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Reality

free

Holiday

Drunkenness
Frying
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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

Operotics
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 Millenium* 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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Mea Culpa
RealTime apologises to the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne for messing up their advertisement in Issue 3.

Theatre of Soak

Bernard Cohen on drunkenness as performance

Although the following represents hours of gonzo research, 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.

On this particular day, the window display consists of pink elephants sliding back and forth in front of a sea of pink tinsel. 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 excess!" he yells. Another friend guffaws expansively. He is attempting to make a pun about rumours/roomers and how he is scotching those in his stomach. I am drunk enough to try anything (served to inmates 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 snooty 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 "thub, thub, thub". A woman is explaining to me that her boyfriend is not a "testosteronic 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, projecting my voice more than is conversationally necessitated. I am slurring and so is the woman with whom I am shepeating. I try to shay things properly but I can't.

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

"He'sh okay," she claimsh.

I hope that my voice sounds concerned, but I can hear it squeaking 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 her. 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 daiquiri. 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 'awwww I dunno'. It's seeming to me like more of an epiglottal non-performance. I get no sense of contraction and expansion which means no characterisation.

Inadequacy. Exclusion. Later, I realise I had misread the anecdote. My reading had lost the anecdote's anecdote. I had over-theorised 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 (very Australian), the inner struggle. 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," says someone else. Now this 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 growlier 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 any more. Our chardonnay has a lifted passionfruit nose and a melon/citrus middle palate with a dry, clean finish.



photo: ARUNAS

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 coast the dairy-aisles 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 truckies sniff the chemical gas

that ripens fruit and deliver Christmas trees in thundering juggernauts.

In Australia, summer Christmastide is a cross-eyed metaphor of baked turkey and steamed tarmac, 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 sanitation trucks, swamp croc stench when sewers back up behind caravan parks; detergent foam spuming along the beach.

Deskless, everything changes. No more emotional recessions. Freaky north-easterlies blow out the cobwebs, lecture notes, rejection slips.

Heat shimmers off decommissioned filing cabinets. Heat: I love its opacity, its turbidity, its heft and viscosity, its tangibility.

Huge fans rifle copies of *Oz Surfie* on fake bodega counters and pictures of synthetic hamburgers crackle in the Freon-treated air of greasypoos up and down the coast. In suburban backyards wubba wubba weed reaches resinous maturity and the neighbour's pit bull bitch whelps litters

of ten. Now daydreams condense around summer-of-love tie-dye colours, everywhere it's Byron Bay. Light the colour of new packing crates. Bakery smells mingling with salt air. The rolling sine curve of sunbaked dunes and a sea of pussy willows dancing in a blonde heat.

Around the stagy rippled turquoise 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 men with hair the colour of leather jackets sit in parked cars sleek as Ronson lighters, and frown over mobile phones: "Yup. Yup. Nope."

A mix of go-go dancers, part-time dominatrixes and girls in bands work their tans in thong bikini 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, fruit salads and

huge iced black coffees.

Kitty Boots argues with her booking agent while Baby Cakes (in a t-shirt saying PURE SEX) reads the fashion mags full of silver leather and articles on boob jobs.

Off the main drag the varicose veins of backstreet travel also hide the slobbo rowdies from the Cross who count their dividends in jail sentences, knife wounds, tricks, tats. Around the poolrooms of the Hotel Bondi a constant hunger: junkies buy and dealers serve.

Around Curlewis Street, grim-looking dudes from Liverpool or Christchurch shiver, jump, shoot into pay phones, bounce off buildings. A bug-eyed Tongan moves through the crowd trailing a suede jacket, "Only \$10". A skinny girl in a tank top and tulle skirt pours 20 cent pieces into the juke-box, playing speed-metal: the migraine tone, the middle-finger-for-all, distorted guitar notes stretched to infinity.

Summer is the marriage of Heaven and Hell, of horniness 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, Jacquie Lo and Merlinda 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

stereotypes to an audience and then humanising and subverting those 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, "Lemonade, here I make, lemonade for guests."

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 housekeeper cum sex-partner. Obvious, 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 drags' reactions. At the end we don't see what the bar audience sees; instead we're mirroring the disgusted responses of the drags/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 juxtaposed 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 butch woman in the pub has some redeeming qualities. In what is a shockingly misogynistic line, Bernadette says to her, "Put a tampon in your box and light it, it's the only bang 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 who wanted to castrate 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 ocker image. The drags, though they 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 characters like 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 yet signifiers 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 is 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



Terence Stamp, Guy Pearce, Hugo Weaving

Elise Lockwood

been reinscribed 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

Cynthia was either Thai, Chinese or Japanese. Even I had doubts when she constantly insists, "Me like to sing. Me like." and "Me perform for you. Me dance too." Back home we know our first person pronoun!

JL Perhaps the film was trying to represent the generic Oriental woman - one who necessarily speaks English badly. Even the background music played in Bob and Cynthia's house is of an "Orientalist" type. This further exoticises the character. For someone not conversant with the Filipino language, the only time Cynthia's ethnicity is foregrounded is when she is specifically

HG What's interesting is that although the reaction of the audience in the bar does validate Cynthia as the authentic woman, the reaction of the viewer of the film is aligned with the drag queens who are repulsed by her behaviour. Ultimately the film says that if real femininity amounts to Cynthia's revolting display, then the dignified femininity as performed by the drag is preferable.

JL That's because by that stage our identification with the drag queens is very well entrenched. The complex cross-cutting, in which the focus continuously pans from Cynthia's ping-pong act to the three men



Julia Cortez as Cynthia

Elise Lockwood

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 s/he never has to give up any of the powers of being a man. S/he 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 issue 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 prick!

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 lighten 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, fluffy, 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.

JL What this suggests is that there is a pecking order being established. While 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.

MB It's a case of picking on the most vulnerable. That's why, when the Filipinos in Melbourne protested against *Priscilla* (The Age, 7 Oct. '94), the film-maker said that in America, where the film has been very successful, no one has complained. That, I think, is quite an ignorant statement. In America, you don't have the prevalent phenomenon of mail-order brides and you have very successful Filipinos there. Besides, what does the film maker want? A rabid display of 'whinging'? I have spoken to Filipinos and even non-Filipinos here who have not made their protest public. The same silent protest is probably happening in America.

JL What's 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 amidst 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; Merlinda 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, summer-time party music. Take with salsa and corn chips. Worldly world music. James Greening's trombone to the fore: more brass than Norman Schwarzkopf. Mood guitar interludes with Dave Brewer and saxophonist Sandy Edwards. Leader Lloyd Swanton earths the mood swings with the tunes and a nice line in bass.

The Mighty Reapers *Trouble People* Rufus Records 1994

Buckets of blues from The Mighty Reapers, ideal for those melancholy post-Christmas moments. Best tracks feature LA blues diva Margie Evans, although Robert Susz also pours out his chilled heart, shaken and stirred: "I got a cold cold feeling, just like ice around my heart." Rob Woolf's Hammond organ is smooth as Cointreau, which is what you should be drinking - along with some of that ice - when this album's playing. Perfect soundtrack as you ponder the vagaries of love gone wrong, why your baby left you, or why your aunt has given you the same Christmas present for the last fifteen years.

Artisans Workshop *Compositions and Improvisations* Tall Poppies 1993

The cerebral, the emotional and the unexpected from this six member Brisbane ensemble. Interdisciplinary music with influences from Reich and Messiaen to Dolphy and Ornette. Compositions inspired by tumble driers, alarm clocks and who knows what. Music to confuse your relatives and frighten your neighbours. Mull over these compositions while probing the mysteries of granny's Christmas pudding.

Paul McNamara

Point Of No Return Rufus Records 1994

Piano-driven quartet jazz. Carefully crafted and forcefully played. A sharp sound including a piano and percussion highlight track. Profile yourself with a desk lamp, take up smoking again just for the night.

The Listening Room *Alpha* ABC Music 1994

It's the silence after Christmas dinner, your eyes are closed, your feet up, listening to the world in an over-heated caravan in sea-side Wangi. Whack on ALPHA and you've got a witty ear-window world inspired by Magritte (Roz Cheney and John Jacobs' *The Listening Room*), Cheney's *New and Curious Subjects*, Moya Henderson's very real, calming, occasionally alarming *Currauwongs*, Rik Rue's gurgling close-up Sydney Harbour, and, something quite different (play later and think 'tango'), Ross Bolleter's accordion fantasy *Nethermost Parts of the Dark* between two bass accordions.

The Listening Room *Beta* ABC Music 1994

On the road, out for a holiday spin, shift through the gears as you leave the city limits and you're away, speeding along with Ion Pearce's *Strange Machine*: softwood and discarded industrial machine instruments. Cut back and forth across the lanes for twenty engrossing minutes. Then, veer off the beaten track with Ros Bandt. Pull over at Lake Mungo where her aeolian harp is set up: haunting sounds with the just audible voice of an Aboriginal elder. Finally, drive on with Andrew Yancken's *Metamorphoses I*: engage the clutch as you speed from the ocean through the bush into the metropolis on roads through doors ...

Steve Hunter *Night People* Tall Poppies 1994

One of life's late night pleasures. Solo bass and duets with himself, a rare consistency of creation. The guitar richness of a five-string bass. Exquisite texture, save for a *Waltzing Matilda* (skip past that one.). Tunes from Hunter, Chick Corea and Steve Swallow, with sound by Belinda Webster and Neal Sandback. Lash out - open the good scotch, single malt, Dalmore 12 years old.

Jeremy Sawkins *Toys* Rufus Records 1994

An eclectic outing from guitarist Jeremy S - a nice touch of Frippery but not enough notes per square inch for the John McLaughlin-ish passages, and the occasional problem with the dreaded f-word i.e. just a fraction too much fusion. Not enough of Jeremy himself except in the tracks featuring Sandy Evans on sax. Ideal for quality takeaway.

Ten Part Invention *Tall Stories*

Rufus Records 1994

Drummer John Pochee leads an all-star Aussie cast through compositions by Sandy Evans, Miroslav Bukovsky and Mike Nock, with the feature spotlight on Roger Frampton's *Jazzmost Suite*. The compositions are expansive, and the big horn section is in fine form, although the band is sometimes lacking in drive. Best with white bread.

Kiri-uu *Ingrian Evenings* Esoterix 1993

Extraordinary sounds from Olev Muska and Coralie Joyce, electronic manipulations of ancient runic songs. Estonian folk music meets digital re-assessment: an international treasure. Aural cross-stitching: sound-bytes of pre-Christian anima. Eerie, atmospheric, archeological. A detour on the electronic superhighway: far north, out there, downunder, far out. Take the fork in the road, open your ears and drift. Astonishing.

Clarion Fracture Zone *What This Love Can Do* Rufus Records 1994

A suite by Sandy Evans. A beautiful opening full of un-selfpitying isolation, ideal after over-crowded Christmas cheer. A sustaining melancholy with gradual escalation into wilder moments. Always underpinned by careful seductive development and engulfing warmth of tone - real Cabernet Merlot material.

Original Motion Picture Soundtrack:

Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould Sony Music 1994

It doesn't matter what you're eating, who you're with and what the weather is like, play this loudly whenever someone turns on the cricket. Here are some of Glenn Gould's best recordings of Bach, Beethoven, 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 bar. It seems so hot and the streets are crowded. Someone beats up Santa Claus. Thankfully, Vangelis has done us all a favour. Released for the first time, these sketches in sound based on the original movie recordings are best heard with tofu, soy and ginger, as the summer drifts 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 indigestion and joviality. Brooding 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 southerly.

Rhys Rees *flying with my feet on the ground* Archon Music 1994

A little overlaid with musical metaphor and metonymy, this is music to sip mango tea with 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-filled scones.

Diamanda Galas with John Paul Jones

The Sporting Life Mute Records 1994

Shrieking dirge singer with three and a half octave range meets ex-Led Zeppelin heavyweight bassist. Jones makes spectacular George Foreman-type comeback to slug it out with Diamanda. No holds barred except for a wistful *At the dark end of the street*. When obscure relatives and forgotten friends have taken up residence on the sofa bed, and you want to maintain the rage ...

Giving Away the Spoken Word

For a while, the idea of a recording consisting entirely of the Spoken Word, other than comedy, seemed the territory of the archivist, capturing the sonorities of poets, writers and actors. But over the past half dozen years, the Spoken Word recording has come into its own, thanks to a diverse company of rogues and raconteurs from the punk ravings of Jello Biafra and Henry Rollins to the humorously anxious narratives of Spalding Gray and Garrison Keillor. More and more people are turning to Spoken Word recordings as an entertainment alternative. Even African American rap artist Ice T has embraced the medium.

The US label Gang of Seven is dedicated to writers and performance artists, among them Spalding Gray, Andrei Codrescu, Tom Bodett, Rick Reynolds, Marion Winik, Nora Dunn, Hugh Brown Shu, Barry Morrow, Bailey White and the label's co-instigator, with Windham Hill's Will Ackerman, Lynda Berry. Ten of these appear on a sampler CD, *The Wonder of Words*. Mushroom Distribution Services are generously giving away six copies of the sampler along with two sets of the Ice T Spoken Word boxed set and two of the remarkable four CD boxed set *Holy Soul Jelly Roll* - Poems and Songs performed by the Beat Godfather Allen Ginsberg.

These CDs will be given away to readers of Real Time who can write telling Mds "Why I need Spoken Word," nominating your choice of CD.

Winners will be drawn Jan 5 and advised by mail.

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- TP027 **Wish**: Extraordinary improvisations by Stevie Wishart (hurdy-gurdy, violin, vocals) with Jim Denley (flutes), Julian Knowles (keyboards and sampler), Rik Rue (tape), Shane Fahey (acoustic treatments).
- TP028 **Artisans Workshop**: Brisbane-based jazz ensemble offers one of the most exciting recordings of improvisations ever released in Australia.
- TP034 **Machine for Making Sense**: An unusual release of text/music improvisations performed by Jim Denley (winds/voice); Chris Mann (text/voice); Rik Rue (tape); Amanda Stewart (text/voice); Stevie Wishart (violin/electronics/hurdy-gurdy/voice).
- TP038 **AtmaSphere**: Scintillating jazz featuring David Jones (drums), Daryl Pratt (vibes), Adam Armstrong (bass) and Carmen Warrington (vocussion). Guests on this album are Don Burrows (flute) and Mike Nock (piano). This CD was nominated for the 1993 ARIA Award (Best Jazz Recording).

Forthcoming release:

- TP059 **Night People**: Steve Hunter with the first CD ever recorded by a solo electric bass guitarist - a beautiful set of pieces played with inspired artistry! (available August 1994)

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

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Operotics

Virginia Baxter in tune with
Annette Tesoriero

In 1995 Sydney will host the Third International Voice Symposium. Kirsten Linklater will be there along with a gargle 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 Cabaletta* at Sidetrack's Contemporary Performance Week in October this year. In a Rossinian display of operaticism, she sang from *The Italian Girl in Algiers* with Deborah Hart on french horn statuesque on a tall plinth at one end of the performance space, Graham Jacups on viola equally imposing on his plinth formally dressed to the waist, underpants below. Annette herself, ornately bodiced and bloomed, strutted 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 like this, in the middle of this sensuous sound, to feel the vibrations through my own body. "It takes muf muscle," interrupted the singer, answering the question on my lips.

For the fuller 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 heaves out a huge Ha Ha Ha. The video images will eventually be really big too. There were also some striking photographic collages by Heidrun Löhr combining images of the goddesses Vac with huge tongue and four arms, and Kali filling the skies with her roar. 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



Nigel Kellaway and Annette Tesoriero in *Choux Choux Baguette Remembers*

Heidrun Löhr

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 heat" 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 Boheme* and *Midsummer Nights Dream* are setting the agenda for discussion of Australian opera. *Choux Choux Baguette* and *Cheesecake Cabaletta* 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 proselytize. 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 *Parabola* by Barbara Blackman and Andrew Ford. She created the roles of *Scarlotta* in *The Remedy* by Raffaele Marcellino and *Marguerite Bunce*, *the Woman in Volcano* and *Vision* by Rainer Linz 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 Remembers* and Santa Lucia Does the Balmain Polka. *The Goethe Institut* commissioned her to produce An Intimate Keynote Address and in 1993 she launched the recital program 'Tis the Gift to be Simple with pianist Gerard Willems. 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, with the aim 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 with musicians 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 Dewey Redman most recently. With the Wangaratta Jazz Festival we have a special arrangement, whereby 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 Goethe Institut. 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 *austraLYSIS* the music improvising group she formed with husband-collaborator Roger Dean. *austraLYSIS* 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 litanies. 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 Fuery's *Representation, Discourse & Desire* (Longman Chesire 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 *Nuraghi 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 -21-7211) 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 onto CD?

K.G.

Hazel Smith, *Poet Without Language*, Rufus Records, RF005

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 weld 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*

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See Mds giveaways page 6

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(Fish of Milk, 1994) and the Machine For Making Sense's *On Second Thoughts* (Tall Poppies, 1994) all effect a series of shifts in the conception of a sound event that brings sound down to earth as part of an emerging "sound ecology."

Having spent years out in the cold, saxophonist Mark Simmonds is an agile and committed pyromaniac, and *Fire*, his first recording (on the new Sydney *Birdland* label) accentuates the texture of the classic hard and post bebop jazz sounds of the late 1950s and early 1960s, while never conceding the temptation to simply reproduce bebop as a style and leave it at that. In a sense, *Fire* is an extended meditation on the bebop form, and the inter-relationships between the various elements of that form, in terms of a particular kind of gritty resonance. In the context of a quartet (saxophone, bass, trumpet and drums), Simmonds is able to excavate the time of jazz (all that jazz, all that time) while still propelling the listener into an immediate apprehension of each improvised moment.

As though offering up an antidote to Simmonds' exfoliated terrain, The Necks' *Aquatic* pulverises an imagined spatial landscape (Simmonds' jazz soundscape), forcing the texture back into the sound. The Necks collapse the expectations of improvisation as an outpouring of sound, as a pure expressive moment. Instead, they generate a winding sonic contour that proceeds through a series of levels (drones,

clusters, runs, repeated patterns), minute melodic conversions, rhythmic junctures. In *Aquatic*, the appearance of sonic movement is no longer a formal relation of meter to harmonic content, but rather, the passage between sound events. This is music that slides through the shadows, pretending to "grow," but is actually already there, in the corners, under the bed, inside the air-conditioning.

If The Necks raise the humidity somewhat, in Rik Rue's sonic world there has never been a shortage of fluid matter. In *ocean flows*, Rue poses the question of how it is possible to render the image of sound as a pure sonic environment. Structured as "works of nature," the digitally recorded sounds of the ocean moving across the beach, rock ledges, and crevices, through the estuary and coastal caves, at different tides and ebbs, are made audible through their replication as musically structured *compositions*.

Rue's soundscapes point to a technological rejoinder where "natural" sounds are digitally reconstituted as sonic textures that inform the content of a work, and, in the case of *ocean flows*, produce the totality of the work. The problem though, is that Rue conceives of a sound environment *only* as a figure of space, and so the listener is subsumed into an organic, all-encompassing space that seeks only to replicate itself at every level, rather than opening sound out to other events, to other times.

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.

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.

Xmas Gifts:

Ariel's Hybrids

Looking for a Xmas gift for that friend who just doesn't fit? Seek out the *under-culture* shelves between Music and Theatre at Ariel Booksellers on Sydney's Oxford Street (or, if you're on the other side of town go straight to Half A Cow on Glebe Point Road). "Underculture?" I quiz Ariel staff member Julia Blanks. "The books that don't fit," she replies with convincing smile. "We used to have a popular culture section above history and current affairs, but it didn't work, so with Katherine Bird, who works here and also for Manic Exposeur distributors, we created a space for the hard to categorise books. We also put the new under-culture releases on the front table to draw our customers' attention to them. It's working. Theatre takes up twice the space but moves twice as slow."

If you're alert to the quirky, even dark side of your difficult-to-fit friend, you'll be able to select from mayhem (*Killing for Culture*; *The Patricidal Bedside Companion*), computing (*Cruising Online*), virtual reality (*Glimpses of Heaven, Visions of Hell*), style (*Covert Culture Sourcebook*; *High Weirdness*), stimulants (*Dope Girls*), syntax (*The Deluxe Transitive Vampire*), knowledge (*Bizarre Facts*), aesthetics (*Coming Attractions, the Making of an X-Rated Video*), things to do (Dada, Laurie Anderson, Artaud, Eric Bogosian, a history of NY's The Kitchen), earfuls (Lester Bangs, Kurt Loder), public speaking (Ginsberg, Kerouac, Aaron Williams); difference (*Feral Children & Clever Animals*; *The Mole People, Life in the Tunnels Beneath NYC*) and smart comics. If your friend is into book burning then perhaps turn to the burgeoning Spoken Word CD section behind the counter. "Put in a CD player and a pair of earphones," I smile. "Good idea," smiles Julia. "Bookshops are changing."

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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.

Allen & Unwin seem to be the only publishing firm in the country that have any clues about how to market serious non-fiction, and not surprisingly they have the most active and interesting list overall. *Volatile Bodies* by feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz headed the Gleebooks 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 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 progressive cultural agendas of diversity 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 ethics 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 pay 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 Finkelstein, and Penguin put out Adrian Martin's *Phantasms* in its McPhee Gribble imprint. Both aim to give the general reader a handle or two on interpreting the culture of everyday life. Of the two, the Martin is more subtle, ironic, nuanced - both intellectually satisfying and a great read.

Taking a different tack is Drusilla Modjeska's *The Orchard* (Macmillan). Mixing the classical essay form with personal narrative prose of great perception, Modjeska invents a highly plausible style of writing for women, about

women. She uses narrative to get into the details of women's everyday lives, but without neglecting critical thinking. This is the book Virginia Woolf was trying to write when she thought *The Years* and *Three Guineas* were one manuscript - half essay, half fiction. In Modjeska they are much better integrated.

John Docker's *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (Cambridge) puts his controversial defence of the diverse and perverse ways of popular culture on a sounder footing. Anyone confused by the raging debates on culture and criticism would be well advised to pick up Docker's lucid guide. It is at once a very cosmopolitan and a very localised treatment of the big picture issues in contemporary cultural thinking. Anyone still confused about the Leavisites, Birmingham and Frankfurt schools, poststructuralism and all that (and who isn't?) will find Docker's accessible but non-patronising style congenial.

The 'Australia in Asia' debate doesn't look like going away, or getting much serious scrutiny in the media either. This is why books like Chris Berry's *A Bit on the Side* (EmPress) are so necessary. The main essay in this little book is about Denis O'Rourke's controversial film *The Good Woman of Bangkok*. By tracing the ambivalent responses of all the film's critics and admirers, Berry highlights the hidden assumptions of sexuality, gender and power in the Australian cultural imaginary of the East.

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. *Sidelines* 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 news weeks, 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 themes - not always that 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 Beilharz means it ironically, I think. These may be

pomo 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 Fesl's style is either trenchant or truculent, depending on your point of view. *Conned!* is an uncompromising 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 Delia 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' now 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.

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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 tight 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 without noticing, having begun with just ten minutes a day.

As well as running he is committed to stamping. It's not the Suzuki Tadashi stomping (taught by a small but growing number of Australians including Nigel Kellaway, Deborah Pollard, Alan Schacher, Deborah Leiser) but it is a relative, nor is it mimicry of aboriginal stamping, though that profoundly inspired Neil to develop the stamping he had come to through

running.

He finds stamping energising, "something takes over in the psyche." For aboriginals stamping "keeps the world alive", a ritual sense that the rest of us lack in our ceremonially deprived culture. We don't "sing and dance the world."

Neil has a reputation as an inspiring teacher. I'm curious about the assumed teacher in the pre-publication draft of the book I have from Currency Press. Certainly the running exercises could be handled by most drama teachers but the stamping strikes me as a greater responsibility. Neil stresses that his exercises are for warming up, not for training, although they do provide a path to it. He also notes Currency Press' enthusiasm for the book to be available beyond theatre and schools, not surprising in an age of proliferating classes for body and mind. The directness of his instructions and the prefacing of each exercise with sometimes poetic and philosophical quotations about running could make it intriguing to the general reader.

Even so, the running exercises do occasionally demand a virtuosity in 'telling' from the teacher - the ability (and imagination) to talk your class (as they run alone, in teams, lines, closed and open spaces) through, for example, the history of the planet or the birds of the earth in Neil's eight 'contemplative' exercises. I ask Neil if he'll tour with the launching of the book, if he'll put out a video cassette to demonstrate just how the teacher works. It's possible, he says. Some teachers might balk at "the spiritual" in the book (including students asked to work from their star signs), but it's sufficiently open-ended to use as you wish.

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 stomping 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 yearns for narrative, one of the reasons for mounting his Katherine Gorge *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 Arramaieda. 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 in 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 Murri Festival, cultural debate, a percussion festival, an enormous number of workshops (body, voice, song-writing, 'Japanese rhythms' with Niwa Motoyuki) and performances (Archie Roach & Ruby Hunter, Bradley Byquar, Bronwyn Calcutt, Danny Spooner, John Williamson, Mic Conway, Riley Lee, Sensitive New Age Cowpersons, Standup Poets, the Mills Sisters and more).

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Metro Moment

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

Brisbane's 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 workshop/rehearsal spaces. The sprawling 70's decor makes it feel like a time capsule.

Regarded by the performance community as too arts-and-craftsy 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 the 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 mainstream theatre regards the fringe as a threat?

JO I don't think that experimental theatre impacts in any way on mainstream 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 Experimetro 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 if I could implement an interesting enough theatre program here, we might actually be supported.

FM It 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 knit, weave and pot. How will Experimetro change this place?

JO Well for ten years or more Metro has supported a number of amateur companies so I can'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 prune the really tragic stuff. My aim is to eventually shift Metro from a scripted drama space into a more performance arts

based space.

FM You and I both operate on the outside, not necessarily on the margins but on the outer side of the mainstream theatre. And 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.

JO I think within the alterna-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 *Tramp-o-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 multi-media on female archetypes), Kicking the Kettle who performed their power tool ballet Kissing Eve at Shock of the New, and The Hereford 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 Tramp-o-line (a mythological space odyssey) was the first production in the Experimetro season in September this year and toured to the 1994 Melbourne Fringe Festival in October.

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The Alchemical Studio

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 am sure that everyone who knew him wishes he was still with us, rather than being honoured posthumously.

Like many of you, my life 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 asthma 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 courtesan, a movie star, a couple of lonely wives, a princess, a queen, several outrageously spoilt, brainless women, a wet nurse, a 17 year old virgin and a man - Don Juan. I have dyed, 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 McAuley, 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 all 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* and Rex is one of the fugitive 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 Giradoux'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 season of plays in the Union Theatre at 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 had been played in Brisbane - and the last of the *Fairytales of New York* by J.P. Donleavy. In the Ionesco, 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* and I prepared 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, understood better than anybody else 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 people like Ionesco, Arrabal, and Ghelderode, 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 Brisbane 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 things German and some of us go backwards and forwards decade by decade from one to the other. But Rex stuck pretty well to things French and that was something again which he owed to



Rex Cramphorn (1988)

Phillip Martin

Rex also introduced me to some fiction that I had not at that time come into contact with. He gave me two Robbe-Grillet novels to read in French and a Natalie Sarraute and that was the first time I had come across either of those writers. He was interested also in Artaud and that, I think, was something again that was to mean a great deal to him. I'd just come back from Vienna where I'd been learning German and tried to introduce him to Brecht and I must say Rex was not much interested.

Just one or two things about the fact that Rex came from Brisbane, which is in some ways quite important. People in Brisbane grew up in a very strange way, that is, everybody grew up in their own little world. There was no, on the whole, general place where you could share your ideas with other people. Most of us were sitting in corners pursuing very peculiar sets of interests. It produced people who had very idiosyncratic ways of doing and

Brisbane. The French Department at the University of Queensland was very strong. We had all acted plays in that department, mostly those little de Musset plays of French proverbs, which I must say I have always loved and which I know Rex also loved. Rex went on to translate and direct a great many 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 wonderful ear for French and for the Alexandrine, as he had a wonderful ear, and again I don't know anybody who had a better one, for Elizabethan blank verse.

That leads me to say that Rex seems to me to be one of the few directors of his generation in Australia who was not much influenced by Brecht. He had no belief in the world of the political and not much interest in the strictly social. What he dealt with, even when it was a question of the use of power, was the world of the pre-social, the world of *psyche* rather than

polis - though I would be very loath to call it psychological. It was the world of dream stuff, of sacrifice and ritual. What he wanted to do with that sort of theatre was not to raise people's social conscience but to shake them out of their social consciousness, shake them out of their clothes very often, and transform them. The means to that was always seduction and magic - even black magic. Those, of course, are means that stand at the opposite pole of anything that Brecht would have tolerated.

Rex's was the theatre of alchemy and it was at its best in plays (I'm thinking only of productions that I remember and which still haunt me and seem some of the most potent theatrical experiences I've ever had) which were essentially religious. I'm thinking particularly of Shakespeare's *Pericles* and *The Tempest*. Rex's production of *Pericles* at Jane Street, and there are some people here who were in that production - Robyn Nevin for example - that was the best production of a Shakespeare play I ever saw here. It was experimental but it wasn't at all

provisional. These were experiments that yielded results and the results were miraculous. When I went back to England, after working with Rex, I saw for the first time one of the productions of Peter Brook. It was *Marat/Sade* and I heard Peter Brook lecture and was astonished to recognize so much that I had already heard. Those ideas were already in Rex's mind and when I came back to Australia, in 1968, Rex was already giving life to those ideas in a way which still seems to me to be absolutely original.

This dedication of Rex's to dream work and to the ritualistic made him vague. I think we all remember and have different versions of the vagueness. I 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 negative 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, untyrannical 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 he responded to because it was already in him.

I think there are many of us who remember productions of Rex's, find them in terms of imagery still absolutely strongly in our heads. I think particularly of *Pericles* and *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 that Rex did. There are also papers. I'd be very surprised if among those papers, as well as the translations - which it would be good to see in print at 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 original his ideas were, how 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 McAuley of the Department of Performance Studies, University of Sydney.

Confronting Tedium

M. Billsson 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 Mellowni 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 subtlety, 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 Mellowni 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 Sha-Manic-Dogma GPO Box 2637 Melbourne 3001.



Mellowni Mari-Yajima

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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 defiled through association; practice is a sticky point; and Indigenous defies classic Anglo definition. Half-caste, micaloo, yellow skinned, douggai, mixed breed, invisible trouble maker, '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 diversity 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, 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 sighting 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 bases of language, form and geographic context remain unchanged whereas content is the responsive element.

Lydia Miller, Performer/Director from Sydney via Cairns, disputes 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, we are exposed continually to technologies. When we are talking about theatre and art, I think we are addressing the fact we are dealing with a number of multi-media 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 a uniquely Indigenous experience. In fact if history read more like an injection of technologies into Indigenous cultures, as opposed to the denial of access coupled with an outlawing of cultural practices, I believe that the more embracing and culturally analytical use of technologies that we are starting to see now would have emerged earlier. Video and telecommunications 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.

The 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-fulfilling 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 inspires thoughts 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 means of representation 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 recapture and appropriate what we interpret traditional cultures to be, we run the risk of denying the experiences we have had throughout the process of invasion. The instigation of internal cultural analysis must be one of our first steps in any form of reconciliation, be 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



Members of Kooemba Jdarra

left to right
back: Sam Conway, Lafe Charlton, Billy McPherson
middle: Lydia Miller, Marilyn Miller,
Deborah Mailman, Roxanne McDonald
front: Tiffany Noack, Leslie Marlier

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 through arts and cultural endeavour is a continuation of ancient structures of storytelling with an ongoing review of language, form 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 an all Murri Mura environment. *The Cherry Pickers*, the company's inaugural production directed by Lydia Miller and featuring seven 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 shaping our cultures, responding from within not from without. The ability to generate and comment 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 artists with small works who 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 Mudrooroo 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 Sabiel, Kate Champion, Matthew Bergin and Heidrun Löhr (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 *Entr'acte*, 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 Sussman'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 Aloise whom they've worked with before in Sussman'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), PICA (Perth), EAF (Adelaide), ACCA (Melbourne) and TPS through the newly formed AACAO (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 works, to hire out the theatre when it would normally be used 'in-house' and direct the revenue into small commissions for artists and performers to create site specific shows. "We need to signal far more clearly that this is a direction TPS wants 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 bonus - improving the space's profile and helping younger artists in particular).

"The site issue 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 compromised: you can't put nails in the walls and a thrust stage has been added to the proscenium taking up valuable floor space. TPS could be involved in working with dance to find a centre - perhaps we'd become part of a cultural centre. Who knows what will happen? Whatever, TPS has a lot of expertise in managing a space."

All of this is happening in the period of Angharad's artistic directorship. "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 based 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 the gallery as well.

1994 was a year without *Entr'acte*, The Sydney Front and Open City performing at the space and there was a noticeable prevalence 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 with signs of 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 next decade, 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 the picture."

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

KG

legs on the wall presents...

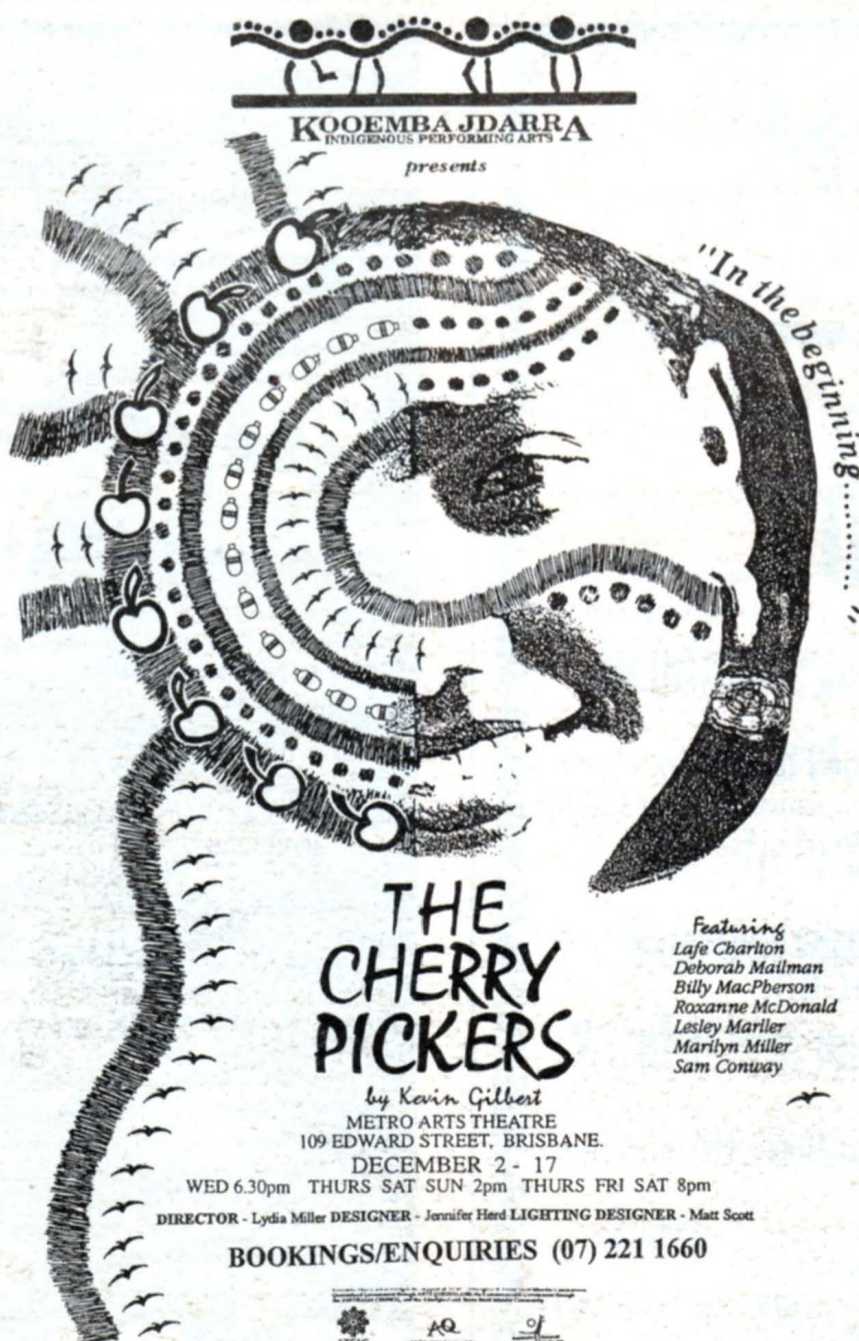


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Chris Ryan interviews Don Mamouny on a flightpath

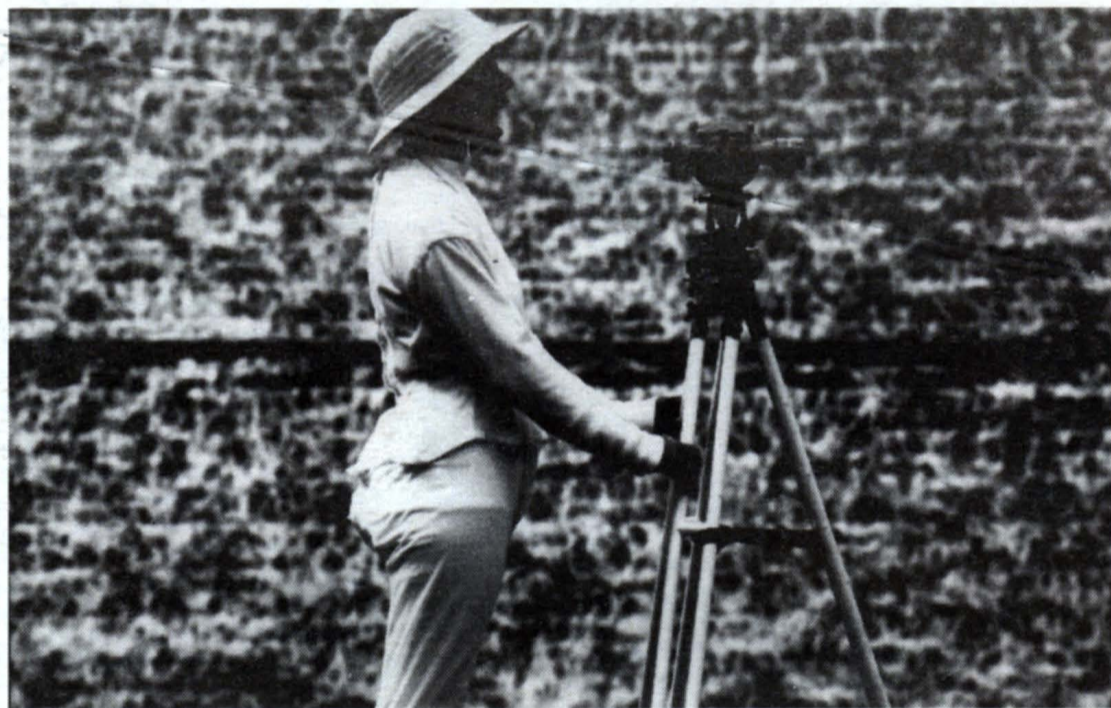
CR I am one of the people who still refer to Sidetrack Performance Group as Sidetrack, so while sitting under the flight path at Marrickville - PLANE PASSES OVER. Sorry. You'll have to wait. My entire being's vibrating - talking with Don Mamouny. Does the name change (though instigated two years ago)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

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?



Regina Heilmann in Sidetrack's *The Measure*

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 Nigel Kellaway and John Baylis on *Idol*. Nigel did choreography on *Heaven*, 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 ... ANOTHER PLANE ... Marrickville?

DM Well it is and it 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. I personally 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

years ago?

DM It really depends on the individual show. I don't think that works that use the language of contemporary performance necessarily play to a small audience. I think that there is a possibility for it to have a much greater public, if the public could only find out about it, because the public are actually pretty bored with conventional theatre and when they do encounter groups like Sidetrack or The Sydney Front, what they discover is something that is very different and very exciting. People often say, "You've given me a new belief in theatre".

CR Do you think that the 'gimmick' is important to creating a mass audience for contemporary performance theatre?

DM No, not necessarily. I think accessibility, to a degree. An audience that's not schooled in the language of non-linear narrative often have difficulty with it and see it as something esoteric and not for them. You can have a non-linear narrative that may well be interesting but what you have to do is take the panic out for 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 WRY 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 that 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 its 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.



Emmanuel Angelicas A person who would rather not be in Marrickville 1985

From Sydney Photographed, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. 21 December 1994 to 13 February 1995. See page 27.

This Wicked Body: three way view

Nigel Kellaway, *This Wicked Body*,
The Performance Space, Nov 1994

Locked in

Not so much incarcerated in The Performance Space as in his body, Nigel Kellaway pushes that body to its limits. Kellaway set himself the task of living in the theatre for ten days, fed by leading chef Gay Bilson, sleeping in an opulent bed, performing the work in segments to visitors in the afternoons with brief breaks for a fag 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 spot) and red wine and the dubious delights of being ogled, videotaped and monologued at. The work proceeds through a series of striking movement images evoking ballet (especially in the arms) and butoh, suggesting real pleasure and some pain (on pointe and suspended by one wrist but without the obligatory St Sebastian arrows) and performed with a steady stream of talk written by Kellaway himself and, more often, others (Wilde, Rilke, Auster, Muller etc.). The consistency of tone of delivery, arch stylish sing-song, and the apparently very personal content about age, authenticity and lust, suggest one voice, not quotation, and trigger a feeling of psychological intensity and, towards the end, suspense as self-doubt (fictional 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 monitors). The performance is complete in itself, the bigger issue is 'this wicked body' that Kellaway finds himself alive in, even trapped in, a male body that dresses and gestures as female, female of ballet and opera and past generations of coquettish middle class western women. This male psyche envies this female body, wants it for itself, especially at forty years of age (opening night was Nigel's fortieth birthday we were told) where the skin, he notes, declares its ageing, where lust is the issue, not sex. As for actual women, as opposed to the fantasy of their bodies, the only 'appearance' I recall is 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' (aided and abetted by Kellaway's going head on at issues like fakery and authenticity and his unconvincing denial of naturalism) is a feelgood evasion of much that was specific, disturbing and powerfully unresolved about the work. Something killed off audience numbers, despite a good publicity campaign and good reviews. Perhaps word got out that the stylish larrikinism of The Sydney Front was not on the menu. Something sinister, something deeply personal, something not quite right, even correct, was being served up.

In performance, Gay Bilson is unlit, we can just make her out. But her presence through the preparation of the evening meal, its serving and its unhurried eating amplify the real time super-naturalism of *This Wicked Body*. Joel Markham plays waiter, personal assistant and stage hand. Resplendently surrounded by his percussion instruments, David Montgomery performs his exacting compositions worked from the ground bass of Bach's Goldberg theme as

'played by Glenn Gould' at the beginning of the show. Kellaway's performance is spacious, allowing us plenty of room to revel in Montgomery's music. As with Kellaway's delivery, Montgomery's music is diverse but coherent - shimmering, balletic, 'pretty' ('in contrast to the dark, aggressive, rude and offensive text' says David), funereal and includes an exquisite serial palindrome (an ingenious mathematically calculated composition reminding us that Gould's other love was Schoenberg's for Bach).

After a mere two visits I take home with me a Gothic shadow - Simon Wise's white and gold light emanating from low -slung gold cross-bars making the space more intimate but eerily deepening its perspective, Nigel's full black gown with gold braid, dark diaphanous gauzes across the space, the Edwardian table and chairs, the aroma of Gay Bilson's evolving consommé, the intensity of the percussion built not on a melody but on a ground bass, the dark reds and golds of a cushioned 'oriental' bed and the seriousness generated by Nigel's text pitched against camp display. Hopefully *This Wicked Body*, the ninety minute performance, as opposed to the ten day event, will stay in the Kellaway repertoire. Perhaps the incarceration was 'only' a metaphor for the uneasy relationship between the man and his body.

Keith Gallasch

Memo to the Colour-blind

In Nigel's promotional material for *This Most Wicked Body*, I picked up words like, "imprisonment" or "incarceration" which reminded me of some of the 70s endurance work done by artists like Joseph Beuys, Chris Burden, Stuart Brisley, Marina and Ulay, Stelarc and Mike Parr. In their experiential performances, these artists, with some variation, tended to show signs of the 'real' condition (and/or duration) of human existence (e.g. excrement, self-mutilation, body odours, body fatigue) in their chosen venues.

Kellaway, on the other hand, seemed to try to veil these elements in his project by "acting out" for the sake of "elegance". Thus, I was unconcerned whether he really stayed at the Performance Space for 240 hours or not, and did not think that this physical endurance (24 hours per day) was much of an issue.

The issue for me is Kellaway's rejection of "Performance Art" (conveyed in a Performance Space Magazine interview earlier this year) or "Visual Art Installation", as well as the "Performance Art" side's rejection of "theatre" (as voiced by a number of writers and artists including Ann Marsh and Mike Parr).

I think the separation between "theatre" and "Performance Art in Visual Art" is an important issue requiring continued and serious discussion. "Performing" is a form of "acting", as nothing is natural in a performance site. It could be said that Kellaway was "acting" in the theatre, but "performing" in the foyer. In the age of TV, life is full of "acting", as Baudrillard argued a decade ago. We no longer know if we are mimicking or being mimicked. Do

we still see "real" and "fake" as absolute opposites? Any theatre has "visual" elements, and as a composed space, has an essence of "installation".

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

As 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 dispute". People tend to forget that any border is an historical, political, cultural, and social construction. Therefore, there is no absolute reason to accept it.

Whatever label one may put on it, Kellaway's *This Most Wicked Body* was a sophisticated, devoted, challenging work, which contributes to further discussion on notions of the "hybrid".

Yuji Sone

PS I wonder if Nigel is going to "act" at the moment of death - like Yukio Mishima who killed himself by "harakiri", 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 screens 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 live by David Montgomery. I've seen him asleep, waking, dressing, going to the bathroom, eating muesli for breakfast in the courtyard of The Performance Space, cleaning his teeth with his tongue, blowing his nose with a hankie 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* is not the explicit showing of Nigel's life as he lives it in the theatre for ten days but rather, that these visibilities can be taken as referring to a real person. That is, what is obscene in this (or perhaps all) theatre piece(s) is that the spectator may presume on the basis of a representation to know the truth about Nigel Kellaway.

The work of The Sydney Front was instrumental in uncovering and challenging the often unacknowledged and unrecognised power/knowledge relations between actor and spectator in the theatre. This was most dramatically demonstrated in an early Sydney Front piece in which a female performer stood alone on stage facing the audience. She stood quite still and after some time a male spectator suggested that she take her clothes off. As in his earlier work with The Sydney Front, Nigel resists and frustrates spectatorial 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 start.

Kerrie Schaefer

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, performance artist Linda Sproul gave a talk with slides about her recent works challenging limited readings of images of the female form. For an upcoming piece in Perspecta entitled *White Woman: a curious experience* in the 19th century wing of the Art Gallery of NSW, she is researching a history of the Poll Hereford and its breeding. A search for the perfect spotted cow...

In her last piece, *Roots*, in the National Gallery of Victoria's *Drydocks and slipwaves* exhibition in February she knocked the spots off the beast. A woman in a gold frock stood on a very tall pedestal, monumentalised by her height, the environment of the NGV's Great Hall, with its Kemp masterpieces and glorious ceiling of angels, and by the "showroom" staging of an audience traipsing in from the courtyard. But this organza dream was blown a raspberry by the frock pulled high above her head, genitalia exposed and hoisted with an erect plaited petard. The plinth slowly fell, the body winched clear by the neck five or six metres by a suspension mechanism.

Sproul says that, whilst seeking "expressions of female abandonment", she is not interested in heroics or acrobatics, hers a notion which differs greatly from finding liberation through form or training. But on this point I must take umbrage: to speak of abandon on one hand and of the clean fall of the plinth on the other, to perform in the earlier *Which Side Do You Dress* nipple pricked and ostrich plumed to the accompaniment of Joan Sutherland's "sonic...abandon" and "fullthroatedness" with her own jaw glued into a sardonic unspeaking groove presents a contradiction of tight versus lush that I cannot reconcile.

Whose voice is abandoned? Whose abandon is it? Whilst Sproul claims to have no interest in virtuosity, she relies heavily on Sutherland's: her own "comfortable" seat on the swing in *Which Side...* is only abandonment in terms of its signing image - i.e. if you imagine the swing as snapshots, but not in real time. And I would argue the fixing of her smile (if the drooling female audience is anything to go by) almost conditions the body to be re-fetishized, if perhaps by the female gaze rather than the male.

Compare this with Maudie Davey's theatre work - also a piece about subverting the fetishized feminine - where a beehived, singlet-and-stillettoed shrew's gripes and moodswings challenge the frills of her garb. This work also carries unnameables, uncatchables, emanations, aftertastes and layers of contiguous tastes that are concrete, yet not a part of the ostensible critique. Meanings are not held, but allowed: once she's through, you can't re-fetishize this gal.

I stress that this is not about one form of work being better or more enjoyable than another. It is only about discrepancies in what is said and done, attitudes to meanings and by extension, to what is taught, or indeed teachable.

From the composing of a kind of nostalgia for the impossible Other with arguments that good theatre training happens in Russia or China or Indonesia, but not here, to the revelation by convenor Richard Murphett that great Russian teachers lament that they can't "do" Peter Brook, blindnesses were rife throughout the conference. Perhaps of such blindness and lament all art is made. But the tendency to polarise was crystallised in the central question on which the conference turned: do we train to form, or to potential (or, as Lindy Davies asked, do we train the mind?)

Training to form need not be only training to a particular world view. Any given form need not be dead if the components we take as givens - like the activities of digestion we commonly forget about - are not neglected. Physicality, presence, image, emanence are what a good actor brings to a form but forgets through habit.

Zsuzsanna Soboslay

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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, *Opinionated* (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 contemporary Australian artists on ABC's *Rage* program. Sliced in for a two minute segment between standard music video clips, 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 counterpoint to the very public persona of the 'evil artist' he presents in the video version of *Opinionated* - 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 judgement 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

way it circulates in speech and print) is to question private and public perceptions of art and artists both as a "provocation but also as a conceptual interrogation". Over-simplification, according to Kreckler - especially in matters related to art - is "like blaming the drought on arts funding or the death of classicism on installation art".

The links between Kreckler's sound, performance and installation works are sometimes conceptually or nominally conjoined (as with the installation and video projects both bearing the title *Opinionated*. An installational 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 (whoever 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 style varies from 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 mime 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 Front 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 community 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 repeatability 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 1-17 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, Hany Armanious and Kathy Temin. Two artists' videos (each being from 30 seconds to 2 minutes duration) will be broadcast together 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/co-ordinator Kim Machan Tel 043 791315 Fax 043 791393.



Beth Kayes and Chris Murphy in *Wildheart*

Nigel Jamieson

Legs go feral

After the virtuosic domestic horrors of *All of Me* circus theatre company Legs on the Wall walk the culture/nature tightrope in *Wildheart* where an anthropologist attempts "to capture, tame and civilise" a feral child. "What he little expects to confront is the animal in himself." The return of the animal to the circus theatre ring? Or a good dose of the old original sin thesis as *Wildheart* "leaps across the chasm of lust and morality" with "a play about burning passion, repression, jealousy, hunger and our desire to survive." The fascination with feral children is revived by the decade; *Wildheart* appears concurrently with Douglas Keith Candland's *Feral Children and Clever Animals* (OUP). The idea for the show came from dramaturg Alma de Groen (not playwrighting this time) out of a number of sources including the Adam, Eve and Lilith myths and the diaries of a priest living in north-west India in 1926 where he encountered two feral children. The show is a collaborative creation, springing from the performers' improvised responses to research material and the shaping of that material with de Groen and director Nigel Jamieson. The emerging plot sounds rather ripe as the bookish anthropologist loses touch with his wife who connects with the land-wise trapper who guides them while the anthropologist mixes it with the wild child. Doubtless the Legs' poetic of physical performance and de Groen's eye for complexities will offer us more than predictable oppositions. A bonus is the participation of Chris Murphy, a striking actor creating the feral child.

KG

Wildheart is playing at the Wharf Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company to Dec 17.

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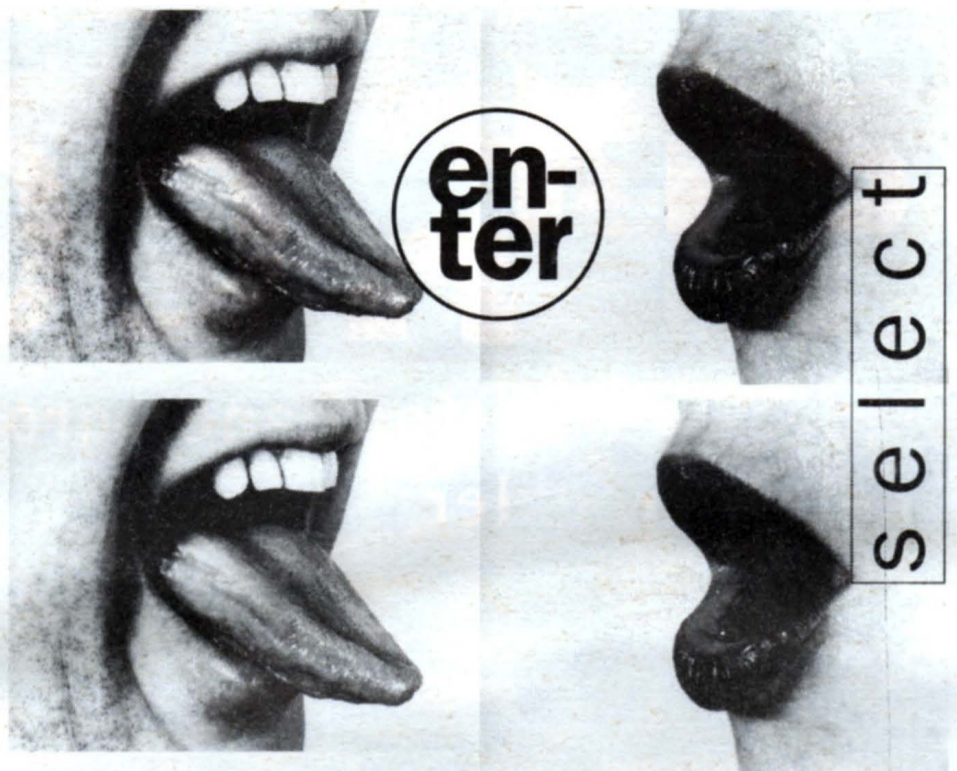
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Watch this Artspace

Ben Curnow susses out the Tsoutas vision

Artspace is geared up to enter an exciting new phase of its history, with the recent launching of studios upstairs 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 will involve 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 facilities which are now ready at the Gunnery 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 insistent that the purpose of the studios should not be merely "product oriented". Artspace will have selection control over four of the studios, which were launched by the NSW Ministry for the Arts in November, and are planned to be up and running by early 1995. It will also be managing the other six on behalf of the Ministry, in conjunction with a selection committee made up of Ministry nominees and representatives, other contemporary art space representatives, and artists.

In a nutshell, Tsoutas' intention as Director is to alter the way in which Artspace is perceived — away from being primarily a gallery where finished objects are exhibited, and towards a type of space where ideas and structures are developed, 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 time 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'm 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 artists twelve years ago, "because I think 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 pressurized, to see if they hold — or does everything turn to air? I'm less interested in things that 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 reinvesting 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 might 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, Hiram To and Mathew Jones, and an exhibition curated by Abby Mellick called "Touch", which were scheduled under the former directorship of Louise Pether. 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 performance-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.

P I C A

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 (Boomalili, Aust.) and Eddie Chambers (INIVA, 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 explores 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 "Maerz"*, **2 Dance Plus & Contemporary OPERA**, *Giles is that You?*

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Exploding Architecture

Colin Hood spoke to Perspecta artist Mathew Jones who is refashioning 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 Perspecta 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 Perspecta?

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 somehow encompass gender'. 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 identity - on the relationships between 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



Mathew Jones *Poof!* 1993

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".



Elliott Erwitt Birmingham, England 1991

To The Dogs - at The Art Gallery of NSW

To the Dogs, an exhibition of some 100 photographs by Elliot Erwitt, is now on show (till the 19th February) at the Art Gallery of NSW. Born in 1928 in Paris to Russian immigrant parents, Erwitt spent the first ten years of his life in Italy before moving to the US at the age of eleven. At fifteen he started to support himself by printing movie stars' photographs in a commercial darkroom in Hollywood.

In 1953 he joined the world famous Magnum photo agency - whose work was showcased in 1991 at AGNSW - and rapidly rose to the top of the highly competitive field of magazine photography. His quirky and candid style is enhanced by the simplicity and discipline of black and white photography. Erwitt remarks - "The dog business started by chance when I noticed that many of my images featured dogs. I don't really take pictures of dogs, I have dogs in my pictures. In dogs I see wonderful qualities often absent in regular people."

Also on show will be thirty of his images documenting the leading celebrities and political figures from the past forty years, including Jackie Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe and Richard Nixon.

RT

Australian Perspecta 1995

Australian Perspecta for 1995 will present a diversity of artists and art practices ranging through performance, installation, kinetic work, computer-generated interactives, painting, photomedia 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 reconceptualisation of the individual, social, sexed or gendered body".

John Bulun Bulun will come from Maningrida in the Northern Territory to show his series of barks 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 Perspecta. *I Woman* consists of 6 pairs - 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 Dement will present a new interactive CD-ROM *Cyberflesh*

Girlmonster, which consists of scanned body parts remade into new beings. Melbourne performance artist Linda Sproul will present her latest performance, *The White Woman*, 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 McDiarmid who is preparing a topical insert for the tympanum 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 Curiosity" 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 Perspecta program will appear in Realtime 5.

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SAT 31ST DEC	NEW YEARS EVE COCKTAIL PARTY & PERFORMANCE	7-10PM
TUES 3RD JAN - 8TH JAN	FREE FOR BOOKINGS GALLERY 1, TAP COLLECTIVE	GALLERY 2
TUES 10TH JAN - 15TH JAN	FORTY WOMEN ARTISTS - GALLERY 1, TAP COLLECTIVE EXHIBITION	2
TUES 17TH JAN - 22TH JAN	FORTY WOMEN ARTISTS - GALLERY 1, TAP COLLECTIVE EXHIBITION	2
WED 18TH JAN 7:30 PM	FORUM "10 X 10 - WOMENTALK" 10 DIVERSE GUEST SPEAKERS	
SAT 21TH JAN 5PM	GALLERY WALK - GUIDED TOUR OF 7 LOCAL GALLERIES LED BY MINSTRELS	
& STREET THEATRE BACK TO TAP FOR "WOMEN PERFORM" PERFORMANCE ART EVENING 9-10PM		

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 eschew the barriers of gallery walls. The public art 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 homeliness, 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.

Distinctions 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

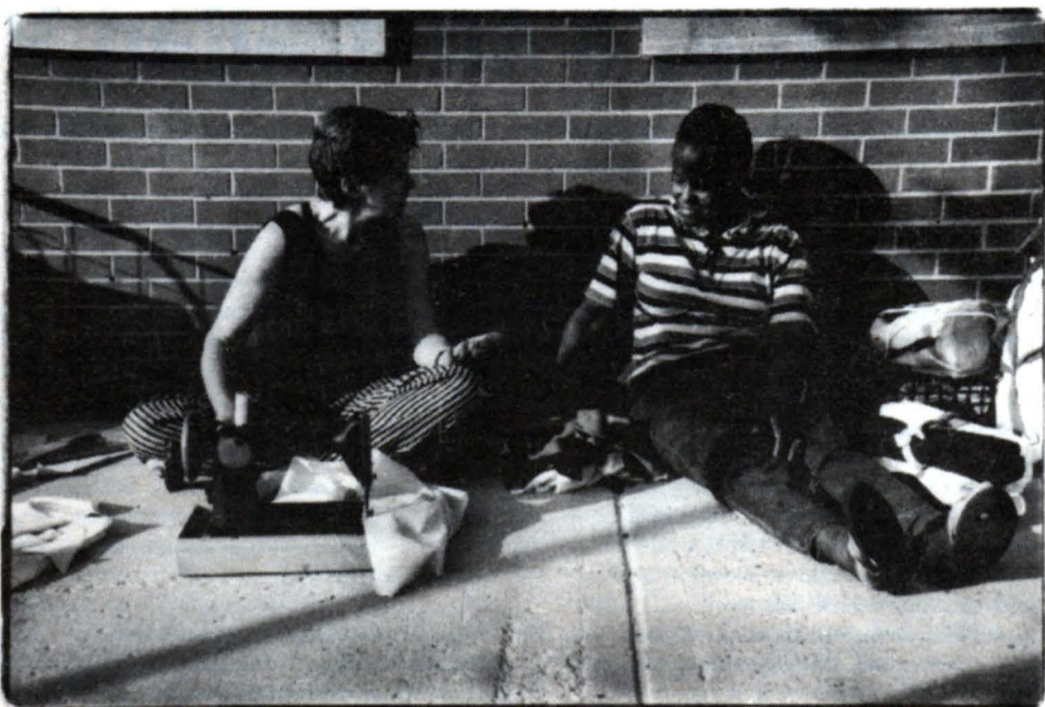
surgical gowns (duplicates of those made in women's prisons around Sydney where she has worked). Before anything else, it was an event that fostered narrative, bringing her into dialogue with other textile workers — the tailors specialising in custom-made underwear or the street-based seamstress whose 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 some narratives and of 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 exploited 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 folded 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.



SWEAT New York 1994 Performance by Anne Graham Photography by Pam Kleemann
Site: Carlisle St and Washington St. Battery Park City, 15th August. Participant: Sophie from Columbia. Sophie sewed on the street, she collected fabric offcuts from Canal St and made bows and bags. Her scissors lasted only two weeks. She lived on the street, surviving and looking for a future in New York.



Site: E. 1st St and Avenue A. Lower East Side, 3rd September. Participant: Schmil Gandelman from Russia. Schmil had a trucking company and at night and weekends made quilts and flags. He continues the tradition of Russian and Polish craftsmen working as cutters in the Lower East Side.



Site: The "A" Train to Harlem, 7th September. The Subway - no eye contact, everyone knowing something was happening but no one wanting to engage. It can be dangerous to be seen watching, everyone preserves their protected space.

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 indicative 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 their 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 paradisiacal 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 paradisiacal 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 cyber-punk.

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 as seen through electronic and mediated eyes. 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 over 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 perspectival 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 resemble 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 effects 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 overtly 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 Conomos, Peter Callas, The Brothers Gruchy, Jill Scott, John Gillies, Cathy Vogan, Michael Hill, Troy Innocent, Phillip Brophy, Ian Haig, Linda Dement, Bill Seaman, John McCormack, Michael Strum, Randelli, Faye Maxwell and Jane Parks



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Shop-soiled and Scintillating

Colin Hood previews the *Virtual Reality* exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia December 10 - February 5

The *Virtual Reality* exhibition, a lavish showcase of consumer culture, commodity sculpture and unlikely virtual realities, 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 world' of 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, Matthys 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 perverse 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 *Dyeing 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.

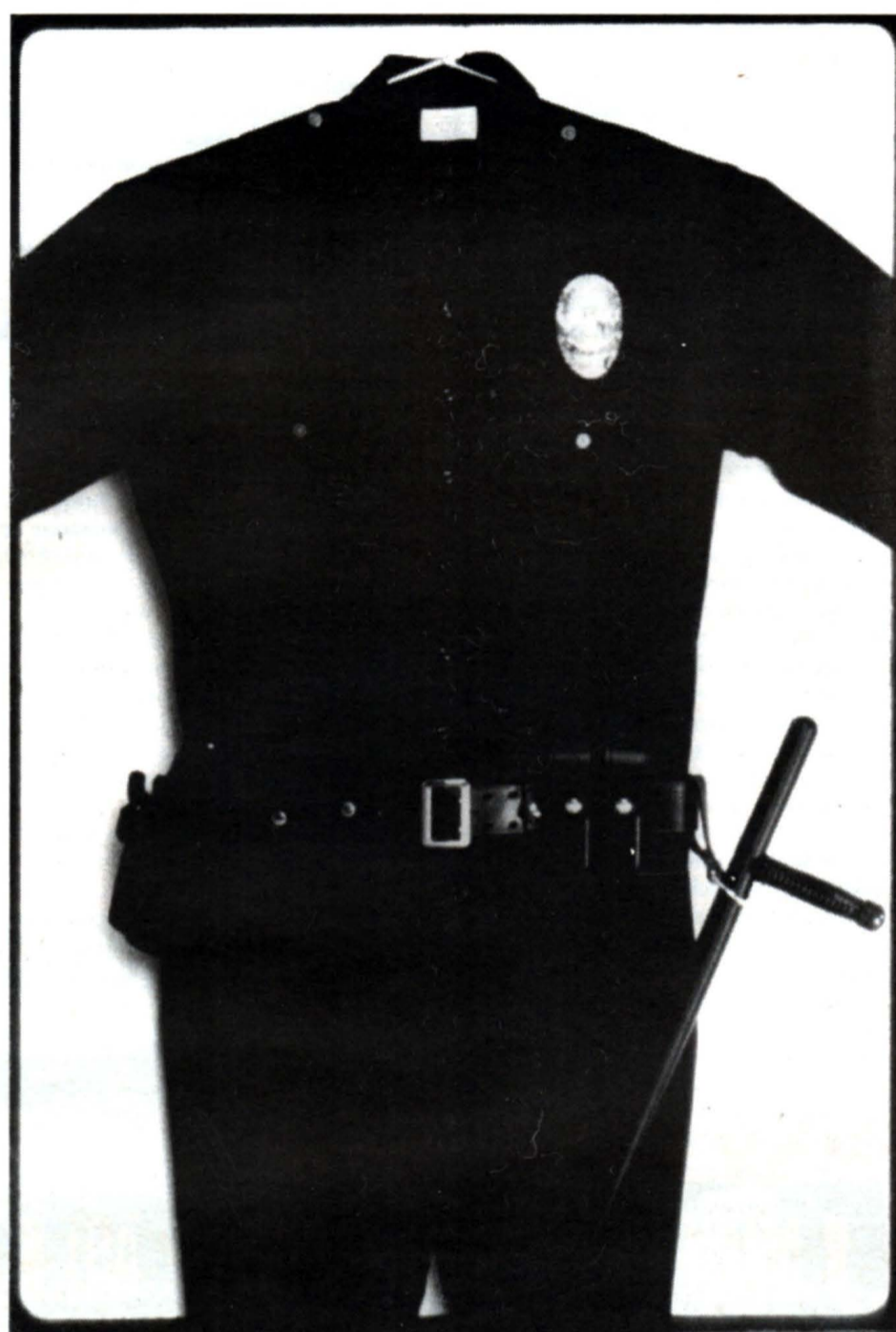
Sylvie Fleury and Damien Hirst are two

visiting artists who have pushed the genre of shopping and the shop display to the limit. In her presentations of shopping bags and perfumes, Fleury has tapped into the kind of consumer delirium which speaks more of excess and loss than it does of comfort and consolidation. English artist Damien Hirst is probably more fascinated by cultures of death than he is 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 downside or perhaps the ultimate goal of shopping for self-preservation.

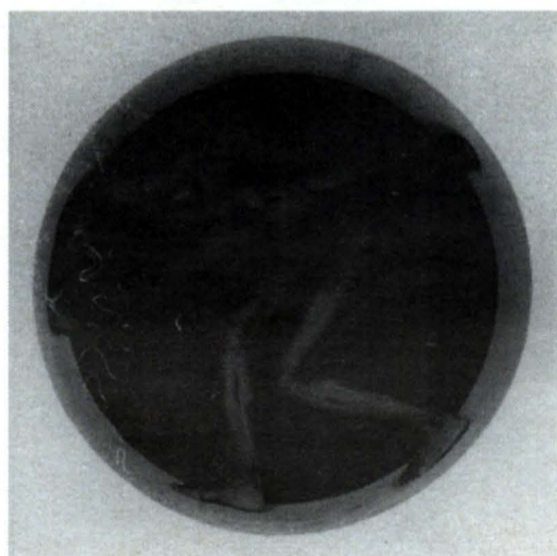
As Jill Bennett remarks, "there is one obvious difference between the art museum and the shop: the museum does not deliver the goods. Unlike the auratic shop window display, a work by Koons or Fleury promises to dispense nothing. Their shop goods are effectively pulled out of circulation, disrupting,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

Current geo-political aspects of interactivity are explored in a series of photographs by Australian artists Jennifer McCamley and Janet Burchill 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 on show. Dale Frank, whose recent exhibition at Sherman 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 connoisseurship and adversarial histrionics, creating a mish-mash of pseudo-realities, *Virtual Reality* may go some way to answering the question: "Why are commerce and art put together and what does the experience say about life today?"



Chris Burden L.A.P.D. Uniform 1993-4



Robert Mapplethorpe Thomas 1986

Following on from the success of its *Kaboom!* Animation exhibition and screening (which featured visits from *Ren and Stimpy* animator John Kricfalusi, Bob Clampett Jr. and Japanese animator Buichi Terasawa), The Museum of Contemporary Art continues its commitment to a diverse range of thematics 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 25 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, Emmanuel Angelicas, Ellen Comiskey, Christine Cornish, Brenda Croft, Peter Elliston, Gerrit Fokkema, Fiona Hall, Tom Henneman, Ken Heyes, Martyn Jolly, Steven Lojewski, Peter McKenzie, Ian Provest, Catherine Rogers, Bruce Searle, Peter Solness, John Williams, William Yang and Anne Zahalka.

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 - selected by visiting guest curator Germano Celant - the exhibition features Mapplethorpe's early work and works for the artist is most famous: 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 important contemporary retrospectives ever mounted in Australia. A major publication will also accompany the exhibition.

RT

Rung in the New Year

continued from page 35

Roxburgh's Hamlet sweet-talking Jacqueline Mackenzie's Ophelia. Xmas? Armfield's letter is personal, even emotional, beginning with a curiously multi-cultural tale of 'a shy Irish man' with his 8 year old adopted twin Korean daughters' after their eighth visit to Hamlet, thrusting \$150 into Neil's hand 'to buy a drink for the actors'. Better is Armfield's revelation that after ten years Company B had confirmed in Hamlet an approach to acting and production, that now is the time to consolidate this, to bring back great productions, and to do this through ensemble. Like Rider's *La Boite*, with Armfield's Company B the relationship with the audience is given primacy: 'There is an atmosphere that you feel the audience breathing in'. A five year plan is sketched out to 'continue to develop several large scale works conceived and written for our ensemble, significant works from the classic Australian repertoire, while each year reviving one or two works from our past repertoire'. He is hostile to the 'quick turnaround' syndrome, blaming it for a lack of 'inspiring traditions on our stages'. This is a big picture missive, that relies solely on words, is visionary and familial - 'I want you to subscribe to our future'. 1995 begins with a revival of the 1990 *The Tempest* (dir. Armfield) which 'seeks, even through despair, for the blessings of love, hope and freedom'. Next is the English language premiere of Genet's 'recently discovered and remarkable' *Splendid* (dir. Jim Sharman), 'part masquerade, part crime thriller. *Splendid* mixes comedy and ritual, poetry and slang, fear and desire'. Most exciting is the return of Stephen Sewell's *The Blind Giant is Dancing* (premiered at Adelaide's Lighthouse in 1983 and far superior to the STC version) - 'Shakespearean in its depth and emotional breadth, Sewell examines the corruption of a good man through the pressure and isolation of public office'. (cf Nowra's *The Incurable at Playbox*.) Finally, a guest production from Perth, with Rosalbe Clemente directing Graham Pitt's *Emma - A Translated Life* with its 20 strong Italian women's choir replete with a pasta wedding

banquet shared with the audience. It's about 'the life and experiences of an Italian woman who came to Australia to start a new life in a new world in the 50s, and found that the joys, the jealousies, the heartaches of love and motherhood have to be endured wherever you are' - denatured multiculturalism? The tone of the letter/brochure is warm, humanist, universal, art for the sake of Australian theatre; particular issues are not on the agenda. This is the only brochure where actors assume major significance. Ensembles are rare on the mainstage (though they can be found in many other spheres of theatre and performance practice) so it's exhilarating to see these names listed: Geoffrey Rush, Gillian Jones, Max Cullen, Kevin Smith, Cate Blanchett, Richard Roxburgh, Keith Robinson, Ralph Cotterill, David Wenham, Jacqueline Mackenzie, Jack Koman and Kerry Walker. As for the state you'll be left in? Nothing brutal promised, plenty of transcendent abstractions about love, hope etc. The Company B repertoire of productions, writes Armfield, 'is epic in scale, particular in emotional detail and yet simple in their form and clarity of expression - relaxed in the way the theatre itself is'. Relax.

I'm waiting to see what Tasmania's Zootango, Sydney's Griffin, Perth's Black Swan are offering. Advance word is that Zootango are presenting 'a comedy from the classic repertoire, *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, dir. John Bolton; 'the premiere of a gritty Tasmanian play, *Meatsafe* by Franz Docherty, dir. Jon Bowling; and 'a magical modern American work, *The Swan* by Elizabeth Egloff dir. Louise Permezel, the company's new artistic director. The Swan was critically acclaimed in the STSCA production this year. The Perth Theatre Trust press release announces *Me and My Girl* (Jon Nicholls Productions & Adelaide Festival Centre Trust) - cockney barrow boy discovers he's an earl featuring Lambeth walks and an English star with supporting cast of Australians (unbelievable); Romeril's *The Floating World* (Black Swan in assoc. Theatreworks Singapore); *That Eye the Sky*, the adaptation of Tim Winton's novel by Sydney's *The Burning House* Company (dir. Richard Roxburgh); Louis Nowra's *Così* (Black Swan & Hole in the Wall); *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* (MTC production); *Dead White Males* by David Williamson (STC production); *Diving for Pearls* (Black Swan & Deckchair Theatre); *Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol* (Theatre de Complicité); *Arcadia* (STC production). Perthians won't be missing out on much it seems, but given their reluctance to go to the theatre it'll be interesting to see how the program's sold, what critical superlatives, what publicist abstractions, what in and out-of-body experiences are promised.

In 1995, 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 morbidity? That's what the troops 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 lead balloon of all time?

We more or less filled the Lion Theatre, more usually home to daggy Fringe performances, now darkened, with a spot picking out a lectern before a black curtain, with a vase of lilies at its feet. We received the addresses in silence, not at all unlike mourners at a funeral, or at least very like a reverent Sunday-service congregation. We were a mute bunch of worshippers or idolaters at the altar of death; papers followed one another without pause for questions.

The speakers ranged from crazily animated to sepulchral, and it was repeatedly borne in on me, for one, how much could and should be said, and by and large wasn't, by way of introduction/contextualising of topics when the matter at hand was mortality. Why anyone should choose to talk about such and such a question, or any at all, takes some explaining in big-picture terms when

you're bearing in mind the presumptuousness of all human endeavour.

Elisabeth Bronfen, Professor of English at Zurich University, and author of *Over Her Dead Body*, an important text on death and representation and femininity, was soft-spoken and compelling. She followed up a speculation that the phenomenon of hysteria is not satisfactorily explained in conventional (Freudian) psychoanalysis as symptomatic of repressed sexuality, but rather signifies being 'half in love with easeful death'. De Quincey and the Wordsworths were invoked to demonstrate her thesis; fascination with morbidity as the source of 'hysteria' and, to no small extent, of creativity. The price of the Wordsworth family romance was the de-animation of the female member (Dorothy) in order that William might incorporate in himself an ideal of masculine femininity. De Quincey, as hysteric, re-animated his actually dead little sister (also by means of opium trances) for a similar purpose.

These were tales of the dead who continue to exert influence, a theme which Anna Gibbs picked up in a meditation on the theme of ingestion; we being both what and who we eat, as it were. This address flowed in and out of the metaphorical realm, exploring autobiography, reading and writing. Our fantasies of incorporation betray our psychic lacunae. Feminist scholars may engage with the ghosts of fathers of knowledge and disarm them through fictocriticism. The ingestion and reconstitution of the self that is autobiography is an encounter with the other on a boundary where the unitary self vaporises.

Felicity Fenner and Anne Loxley filled in the time before actual ingestion of sandwiches with slides of paintings about death by Australian artists. This was a respite, in that there was no thesis here: the Australian artists followed pell-mell on each others' heels, war and massacre upon heroic slaughter of crocodiles next to

fantasies of bleeding infants and Juan Davila's Grim Reaper, nineteenth century epic alongside millennial hype, Tucker's calm murdered bridegroom next to assorted apocalypses.

Attention was drawn by the organisers to the significant fact that the conferees had chosen to devote a chunk of their ever-dwindling stock of hours at the EAF's behest by issuing name tags stamped with 24 or 48 according to the period one had opted to spend considering one's allotted span. A motto competition would have been good. "Never say die"?

Colin Pardoe was anthropologist-in-attendance and sketched in serious Big Picture considerations such as deep time, archeological time, geological and personal time, considering in particular the relations of social scientists over the last piddling one or two hundred years to the first settlers in the country. Aboriginal tradition has not understood death as having 'natural' causes, but as being causally related to human behaviours, with blame being assigned and retribution exacted. (Who dies of natural causes in Western society, Pardoe asked, and are blame and payback excluded?) He had slides of a reburial 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.

Michael Eather and Laurie 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 facsimile, fences and gates 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 Eather/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 laconic 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 Eather handed the reins of the informal talk back and forth supremely casually.


We saw some of 'Batman II' (Jane Goodall on fake apocalypses and our *fin de siècle*; the difference between ending and stopping). We saw an endless film-loop of Bruce and Brandon Lee mayhem in a curiously fond, old-fashioned father-son romance/saga (Leon Marvell). We heard from Jyanni Steffensen that the phallic lesbian vampire could administer punishment to desirous 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*.

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Permission to Look

Artist Elizabeth Campbell has worked as an artists' model for 17 years and for 12 of those, mostly unbeknown 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 for signs of 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 *Model 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 easels with paper and pencils, the model's dais, her work materials - velvet, cushions, stool. "Reclining Nude," she announces. The audience take up pencils to draw. The amplified sound of drawing fills the room. I trace the edges of her body - hair, forehead, surveillance camera, eyes, mouth, microphone.

"I catch a glimmer of your bright eye as it moves across my shoulder," she says, "makes its way towards my throat. I swallow. Will your pencil bounce?" It does. I look up to catch the model's eyes looking into nowhere. "Find a point on the wall and look at it," he said, "people don't like to be watched while they paint."

She takes me in with her camera, saving me for later, adds my drawing, for her collection.



"Standing Nude. Weight plunges to the ground through my left leg, forcing my hips, my pelvis to tilt. Right foot extended for balance and design, apparently relaxed but carefully flexed. I hear the hiss and whisper of charcoal on paper, sharp and fitful, long and smooth and seemingly endless."

After 18 one minute and 4 five minute poses, she stretches, rolls slowly down, laughs and reaches for her robe. Elizabeth Campbell would like to stage her next performance in a gallery of 19th century art, a very live model among the silent ones.

Virginia Baxter

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, each 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, out there, up on the screen. I want to watch her again and again because of this: for all the harrowing intensity that frequently accrues to her presence 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 film incarnations—in earlier Cassavetes films for instance, such as *Faces* (1968), *Minnie and Moscovitz* (1971), and *Woman Under The Influence* (1975)—are written into each role she plays. So—who knows—there is the possibility that I too can learn those skills, can aspire to a more decidedly

nuanced body and way of being in the world.

Gena Rowlands is an actress who particularly foregrounds acting as a process of production (as an engendering of the body) and *Opening Night* is a film that is particularly concerned with various regimes of fictionality (film, theatre, the quotidian)



Gena Rowlands and John Cassavetes

and also with the very question of identity and identification. It explores the question of how to act: on the most mundane level—how to act when the world and self are disintegrating; and on a more specialised level—how to act on the stage, how to perform a fictional identity, how to seduce an audience.

How to act: for Myrtle this problem is acutely professional and therefore practical, but insofar as it is a matter of identity, it is not separate from her personal or 'private' life. It has to do with the troubled relationship between character and actor, and with the way in which fictional energy

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 *actorly*, 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 actorly performance and the filmic; the film is conceived within the parameters of a dramaturgy that is not centred on character but that is nevertheless 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

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 (and the film enacts this cinematically) poses the slap as a *gestus* that actualises the discursive violence she is experiencing. And her conjuring up and eventual exorcism of the ghost is a way of transforming the scenario.

It is often unclear—during all the rehearsals, improvisations and enactments—whether we are watching, in Myrtle's hysterical reactions, a consummate 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-discursive, 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 or parts, and we know that the identity between the actor (Gena Rowlands) and the character/s (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 drama of identity (and age) into hilarious farce. As she goads Marty (played by Cassavetes), as she sends him up by making faces at the audience behind his back and gesticulating with hyperbolic abandon, so he rises to the bait, gets the giggles, and enters the game of upping the ante. He becomes the one who is turning grey and becoming anxious about ageing—jumping up and down and thumping his chest like a chimpanzee—"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're right, 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 & 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.



Still from Moira Joseph's film *The things I can do with my toes*

Experimenta 1994

representation, but in terms of an enactment, a fictionality realised 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 this 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 scenario'—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 exorcise her in an extremely violent encounter. Myrtle's problem is not that she

Tending to Desire

Peter Macarthy previews the 1995 Mardi Gras Film Festival

Fronting up for its eleventh year - having undergone various nominal transmutations - the Mardi Gras Film Festival looks set to enter a field of even greater film diversity than its previous ventures. With twenty-five features, a dozen documentaries and twenty or so shorts from around the world, this year's crop is enticing precisely for its lack of homogeneity. From a very classy documentary on Pasolini and a *Paris is Burning*-esque doco - previously banned in Australia in 1968 for "promoting homosexuality" - to another teen angst outing by Gregg Araki, and a stylish SM gothic horror genre piece from Spain, this year's festival seems notable as much for its emphasis on film practice as same-sex practice.

Le Ceneri di Pasolini (Pasolini's Ashes) by Pasquale Misuraca is a kind of "Pasolini on Pasolini" poetic rendering of the filmmaker's career. The master narrative here is essentially that of the interview - Pasolini speaking, responding to a series of television inquisitors - cut with excerpts from his films and dramatisations of his famous cruising, particularly the pick up that finally killed him. Pier Paolo Pasolini was a poet, a communist, a teacher and, in his own lexicon, a *finocchio* (literally fennel), a fruit who was run out of his profession and the Italian Communist Party for pilfering boys in 1949. But Pasolini never lost his passion for either boys or the Party and remained a committed practitioner in both areas until one of the former brutally murdered him just outside Rome in November 1975.

The title of Misuraca's film is taken from Pasolini's poetic ode to the martyred Italian communist Antonio Gramsci who became something of a political and ideological Muse to Pasolini. In 1956, *Gramsci's Ashes* brought him major recognition as a poet, by which time he was again teaching in the sub-proletarian suburbs of Rome where he was living. He'd made friends in the literary world - including Alberto Moravia who believed Pasolini to be the most important poet of the latter half of the twentieth century - and with his first hand experience of "the violent life" of Rome's slums, courted some fame and notoriety as a script writer, working with the likes of Bolognini and Fellini (he wrote the dialogue for the

famous underworld scenes of Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria*). Pasolini took to film because he wanted to change technique, to write in a language understood by all - representing the real, as he put it, by the real itself.

For some, the anti-fascist message of Pasolini's last film, *Salo or the 120 Days of Sodom*, was blurred by a degree of complicity between the libertine torturers and their victims. While this misses the point of Pasolini's objective (fascism is defined by this very ideological complicity fostered in its constituency) it nonetheless points to a troubling fascination with this complicity. But *Pasolini's Ashes* doesn't waste time with this controversy and lets Pasolini speak for himself. The film ends with a most telling ode to his other Muse cut with last interviews on the windswept beach in Ostia, shots of his dying mother - begging her not to leave, desiring death - and Pasolini - point-of-view shots of that fateful night.

It is within your grace that my anguish is born / you are irreplaceable that's why the life you've given me is damned to solitude and I don't want to be alone / I'm infinitely hungry for love / for the love of bodies without soul / because the soul is in you, is you but you are my mother and I'm a slave to your love / I spent my childhood a slave to this awareness ... it was the only way to feel life / the only colour or form and now its finished ...

Reflecting perfectly this world of tele-commodification are the protagonists of Gregg Araki's *Totally Fucked Up*. Auteur of the cult and notorious *The Living End* (lethal gay buddy movie with no production values to speak of), Araki has conjured a sort of no rent teen angst film "in 15 random celluloid fragments". Based on press clippings about higher than average gay teen suicides, the film loosely portrays the no way out lives of six bored and disaffected gay and lesbian youths. Subtitled "Another Homo Movie by Gregg Araki", it clearly signals its queer affiliations. While quoting Godard and Jon Jost, *Totally Fucked Up* plays more like *The Breakfast Club* without the blackboard or even more a teen-something *Love and Human Remains*. Purportedly an homage to Godard's *Masculin/Féminin*, Araki's Godard can barely be seen beyond the direct address and intertitles - a travesty of both the formal and sexual political fabric of Godard's film. Araki thinks to define some sort of homo-zeitgeist but what we get is a homo-ghettoisation of the complete works of John Hughes - niche marketing for rite of passage, neurotic outsider teens who'll probably grow out of it. All resisting the big disease with a little name, it takes the two token valley girl lesbians to dispense safe sex advice and paraphernalia

to the motley crew of male jerk-offs - all welcome here. And the James Dean come-on lead, poet pout without a pen, mouths pathetic nihilisms gleaned from indie bands - "all I want is to be happy for just one second" - before topping himself at his "mom's" home in Beverly Hills. These youth aren't disaffected, just affected. In a desperate attempt at displaying a "totally tweaked, totally twisted" realism of diversity - of a very paradoxical heterogeneity - Araki only displays a bland homogenisation of sexual politics. A sort of "We're all in this together" sexual ethic that hides boundaries rather than truly transgressing them. Lurking here is a masculinism disguised by the effete sensibilities of its male characters - looking straight, playing faggot, sissies one and all - masculinist nonetheless. But it's not masculinity in itself that is problematic here - or elsewhere - just the pathetic subterfuge that smooths it over, giving it a bad name. During the sixties when playwright Joe Orton picked up some trade down at his local, things were closer to what they seemed. Orton had a feel for the worker - labourers, fitters and boiler makers - hitting on them frequently and with great success. A man's man who liked men's men, he eschewed the fey affectations of sensitivity, telling his workers - for fear of alienating them - that he was also "in the trade", a builder no less. But this, like the *Querelle* of Genet and Fassbinder (Brad Davis was no sissy), like Gregory Corso and Pasolini, makes no pretension to the type of bland lie of sexual homogeneity affected in *Totally Fucked Up*.

Frank Simon's *The Queen* is another story altogether. Made in 1968 and originally banned in this country for its propagation of homosexuality, *The Queen* is a high camp comedy doco of the '67 Miss All-America Camp Beauty Pageant. Like all good beauty pageants the contestants are judged on walk, talk, swimsuit, makeup and hairdo but these queens (one and all) are judged by luminaries such as Warhol (look hard, you'll miss him), Edie Sedgwick, Larry Rivers and a very wasted Capote (he denied he was ever there). Backstage action, idle gossip, over-the-top stagecraft and out-of-it stars will entice all who saw *Paris is Burning!* or have tried to get backstage for that elusive autograph of their own Mario Montez. Legend has it that *The Queen* was hot favourite for a prize (no-one knows what category) at Cannes before the likes of Godard and Louis Malle shut it down.

Tras el Cristal (In a Glass Cage) is a controversial and late feature release from Spain. Directed by Catalan director Agustín Villaronga in 1985, this highly stylised gothic thriller couldn't be further from Araki's girls just wanna have fun style of filmmaking. The story of Klaus, a Nazi camp doctor living out his days with his

wife and daughter in rural Spain, the film attempts a transposition of the psychosexual themes of power, desire and masculinity to the horror-thriller genre. Klaus still harbours the lethal desires he played out on young boys in the horror camps and the film opens with one final re-enactment of his tortures before he falls victim to a tragedy of his own. Paralysed and confined to an iron lung he is tended to by his wife and a coterie of servants before the arrival of a young valet, Angelo, who is sent to give the good doctor special attention. Angelo knows something of Klaus's story and begins to play his own game of psychological torture, tending to him like a butterfly collector. But Angelo too is in a way wounded and while taunting his captive Klaus, slowly assumes his character. Formally it has the wide screen elegance and high production values of any art-house film you're likely to see - long, fluid tracking shots, exceptional lighting and sound add to the tension in this essentially high gothic horror genre thriller. Like *Salo* and Cavani's *The Night Porter*, *In a Glass Cage* sets to explore the relation between the essentially fascist themes of repression and complicity. But the medium renders confused the politics of these themes and what ensues will incite horror in some and pleasure in others and it is this that makes the film highly problematic. It is both a film of wish fulfilment and revenge and, while Villaronga clearly qualifies his position in terms of justice, the process of identification between torturer and tortured tends to desire in a way that overshadows the clearly sign-posted rationalisations for the victim's revenge. Villaronga is ultimately unable to pull off his avowed analysis of these political themes and we are left with a film of epic horror erotica - style over substance.

In Melbourne in 1981 Robin Wood, well known gay film critic and scholar, said that the best film ever made about homosexuality was Scorsese's *Raging Bull* and that the best film ever made about heterosexuality was Scorsese's *New York, New York*. Araki probably has other ideas and given that he intends his next movie to be subtitled "a Hetero Movie by Gregg Araki" I can hardly wait. As to the assertions of Wood, we can perhaps best put this to the test by exploring the diversity of film product and culture. The Mardi Gras Film Festival is party to that very diversity.

The Mardi Gras Film Festival will be held at the Academy Twin Cinema, Sydney from February 16 - 26. Festival brochures and ticketing information will be available from the Academy Twin from mid January. Full details in the February-March issue of Real Time.



SYDNEY

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MATINAZE 1995

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will be presented by Sydney Intermedia Network at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in March 1995. Film, video and electronic media artists are invited to submit recent work. Super 8, 16mm, VHS, S-VHS & U-matic works can be screened. There are no subject or style restrictions however works should show innovation and/or awareness of contemporary art and media issues. Entries for preview should be

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Entry forms are available from: Sydney Intermedia Network, Ph: 02 264 7225 • Fax: 02 267 8539, First floor 168 Day Street, Sydney NSW 2000.

SIN receives financial assistance from the Australian Film Commission and the N.S.W. Film and Television Office.



Sarah Calver and David McMicken of Darwin's Tracks Dance Collective in Silent Thought

Yoris Wilson



Bill Handley and Paul Johnson, Perth's Fieldworks Performance Group in odd couple



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.

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Douglas Wright Dance Company in Forever
Everest Theatre / Seymour Centre January 9 - 18, 1995. Sydney Festival & Carnivale 1995.

Peter Molloy

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 inclusions 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 series should be a sharp, speedy look at the mid range of the Australian contemporary dance sensibility without digression to the extremes - neither fornication onstage nor pointe shoes on anorexics are likely to be seen. There are also forums which cover the spectrum from academic through 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 attendees at last year's festival. General Manager Mark Worner 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 blurbs 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 hybridity by mixing dance and computer technology. However, a company like Fieldworks, which, according to Mark Worner, uses little more than bodies in space and some 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 showings 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 Worner 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 it's this year's attendees who will determine the theme of next year's festival, it might well be worth making your voice heard.

To receive a brochure on the 1995 Green Mill program, call 03-684-8814.

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 *Imagined*.

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 meant the well-publicised discarding of local talent, it's not surprising he would want 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 bitty, 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 Carnivale. 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 Carnivale was ungainly and unfair 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

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At The Black Pig's Dyke
by Vincent Woods
Directed by Maeliosa Stafford
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written and directed by Piotr Tomaszuk
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Douglas Wright Dance Company

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Seymour Centre
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Harbourside Brasserie



Mauro Gioia
The embodiment of the sultry Italian crooner brings to life the songs of Napoli
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The Joys of Women
From Fremantle, the famous raw and earthy Italian women's choir
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(dinner from 7pm)

Tiddas
& Kev Carmody, one of Australia's best known

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The Sydney Morning Herald

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drawn, the director's programming decisions made apparent for festival-goers to help them decide what they should be seeing.

The Australian content in the festival is significant though so far publicised in a minor key. Only the Adelaide Festival, from time to time, and Robyn Archer's Festival of (exclusively) Australian Theatre, have managed to give Australian work real prominence. Barry Kosky's commissioning of Australian works for the 1996 Adelaide Festival is extensive and innovative, much of the program already known around the industry traps. Presumably Steel, who has made significant ventures with the Adelaide Festival and for the Brisbane Biennial will doubtless have some strong ideas for 1996.

This time round he's got Melbourne's Chamber Made Opera with a new work, *Tresno*, by a remarkable Melbourne singer Jacqui Rutten working from her knowledge and experience of opera, seventeenth century song and traditional Javanese music. The resulting hybrid is further layered with dance and casually labelled 'dance opera.' Chamber Made have rewritten the possibilities of opera in Australia, echoing on a smaller scale and with originality what major overseas opera companies have tackled but the Australian Opera and Victorian State Opera have been afraid to embrace - new music.

Also from Melbourne comes IRAA Theatre's much praised *Bacchae - Burning by Water*, the first part of a trilogy (to be completed at the '96 Adelaide Festival). Director Renato Cuocolo has brought together texts by Euripides, Robbe-Grillet, Kiltès and Joyce, constructing performance "as a theatrical composer." "I am absorbed by the confrontation between Dionysius and Pentheus. I see

Pentheus as a modern man troubled by his own sexuality, his desire, his fear of desiring, his latent homosexuality. *The Bacchae* is a theatre of cruel dreams, necessary and determined dreams."

Sydney Theatre Company's 10th Anniversary at the Wharf is celebrated with *Sydney Stories*, eight short performances, each introduced by a prominent Sydney-sider each with their own story to tell. True to these hybrid times, the innovative program is made up of a mini-opera (*The Ninth Wonder* by Justin Fleming and Stephen Edwards); 'a visual adaptation' of Peter Carey's *The Last Days of a Famous Mime* by Theatre of Image whose director, Kim Carpenter, is designing all of *Sydney Stories*; and Kai Tai Chan's *Two Wongs Don't Make a Right* - bound to be movement driven given that its creator is the former director of the One Extra Dance Company. Then there are the plays, if you like that kind of thing. Stephen Sewell, Louis Nowra, Nick Enright and the new girls on the block, Catherine Zimdhal and Vanessa Bates have created what sound like a good surreal night out - Mr. Whippy, the Pope, a body piercer, and an Australia Council bureaucrat appear amongst others along with the real Arky Michael in *The Way I Was* by Nick Enright, "based on an incident in the life of the young Arky Michael."

On the new media & performance front Sydney's Open City present two works, *Shop* and *The Necessary Orgy*, for performers and computer interactive videodisc created in collaboration with media artist Bill Seaman whose *The Exquisite Mechanism of Shivers* was a hit at the 1992 Sydney Biennale and has subsequently toured to Japan as well as going onto CD-ROM, a format Seaman is currently exploring in Germany courtesy of a Siemens Corporation stipend.

Virginia Baxter has created *SHOP* - a woman computer-sells and buys to and from herself, searching for a window into what possesses her to *Select*. The *SHOP* soundtrack is by innovative radio producer Virginia Madsen.

Keith Gallasch's *The Necessary Orgy* is about sexual fantasy and the words we use to grasp, express and conjure it. A man presses *Enter* and loses himself in a hypnotic, computer-driven journey of sensual sounds and images. Gallasch and Baxter play themselves in their distinctively informal style in a performance involving computer, laser disc player and video monitors, in cycles for three hours each night allowing the audience to arrive, depart, return as they choose. The stylishly quirky furniture is by Michael Geissler and Stefan Kahn (NPG) currently exhibiting at Bibelot in Paddington. Seaman filmed, edited and wrote the music. During the day visitors can drop into the Australian Steamship Navigation Building (cnr of George & Hickson Sts) and activate the programs themselves.

Peter Handke's *The hour we knew nothing of each other* promises wordless physical theatre by one of the most challenging of contemporary playwrights, Germany's Peter Handke, author of *Kaspar* and *The Ride Across Lake Constance*. Director Michael Gow and a big, young cast create some 400 characters. Michael Billington in the *Observer* called it "people-watching raised to the level of art ... not avant-garde theatre for the few but a democratic spectacle for the many." (Ah, critics. What did Billington make of the challenge of Handke's influential and difficult early 'undemocratic' works?) 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.

Brisbane's Expressions Dance Company, directed by Maggie Sietsma, is the Festival's Australian dance quota in a work inspired by Magritte and Kafka with appropriately surreal imagery.

At the Harbourside Brasserie, a strong line up: The Joys of the Women (impressive Italian song from Fremantle), Tiddas performing with Kev Carmody, and Arramaieda.

On the international front The Druid Theatre Company's *Black Pig's Dyke* promises more than the usual cozy festival teary Irish night out, employing a traditional folk play structure, mummung, pitted against contemporary naturalism. It was featured at LIFT, London's innovative international theatre festival in 1993. Poland's Wierszalin presents *Roll-a-Pea*, a well-travelled "naive play with actors and wooden puppets. Folk theatre at its most raw." Add the Quandong Acrobats of China with their 2000 year tradition, a Zarzuela spectacle, the Korean Samul Nori and you have an interesting cluster of perspectives on the past. If you add the The Pkrovsky Ensemble "who have immersed themselves in the village life and folk music of rural Russia" performing Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, a music-dance folk drama with the 1923 score (played by Synergy) still sounding utterly contemporary as well as rooted in tradition you have quite a journey of cultural discovery in front of you, with *Les Noces* at the top of the list.

On the contemporary front, Compagnie Philippe Decouflé, making their only appearance in Australia, offer "elegant acrobatics ... farcical comedy ... physical theatre ... " and, according to the press release, their director's fascination with trapdoors and everyday objects with lives of their own. All we know about him is that he geessed the striking opening

and closing ceremonies of the Albertville Winter Olympics in 1992. Presumably those taken with Circus Oz, the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, Rock'n'Roll Circus and Legs on the Wall, will find spectacle on a larger scale than they are used to.


Already rumoured to be the Festival hit-in-advance is New Zealand's Douglas Wright Dance Company in *Forever* using multi-media and a narrative following "the currents of sexual attractions and emotional connections among a group of friends, the death and funeral of one of them, the discovery that a second is suffering with the same mysterious AIDS-like illness and a realisation that death awaits them also." Wright's *Elegy* and *As It Is* are scheduled to be screened on January 2 in the new ABC TV series *Dance Now*.

Fronting the jazz program is America's leading jazz guitarist John Scofield. His duet album *I Can See Your House From Here* with the other great, Pat Metheny, is a sublime introduction to his skill, or his recent group albums *Time on My Hands* and *Hand Jive*. He's at The Basement for four nights only. Save Perth's occasional stroke of genius (Wayne Horvitz and Fred Frith a couple of years ago), Australian festivals haven't been good at jazz, so it's good to see Steel including the UK's Stan Tracey Quartet, drummer Billy Cobham working with Australian musicians, plus our own DIG, Dave Tolley's THAT, the catholics, AtmaSphere, Bernie McGann, Mike Nock and Clarion Fracture Zone on his program. You could take in a lot of jazz in two weeks and there are bound to be late night additions.

The weekend of 7 - 8 January could well find you at Centennial Park for a performance of a totally different order, the flying of the kites from *Art Kites - Pictures for the Sky*. The kites are on display at the Darling Harbour Exhibition Centre Dec 26 to Jan 29. A selection will fly at Centennial Park with 60 Hamamatsu 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, Keifer and many others. The Goethe Institut, who are bringing this event to Australia with the Darling Harbour Authority, have commissioned Australian artists Alun Leach-Jones, Rosalie Gascoigne, Pansy Napangati, Clifford Possum and the Yuendumu Group to create new works to become part of the permanent collection and to be flown on the weekend that opens 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 hard compared with, say, the Festival of Perth Feb 17 - March 12, which is ... enormous. Decisions there are helped a little by the clear line between conservative big acts and the adventurous smaller shows many of them Australian. More of that in Real Time 5.

In the meantime Sydney is on the edge of having a good festival at last unless it stays in the common festival mould. Leo Schofield might have done well in Melbourne with his calculated conservatism but many of us who were drawn to previous festivals there didn't bother this time. Kosky promises much, going for a total festival, high profiling Australian content, commissioning, reinvigorating a moribund Writers' Week. That we want more after having so little for so long in Sydney is not surprising. The Sydney Festival's neglect of local talent was insistent. Let's hope Steel wasn't wounded by his Brisbane Biennial experience where his sense of adventure wasn't welcome. It should be welcomed here.



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Chamber Made Opera



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, halfway 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 Saturday mornings and offering grilled cheese fingers and a nice cup of Bushells, but nowhere could you get a good latte with a creamy head.

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 icecream vans 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-Sydneysiders 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 interstate 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 Damien spinning Acid Jazz tracks; Sunday afternoons heard the Surly Girls singing originals and k.d. lang covers before they went on to much bigger things as part of *half pound of ostrich feathers and a hot spur*: a wet and sullen

evening saw a site specific installation and performance, Incorporeal 3 (one of a series of four), "The Insect Cage. Correct Sadist. 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 dub and curry night, *The Pounding System*, serving 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 sips on black coffee and writes letters in a corner; a television gardening guru who orders kumara (sweet potato) soup and perches at the bar contemplating his fingernails, and a mountain climbing Scottish psychiatrist, resident of Hobart, who sent a postcard to the cafe when trekking in the Himalayas, stating simply that he missed his "Errol" 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 homophobia as for its devils, 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 money used for AIDS research (Andrew was the first Tasmanian to die from AIDS). In appreciation of their continued support, the Tasmanian AIDS 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 existent, the crime rate is low (although the rare heinous crime is usually a truly bizarre one) and beaches are syringe-free with the only footprints often your own - in fact it's the natural beauty of the place that keeps a lot of us here, and it's no surprise to learn many artists, writers and craftspeople 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. Although there might not be loud and obvious action here the city still has it's Kaos, and more ...

Sport

Tooth and Claw

with Jack Rufus

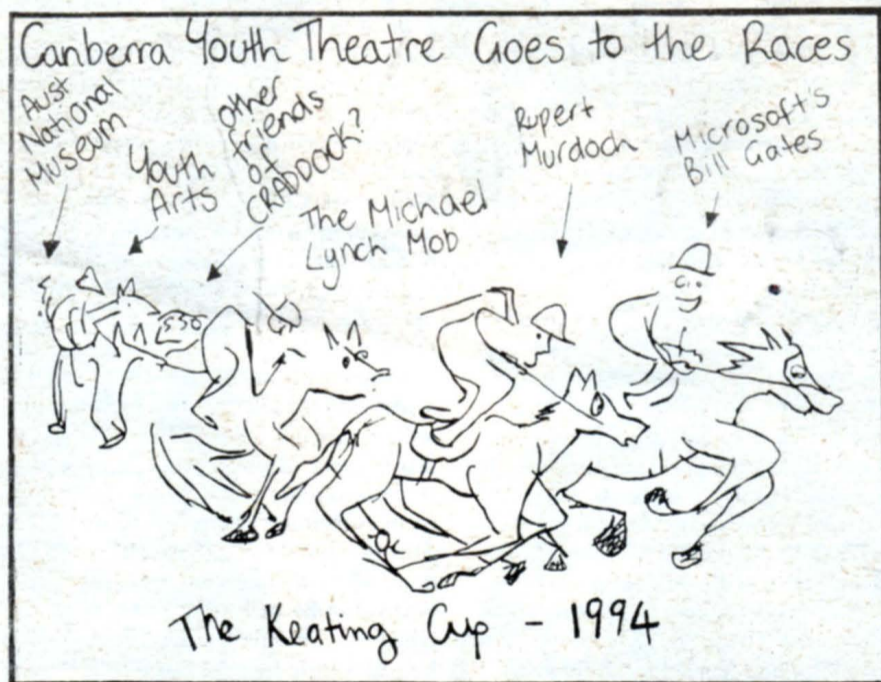
Which body part is dominating world sport today? It's small, it's mean, it's ruthless - and it leaves sports stars of all codes quivering with fear. It is: the index finger. Not just any index finger, but one poised over the controls of a video recorder. Pressing freeze-frame, slow-motion, rewind, fast forward: bludgeoning those

buttons, searching for incriminating evidence - anything to bring a sporting superstar down.

Look at goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar: devastated by video evidence seen around the world. He accepts a bundle of notes, he throws it onto the sofa, an expression flickers on his face for a moment. Arm-chair assassins world-wide 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 ball 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. Restrain that hand, control those facial expressions. Conceal the guilt, project a facade. 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 relax in the outfield, mentally counting the gold bullion pouring into your Swiss bank account, immune to the prodding and probing index fingers itching to get at you - BECAUSE YOUR FACE IS AS IMPASSIVE AS BRYAN BROWN'S.



ADVERTISEMENT

Tee Off

with Vivienne Inch

Was that Mr and Mrs Whiteshark's little boy I saw Christmas shopping for the man who has everything, rifling the shelves for players for the new SuperLeague Golf? What a disgusting display! Sticking his fingers in the chocolates looking for hard ones, squeezing the fruit, driving the shop assistants mad. "No, no, not that one! That one!" Pushing careful shoppers aside. "Don't care what it is as long as it's expensive!" Super League! What a Christmas bummer. Goodbye to the Australian Open. Gifted amateurs will huddle outside like the little match girl watching a handful of filthy rich super-leaguers battle for megabucks. Is this what's inside the Christmas box of Pay TV?

System-X

System-X, an artist-run initiative, is 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, enlisting more online artists, running several art events and conducting an online gallery. We have been entirely self-funding except for a small grant from ANAT. We are now connected to the Internet full time and are rapidly accumulating a new archive of artworks, and gathering interest in our activities from a large range of people. We believe it is imperative that there exist artist-run projects to export our culture to the rest of the world. From the recent examples of ISEA 94 and SIGGRAPH 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 both on the arts and other topics.
- Access to arts-related mailing lists and newsgroups.
- Contact with national and international organisations with similar aims as yours.
- The ability to publish, online, "hypermedia" catalogues, gallery information, forthcoming event rosters, publicity materials, calls for participation, and the like. These publications can include graphics and sound as well as text.
- The ability to utilise the Internet in and for artworks.

A typical cost scenario is around \$200 p.a. for the connection to System-X plus a once-off capital expenditure of \$500 for the access software. 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.

For more information, contact

System-X Communications

Postal: PO Box A2253,
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E-Mail: scot@sysx.apana.org.au
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Rung in the New Year

Bosco Rung awash in 1995 subscription brochures

Now that the state theatre companies are to join the incipient Major Organisations Board (already known as the MOB) of the Australia Council where they can get on without being harassed by their bothersome peers, it's timely to have a look at what they and their immediate peers are up to, especially given the broadsides aimed at the state companies by Neil Armfield (as reported in the press) at the launch of his 1995 Belvoir season and Patricia Kennedy's complaint at the National Performance Conference that "subsidised companies are run along commercial lines and actors are used as tools to get the product out."

It's an education, the way these glossies promise you passion and integrity and the best most comfortable seat in the house, and with what superlatives. I was left gasping for a commonplace noun, a humble passive, a pause between subscription options, extra benefits, parking and meal offers. Such totality, such commitment, such convenience, the year mapped out, such mindlessness - few promises of intellectual fire but plenty of body and heart and soul. The exceptions, of course, stand out. Ready to paddle about with me or...?

"Dive in!" commands Melbourne Theatre Company's artistic director Roger Hodgman, leaving the primitive Russell Street for the "comfort and convenience" of the Fairfax at the Vic Arts Centre. The summer subscription (December-May) season offers Mamet's *Oleanna* (primeval, timely, heart-pounding, red hot, shakes you until your bones rattle about), Feydeau's *A Flea in Her Ear* (breath-taking), Sondheim's *Assassins* (lethally brilliant, blood-curdlingly funny, a cry for help ... entertaining), Stoppard's *Arcadia* (wit, intelligence and heart), Lawler's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* (Australia's heart and soul) and *Shorts* (a delicious mix). The promise of whole body experiences ranging from nourishment to violence covers over the not inconsiderable demands on your intelligence by Mamet & Sondheim. And you wouldn't want too much bothersome Australian content, that always requires some thinking about, so anything new has been relegated to the *Shorts* season with works by Catherine Zimdahl, Andrew Bovell and Pam Leversha, the directors including Jenny Kemp and Victoria Eager though no telling who's to direct what. The balance of *Shorts* are Chekov's *The Bear*, an adaptation of a Moliere, Tennessee William's *This Property is Condemned*, Mrozek's *Out at Sea* and a relatively recent Russian play, *Love*, by Ludmilla Petrushevskaya. It's a pretty standard state theatre company line-up, with women in the small print save Robyn Nevin who gets to direct *The Doll*. Perhaps this is the realisation of the Kennett dream - London-New York-Melbourne. Save for three out of the seven short plays you could be in either of those other two cities. Not so much a dive as a step into a warm bath? Lets hope the winter subscription has more to offer.

Chris Westwood's State Theatre Company of South Australia brochure is a much more modern encounter, the rich colouring of the photo collages (as opposed to Melbourne's neatly framed commissions) dominating the page. Westwood's preface insists on the local, national and international significance of the company and the works done, *Medea* is linked with "the influence of Greek-Australians in the shaping of Adelaide" and *The Floating World* is a South Australian/Japanese/Malaysian/West Australian co-production (with W.A.'s *Black Swan*). Hobart's *Constantine Koukias* (of *IHOS Opera*) will direct the outdoors *Medea* "in a blaze of smoke and fire ... a performance of a lifetime", Doris Younane as *Medea*, Luciano Martucci as Jason, Nina Paleologos as the nurse, Jim Sharman directs Pamela Rabe in *Miss Julie* (with a bonus curtain raiser adaptation by Hilary Bell of *The Stronger*) - "immense spiritual power which transcends its own time"; Cath McKinnon directs Timberlake Wertenbaker's challenge to the art market - "exhilaratingly intelligent"; Nigel Triffitt re-creates *Moby Dick* (1990 Melbourne Festival) - "stunning visual style", "the equivocal defeats and triumphs of the human spirit"; Andrew Ross directs John Romeril's *The Floating World* with puppetry by Noriko Nishimoto and music by Mark Chan - "a moving study of personal disintegration and the psychology of racism"; Gale Edward's Sydney Theatre Company production of Stoppard's *Arcadia* - an "intellectually exhilarating play of ideas"; Teresa Crea (of Adelaide's *Doppio Teatro*) directs Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (still a provocative experience in Rodney Fisher's STC production a few years back) with Veronica Porcaro, Lucia Mastrantonio & Caroline Mignone; and Simon Phillips adapts Katharine Susannah Pritchard's *Haxby's Circus*, hopefully an opportunity for Australia's circus-skill performers, some of them fine actors, to explore the mainstage. This is a brochure that presents a program that effortlessly reflects contemporary Australia. If the MTC biffs us about, the STCSA brochure is more of the transcendent, local/national/international, "human spirit" giddy variety but in program with admirable gender, cultural and theatre form range and balance and no fear of intelligence. Perhaps indicative of a tough first year as executive producer, Westwood has turned to a few classics but has put them in bold hands, has not scheduled new Australian plays (save an adaptation of a novel, no playwright specified) and is at pains to explain to South Australians that in a ten year survey the STCSA produced & serviced 3,396 performances seen by over 800,000 people etc. and that what's so special about the STCSA theatre, it's an employer, tourist attraction, exporter. Subscribe & build the future. A heady appeal to cultural and industry priorities.

Ten years at the Wharf. Time to celebrate with The Sydney Theatre Company with their not too celebratory, cautious brochure, which for the second year running has won an international design prize. The celebrations seem centred on the adventurous Sydney Stories season (see our Sydney Festival preview), the rest of the program being predictable. You get to 'laugh with, cry over and rejoice' at Boucicault's *The Shaughraun* (dir. Gale Edwards); have your thoughts provoked and wit sharpened by Hattie (Hotel Sorrento) Rayson's *Falling from Grace*; 'squirm in your seats with laughter and recognition' at David Williamson's blow at post-structuralism (wow), *Dead White Males*; you'll find Terry (Insignificance) Johnson's *Dead Funny* spiky & 'painfully funny'. Gale Edwards gets to mount a local version of her London *Saint Joan*, this will do justice to a Shaw classic that commands your 'thoughtful sympathies'. Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women*, with Ruth Cracknell, will stun you and break your heart. The ubiquitous Simon Phillips will give you sex in Cocteau's *Les Parents Terribles* 'to astonish, outrage and excite'. (Like the Albee this is one of those plays that's made it over there and which state companies inevitably pick up.) Nigel Triffitt's 1987 Melbourne Spoleto Festival *The Fall of Singapore* is revived offering to stun you with 'theatre in its most intense and pure form'. Good to see Triffitt getting an airing both at STC and STCSA with productions you would have expected to have disappeared for good in the usual Australian theatre manner. Guest company Theatre de Complicite from the UK on their third visit here with their very European physical style (which rendered

Bruno Schulz's already marvellous surrealism almost unintelligible in their *The Street of Crocodiles* a couple of years ago) will 'spell-bind' you with a work that 'glows in the mind', *The Three lives of Lucie Cabrol*, an adaptation of a John Berger story. Nick Enright has re-worked his *Property of the Clan*, a morality for young people about a recent teenage murder, as *Blackrock*, now aiming at adult audiences. This will have you questioning 'how we live in the 90s' i.e. it's thought-provoking. Well, there you are, somewhere between the MTC's visceral armchair theatre and STCSA's transcendental relevancy perch i.e. a little room for ideas and intelligence and a few adventurous programming ideas in the Sydney Stories and the Triffitt. Not too much stress for the subscriber, established Australian playwrights, established woman director (two shows for Gale Edwards), nothing disturbingly ethnic save a couple of French phrases but plenty of stuns, provocations, heart-break etc. Take care. Artistic director Wayne Harrison calls it "a diverse, stimulating lot ... Enjoy some delightful, controversial new work".

Not one of the MOB, but I'm sure it would love to be, Playbox persists with integrity, artistic director Aubrey Mellor presenting "Another season of new works which reaffirms the company's faith in the creation, interpretation and promotion of a national repertoire". Success, excellence, popularity, prizes and relevance, the diversity and the experience of the writers are the criteria that should drive the subscriber - "only by subscribing to all the plays can you appreciate the breadth of new writing in Australia and capitalise on the greatest savings." Chris Westwood would like that one. But Mellor goes further where Westwood leaves it implicit, "I invite all those who are interested in Australian culture and are determined to end the cultural cringe which has handicapped this country for so long, to subscribe to this season." Subscription by conscience. Perhaps Playbox wouldn't like to be in the current MOB line-up after all. The stylish cover of a face fractured by glass and intensely coloured light is not sustained on the inside where the usual collages declare themselves. The text is cautious by comparison with the other brochures, plenty of words, more literary and much less overwhelming promise of your being knocked about or your spirit uplifted. Michael Gow's *Sweet Phoebe* is 'madcap' (Gow directing), Daniel Keene's *All Souls* is 'a play for our times, a vision of our dreams and nightmares' (Rhonda Wilson dir.), Sue Ingelton's *The Passion and its Deep Connection* with Lemon Delicious Pudding (dir. Kerry Dwyer) 'has created a singular and monumental play that bridges reality and fantasy, the mythic and the suburban ... a fabulous voyage to the self'. Nick Enright's *Good Works* (dir. Kim Durban) is 'a modern love story, a riveting family saga and a suspenseful thriller'. Louis Nowra's *The Incorruptible* (dir. Aubrey Mellor) 'brims with political swagger, fast moving narrative, punchy dialogue and the penetrating one-liners for which he is notorious'. Alex Buzo's *Pacific Union* (dir. Bruce Myles) 'offers an insight into the frantic months between Hitler's death and the atomic bomb ... and the birth of Australian foreign policy'. Chikao Tanaka's *Mary* (Dir. Aubrey Mellor) is set in 'the only Christian city of Japan', Nagasaki. The play is 'a Catholic drama (about) a conspiracy by a group of believers to abscond with the shattered pieces of a statue of the Virgin Mary which had stood in front of their cathedral at the time of the bombing' and also 'the story of a murderous revenge'. Joanna Murray-Smith's *Honour* (dir. Ariette Taylor) is about the impact on a family when a mid-life crisis father turns to a younger woman: 'serious, funny and emotionally provocative work'. These examples are about as pushy as the Playbox brochure gets. You've got enough information to make up your own mind. It's a leisurely read, not a quick hit, an amble, not a dive, but if you go with it - it's commitment to Australian culture. Women direct (Taylor, Durban, Dwyer, Wilson) and write (Ingelton, Murray-Smith) though, save a guest Japanese playwright, the multicultural is light-on compared with STCSA but not with the STC and MTC. The sense of national and international is strong.

More celebration: Queensland Theatre Company's artistic director Chris Johnson writes, 'Join us for delight and debate, celebration and change in 1995 - QTC's Silver 25th Anniversary'. She opens with Arthur Miller's 'I could not imagine a theatre worth my time that did not want to change the world,' but doesn't go on to labour the point, at all. It's a classic state theatre company season but the brochure technique while looking standard goes for image and not information, a double page per show with perhaps a quote from a critic. Then turn to page 20 for the synopses. I'm spared hyperbole: Gigi (Dire. David Bell) is simply a 'celebrated comedy', Williamson's *Sanctuary* (dir. Aubrey Mellor) 'a gripping drama that builds to a thrilling climax', *The Threepenny Opera* (dir. Chris Johnson) 'a theatrical and musical masterpiece', Ireland's Billy Roche (dir. Maeliosa Stafford) 'a superb and moving entertainment designed to touch the hearts of an audience' (that's more like it), Miller's *The Last Yankee* (dir. Chris Johnson) 'a quiet, imploding depth charge', 'a moving story', *The School for Scandal* 'one of the greatest comedy of manners ever written'. Nick Enright's *Good Works* (dir. film-maker Jackie McKimmie) is 'moving, powerful, absorbing', 'a rich story of desire, power and human strength'. Michael Richards' *Christmas at Turkey Beach* is 'funny, heart-warming and a celebration of Queensland life at the beach'. These are as strong as the copy gets, perhaps Brisbanites don't have to be bludgeoned into subscribing with visceral language and calls to cultural duty, or perhaps they'd object.

But at Brisbane's La Boite the promise by artistic director Sue Rider - in a through-designed type-face-driven navy, orange and chartreuse brochure without photographs - is of 'high voltage theatre' - 'five electrifying plays' in an intimate and informal venue where the audience 'love the energy that sparks between performers and their audience ... a theatre where better doesn't have to mean big.' Like Playbox there's a combative air but without the call to cultural duty, just little versus big. *Hamlet* (dir. Sue Rider) is 'a play to make us cry, laugh, and maybe think again', Timothy Daly's disturbing *Kafka Dances* (dir. Jim Vile) has become 'warm and wonderfully funny', Sara Hardy's *She of the Electrolux or A Vacuum in a Room of One's Own*, commissioned by La Boite, directed by Sue Rider, is intriguingly about Majorie Barnard, Flora Eldershaw and Margaret Preston, 'a spirited and witty examination of notions of artistic freedom and independence ... original, insightful and delightfully unpredictable.' The prolific Louis Nowra's *Miss Bosnia* (dir. Sue Rider; originally commissioned by Sydney's Teatar di Migra) is 'a hilarious comedy' about a Miss Bosnia beauty pageant during the siege of Sarajevo (!) Sean Mee directs Queenslander Philip Dean's *Long Gone Lonesome Cowgirls*, set in country Queensland in 1965 replete with country music and cowgirl fantasies: two young married women 'through a series of witty musical encounters, come to terms with reality in an unexpected and touching conclusion'. Fortunately the electricity metaphor isn't sustained beyond the director's preface and things feel pretty comfortable from then on - plenty of warm and funny and touching. So where does the electricity come from, surely not from the players and audience alone. Of course *Hamlet* and *Kafka Dances* will be electric but this is not a brochure to labour the dark side.

Now for something completely different (even given Belvoir Street's almost innovative 1994 black book by Baz Luhrman). It's not a brochure, it's a personal letter from Neil Armfield, Artistic Director of Company B. And a Xmas card. How nice, a lovely photo of Richard

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