Millennial Predilections

John Conomos
Frances Dyson
Keith Gallasch
Nicholas Gebhardt
Jane Goodall
Ross Harley
Gay Hawkins
Ann Marsh
Peter McCarthy
Naomi Richards
Robert Schubert
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Millenial predilections: toward 2000. It's five years to the millennium and counting. After the bacchanalia of issue 4, and on Real Times's first birthday, a moment of reflection...Real Time takes time out to check the vital signs of the Creative Nation, to speculate on where we're at in performance, visual arts, film, theatre, sound, design, dance, multimedia and cultural policy, and to tentatively guess at what the future might hold. Obviously noone could be cajoled into making predictions, but our writers took the opportunity to draw perspective on the state of play, with some coming to the conclusion that in the face of the assault of the virtual and the harangue of futurephilia, history, the past and our material baggage are asserting their presence insistently. It's a particularly fruitful point of departure finding a metaphor in the new Museum of Sydney's approach of salvaging scrimshaw while plugging into the World Wide Web.

As Jane Goodall writes of performance, the arts, like the body, "have no choice but to carry their past into their future", a phenomenon palpably evident in what a number of writers perceive to be a return to materiality. Robert Schubert, for instance, takes pleasure in the new "visceral" visual art which has emerged in the wake of the cool hyperintellectualism of the 80s, while Peter McCarthy contrasts the ephemeral artifice of *Priscilla* and *Strictly Ballroom* with cinema of "substance", grounded in the stuff of good character and narrative. For the five dancers in dialogue with Naomi Richards "a body will always be a body" ultimately resisting the "quick hit" mentality of a technology which seeks to turn art into "product". However, as Jane Goodall notes it is perhaps less a question of opposing the technological and the biological, hardware and wetware, than of problematising and negotiating the "relations between matter and circuitry". For Fran Dyson, we are in a moment of repose, precisely at the borders where, thanks to technologies, categories are collapsing, "prompting very basic, thoughtful questions. Is it biological or mechanical, living or dead, heard, felt or seen?"

The concern with the packaging of art and culture is another insistent theme. For Ross Harley, the future is now, and it's gonna cost. Cruising the fast lane of "market ergonomics" he finds that in Total Design Inc., (care of Sony, Microsoft and Co.), your life is their circuitry "". For Fran Dyson, we are in a moment of repose, precisely at the borders where, thanks to technologies, categories are collapsing, "prompting very basic, thoughtful questions. Is it biological or mechanical, living or dead, heard, felt or seen?"

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Reflections on the state of play are necessarily partial. Projections are necessarily foolhardy. Perhaps together they have the potential to listen up to the zeitgeist.

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Framegrabs from the Future
Ross Harley windowsshops at the the techno-design interface

"Making a dinosaur for Jurassic Park is exactly the same as designing a car." That's how Ed McCormack, CEO of computer mega-corp Silicon Graphics, figures it. Truth is, few of us would disagree.

Entertainment and commercial marketing are conerging into new good bedfellows, though in the past we would seldom mistake one for the other. American insurers and designers of concrete buildings like Henry Dreyfuss and Norman Bel Geddes may have dreamed up sets for Broadway, and Garages for Warren and Sears and Bendix may have lived in Hollywood, but that's about where the connection ended. Well almost. But at least he was an experimental difference between their styles and props on stage or screen and the built environment. Nowadays their interchangability hardly raises an eyebrow. Hollywood and Detroit work happily side by side, dreamers, designers. (For every body) and concept development on the same computers, sell their products through the same channels (billboards and magazines), and dump their goods in the same old places (western suburbia or third world echoing). All the same.

At the same time, television has been let out of the studio and shoved headfirst into the world of home entertainment--Natural Born Killers--style.

There's no denying it. Media, telecommunications, marketing and computing are conerging into new corporatised urban landscapes that bear none of the dark romantic hallmarks production designer Lawrence Paulus's Mad Mod materialised for Bladerunner's bad new-future. Forget the utopian soaring and gothic industrial climbing. For the majority of us the future is already here -- and it's not what you'd call pretty. It's planned, it's calculated, it's corporate and global. It's most probably at a shopping complex or video/computer/TV screen near you. And it's gonna out.

Our sprawling cities present the new outlets for a determinated material culture in which design styles are slotted into separate sections, and seen and heard evidence that things have been deliberately cast (as we if don't know by who) to fit one another -- from freetish consumer objects to urban planning; from TV graphics and virtual reality to the pretend urbanisation for the supermarket shelf or for television; from the austere public bus shelter to the new toll paid urban element. Is that the distance between home and work even as it's annihilated.

It's increasingly hard to avoid contact with a world designed on the totalising scale of global media. Everyone and everything is plugged-in (especially when it's advertised "Unplugged"). We all know this the distance that used to separate the media and the world it celebrates is done away with. But here's the real life is now designed and experienced as an extension of communications media (as we used to think) the other way round. North America remains the pioneering source of material media -- the places and abscences of traditional media (from Hollywood to the Fox network) have been incorporated in a bombastic web (I hesitate to call it a system) of entertainment, news, and corporate media conglomerates and magnifies providing the model upon which countless other cities-as-urban complexes are designed. The most banalilan.

The following banal 'framegrabs' are not from the near or distant future. It's still 1995, and the theme remains the same: the conrsumption is fun. So what if its costs a little?

Frame 1. Even at 30,000 feet, no-one can escape the right to consume, with the credit card of your choice. The High Street Emporium guide, just like the other Skymlay shopping categories, gives me instant access to manufactured and marketed goods and an experience, who could ever forget to call home again?

Frame 2. At the motion-platform Omnimax ride, back to the Future - a fifteen minute experience that ushers the participants through an architectural maze of corridors and tunnels inside the new Media Institute for Future Technology -- we make it home over time. But for a quarter of an hour, we're supposed to be impressed with the idea that we're actually participating in an extended narrative from the film of the same name. I'm not sure how our Sunday morning television distributes us from one checkpoint to the next - complete with surveillance cameras, familiar newsreaders back on video monitors, written LED instructions, and real institute "assistants" - is only vaguely engaging. Because we're repeatedly tunnelled into the eight-seater De Lorean time travel mobile is another matter entirely. The reality effect rapidly accelerates, and time flows as it is a dream (or nightmare). Crashimg headlong through a seamless collage of 20th century shopping centres, town streets, high rises, Age landscapes, AMOZari 2015, prehistoric volcanoes, exploding Texaco signs and ciplexes of the future, the time machine ride is the most visceral experience in the entire complex.

Souvenirs can be purchased at the Time Machine gift shop on the way out. "The way everybody seems you can know to get that stuff anywhere.

Frame 5. Like the recently opened New York Skyline on the second floor of the Empire State Building, these flight-simulator attractions blur the distinction between architectural reality and cinematic illusion. The ride propels the traveller from the stasis of the monumental site to the mobile world of green screen. The mechanics of the race and computer controlled movement may be clumsy, but the thrill lurks riders back for more. Of course, it doesn't compare to the "real" view from the Observatory on the 86th floor. But who said it was supposed to supplement, add an orientation to a world which is in its own way just as intricate and enigmatic? "Look at the cars down there! They look like ants!"

Plenty of stuff to buy down there but Gizmo (he's not to say the rest of the built environment hasn't learned from such entertainment machines. The young LA- based firm of Mehedar Yajnik and reality theatre at Universal CityWalk also incorporates kinetics into its design. Its folded film surfaces and the facade functional as an electronically liquid marquee, as if it set static architecture in motion.

Regardless of the building's success, such considered designs endorse these entertainment complexes with more than a little culture. Like the radically constructivistic KFC outlet in the middle of LA designed by Frank Gehry (crafted by for example), the Planet Hollywood restaurant designed by Antoine Furst (the late production designer of Batman), these places make a virtue of the high pop-modern culture that directs our urban experience in the future, and checkpoint inside the building. As the windowed retail outlets mushroom in major cities -- over 300 Disney stores worldwide, with Warner Brothers Studio Stores catching up. With the potential to be made from merchandising, stores like those in Santa Monica Plaza or midtown Manhattan are not going to be the future of corporate collectible. Unsustainable media empires have wanted to project all along. Toontown is rock solid.

Frame 10. That is of course until we finally get to see computer character Bill Gates "Sas Simon of the North", currently being introduced in the suburb of Medina, across Lake Washington from Seattle. Partially tunnelled into the hillside, the five acre waterfront house has journalists debating whether this is Batman, Dr No, or Citizen Kane, rear projected on the outside. While architects James Catler and Peter Boblin say they're trying to avoid ostentation in their design, mistaking Gates' intention to let architecture make concrete what Microsoft can only copy with the edge of the next millennium, William Randolph Hearst once had a similar scheme.

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Warped Crotchets and Phallic Prods

Robert Schubert takes a biopsy of the return to materiality in Australian visual arts

Keen postmodern observers will discern a delicious irony in a commentary which, like God-like, attempts to sum up and then prophesy developing trends in Australian visual culture. We know M. Foucault too well not to be suspicious that claiming cultural dominance has a way of producing unity when historically there might be none. Suspicious because years, decades and centuries of the weightlessness of soothing is pure conjuncture. I apologise beforehand to those written out of this history. In spite of these suspicions, there is something seductive in the image of a dwindling millennium. It offers security in the duxia of Christian narratives where cultural redemption and damnation (thelogians call it chiasm) provide shelter for our feeling and understanding of what art will look like in 20th century fin de siecle. You can’t beat the millennium for pure hyperbole. The apocalyptic end is nigh but then, so is the beginning. But the beginning and the end of what?

On the more solid turf of the 90s, artists and curators have developed a romance with different aspects of, for want of a more exacting term, material culture. Neo-abstraction pervaded commercial gallery spaces in 1994, where the revision of aesthetic modernism developed through the late 80s in artist run spaces like Store 5 in Melbourne and First Draft West in Sydney, began to enter mainstream consciousness. Responding to a perceived collapse of the critical debates in so called postmodern culture, artists like Melissa Scher, Rose Nolan and Kerry Polines revisited aesthetic modernism’s affection for materials. For some commentators, it is a distinctive emphasis in works by Harper, for example, on low materials, surrealism and co-abstraction pervaded commercial

Nolan and Kerry Polines’ painting, which critique the heroic claim of Australian visual art’s romance with different aspect of, for want of a more precise place over and above its abuse and commodification in mainstream culture. In this context, corporeality has emerged as a major area for a critical dislocation of heteronormative and absurdly patriarchal ideologies churned out by the media.

The federal government’s somewhat cynical attempt to bring together computer technology and Creative Nation begs the question as to how this will affect not government nor material culture. There is a possibility that this push to “modernise” art practice in Australia might succeed in establishing their relevance in an Australian context, might have changed dramatically as new forms of activism developed under the deconstructive sway of queer theory and practice in the 90s. Nevertheless, the exhibition said nothing about the year 2000. A show about AIDS in the 90s is less praiseworthy than indicative of a more general acceptance of lesbian, gay or queer discourse as legitimate, non-marginal themes for the visual arts. This mainstream interest in specifically gay, lesbian or bodies and representation in Australian visual culture is confirmed by the incorporation of perspectives into the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in 1995, the sex art exhibition in this year’s Mardi Gras visual arts program, and the festival’s ability to draw such art world down the infobahn or see installation works curated within the virtual wall of a cyber gallery? Would this push see different regional and national circuits of the work?

Robert Schubert is a writer and doctoral candidate in Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne.

Frank Sens ‘Seat’ 1994. From ‘Don’t Leave Me This Way: Art in the Age of AIDS’ conchrision wood, paint. 150 x 150mm.

More generally, the move towards installation art in the 90s might also be understood as a capricious response to the collapse of postmodern criticality. Like its neo-abstract counterpart, installation harks back to modernism, but its eye is not on Norland or Stella, but a more discursive, anti-aesthetic strain of minimalistic sculpture which reinvigorated the late modernism of the 60s and the conceptual work of the 70s. Like minimalism, much installation in the 90s involves the viewer in the articulation of visual meaning over the more contemplative place marked out by abstraction and its promise of pure subjectivity. Kate Brennan’s ingenious Consecutive Installations at Gertrude Street in Melbourne and Neil Emmerson’s Inhabit Me (Like a Memory) at Artspac in Sydney are two works which might be singled out. Brennan’s installation worked to temporal and spatial contingencies of looking by reconvening the spatial arrangements of woods and the subversion of the Robert Morris’ gestalts seem a constant reference in Brennan’s revisionist project. However, a how about A I D an)

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The Annear View

Jacqueline Millner talks to Perspecta 1995 curator Judy Annear

**Australian Perspecta 1995 is the first curated by a guest curator. Judy Annear, most recently Commissioner for the Australian Pavilion at the 1993 Venice Biennale, has spent much of the last ten months whitlting the 1500 artists whose work she viewed down to the 36 on exhibit, a task which unlike her predecessor she undertook without a curatorial. There are many familiar names in the show, and while Perspecta has something of a tradition of exhibiting mid-career artists whose work has taken radically new turns, Ken Unsworth is a perennial — the contrast with the "new guard" of the 1993 Perspecta is striking. This impression made the selection criteria of particular interest...

**JM:** The early promotional material for Perspecta 1995 mentions the word "hybrid", although the more recent publicity steers clear of the term. Was hybriddity still the guiding principal of your curation, and how do you interpret the notion?

**JA:** There was a point when "hybrid" started to become a sort of "buzzword", so I thought I'd tone the publicity down, so that by the time Perspecta opened it would not be like yet another fashionable term of utter meaninglessness. I like the word because it incorporates all sorts of things that have defied and continue to defy labelling, it's a convenient open-ended term which people can't hang mountains of restrictions around. It's that kind of liminality which really interests me not just about contemporary art but art in general, regardless of the medium. Some people have said, "Well, I assume it's a show about new technologies." It's apparently easy to use a computer to generate hybrid forms, but the reality is that a lot of high tech work really bores me because it's too much about the technology, and too much about trying to recreate reality. There are certainly two people in the show who work with CD-ROM, Troy Innocent and Linda Dement, but their work interests me because they are trying to go beyond the absurdly logical restraints of the computer screen. Another tack on hybridity is that taken by Tony Clark and Linda Marrinon, who you could say are hybridising painting and sculpture, masculinity and femininity.

**JM:** Do you think the very slipperness of the term risks it evading the hard questions, in terms of meaningful critique?

**JA:** Yes, I think that is a possibility. There is a real cynicism about the possibility of political change. That was a problem I faced in putting Perspecta together, because I wanted to include artists and work which had a very direct connection to society, and a kind of politic, and that's very difficult to find in Australia at the moment.

**JM:** There is an expectation that Perspecta will review what's been happening nationally in contemporary art over the last couple of years. What other criteria did you bring to your curation?

**JA:** One of the criteria for selection has to be evidence of some understanding of aesthetic value of whatever description. Having worked with a lot of Japanese artists, I'm much more demanding now in terms of what I expect of an artist. To me, the visual arts have a very performative aspect, and it really shows if artists go out in front of an audience and they haven't got it together.

**JM:** What about the national character of the show? W.A. and Queensland are somewhat underrepresented.

**JA:** That's a very tricky one. A lot of people in the smaller centres have a real problem with maintaining the kind of rigour necessary to focus on your work regardless of an unsupportive environment. I'm sympathetic, but in the end, when I had to make those critical decisions about those intangibles to do with aesthetics and quality and so on, people just fell off the light box.

**JM:** Are you using any other venues?

**JA:** No, I decided to concentrate it here. The thing that really interests me about museums, particularly this one, is that it gets an unbelievable number and range of people. You have to be quite intrepid to go to things that aren't in obvious places. There will be whole sections of the art community which will be irradicated by that, but because I'm very interested in the educational role of something like this, I really do want to get to as many people as possible.

**JM:** Does the way you curated Perspecta give you indications about tendencies within contemporary Australian practice? Where do you think things are headed?

**JA:** It's very hard to say. I'll depend very much on whether the recession really ends, and private money starts flowing back into the art market, and also on whether the VACR change the way in which they support contemporary arts, and start developing an international program. In terms of artists making art, while I think there is a lot of good work here, I also think that visual artists in Australia really have to be a lot more focused and a lot tougher about what they are doing. While I would like to think that we would have transcended certain kinds of decorative aspects associated with Australian culture, I fear that in five years' time things may not be that different. I think there is a kind of inertia that sets in towards the end of a century, although the year 2001 will probably be absolutely fascinating.

Perspecta is at the Art Gallery of NSW from Friday 3 February to Sunday 26 March.

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**The Wizard of Oz**

Tracey Moffatt: 'The Wizard of Oz, 1995'

*He was always Dorothy in the school's production of the Wizard of Oz. His father got angry at him for getting dressed too early.*

From 'Scarred for Life' photo series 1994

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**Charm Alone**

Tracey Moffatt: 'Charm Alone, 1995'

*His brother said, 'crooked nose and no chin - you look like no one at all.'*

From 'Scarred for Life' photo series 1994

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**Useless, 1974**

Tracey Moffatt: 'Useless, 1974'

*Her father's nickname for her was 'useless'.* From 'Scarred for Life' photo series 1994

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**Utechian, 1976**

Tracey Moffatt: 'Utechian, 1976'

*Her mother's nickname for her was 'Utechian'.* From 'Scarred for Life' photo series 1994
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4 February Tony Clark (tbc), Aleks Danko 5 February Leigh Hobba, Neil Emmerson, Paul Saint, Jan Nelson
10 February David McDiarmid 17 February Brook Andrew 24 February Linda Sproul 3 March Ann Stephen on Ian Burn 5 March Linda Dement

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As Henry Mencken's aphorism goes, there are no dull subjects, only dull writers. But if it is not simply dull, then what exactly is the problem with most critical writing on contemporary art in Australia today? At a glance through the journals and newspapers which carry such stuff, most writing of this kind—through rare exception—manifests itself in three ways: firstly, as a kind of simplistic, promotional reportage appealing to the lowest common intellectual denominator; secondly, as mere descriptive analyses gleaned from the 'artist's statement' (not unlike other commentaries) which reflects and magnifies the personal prejudices of the scandal-monger posturing as an important newspaper columnist. Of this third kind, little more is ultimately displayed than the base moralism of a public executioner, and even less could it be said to serve any useful purpose. Each of these three types seem uninterested in—perhaps incapable of—providing any conditions or contexts from which a variety of critical positions may be allowed to emerge and proliferate, through which, in turn, more rigorous and open debate over the means by which art is validated orinvalidated, criticised and assessed, may be more convincingly taken up. It is as if writing on the subject, passed off as fair comment, actually reflects a certain homogeneity of critical thinking amongst art writers and presumes, equally, the existence of a homogenous 'readiness' characterised as an undifferentiated, uninquiring and passive 'public' only too ready to accept the role of the art writer as the generator of art's 'meaning' and the arbiter of its worth. The condescension is quite breathtaking.

Artwriting nowadays generally fulfills the same function as a social column, preoccupied with supplying red-top tips to a small, competitive in-crowd of art-pundits and purveyors, hangover and, more often than not, other artists (see you at the next opening). Perhaps the problem may simply, and more pithily, reflect a serious lack of imagination on the part of the art writer, a paucity of clear thinking with respect to more important and over-arching social and cultural issues. Here, one form of writing, specific to no one particular subject and oozing more style than substance, may simply substitute for any other. Arts writer as gossip columnist? In all events, it is hard to understand how even the slightest writing comment resembling informed, scholarly or intelligent debate gets passed off as 'important' and 'seriously' stuff, and how certain art writers gain the credence and reputation they do. 'A cock,' said Syros in the 1st century BC, 'has great influence on his own dunghill'.

Most Australian contemporary artists I have met seem to imagine that their entire future depends upon the publication of absolutely anything whatever written about them by anyone whosoever. Why is this the case? If it might be said that there is nothing terribly new in this situation—that art-production has always disappeared up its own publicity-sucking fundament—I wonder what ultimate benefit may be derived from indulging in such promotional preoccupations? The amassing of an enormously bulging C.V.? How many artists, I wonder, would dare include in their C.V., a full copy of a 'bad' review, or even an honest one? Most, I dare say, would suspiciously resort to including the name of the reviewer only in the 'selected bibliography'. Arts graduates pumped out wholesale from the various colleges seem to have understood nothing else than the necessity to publicise, promote and market. It seems success for the Art Dandy ('Pop-Art?') may be in part measured by having been referred to, say, in the hyper-space of the super-market journals (even if what is said about them is scarcely understood), in some soporific expance of tendentiousness over-produced in the more respectable journals, in some smear of self-interested foolishness dead-fallen from the press of the popular dailies, or in an occasional bright spot buried and forgotten in the committee-stacked underfunded. What is wrong with this picture?

Not that the fault lies squarely with the artist. Far from it. The business of writing, the sheer undertaking of critical responsibility seems here the thing which is at stake, and perhaps, in Australia, never so urgently. Felicity Fenner often appears in her columns as little more than an egotist's facility, a fashionable 'margin sinner'. Her writing betrays a surprising lack of concern for how that late 20th century kind of art which feigns self-reflexivity and purports to undermine artistic conventions actually functions to reinforce such conventions. Does art merely and placidly unfold of its own accord? Representation, as writing or art, takes on its most important form here, that is, at the point where it is disguised as post-representational (which in the genuine sense, roughly speaking, would re-fraw from mere imitation and instead make explicit the strategies which enable representational works to work). On the other hand this may be where it is most potent given that a lot of people probably read this stuff, although then it would represent a kind of power without responsibility. Good criticism should not shrink from engaging with difficult issues, and could perhaps demonstrate how representational art functions, how it mobilises certain power bases, for instance, and not just what representational works represent. Ostenibly a kind of postmodern form of address, Fenner's writing lapses into a kind of simple affectation, a (mis)representation of post-representation, and degenerates into the same kind of erewurp stylisations characteristic of the inadequately instant work she so openly promotes—the very misrepresentation of postmodernism that Lyotard himself so many years ago lamented.

To comment on the other end of the critical writing spectrum, I have always struggled to stifle the yawns which invariably result upon opening one of John McDonald's phials of chloroform. He has perhaps more than any other living art writer anesthetised entire reading publics with his cyanide gas-bagging. I wish I could say of him that I used to like his earlier work (as he has said of Susan Norrie). I now instinctively avoid reading his articles altogether; in the end I simply can't be bothered searching in vain for even the manifest content. I can only presume that his editor knows even less about the issues than he appears to. If, by making appeal to some obscure notion of 'good art' or 'aesthetic value' makes the Kof hopes to convince anyone other than those equally as jaundiced of his odious opinions, if by attracting their middle-brow sneers of disapproval he hopes to demolish the inanities of the contemporary art circus, then I wish him the very best of British. If, in the end, he succeeds in nothing else than simply boring or irritating people, his opprobrium could only be said to perfectly match the objects against which he so bitterly rails. Shawn Davies teaches art theory at the University of Western Sydney.

**Condition Critical**

Shawn Davies TKOs visual arts criticism.
A Body will Always be a Body

Naomi Richards in dialogue with five dancers in Melbourne

Shelley Lasica, Sandra Parker, Trevor Patrick, John Utans and Ros Warby are all mature dancers and choreographers who have worked in a wide variety of settings. All of them have choreographed and performed their own work, and collaborated with other performing artists in dance, theatre and opera. All have worked overseas, so understand their craft in relation to choreographic practice throughout the world.

Their highly individual work has grown from explorations of a range of classical, modern and postmodern movement and performance techniques including classical ballet, American modern dance, European dance/theatre, release techniques, alignment work and improvisation. Their work is frequently performed without sound. When present, sound is just as likely to be spoken text as music. Although their movement is often small and slow, the experience of watching their work is vivid.

The questions “What characterises Australian dance in the 90s?”, “How is it shaped?” and “What is the future of dance in Australia?” asked of these five practitioners led to very general discussions. The conversations included issues such as the definition of an Australian dance style, the diversity of work here, support for dance and the impact of new technology.

Many of the conversations began by my asking what sense it makes to talk about Australian dance.

JU: The push to find the ultimate Australian style in dance, as in any art form, results in token gestures such as the Australian Ballet’s commissioning of Dancepool and Cuddlepie or Ned Kelly. I don’t think you can push an identity like that...I’m conscious of being an Australian choreographer and dancer but I prefer to place myself in a dance heritage and to reflect on myself as an Australian dancer from this framework...If there’s anything that characterises Australian dance it is its diversity.

RW: When people talk about Australian dance in a positive way it’s all about the strength, the power, the athleticism and the space that Australian dancers occupy. When you think about that, it’s about people “doing” something, and dancers here are very good at “doing”. When I am working, I watch. The combination of doing, watching and sensing is very hard, very disciplined work, and you come at it from a very rigorous process. In the training of dancers here, and in the social environment here, “doing” is a much more popular way of existing than sensing, watching, observing.

Australian dance, like many other art forms in Australia, is under constant pressure to make easily reproducible and digestible product. Popular culture’s aspiration to present an eternally youthful body, together with its stress on the visual and our culture’s limited understanding of physicality, encourage dance to be experienced merely as spectacle.

TP: The institutionalised learning of dance is such that the dance scene is constantly moving from one wave of youthful exuberance to another and often does not reach the point where people are practising as mature artists and working with ideas. Few young artists think of themselves as artists. To most people who are practising dance, it’s a job. Again because it is so much tied with youthful vitality, the work being performed and made is imbued with that. The work is often about glamour, virtuosity, the spectacular...Where is art amongst all this hormonal activity? It’s very difficult to fight that, particularly when people are funded in ways which encourage Australia in the 90s? A stunning Merry Widow; an elastic modern dance; a contact improvisation with text spoken by the dancers; a male dancer in a black frock; a story told in the gestures of hands and eyes; a solo dancer moving without a sound in the gallery; a Western-trained dancer, a designer, an actress, an Eastern-trained dancer and several musicians collaborating in performance; a raunchy rendezvous in a cafe to rival any Grand Marnier TV ad; a barefoot woman in a jumprope on a wooden floor listening intently for the next move; a woman with a birdcage on her head; a woman pulling an endless strand of red wool from her mouth; any number of people doing for the thousandth time something with a chair... The multicultural society is rich with diversity, but how comfortable is it sustaining difference?

TP: It’s an interesting problem that I have noticed in the last few years, the dance establishment trying to homogenise the whole scene into one big, happy, harmonious community. I don’t think it is. I think there are a lot of vibrant diverse forms, and they need to be separate, they need their own space, and this corollary, it seems to me from organisations that purport to represent the whole community, is misguided.

SL: The homogenisation somehow goes in line with people trying to identify an Australian dance style. But there is no one story and no one history to set up official histories is the prediction of reasonably unpleasant forces. It disturbs me immensely that the perception exists of a recent springing up of contemporary work from a single source, when if you look at the bigger picture you see how things grow and develop, how the diversity grows and develops.

JU: Is it a time of diversity. I just wish that people would accept that diversity. When I think of Melbourne and the different philosophies that different dance makers are employing there’s a very rich and vital practice. What bugs me a little is the competition, or that... That difference cannot be sustained?

JU: Yes, and that comes back to the funding dollar.

SL: The future of dance in Australia relies on the generosity of spirit among practitioners in increasing belief in the practice, a realistic belief in the practice and an integrity about it that is what it does. Until practitioners have that sense, why should anyone else take notice?

Naomi Richards is a Melbourne writer on dance.
Sound Futures

Frances Dyson strikes a repose on the borderlines of contemporary sound art practices.

A recent collection of writing on radio art published under the Semiotext(e) series contains a significant number of historical texts that advert to the noisy and transmissive origins of this contemporary art form. This is not surprising really. Given the current fascination for all things either, the weirdness of wireless has naturally emerged as a theme of great historical relevance, and rhetorical exhibition. The irony is however, that while experiments in early radio and telephony are providing a fertile source of fact and fiction to support the more utopic claims of cyberphiles, radio art is still not receiving the attention it deserves. For institutions and independent producers alike, developments in 'new media' seem to be more in line with the 'wireless' (and hence more 'future') future, offering an alternative to the one-way, stereophonic and often institutionalised broadcasts characteristic of mainstream radio. If this is helping CD-ROM allows artists to map entirely new ways of engaging with the work, sound files can be 'broadcast' on the internet without institutional approval, sound spatialization technology allows artists to abandon stereophony in favour of a more 'realistic' and immersive listening experience, and virtual audio technology combines interactivity with immersion to simulate changing sound environments as the body moves through the virtual space.

Interest in these technologies has certainly been primed, but it is also important to point out that sound artists have been experimenting with interactivity and spatial immersion through various means for the better half of this century. Installation works in particular allow very precise configurations of sound to be distributed in a given space, and simple electronic devices such as motion detectors can provide an interactive element. The result is a sound-space where the phenomenality of sound, in all its intensity and palpability, can be explored. But irony abounds in the sound world, for as sound installations increasingly direct gallery audiences to the acoustic and architectural nuances of real space, the quality of aesthetic experience they afford is in being computed in the virtual space. And the key element in virtual space is not at all, but time.

Time, write large, covers every element of the new technologies which enable acoustic space to be mapped. Time figures in the enormous computational processes required to plot a sound moving from one side of the room to another, being absorbed by some materials and reflecting off others as it travels. Time, or lack of it, makes it difficult for artists to experiment with technologies, especially when, as one engineer commented, 'if they haven't got bugs they're obsolete.' Time, or its elision, has produced the sound bite and the untraceable sample - now appropriated by advertising after a long and respectable history within a particular genre of audio art that grew out of tape cut-up. Time, or its storage in recording technologies, makes fashion fodder of once innovative sound compositions, and captures distant voices as exotic in the frenzy of consumer culture's imperialistic sweep. Time, measured in nanoseconds and regimented by mass media, threatens to create a muddy audiophony of brown noise.

But sound artists have also had time. Samplers, one of the most important developments in audio technology, have been standard equipment in both artistic and popular studios for at least the past decade. Prior to sampling, tape cut up and complex multitrack mixing were extremely common, and contributed to the development of a genre ('cut-up', 'scratch' or now 'plunderphonics') characterised by a self-reflexive, critical perspective on both mainstream media and media technologies. So it is not surprising that all but the most naive audio artist would use a recording without being cognisant of the meaning already embedded in its history. Nor does the production of ever more minute combinations of sounds (and images) appear either hypeworthy or 'new' to most artists, trained in the tone and look of the new delivery systems. There is a growing sense that the prerecorded and highly coded media sound, scratched into prolific polysemic forms during the 80s, is disturbingly monotonous, that creating new meanings from the dust pile of media sound is also creating more dust.

With the present mediatisation looking so degraded—a landscape of remains, where ever rationalised time becomes an industrial expurgation aimed at not surprising that sound artists are now interested in spaces, be they real or virtual, in sonic formations and flows, and in non-institutionalised acoustic interactions. The eloquent (if not the hi-fiidelity) of pre- and post-media appears in the audio artworks forming new territories on the net, or in work that rediscovers the noisy origins of radio recording and transmission (remember the telephone?). The question of space is raised again as sound artists rekindle the issue of noise pollution which Murray Schafer and the World Soundscape Project began to articulate in the 1970s. However this return sees a shift from the pristine recordings of mostly 'natural' sound that characterised soundscapes, to the more complex and in a sense rhetorical scope of acoustic ecology. Within this field, sound—be it bird song or buzzing fluorescent light—is treated as part of an aural habitat, an aural culture that can no longer support notions of 'silence' or 'pure sound', and that is beginning to realise the importance of the noises it has studiously ignored.

For the future, the territories are not necessarily new. While developments in audio technologies will certainly contribute to the consolidation of sound art and the proliferation of its forms, what seems most important is the deliberate interjection of repose within contemporary work. Ironically, again, this occurs at the borders where, often thanks to new technology, categories are beginning to collapse, prompting very basic, thoughtful questions to be asked. Is it vibrational or electrical, is it sound or data, biological or mechanical, living or dead, heard, felt or seen? How sounds the tick?
Noises Off
Nicholas Gebhardt speaks to Australian sound artists and curators

In a recent catalogue essay, the historian Paul Carter suggests that the "...nostalgia imprinted on the public mind will not be resisted." Carter's statement might seem fairly incidental were it not for the surge in major sound events and exhibitions that are occurring nationally and internationally, that apply the category of "sound art" to a range of events and performances. The presumption, of course, is that there's that, there is to create, and to negate it is to fail to make that sound art. But does sound art in fact engage with or produce a concept of sound that allows for a questioning of the various uses of the category of essential notions of sound?

This question is inevitably bound to a series of imaginative leaps from radio to gallery spaces, from contemporary music to shopping malls and on to the blue of sea with its imagination for "the mix".

In a sense, sound is everywhere and nowhere at once, a noisy imposition on an even noisier silence and a mute interloper amongst centuries of visual trope. Its chara and barhance and hallow out the way it touches you and that was once tongue-in-cheek becomes a kick in the ear. As sculptor Nigel Helyer points out: "The study of sound is a kind of diaspora and its companion a connective tissue between all disciplines. If you work in sound that's the interaction you need to work, that's the way you're forced to work."

It is a mistake to imagine that experimentation with sounds beyond the realm of the tempered ca lices, to digital effects. A second category of hybridity is highly conducive to sound art, with its emphasis on a multiplicity of events and a pre-history of recorded materials across a variety of sites. Ultimately, it is the collapse of Critique Nation and the multimedia industry that in many ways unearths an opportunity for sonic artists, where the sound element is installed as the core of the multimedia or virtual reality experience.

As Nigel Helyer suggests, however, multimedia is still "...in the inchoate stage, track in that flat void of the screen, whereas a sound can be a very rich experience. There's a minimal amount of work being done in terms of the multi-dimensionality of sound. The sound images that are used to frame the 1950s and 1960s hi-fi developments are based on pictorialism with perspective arrangements in them. There's nothing happening in multimedia to liberate sound from the confines of this pictorial space." For Helyer, to work with multimedia it's necessary to make the sonic capacity come alive, to draw out the somatic and emotional power of sound.

So how might sound be placed in virtual environments that all too often take sound literally? Virginia Madsen speaks of sound as something already both actual and virtual, and because it always has bodily effects, the waves are always hitting you and you experience it as virtual in the way of art, but not a virtual future. Its power lies in its not being attached to a particular image. The mixing, though, is to reconfigure all events, processes, within a (multi)media space, to build a sound aesthetics based on sonic art practice that questions whether 'natural' or formal, where sound art is maintained as an organic process that only ever reveals the meaning of sound as internal to itself.

This tendency raises the question of what kind of an experience of sound can be achieved in gallery, museum and other spaces which are historically bound to the primacy of the visual, the autonomy of the word, and a listening that is still, in many ways, a question of absolute fidelity to the source. For Paul Carter, the real problem lies in the expectations associated with the paradigm of the "the gallery" or the museum as a forum for demonstrating a concept of a sound work that does more than simply produce a sound. It's a problem, however, that the industrial process of manufacturing new aural experiences in which the sonic arts are held to the same kind of formal properties that are all sound in terms of its generative potential. We are well aware of the limits of sound, the obvious incentives for na"e optimism in the name of an enclosed listening, an ear that is completely immersed. Given this potential fascination of sound, it is important to question a sonic arts practice that grounds itself in sound as the total experience of the ear.

In this context, the work of someone like John Cage (and Cage's influence on creating a field of sonic art is formidable) still has a strangely romantic attachment to the image of the Gallery of One and Silence. When hearing his ear, is Van Gogh who in fact marks listening as obsolete, and makes it a question of framing sound to be framed. A sound event therefore, is not something to be heard; it is no longer a question of framing sound to be framed. Rather, to amplify and record sounds is to pass through a series of possible moments, of containing and taking hold of sound as simply another element in thinking through the "noise of time."

Nicholas Gebhardt is a Sydney writer and doctoral candidate at the University of Sydney.

**SOUND IN SPACE**

**SOUND IN SPACE** is an event which will explore the totally unique medium of sound in an Australian context. Sound has its own performative qualities, as a physical and psychological definition of sound - as vibrations in the air - cannot encompass the powerful affective qualities of a sound. Sound is a lover's voice, a musical excursion, fingernails scraping, chalkboard scratching, posters rustling, rhythms and riffs. Nor can such a definition illustrate the multi-dimensionality of sound art. Its presentation is an event of sound. In Australia, sound and audio practice reach into the fields of music, contemporary art, experimental and new music, performance, sound poetry, radiophony, soundtrack and sound design. The exhibition encompasses all these "categories" - but with a strong visual dimension.

The exhibition will feature both new and classic work by artists who have delineated and continue to contribute to the field of audio art practice in sound. Their works range from those which integrate sound with a visual component, to those in which visual images are created by listeners from audio triggers. One theme explored in the show is the technological production and reproduction of

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**an MCA exhibition**

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**SOUND IN SPACE** has been organised by guest curator Rebecca Coyle for Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art. It will open on the 12 May this year, and will run until August. An accompanying performance program will be held in the gallery.

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Orchestration of a Nation

Nicholas Gebhardt talks to composer Jonathan Mills, music consultant to the Brisbane Music Biennial

"It's certainly no accident that the most interesting works produced with the new digital technologies are by musicians without a past"

Luciano Berio

The contemporary music scene is in a curious state. It is skewed by strangely antiquated concerns, traumatised by the symphonic nationalism that is plaguing the end of the century. Speaking with Jonathan Mills, a composer and research fellow at RMIT in Melbourne, you realise that it will take more than a return to a sound state to make the music come to life: "We have gone down the path in this country of being dominated by certain notions of what an official culture is. We are driven by an overpowering need to create an official culture and yet our culture is not something which you can prescribe or define. And as for the economic realities, they are in some ways a separate issue and they need to be treated separately. What needs to be dealt with right now, in a comprehensive document, is the artistic musical imperatives at work here."

Mills traces the problem to an outdated and repressive system of musical administration which stems from the power of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and an imperial mentality that still sees symphonic grandeur as the apex of musical culture (and this applies to pop music as well). He points out that we are "...tumbled with a structure which is nineteenth century and does not even deal with the way in which we hear. Most of the population of this country receive their acoustic information via some form of electronic technological mediation. So wouldn't it be sensible and mainstream to put a few bucks into research in that area? We are simply not understanding the quantum leaps that are possible in terms of how sound can be defined.

"The whole of 18th and 19th century western music was based on certain assumptions about modulation, equal temperament, and the uniformity of instrumental technology. We have moved in terms of our sound world far beyond that. It's almost an anachronism to even talk about figures like John Cage and Pierre Schaeffer. It's not merely that there are these things that happened in the early twentieth century called musique concrete, or aleatory processes, that we haven't caught up with. Rather, it's that we've gone far beyond them and so have the mainstream practices. Any third party of the government which the ABC charter is to actually present Australian culture in all its diversity, and by that I think one needs to look not only at the cultural background of people involved - which does not mean Aboriginal musicians - one actually has to look at the available technology and performance practices that the ABC and other cultural bodies might have invested in or investigated. None of that's happened, even though 90% of the money available for non-commercial music goes into an orchestra, an opera company or a ballet company."

In this sense, "... contemporary music practice has to be understood as a question of a spectrum, where all sounds are potentially transformable into anything else. Putting aside the technological implications of that, the aesthetic implications are astounding and completely ignored, except by a few fringe dwellers whose work has appeared in scattered events like The Listening Room, Perspecta, the Biennale, the Sculpture Triennial in Melbourne, and Soundculture. And still we are mindlessly churning out these people to play violin or viola and yet technology has gone so far beyond the need for a viola that it's ridiculous."

For Mills, the most significant act in Creative Nation in terms of music was to remove the Sydney Symphony Orchestra from the ABC. This at least potentially opens up the system of musical control which, since the 60s, has confined such musical developments as authentic performance practice, certain contemporary forms, improvisatory and non-scored techniques and electro-acoustic music, to the margins. Mills emphasises that "... if you think that the government and the ABC charter is to actually present Australian culture in all its diversity, and by that I think one needs to look not only at the cultural background of people involved - which does not mean Aboriginal musicians - one actually has to look at the available technology and performance practices that the ABC and other cultural bodies might have invested in or investigated. None of that's happened, even though 90% of the money available for non-commercial music goes into an orchestra, an opera company or a ballet company."
Wired for Performance

Annemarie Jonson interviews ABC Radio's Sarah Benjamin

When Sarah Benjamin was appointed as the manager of arts for ABC radio in May 1993, she commented that she would like to enhance the role of radio as a venue for performance. Annemarie Jonson asked her to expand on this, and what she meant by radio as a performance venue.

SB: An evening "strip" from 9.30 pm to 10 pm of performance has just begun. There's a difference between how I understand performance and how some listeners would understand performance. Radio National managers have wanted a fairly common, accessible standard that they could support. The idea is to cover the range of positions out there, including very narrow and conservative. John Macdonald has a reputation for being in tune with what's going on in Australian performance and how the network manager, as well as radio managers, is critical to the ABC's role in not just supporting and wave on.

A[ ]: Going back to Arts Today, David Marr comes under a degree of criticism for what is perceived to be his passionate perspective and for his authorial voice. In February 1994's 24 hours he said that he'd like Arts Today to be a cross between Civilisation and PM. (Both laugh) Marr also said he was keen to maintain the distinction between opera and ceramics while the then executive producer, Jame Ryan, said the program would work in an interdisciplinary way. Would you care to comment?

SB: I don't think he'd say that now (about Civilisation). I think David is a fabulous mind. That program has developed from its infancy to something much stronger. There's a kind of maturity there and I don't think it's a cross between PM and Civilisation. I think the program has also done a really good job of breaking down barriers between disciplines. It has managed to integrate a performative element and arts reporting.

A[ ]: The flagship acoustic arts program on ABC radio is The Listening Room (TLR). I understand it's constantly threatened by budget cuts and its duration was cut from 60 minutes in 1993 to around 45 minutes in 1995. What is its future under your management?

SB: TLR is the radiophonic nerve centre of the ABC. It makes no bones about the fact that it is an artistic centre in the way that other programs aren't. It went to the Prix Italia last year and was bowled over by the recognition of TLR and the acoustic arts, and this is a classic example of Australian performance being more highly regarded overseas than it is in Australia. If I were to achieve anything I would really like to change that. There's a lot of the "don't know, don't understand, therefore dismiss" syndrome. It is expensive at a time when the rest of radio has been asked to produce more output on less money. So it is a struggle, but as far as I'm concerned TLR is critical to a certain level of artistic enterprise and endeavour and also critical to the ABC's artistic credibility.

A[ ]: Where will arts on ABC be in a few years from now?

SB: I like to think about the future of arts in terms of consistency of quality in programs. I would also like all our programs to have more position and I don't just mean "scope", but inviting more debate. I also mean not being afraid, a boldness about how you use the forum. My idea would be to continue to develop outstanding programs, and that entails taking risks and risking flops. It's also about striking a balance between experience and fresh ideas, being in tune with what's going on intellectually or artistically beyond the ABC. We are bringing people in through, for example, the Australia Council Hybrid Arts Committee's residencies with the ABC. It'll be important to work to maintain the freshness, creativity and intellectual rigor of arts on the ABC.

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Come Out, the festival for young people, is an important part of Adelaide and the national cultural life. Along with Melbourne’s Next Wave for youth (and beyond); and Brisbane’s Out of the Box for younger children, Come Out offers the young a perspective on themselves across cultures, nations and art forms. Each of these festivals is just as significant for adults. In Adelaide you don’t have to choose children or a classroom of kids to motivate you to attend.

Even compared with the Adelaide Festival, the scale of Come Out is awesome. The 1995 program ranges from puppetry to rap ballet to a ‘Barry Kooky Masterclass’ for ‘emerging young performers. Six workshops culminating in a presentation’. There are diverse theatre works, a Critic’s Symposium, Alkervite (a statewide literature program with 37 writers international, national and local), Youth Theatre is performing Pinkola: fer a l pig s, talking m otorbike , s p ace d -our hippie s present ing ‘acrobat , visual comedian and orche -r removal’.

Youth Theatre is part of Adelaide’s Fringe Festival, the Lion Scale of ‘Barrington’ and the national literature program with 37 writers international, national and local. Come Out has operated for nine days and will feature an important part of Adelaide and the national culture, nation and region. Adelaide you don’t have to travel for younger audiences.

While you’re at it, visit the Adelaide Festival Centre, visit the relatives, I vory Circle Visiting the Relatives, L i tterature program with 37 writers international, national and local.

The Australian content includes Nigel Jamieson’s production of Gillian Rubinstein’s sci-fi Galaxy-Area, Queensland’s Kite Theatre’s Meats Time, WA’s Barking Gecko with three "plays about humans and other intelligent animals", visiting relatives, Alkervite, Ivy Circle and Dolphin Talk, Maggie Theatre’s Verona with ‘acrobats, visual comedian and orchestra’, the return of Sydney’s Unity Youth Theatre, ‘Toxic Girls, Cinderella All Abroad and Yira’, Youth Theatre’s ‘The Big Top’ and ‘an Aboriginal family torn apart by glue snorting, alcoholism and cultural isolation’.

The expanding vision of what constitutes a young audience, the juxtaposition of traditional fare and the new (physical theatre, the embracing of some tough issues, cross cultural work, the provision of a ‘club’ focus with Kent State) promise a nice mix of older and younger audiences.

The emphasis is on the theatrical, dance and a little space, music is represented within a theatrical context and not much on its own and the techno-arts are barely glimpsed (while Next Wave is rumoured to be gearing up for a hi-tech 1996).

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Pulp Formalism

Peter McCarthy

On a summer’s day sometime during the fifties on Sydney’s waterfront, a troupe of ‘workies’ (the term derived from the communist Waterside Workers’ Federation) performed some workers’ theatre (one act, possibly Brechtian in inspiration) before the wharfies baking in the lunch-time sun. At its conclusion, one well-intentioned worker-LaborJBureaucrat turned to Kureishi and asked confidentially: ‘Any questions?’ ‘Yeah!’ came the laconic reply: ‘Show us your film!’

I was reminded of this story of what could be called form over substance when screenwriter Hanif Kureishi spoke in Sydney some years ago about the same issue. Flush with the success of My Beautiful Laundrette and Sammy and Rosie Go Lat d, Kureishi was invited to address some audiences on the role of the writer in film and to confound some writers’ work. At one of the conferences he was asked the secret of the success of the alliance between him and Stephen Frears. “Whatever happened to Hanif Kureishi?” Or, perhaps, we should now more properly ask: ‘Whatever happened to the good story?’ His prescription, it seems, falls flat.

Speaking of his part in Vincent Ward’s epic Map of the Human Heart, Louis Nowara argued in a recent interview that ‘this combination was over-rated, that he was fed up with writer-carpers about directors bastardising their scripts’. Ward, senior director such as Mamet and Pinter whose films he believes choose on their own words, that words work constantly against the grain of the film. But at heart, Nowara is a good story teller and this, combined with Ward’s respect for the film as an art form, is what makes this combination rare and with few exceptions the current crop of Australian films are characterised by a kind of ‘quirky’ cut and paste that might unfortunately be called form and content. Some redeemed themselves with strengths at least one of the major prizes. But even now, down precisely because of their impossible relation.

The great greg (should this be the appropriate designation) of ‘quirky’ Australian films - beginning, let’s say, with Lambrham’s Strictly Ballroom - has given rise again to the ridiculous optimism for an Australian film industry, described variously since the late sixties as barbarous, baroque, boyish, barmy, baroque, baroque and oh so baroque. In my view, a strange death of the ‘quirky’ that we see in the film is a symptom of a deeper condition that we are starting to see in the film industry.

The media, at this time of the year we hear incessantly of standing ovations, rave reviews and high hopes for the overseas sales. But apart from the negligible financial return of these films, in real terms, and despite the numerous ideas for new films, new crops of auteurs, one wonders what obtains in this Renaissance beyond the obsequiousness which defines the new phenomenon. This genre of the ‘quirky’

Mareel’s Wedding (‘two weddings and a funeral!’) bears little relation to this genre.

There is the nineties crop of ABBA, which fortunately only drives the marketing of this film, not its story. This is a film with substance - well-written, richly acted and formally crafted. John Ruane’s Death in Burwood immediately sprang to mind with these films as a sort of omnibus of the ‘quirky’ Australian film. While Strictly Ballroom did have some well-written characterisations - absurd but close-to-the-surface observations of working-class life and pride - it all too quickly fell into the realm of fashionable caricature, particularly its working-class subjects such that any warmth for them quickly evaporated. Interestingly, it seems, so did Lambrham in the local film scene. But Hogan’s and Ruane’s films work precisely where Lambrham’s fail - their characters are real.

The sense of the real is more than evident in Roll of Her Boy Bad Bubby, a film that challenges this genre in its ‘quirkiness’ but stands apart in its powerful and brave blend of stark realism and urban absurdity. Interestingly Bad Bubby’s treatment of the world by the media but did get standing ovations at overseas festivals. While largely due perhaps to the Richard Linklater of the film, it’s a genre of the ‘quirky’ in the Australian condition.

The current crop of popular films (a piece of art film based on artifice and this, combined with a good story teller and an appropriately designed) of ‘quirky’ the film is an exemplary precisely for its expensive artifice - a kind of bloated and dishonest industry parading as ‘art’ (catering, chit-chat, advertising and 2ADs) that further forges this gap between content and form in, or, in the true tradition of the ‘quirky’, renders the viewer complicit in its content and form such that its labours simply evaporate. It seems that there are two sets of artistic tendencies prevailing here - at one end, the purists purveyors of film art who explore the texture of film, the beauty of film, the luxury of film, the fashionable auteurs; and at the other, the ‘art film’ parading as ‘anti-art film’, rambunctiously parodying the artifice of artifice that gains credibility in artistic and fashionable quarters without even trying. This is not film as art but a sort of parody of the form of this normal nonsense is Debra Nile’s Vindication, another graduate-short-as-enter-to-industry. This film however is notable precisely for its beauty and its absurdity. A five minute film about a murder investigation in five single but fluid shots, it attracted first prize in a film competition mounted last year by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. It remains to be seen whether this kind of art can be maintained in the face of growing madness and their attendant assistants. Form is good and there’s little doubt that good form makes a good story even better, but it’s not an end in itself as some of the new breed would have us believe. Bob Ellis has pointed out the Australian production form, from the grand to the pointlessness - narrative of inherent failure, the ‘we’re in it, whether we like it or not’ kind of resignation at the heart of the earlier ‘reassurance’ episodism of the likes of We, Breesbos, Noyce, Armstrong and Schepsis. These narratives were deserted by the Amines, say that they explored the vicissitudes of what they saw as the Australian condition - a sort of pathological condition that we are stuck with and just had to get used to, and this was precisely their point. But there is a new wave of the ‘quirky’ generation, is this the new ‘genre’ which has little to do with the exploration of anything. The kind of ‘dress-up’ that is fashionable. Reflecting on Mamet’s Desperate Scilla is at the cutting edge of this ‘new pointlessness’ - dressing up to conceal the point that there is no point, revealing only in the apparent ecstasy of men parading as women (there is of course an ever-ready contingency of drag as parody of women - usually articulated as ‘we just wanna have fun’), Elliot comes nowhere near to approaching pathology, of either the characters in his film or the medium itself.

JOHN WORTHO’S DEBUT PAPER PROOF successfully entered the fray at Cannes and uncomfortably fits this genre. But Proof is at least a product of good substance. Indeed arthouse, it is, however, a good story - the idea of a blind photographer is a good one - with distinct characterisations and psychological depth. (You do get the sense that this was originally a novel."

Peter McCarthy
Cinematheque 1995

The AFI in association with the Melbourne Cinematheque has announced its program for 1995 - the centennial year of cinema. **

Featuring over 100 films shown weekly in capital cities throughout Australia (why no regional cinemas?) the National Cinematheque functions as a 'gallery' of cinema, offering cinema classics as well as films which inspired the classics - curious films, forgotten or unjustly revisited; films from historical archives and private collections; well-known films screened the way they were intended to be seen rather than on television or video screens; extraordinary films from cinema's alternative cultures - its experimental and political underground; cult films; and films in formats such as video or super 8 whose many and varied practitioners are often dismissed from cinema altogether. The Cinematheque also has access to many films to which commercial distributors do not, including those of the National Library and the National Film and Sound Archive, as well as foreign embassies and cultural institutions. The 1995 program includes: a celebration of the documentary work of major French film-makers including Resnais, Demy, Godard, Franca, Chris Marker and Cocteau. A highlight will be the Australian premiere of Godard's Hélène Pour Moi, a 1993 version of the Greek myth of Alcmena with Gerard Depardieu. Popular classics by Capra, Welles, Scorsese, Busby Berkeley, Ernst Lubitsch, Buster Keaton's Sherlock Junior and W.C. Fields' Never Give a Sucker an Even Break. A tribute to the late Cecil Holmes, fifty years of films from the Commonwealth Film Unit and a collection of remarkable animation films by Walterian Borowczyk and Jay Lenica.

** From the Movie Film Alive Newsletter: "French film pioneer Augustin Le Prince developed a working projector using frame by frame film stock at the Blind Institute in New York as far back as 1886. However Le Prince and his projector vanished without trace from a French train several years later. The Lumiere Brothers and Thomas Edison were then unjustly acclaimed as the real inventors of today's motion picture technology."

Appropriately, Sydney's 1st Foto and Film Fair (Sunday Feb 19, 10 am to 4 pm) will be held at the Railway Institute Hall, Devonshire Street, Central Railway. On sale: Cameras (working and collectables), Film, Books, Movie Cameras, Projectors, Editors, Film Stock and Feature Films. Enquiries: (02) 211 6314

Peter McCarthy is a Sydney writer and education officer


d to do 'a Ken Loach' and with the powerful and honest writing of Alan Duff's novel, on which the film is based, he has come pretty close. He tells a good story and with the help of Stuart Dryburgh's camera (cinematographer also for The Piano) gives it good form. From the movie Peter Jackson's Heavenly Creatures, another 'woman's film' astounding for its strength of character and unpretentious form. Were these films Australian, it wouldn't be such a bad thing since they may have the effect of forging another aesthetic - an aesthetic of substance. But where does this current Australian tendency to cultural veneer take us? There is clearly no shortage of budding directors - institutionalised or not, the desire to direct is evident everywhere - and indeed it seems that nothing will stem the flow of what passes for film art. The all-too accessible medium of video is arguably responsible for the current proliferation of self-expression and artistic aspiration - it used to be that the artist did video as an entry to the higher budgetary concerns of film but now, it seems, all that is necessary is that one work in a video shop. This is, however, not the issue. The real problem is that this current crop of video auteurs is the stuff of tomorrow's film industry, all eagerly vying for public funding for yet another 'quirky' Australian film, further forging an aesthetic defined merely by its marketability. If the marketability of Elliott's artless aesthetic (none dare shout "Show us your cock!") here is anything to go by, we're in for a further cycle of this publicly-funded 'quirkiness', unless that is, someone notices the very marketable product coming to us from across the Tasman - a marketability matched only by its character and its substance.

Peter McCarthy is a Sydney writer and education officer

Cinema in the Land of the Big Sky

Pilbara Performance on Video

Bahau in the Land of the Big Sky is a community theatre project created by Filipino women in the Pilbara in 1994 through the auspices of the Community Arts Network (WA). It ran for twelve weeks through interviews and cultural action workshops around the issues of domestic violence and cross cultural marriages. Out of these came a script and a performance given in the Matt Dan Cultural Centre. Set both in the Philippines and Australia in the 19th and 20th centuries, using dialogue and dance, the work gives women the opportunity to share their experiences about migration, isolation, discrimination and the stereotype of the 'mail order bride'. Two videos of the project have been released. Call 09 328 2022 or write to Community Art Network (WA) Inc. 123 Claiborne Rd, Perth WA 6000.

Films & Film Festivals

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2000: Some Detours

Jane Goodall traces a performative future where neophilia and the necropolis, and becoming and entropy collide.

Since 2000 took over from 1984 as code for "the future", a picture of the world to come as a place of imprisoned possibilities (1984) has been replaced by images of a world where possibilities are running riot (2000), a world racing ahead, towards the round numbers of the millennium at which tomorrow will swallow up yesterday in a cataclysmic act of supercession. Looking down the barrel of the future into mondo 2000, what do we see? The post-human dwelling in a wonderland of techno-baroque, while the super-human displays the Olympian body striving for its peak always heavily invested.

invited to speculate about the future of any artistic practice seems like a lure to hitch up to the Go-Techno! bandwagon and get discussing about the virtual and the cyber, the hyper and the post- ... Or was that last year? 1994, the year the multimedia multicultural Creative Nation got set to sweep into tomorrow's world. The year Sydney, 2000 and the future were coded together with winning the Olympics bid. As all this future-production was going on, though, performance and performance art had gone reminiscent.

People were reading Anne Marsh's Body and Self, Performance Art in Australia 1969-1992. Nick Waterlow's retrospective exhibition 25 Years of Performance Art in Australia opened in Sydney in June, and went to Brisbane in August; this year will see it in Adelaide, Melbourne and Perth.

Maybe retro is the right mode for a resistant practice when neo-futurism is the new mode of conservatism. Or maybe performance, with its real-time commitments to slow motion, stillness and repetition, has been casting itself against the fast forward set of late capitalism since John Cage first tried to rescue "the now moment" in New York in the 1940s. But there are particular Australian resonances to the futuristic imperative. You can't miss them if you walk out of Redfern Station in Sydney, where the bridge in front of you is painted with Aboriginal images and the words 40,000 years is a long long time.

40,000 years still on my mind. To go gung-ho for 2000 is to cultivate amnesia as regards the 40,000. Futures are need to know where it was going. It seemed to be a successfully eluding the ethos of forced becoming that operates at every level - the personal, the institutional, the national - in a late capitalist climate. Perhaps there is an important role ahead for performance and performance art in maintaining a cultural space that is not-the-Olympics, providing some detours around 2000, working to redeem the future from the tyranny of the futuristic.

For me, then, a prospective view of performance is bound up with a retrospective view; this starts in the studio of Heidrun Lohr, who has specialised in photographing performance art since the mid 1980s. We cover her large wooden table with pictures, looking for a principle of selection. Performance has an afterlife through its documentation, and here the photographer's contribution is crucial, but Lohr does more than document. She is one of those rare photographers who has an instinct for witnessing the instantaneous unfolding of an event and she captures the figure of the performer in ways that convey something of what it is to risk live action. Alan Schacher carries a heavy, door-sized wooden board on his back, maintaining his balance with visible effort. Stelarc, looking lightly and not a bit post human, concentrates on getting his equipment working. Next to Stelarc, we put Gerardo Rodriguez-Bruzzei, grimacing under a shower of green and gold glitter, which he tips over his head from two buckets as he shimmies to a gathering drumbeat. He has coated his body with vegemite, and you can see the glitter randomly catching, bouncing and cascading down one gleaming leg. The action shot pur excellence.

There are two photos I've never seen before, of Judy Best's 60 Second Performance for Building Site and Feathers (1988). One of these makes an immediate impression as a superb dramatic composition. It's a picture of a demolition site, with the foreground line marked by a huge iron girder, and the rubble sweeping back to the towering shell of a four story building, etched against the sky. The focus is so clear you can see every broken brick. Judy Best, a ghost figure in white with a veiled hat, carries her great white bag of feathers across the rubble and passes a man on crutches, her collaborator Terry Burrows, who had a broken leg. The second picture shows the white feathers in an upper storey of the building, framed by the rectangle of the room's shell, about to pour over her hand and float over the site.

The peacock has the qualities of the analogue photograph in their linear composition, the technical virtuosity of the black to white tonings, and their sense of capturing the moment (what Barthes called ca astant). Work like this doesn't belong to a digital culture. And the performance itself was deeply retrospective. It marked the loss of the Old Canberra Hotel at King's Cross, a cheap haunt for travellers and local drinkers, which was to be replaced by an ultra-modern international hotel. The feathers came originally from an old kelpi quilt bought second hand, and Best had recycled them to make a quilt of her own. Letting fly the feathers was a letting go of this emblem of her own past, with all its personal investments and associations. Entropy, diaspora, demolition. Neophilia does not acknowledge these. Nor does it acknowledge that discontinuities have their price, and continues their value. William Yang concludes his recent performance The Fabulous Trifle and Other Great Meals with an account of the sudden recognition that a meal he had eaten in a peasant kitchen in China was a meal that had been prepared and eaten in the same way for hundreds and hundreds of years. "And in that moment", he says, "time and space disappeared and all the meals I had eaten merged into one."

Nigel Kellaway stars This Most Wicked Body by announcing: "Yesterday I discovered a dead spot on my skin, a piece of death. Dying begins. Or rather, is accelerating. By the way, I happen to agree with it. One life is enough." Kellaway has a seductive beauty in performance, and he exploits it. He plays being beautiful, plays it for all its worth, but it keeps getting away from him and this becomes what the performance is about. This most wicked body has an anti-aesthetic life of its own; its entropic tendencies are manifested sometimes in wastage and fatigue, sometimes in rococo grotesque escape from the disciplines of formal presentation in which it has been

Alan Schacher performances in real time, beating the clock, beating records, beating rivals, beating the track to the goal post in the ultimate bid to be unsurpassable. What has performance to do with this vision? In the present cultural climate, to be
Judy Best

 schooled. Lohr catches the wicked body at various of its escape points. There is the portrait shot, where the genre unmistakably calls for beauty, but the face has slid into a heavy-featured expression of disgust. And there is the pirouette pose, which perverts aesthetic codes by combining them into jarring hybridity: the masculine and the feminine, the nude and the costumed body, the classical and the avant-garde.

What does the future mean for the body? There has been much speculation about the body/technology nexus, and the coming age of the cyborg. Telarc has been a major international influence on this speculation, and has given it some explicit direction, but Telarc remains unique. For most of us, we life is here to stay, and the future of the body - of the individual bodies we inhabit - necessarily involves deterioration. The body has no choice but to carry it past into its future. And the performer, whose medium is the body, must engage with all the complexities of its continuous becomeings and unbecomings. Anna Sabiel's work is strongly directed by a fascination with body memories, which she explores in meditative performance installations through a series of experiments called Internalised Cities.

I go with Heidrun Lohr to watch a photographic session on site at the Rigging and Scaffolding Annex of the Sydney Institute of Technology, where Anna and installation artist Sarah Waterson are working on an articulated construction of cross bolted scaffolding poles, suspended from twisted steel cable between two 8 metre joints raised to a not quite vertical axis. "There are lines everywhere", says Heidrun, lying on the ground, trying to get the structure against a looming sky. It's a complex of skewed verticals and horizontals, built in a series of vertebra-like sections which are joined by strips of purple lycra. Anna adjusts the velcro fastenings on the strips. A Heath-Robinson touch, quite out of keeping with the rigorous technical knowledge that has gone into the rigging process. But it works. She climbs onto one of the bars, and the whole thing responds with a reptilian sway. As Anna tries to get the feel of it, Heidrun is clicking away, witnessing a newly developing relationship.
Memories. The installation is to be wired for sound by Shane Fehery, and Toss de Quincy is collaborating on the movement design, to create an orchestrated suspension performance that taps the residual memories in the body itself. (See Cover)

Anna Sahlin's commitment to heavy metal is a salutary reminder that technology is not all electronics. The material remains of dead machines or machinic constructions are everywhere, and we'll go on adding to them till well beyond 2000. There's no better medium than performance, though, for exploring the absurdities in the relations between matter and circuitry. Another photograph from Heidrun Lohr's collection shows Jill Orr in Love Songs (1991) sitting on the edge of a primitive wooden bed in what looks like an old world log cabin, watched over blankly by the glowing screen of a TV in the corner. The walls are chalked with the timeless slogans of broken love, and Orr herself is covered in chalk-like make-up, as though her body were starting to be encrusted with its past experiences. Open City have got into a highly developed relationship with the screen in Shop and The Necessary Orgy. They make light of the adventures of the flesh in an electronic environment, where desire follows ever diverging objects.

Entropy again. The screen hares energies only to effect their dispersal through an infinite process of futile selection. No sale. Virginia Baxter shrugs off the wasted enterprise and, in real time, rallies her energies and reinvents her desires for another go. Keith Gallash, exhausting himself amongst virtual bodies, warns you are already feeling grubby, splintered, public, sad and thinking... I won't last the next five minutes. The Necessary Orgy is not for you.

The future is the next five minutes, as well as the millennial leap. Can performance erode the tyranny of 2000 by an infinite succession of five minute detours? Where is performance going? The obvious answers - that it's going hybrid, multicultural and technological - surely don't need rehearsing again. Returning to Heidrun's table, there is a picture of Katya Molino, dressed as a nurse, dancing with a skeleton by a field of fake poppies. In a minute, she will sit down and tell a story based on the memory of lying in an Intensive Care Unit. The past and the future are another kind of hybrid, which is belied by the dichotomous thinking of futurism. I've recently moved to Homebush, to the heart of 2000 territory. On the UBD map, the house where I am living is situated mid way between two large yellow patches that are free of roads. The upper one is the Homebush Bay Olympic site. The lower one, quite a bit bigger, is its unacknowledged Other, Rookwood cemetery, the largest city of the dead in the Southern Hemisphere.

Jane Goodall teaches Postmodern Studies at The University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury and writes widely on performance and other experimental art forms. She is the author of Artaud and the Gnostic Drama, Oxford University Press, 1994.
Once More With Feeling

Anne Marsh looks back at the year 2000

Looking 'toward 2000' in the artworld is like trying to experience what has already taken place. After all, Jean Baudrillard, intergalactic captain of the 'already there', turned 2000 into a nostalgia trip in 1984 under the pre-tense that the year 2000 would not take place, and later that the year 2000 had already happened.

One thing is certain: the year that designate the end of the century and the beginning of the next has become a sign and its meaning shifts with its context. The fin de siècle has always been an hysterical moment in history but after a whole generation of artists and critics have been schooled in the properties of the sign, it does seem significant that the three-zero binary of 2000 takes on mythological status.

Performance art which focuses on the body and the identities signified upon it collides with the metaphorical construction of century's simultaneous endings and beginnings. The body and technology have been recurring themes in recent performance art. The renewed interest in the corporeal body, spurred on by feminist theories of difference, manifests in investigations of the social coding of the body as well as the much touted angry, abject work. The interface between the body and technology is explored in the spectacular body amplification and robotic choreography of Stelarc's performances. It is also exploited by Laurie Anderson who wires her body for performance, using technology to change her sexual persona on stage.

The intervention of technology in society and within the body still causes ethical concerns for the loss of privacy, subjectivity, spirituality. The elusiveness of that which cannot be represented fascinates us and continues to produce some of the most sustained conceptual performance. Many of these works rely on transmitting cultural and personal memory and it is often technology which allows for such representation.

Barbara Campbell's historical and sociological meandering in Cries from the Tower, The Diamond Necklace Affair and more recently Backwash are interesting examples of a new direction in performance art. Campbell is interested in the way in which history is written, who makes history and why. In Backwash (ACCA and AGNSW 1994) she used taped telephone conversations intercepted with narrative and chant-like sequences of phone numbers and place names to re-create a moment in local history. A bank of tape recorders, mixers and microphones enabled the artist to choreograph an alternative history, one which focused on the role women had played rather than the heroism of the men documented in previous accounts. (Cont.)
In the 1990s there is much talk of the 'performative' body as boundaries between modes of performance break down further into what some are calling the 'hybrid arts'. Difference theory, queer theory and theory concerned with the corporeal have contributed significantly to a critical understanding of the 'performative' and its role in postmodern culture.

In contemporary photography the performative is a dominant theme and some of the most challenging images in Australia are being made by artists interrogating racial and sexual histories and identities. Rea's Definitions of Difference (Blakness ACCA 1994) is a dramatic series of coloured bodies all tied in various ways with a noose knot. Over each image is a fishing manual definition of a particular knot. The sequence of posed body portraits questions black identity as a homogeneous idea by colouring the bodies differently, but still conveys the social oppression of that body in the sinister sign of the noose.

It seems that as the century closes the body with its social and psychic structures will continue to be a vital surface for each's rendition of the bridge or in some versions the body there are now quite complex and sophisticated works being produced, the spectacle of the abject body returns in a variety of rehashes of 70s body art. Simone O'Brien's pissing from a trapeze in The Performance Space's Open Week might have been tongue-in-cheek but it shares the same infantile fantasies as many of the pre-odical antics of the 1970s. That it was an emission by a woman in the 1990s makes for good business in the artworld at present but this is only because the bad girl/wicked woman syndrome has been poached for all it's worth by critics, many of whom, along with some artists, miss the critical edge. Jill Orr's Raising the Spirits (Persona Cognita, MoMA, 1994) and Marriage of the Bride to Art (NGV, 1994) both explored female cross-dressing. This aspect of the 'wicked woman' genre is still pertinent because cross-dressing has, until recently, been considered the domain of the female impersonator. The current fashion for cross-dressing among men, spurred by the success of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, is not as socially challenging as a woman mocking the phallic symbol. Mike Parr's rendition of the bride on the front cover of December's Art and Australia is a sad existential story without the camp edge of the queen vendor or the menacing gaze of the phallic woman. Linda Sproul's work is in danger of being misread under the somewhat facile categories of wicked/dangerous. The trouble with these terms is that they resonate quite vibrantly with old existential tropes so that the oedipal play continues, albeit in another body.

Sproul's performance opus is densely packed with social, historical and psychological references. Roots (NGV 1994) looked at the monumental myth of woman as she has been enshrined as object in western art. Standing on top of a 4 metre high column she proceeded to sew a 2.5 metre plait tied to her pubic hair. The phallic protrusion fell in an arch above the audience as Sproul was winched off the pedestal in a neck brace and the column collapsed to the ground. Suspended in the Great Hall of the National Gallery the artist dressed in gold appeared as the goddess, virgin and temptress so often depicted in art history. Once on the ground she handed out her trademark funeral cards. This time the message included a small plait of hair and the caption 'remember to die'. Sproul's announcement could have been usefully employed by emerging artists who were challenged by the old avant-garde during the seminar programme of 25 Years of Performance Art (The Performance Space, 1994) to justify their territory as performance artists. As we contemplate the year 2000 it is difficult to be clear about exactly what has died but it seems relatively safe to say that once we get there we'll know we've already been there before.

Dreaming Theatres

Rubbing against each other, overlapping, brawling, forgetting who they are, multiplying, burning out, dreaming, reinventing and re-locating, rolling and subverting, they are the Mac-musical, the state companies, the regions, circus, community, alternative, hybrid and performance theatres, black, white, homosexual, female, educational, deaf, disabled, old and young. Actors and a few directors and designers cross-class this massive pluralised territory, most of us don't know the map. We live in a theatre age of astonishing complexity and perplexity, as dense and rich as you could perhaps wish and impossible to take in.

Some, conservative and radical, wish backwards to a small monolithic mainstream with a gritting alternative current. Some wish forwards to a theatre that is part of everyday life, visionary and influential. Theatre in Australia, relative to its past, is big, widespread, touring, bewildering and Australian as never before, but the industry is anxious, bickering, threatened inside and out, even prophesying its doom. Because so much has changed so quickly, because so much has multiplied and diversified - forms, venues, training institutions, the number of theatre graduates, proliferating writers, the races and classes represented - this is not surprising. Creative Nation's marketing and promotion impulse, the long-term brake on increased funding to individual artists, the threats of conservative state governments, the ill-advised creation of the Major Organisations Board of the Australia Council, all feed the apparent paranoia with apparent fragmentation, with old hierarchies apparently re-confirmed, with apparently conflicting criteria of excellence and access. There is no easy overview, no big picture, no one critic to conveniently terriodb the quick from the dead. Voices are raised, demanding a political funding, support for ensembles, 'homes' for the performing community, access to multi-media (these last three at the 1994 National Performers Conference, Melbourne). A war of the theatres threatens to erupt between Belvoir Street and the Sydney Theatre Company over art, ensembles and relations with the Australia Council, the STC's director pleading for additional state support so that he can cut what he experiences as strangle ries with the Council. The Australia Council, led by the Music Board, has set about simplifying and clarifying its goals and funding criteria, perhaps a good thing, but it won't ease the fears of a very real, complex world and much energy will be expended on resolving between the lines as explicit criteria fade.

Even at its most elaborate, behind sets, masks and techno-lighting, theatre dreams of a purity incarnate in the body of the actor, of an empty space, the ensemble, and an under-performed division of labour. Theatre embodies a tension between profoundly conservative and radical impulses. Even at its most conservative, even reactionary, theatre has been an outsider, vulnerable, underemployed, its dreams far outnumbering those who even get half-way to the transformations, otherness and influence they yearn for. Even when radical, it can be pathological, lauding, precociously disappearing, clinging to a past pre-film, pre-television, pre-CD-ROM, suspicious of, even hostile to the freshly categorised Hybrid Arts even though sharing much with them. There is much to value in theatre's innate conservatism, but much which keeps it out of touch, embarrassing, at odds with its relevance mark (as a leading Australian director once observed, you can get the topical drift by watching TV soaps, but not the theatre), anxious, threatened and playing to a small if growing part of the population. It's a kind of half-living national treasure, propped up, contrary, awful and awesome in its energies and latitudine, nowhere more evident than in the state companies as they are rescued by MOB from their irritating peers.

By year 2000 they might not be recognisable. Sydney, Melbourne and Queensland state companies look much as they have for a long time, anachronistic, with the odd innovative moment, and high
Perth Festival, Australia’s oldest arts festival, respectively directed and administrated by Graeme Drinkwater, David Blankenhoop and Henry Boston, Australia’s longest running and most consistent enterprise, continues to be. Despite the fact that their annual festival is staked in their image: solid rather than particularly innovative, emphasising existing rather than creating new work, it is locally referred to as ‘art great plays’ (Priestly’s An Inspector Calls, Royal National Theatre of Great Britain and Sydney’s The Well of Saints from the Abbey Theatre in Dublin); world-ranked orchestras and chamber ensembles (the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra, the Prague Chamber Choir and the Moscow Conservatory Trio) and the relatively slowly expanding, contemporary dance, in which this festival has a noticeably adventurous record. Garth Fagan’s Dance Company and MOB but run a pare, adventurous, boldly entrepreneurial, multi-cultural, performing and cultural exchange? Are they just bread and circuses, or is there something else of substance? One answer, and cultural force.

A festivals within the festival: the festival of worlds and seasons. The Well of Saints festival, world ranked orchestras and chamber ensembles (the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra, the Prague Chamber Choir and the Moscow Conservatory Trio) and the relatively slowly expanding, contemporary dance, in which this festival has a noticeably adventurous record. Garth Fagan’s Dance Company and MOB but run a pare, adventurous, boldly entrepreneurial, multi-cultural, performing and cultural exchange? Are they just bread and circuses, or is there something else of substance? One answer, and cultural force.

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Mardi Gras '95

The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival (3 February to mid-March) reinforces its international heavyweight status this year with the participation of Pierre et Gilles, "the twin gay icons" of the art world who will present their "stunning, unique images of kitsch, hard hitting camp and fab decor" at Roslyn Oxley Gallery. The visual program overall reflects an acknowledgement of the strength of queer art in mainstream circles. Major galleries — the MCA with Remark and the AGNSW whose Perspecta is an official Mardi Gras event — are involved for the first time, and boutique commercials, such as Sarah Contier with photographs by New Yorker Jack Pierson, are also grabbing a share of the action.

Nonetheless, the overwhelming flavour is still one of community and grass roots inclusiveness: alongside Out Art, the Mardi Gras community art show at ARDT Gallery, there are 36 exhibitions scattered throughout Sydney's cafes, warehouses and public sites. The Sydney ArtBus, complete with your very own queer performer as guide, a Stephen Cummins retrospective, and Out City Projections, a moveable installation of projected images, look of particular interest.

The emphasis on community also comes through in the decision to move the nerve centre of the performing arts program "out west" to Newtown. The New Theatre presents Barry Lowe's The Death of Peter Pan, an exploration of the fraught love between youth and ageing author J.M.Barrie, creator of the little boy who never grows up. Toxic Girls by Mardi McConnochie, where four schoolgirls "discover that passion can lurk in the most unexpected places", is on at Newtown High School, whilst The Studio Theatre hosts A Body of Work, "handsome abstract dance" by Lance Gries, who's been known to play the piano other than with his fingers. Closer to the city, The Performance Space becomes cLUB bENT, the Festival's first late night arts club, a showcase for queer performance, trance work, cabaret, film, monologues and video and computer art. Belvoir Street presents Honour Molloy's Tongues of Stone which uses the disturbing history of abortion in late 19th century New York as a backdrop for the consideration of contemporary concerns about the right to privacy and freedom of expression. And the tiny Lookout Theatre packs a punch with Queer Fringe, a season of work by local Australian playwrights.

The sense of community building carries into the big events such as the fair with its dog and drag competitions ("see if you can tell the difference"), the Awards night, the Sports Festival, and of course Together Forever, the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Choir gig at ABC's Eugene Goosens Hall. This performance forms part of the Festival's inaugural music program, which also includes Wilde Alone, Opera Appollo's production of Larry Sitsky's 1982 opera, and Live At the Eco Bar, late night casual jazz, country and rock.

For the more bookish, the literature program offers two book launches — Divertika queer anthology and Love Cries: Cruel Passions, Strange Desires — and two prose/poetry readings, at the Writers' Centre and The Women's Library, while the highlights of the forums include Art & Culture at the MCA and Needlefest, a discussion of issues faced by gay and lesbian injecting drug-users via a variety of popular films.

For more info, get yourself a Festival guide or call (02) 361 0655.

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Embodying Archetypes, Personally

Nikki Heywood's Creatures Ourselves previewed

Anyone who saw Nikki Heywood's disturbing, balloon-frocked contribution to the innovative Steps program curated by Leisa Shelton at Sydney's The Performance Space in 1994, will want to see Heywood's latest full scale work.

Creatures Ourselves is a performance born out of collaboration between Nikki, five performers and two musicians-composers. It is a movement-based work influenced by butoh practices, particularly Body Weather, but with a strong interest in the ordinary gesture. Swinging between the grotesque and the banal, it examines the world of the insect hive as a metaphor for male and female archetypes and their relationships.

This is the third and most complex of a series of performances in which Nikki has looked at powerful female archetypes. The first, SOMA/Memory Frame, with music by Matthew Faragher, was a solo based on the Sumerian myth of Innana and her journey into the underworld, her encounter with and near annihilation at the hands of the monstrous Ereshkigal, her rescue and re-emergence.

The second work, The Body Sings, grew out of a fascination with the gargantuan myth of Ereshkigal, her relationship with fertility and death, and her dreams of ascension from the shadows.

In Creatures Ourselves, the enlarged female body now inhabits a world populated by others. She is queen or supreme matriarch, a position she may or may not have chosen for herself, as it implies entrapment, service and, ultimately, sacrifice to the others.

Implicit in this dynamic is the relationship between size and power, the mutability of the female body, anorexia being the most potent example of the struggle between an assertion of power and its complete removal.

This is particularly relevant in dance where anorexia abounds in the quest for perfect form. In Creatures Ourselves, we see a reversal of this form, where the female body is expanded to its full potential and the male body is diminished as a consequence.

The soundscape for Creatures Ourselves has evolved from a collaboration between Gary Bradbury and Tony Backhouse. A capella voice engages with electronics. Sounds from performer improvisations led by Backhouse focus on vocal textures and dissonance rather than song. The electronic component has been generated by Bradbury entirely from samplings of voices, utilising digital treatments and analogue synthesizer filtering effects. Electronics are also employed 'live'.

This conjunction between the human and the electronic echoes the thematic range of the performance from archetypal to personal.

Creatures Ourselves, The Performance Space, Sydney, March 2-5, 7-12 8pm

One Extra Miracle

A new dance of ideas about hope, desire and belief

The One Extra Dance Company's Tent of Miracles has a story to tell: "Somewhere in drought-stricken, rural Australia, after much wishing and praying, a spirit cockatoo guides a woman to water. But blind faith is exploited when this water is taken to a carnival and sold as 'Miracle Water'.”

One Extra's commitment to dance as theatre is well known. Appropriately, the company's founding director Ka Ti Chan returns to the company as dramaturg and co-director to work with current artistic director Graeme Watson who is directing and choreographing Tent of Miracles.

The narrative outline shouldn't suggest a preoccupation with story alone. Doubtless it provides a schema from which will spring powerful and cumulative theatrical and dance moments and motifs. One Extra are not afraid of ideas, hence they subtitle the company 'dance of ideas'. Watson is interested in the appeal of miracles in an imperfect world, indeed in what can appear to be a miracle in such an age as ours. Fundamentalists reaffirm the belief in miracle, the Pope beatifies as many miracle-makers as he can. Watson thinks "the appeal of change without explanation is not surprising in a culture in which everything is explained".

The first act of Tent of Miracles is rural. The arrival of rain is interpreted as a miracle. In the second, urban act, this miracle, or the blind faith in it, is exploited and trivialised. Watson observes that in Christianity, miracles are invariably in narrative form, but perhaps there are other forms of miracle - the event to which a narrative is attached in hindsight or all those moments that could be labelled miraculous but we don't know that they are.

Watson says, "Tent of Miracles could be read as referring in part to the dance world. Traditionally dance was preoccupied with perfectibility of body and performance. Now the miracle of achievement," he says, "is located in marketing." He worries that this narrows the possibilities of being subservient as we work to survive rather than create. This is confirmed by Creative Nation's focus on the market and promotion and, he fears, the ongoing off of subvention to the new Hybrid Arts Committee of the Australia Council. One Extra, he points out, has always been 'cross artform', and the pleasure of working with One Extra is in its refusal to be easily categorised. The categorising of experience (as miracles) or forms (as pure dance) can be demanding and limiting.

Rory Dempster is creating 'a tent of light', incorporating performers and audience in the capacious St Georges Hall Theatre in Newtown, Sydney. Emmison D'Arcy is creating the set. Live music is by Anthony Partos. The ensemble of dancers includes Lisa French, Patrick Harding-Irmer, Dean Walsh and Michael Campbell (a leading dancer with Cologne's Tanzforum) and Jeannette Fabila from New Guinea and a 1994 Graduate of NAIDSA. RT

The One Extra Company's Tent of Miracles, St Georges Hall Theatre, Newtown, 23 March - 9 April.
Emergent media zones

McKenzie Wark tunes his aerials to the information superhighway

How is the mediascape likely to change over the next decade and how does this affect the practice of new media art? The changes in the technology of the media that are either happening or imminent have been much hyped, and not without reason. New media forms will open up some interesting possibilities for art practice, and perhaps lose off some old ones.

Less often discussed is a second aspect of this change—the changing expectations and competencies of audiences. The media often discuss the media as if the process of choosing, receiving and interpreting media flow were some kind of natural process. No matter how much this is changing, one might like to presume that the development of the new media vectors will automatically create a new audience and a new market, it isn’t necessarily so. For the moment the competition between existing audience cultures and new media forms is always a complicated and quirky business. This is as true for the uses made of media by art as by commerce. Changes in media forms often appear to be driven by the needs of an unspecified audience. In those areas of culture where the changes are most apparent, as in the media zone. There is a narrow window of opportunity seized by a number of media oligopolists. Basically, every medium faced the same problem in the 80s: costs were rising faster than audiences or markets were growing. This was the problem with the movie business, television, publishing, computers and telephony.

One solution to this problem was to build a new audience, or to resist the cultural protectionism of countries like France and Australia and the privatisation of state telephone monopolies in their media industries. Examples are strategies of this sort. A whole range of businesses, based in television or publishing or publishing or publishing, are now experimenting with CD-ROM, or over a network, be it the telephone system used by the internet or cable and satellite television services, to deliver multichannel television. On the internet, the World Wide Web is growing and offers speed for low cost experiments, like video. And Blair’s Web Xe. CD-ROM is also a potentially low cost medium and many artists or multimedia companies are rushing out CD- Interactive television is another story, and experiments here are mostly restricted to corporate tests of new formats for commercial products. In the US, access to this medium depends on mainlining the community access principle already in place for pay TV.

In the relatively high tech area of the experience media, the talents of creative artists are brought in by investors because their bets are on what new forms of cultural forms might work with as yet unspecified audiences. In those areas of interactive media that use established software tools and delivery formats it is often possible to create works on very small budgets. An example is the very successful CD-ROM Myst, produced by a team of three people working at home. Making visual artists and filmmakers are now experimenting with CD-ROM works.

The first big distinction is produced. There is as yet no easy way to distribute CD-ROM art. Book publishers and video games companies are rushing out CD-ROM based products, and these are distributed via computer stores and occasionally, on an experimental basis at this stage, by bookshops. Many of these products are very poor, particularly some of the crap authored by publishers and TV commercials, but will pay attention because they have media conglomerates of the order of Time-Warner behind them, they are on the market.

Most interactive products from computer game producers technology applications of existing cultural forms, including enyclopaedias, music video, documentaries and video games. They often have high production values but fail to maintain the interest of the idea or to really use interactivity in any interesting way. How to preserve buttons and waiting ages for the screen to reframe any more interactive than flipping the pages of a book? Where interactivity gets interesting is where the skills of film, video, music, games and publishing collide with each other. In Australia, producers with a diverse range of media experience such as Troy Innocent, Brad Miller, Linda Dement, John Collette and VNS Matrix are all producing interesting hybrid forms of interactivity, mostly using readily available interactive formats such as CD-ROM and laser disk. Jon McCormack’s work stands out in this company of bicultural experimental computer programming. On the whole, however, the opportunities for artists, particularly for Australian artists, lie in bringing conceptual and cultural forms to existing technologies, rather than being preoccupied by the so-called ‘cutting edge’ technologies of change per se.

Television based interactive media are a long way off for Australian producers. The collaborative interests of the broadcasters have locked us out of multichannel television for a generation. To this one can add the enormous difficulties in raising investment money in Australia. But there is hope. Community TV activists, such as Jeff Cook, have involved in putting community TV to air via cable, and a small band of energetic community TV activists, such as the indefatigable Jeff Cook, have interactivity in their sights as well. The TV that is controllable is a rudimentary form of interactive device but it can be used to drive a menu-based interactive information format.

In the Australian context, access to new media, for community TV, or indeed for any artist, is constrained by a number of factors. Pressures from globalising media oligopolies to relinquish cultural protectionism will increase. The Hollywood movie conglomerates lost on this issue in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade negotiations against the US, in the world market, or contact Chimera for more information.

Given the stranglehold media oligopolies have on mainstream Australian media, and the influence on the policy process, it will be extremely difficult to maintain spaces in the emerging media landscape for anything as ambitious as community broadcasting and subsidised cinema and art. It was refreshing to see a strong, coordinated and consistent cultural policy statement to experimentation and production of Australian content in film, television and broadcast media—administered by a new committee, the Film Commission and SBS. That the ABC was unable to negotiate this policy commitment was very disturbing, as is the present government’s lack of commitment to the main public broadcaster at a time in which it has undergone massive restructuring to orient it to the new environment.

Community activities won a significant victory in 1993 in getting bandwidth set aside for a sixth TV channel devoted to community video access. Yet it remains an open question whether community media groups have the resources and experience to capitalise on this opportunity. The lack of coordination between arts policy, community media policy and new media policy on the part of government finds an unfortunate parallel in the lack of coordination between different art groups, the media and the arts. Creating spaces for dialogue on media futures is very urgent.

There are now significant funds to disburse for new media experiments. This will work best if concentrated on the cultural forms of new media rather than on cutting edge technology. Australia is a technologically dependent media market, being a long way from centres of research and power in the emerging ‘military entertainment complex’ of California.

Art tends to occupy one of two margins in relation to the dominant media technology of the day. Either it colonises residual media left behind by changes brought by the culture industries, or it forms an avant-garde in the emergent media that do not yet have a stable infrastructure. The opportunities for art practice at the moment are opening up in the emergent media zones. A narrow window of opportunity there is more broadly interdisciplinary and collaborative activity, the instability of the whole nexus between media technology and cultural forms at present. The patterns of culture that will stabilise in the next millennium may well be determined by experiments and struggles undertaken today.

McKenzie Wark’s book Virtual Geography: Living with Global Media Events is published by Chimera. For more information contact Chimera Press and distributed by Manic Exposure.

Chimera

In and Around Sydney 20-26 February 1995
System Error

John Conomos retrieves artists from the Creative Nation trash can

The rhetorical architecture of Paul Keating's recent Creative Nation statement signals the growing realisation that the new media arts are emblematic of new cultural, economic and paradigmatic shifts in our everyday lives. Clearly, this document suggests a substantial shift in government cultural policy. However, the document's traditional emphasis on direct assistance to visual artists, filmmakers, writers, performers, dancers and writers is now somewhat out of date. To a more recent one of supporting diverse institutions and mechanisms of cultural products and services in the context of local, national and global cultural spaces.

For the first time, aside from the more necessary concerns of supporting relevant arts funding institutions like the Australia Council and the traditional art forms, we have a focus on the way the new multimedia technologies connect to broadcasting, computing, telephony and information. This signifies throughout the document a sustained project to expand the economic potential of the arts by encouraging the computer/technology sector of our economy to fund new digital media products. Further, it indicates the emergence of new post-biological art forms evolving from a multiplicity of interactions in electronic space.

Although Creative Nation possesses numerous worthwhile ideas, rhetorical emphases, and pragmatic funding suggestions, there is nevertheless a problematic Arthurian characterisation of the traditional and the new media art forms in terms of cultural excellence, national identity, self-expression and quality. To a considerable degree, a possible road map to our expanding culture technology and its relevance to us as individuals and as a highly urbanised multicultural society. But it is a document that also typifies certain cultural, epistemological and technological pitfalls of a more utopian/technophilic approach to the question of how new media technologies and contemporary art practice.

Too much emphasis has been placed on how high-tech entrepreneurs have the magical formula for transforming Australia into a truly digital David versus the analogue Goliath in the Pacific Rim. The $84 million that is to be spent in the next four years is a positive step in facilitating new media products and services for Australia's rapid entry into a post-broadcast world of global media, but little consideration has been given to the more mainstream and yet more representative of the postmodern technological avant-garde, in the emerging multimedia institutional landscape.

Too often reading Creative Nation one has the sense of an absent, new: a naive belief in a top-down hierarchical model of cultural production, new media technologies as an expression of late-capitalist culture and Platonic cyberpace ideology. It is also assumed that new media art forms imply, ipso facto, new aesthetic paradigms. This does not mean that I subscribe to the wildest romantic excesses of Roy Ascott's view of the new interactive media as a global "mind-to-mind" revolution nor to a Jeffersonian model of the information superhighway and its putative emancipatory possibilities as we read in Wired and other West Coast New Age publications. But I do believe in the critical project of conceptualising the new media arts (as Ascott does) along the lines of a bottom-up paradigm of connectivity and interactivity.

The new "terminal identity" subjectivity that defines the young navigators of today's computer terminals of multimedia forms has not been adequately acknowledged. Electronic art as an open-ended paradigm for re-thinking our institutions, our perceptions of ourselves and the complex continuities between the traditional and the new media has taken second place to the notion of new multimedia technology as a national cultural "downloading" ideology. (This is especially evident in the "Australia on CD" Program). The proactive stance adopted by Creative Nation to engender a viable content-oriented multimedia industry suggests a limited utilitarian concept of the new electronic media. It rarely acknowledges that a new type of technical formations of new media art forms are complex and that their innovative content-mediated forms, forms, textures and cultural agendas are a legacy of modernism as much as they are of the naive post-war avant-garde arts. (This is tangentially indicated in the recent Nikau TV advertisement featuring William Burroughs).

What is commendable in this cultural policy document is its underlying objective to locate the new media arts in the broader domain of everyday life. However, this does not negate the importance of creating new exhibition, production and rhetorical contexts for artists engaged in the new cultural forms, in the gallery and the festival world as much as in the proposed Co-operative Multimedia Development Centres. The electronic arts depend on our ability to question the misleading beliefs and assumptions of our cultural pietists, whether they do constitute an "avant-garde" practice and how they relate to the more traditional art forms. For in the irrepective of the document's practical strategies to create national multimedia forms, the Australian Multimedia Enterprise, the Co-operative Multimedia Development Centres, the "Australia on CD" Program and funding the Australian Film Commission to produce multimedia works, we need to ask the more demanding self-reflexive questions regardingotechniques, our mass media capitalist conceptual frameworks, seeing how cultural institutions mask the vested interests of academic, bureaucratic and corporate culture and how our mainstream thinking about art, culture and technology is hopelessly inadequate in the light of the aesthetic and cultural turbulence the new cultural technologies are creating. (On the latter point, Laurence Rickels amongst others, has appropriately described our symptomatic inability to find our way from the "neocolonization of the rational" to the "perspective psychosis").

Where Creative Nation is correct is in stressing the diverse division of cultural labour that is required for the production of CD-ROM technology, broadcast and interactive services, and on-line PC services. It is confused and vague however on the complexities of training individuals in the new electronic media and on how established and younger artists will connect with corporate, software and tertiary personnel in these new production contexts. Creative Nation underestimate not only the experimental necessity of the role that mores General Nandaloimoto Nintendo international artists have to play in the production of the new multimedia exhibits and screen-based electronic media, but it also overlooks the importance of how difficult it is to locate adequately trained new media arts personnel.

Consequently, artists familiar with the new media forms need to be situated in the chain of executive decision-making, they need to be involved in the early stages of conceptualising the new tertiary sites creating their hybrid services for the Internet as much as for the new media forms need to be situated in the Creative Nation document and is sadly lacking today with the exception of one or two museums like the Museum of Sydney.

It is crucial that we remind ourselves whenever possible that the emerging media arts are starting to represent a canon as much as the more traditional art forms do. This necessitates the rhetorical awareness to question our established tendencies to either subscribe to a utopian or a dystopic view of the new media arts.

As we approach the end of this century, what is clearly emerging in electronic media are the unpredictable non-binary intertextual forms between computer art, video, cinema, television, performance, virtual reality and cyberspace and the increasing significance of computer animation and graphics in shaping the concerns and aesthetics of new technologies. Lamentably, Creative Nation does not give due recognition to these dynamic aesthetic, cultural and technological forms, nor to their multimedia creators and neither does it consider how they might be located in reference to education, culture and industry.

Notwithstanding the questionable nationalist slant of Creative Nation and its overall tendency to elevate the new media technologies almost solely in audience, economic, marketing and social terms, it nevertheless directs our attention to important issues relating to how the new digital arts are connected to the experience of our everyday lives. It is a significant "weather vane" signal by the Keating administration that finally the new media technologies are being factored into government cultural policy. However, this does not mean that I subscribe to a utopian or a dystopic view of the new media arts being factored into government cultural policy. However, what is truly significant is that new media artists are starting to represent a canon as much as the more traditional art forms do. This necessitates the rhetorical awareness to question our established tendencies to either subscribe to a utopian or a dystopic view of the new media arts.

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The New Chimera

The New Chimera

Synapex, the organising body of Chimera, a five day art event for Sydney (February 23-27) was "the first of its kind in Australia to focus on new directions in artists' practices that bring the arts and technology together金融服务, workforce, and education. Fourty seven artists from Argentina, Thailand, England, Korea, Italy, Canada, Ireland, the U.S.A.; residents at Artspace) draws on contemporary, exhibiting, and

The symposium is at the Goethe Institute, the exhibition at Parliament House, the "computer mediations of communication" at UNSW's College of Fine Arts.

Co-ordinator Neil Berecyn emphasises the optimism of the event and the vitality of new arts practices, especially in the blend of technical, artistic, environmental, and educational work on the site. "Many of the visiting artists and the their unemployed counterparts" says Apple have been very helpful and made such means accessible. Berecyn has worked with deaf audiences and has created sculptural performances. Berecyn's work is about the border between Australia and Northern Ireland, art practice and digital technology, it is about the unpredictable non-binary intertextual forms between computer art, video, cinema, television, performance, virtual reality and cyberspace and the increasing significance of computer animation and graphics in shaping the concerns and aesthetics of new technologies. Lamentably, Creative Nation does not give due recognition to these dynamic aesthetic, cultural and technological forms, nor to their multimedia creators and neither does it consider how they might be located in reference to education, culture and industry.

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John Conomos is a Sydney media artist and commentator.

Jeffrey Cook (Open Access Cable, Sydney) and John Conomos.

"Most of the visiting artists and their organisations," says Berecyn, "work outside the normal art world and with a non-traditional audience, without a building. Process is as important as the finished work and there is a belief that social change can be effected where there are new media artists."

A significant focus of the event is to develop communications between artists through fax, e-mail and internet, to integrate new media into art practices both as art and as information and to make such means accessible. Berecyn says Apple have been very helpful and that Michael Lee, the exhibition's opening address on-line. Another interesting feature is that the conference will allocate time for the presentation of proposals for future projects with a strong emphasis on collaborations across nations, cultures and forms.
Stock in trade recently I noticed the ad on the back of a comic book. Under an image of an eager-looking woman sitting beside a phone, two words jumped out in bold: WORKING NATION. It wasn’t until I read the fine print that I realised that the purpose of this catchy phrase was to promote the basis of new training schemes funded by the Commonwealth government.

There seems to be no limit to the Keating government’s capacity to inject nationalist sentiment into every new policy development. We’ve had the Greening Australia environmental policy, Playing Australia, a touring arts program, Multicultural Australia for the Olympics bid, the republic debate with all its rhetoric about the ‘culture’ nation and, at the end of last year after much hype, the long awaited Commonwealth cultural policy.

Creative Nation is certainly a very hip title for a cultural policy. Not only does it affirm government’s role in supporting creativity but it also plays on the idea of nations as cultural formations, as powerful inventions influencing our sense of identity and attachments. This is fundamentally what this landmark document is about: how should government intervene in the complicated worlds of cultural production, distribution and consumption? And how can these interventions help reflect and create something called ‘Australian culture’? Or, to put it another way: what is the role of cultural policy in nation formation?

‘Pretty crucial’ is the answer that Creative Nation comes up with. In the past it tended to be wars or wool that put us on the map. Now, it seems, Australia’s cultural industry is a powerful invention that can shape our sense of identity and hopefully keep them from falling into a kind of Australianised civilisation. Don’t think that cultural policy should ever be determined by political or economic aesthetic objectives. Rather, it should, and often is, about creating and protecting spaces of possibility, innovation, employment, critique and creativity in which the nation is imagined in important and progressive ways. You simply don’t know where it’s all going to go.

This plea for the role of policy in providing structures for national (and local) cultural expressions is not based on the idea that Australia’s ‘excellence’ varies from that of Australia’s civilised status. I don’t think that cultural policy should ever be determined by political or economic aesthetic objectives. Rather, it should, and often is, about creating and protecting spaces of possibility, innovation, employment, critique and creativity in which the nation is imagined in important and progressive ways. You simply don’t know where it’s all going to go.

A major theme running through Creative Nation is the need to maintain these policy traditions of cultural nationalism and protectonism; to continue government’s role in creating spaces of possibility. But the justifications for this have taken on an added twist. In the recent past, cultural industries were regulated or subsidised so that Australians could ‘dream their own dreams’, to quote a newspaper piece of policy rhetoric. The justifications were inward looking. Australian identity was young, fragile and vulnerable. Government protected home supported arts, films, books and images would help us understand who we were.

There is little of this insecurity and defensiveness in Creative Nation. Instead, the tone is confident and outward looking. Export market, national recognition and trade possibilities are the new rationales for policy. It has to be put to work to attract tourists, open up new markets and assist the balance of trade figures. Programmes like the Visual Arts Grants Support Scheme and Australian multimedia companies to compete internationally, cultural industry development and cultural industries. Multiculturalism has definitely arrived on government’s discus ated cultural policy. The SBS receives an extra $13 million over four years to commission Australian programs from independent producers.

The export drive in Creative Nation seems to compete globally, to seek out international markets and facilitate the wider circulation of Australian cultural products.

The role of cultural policy in this process is crucial. Protection of content and local production, support for creators and a more aggressive export orientation for cultural industries are all strategies that will foster multiple varieties of Australian identity and hopefully keep them independent and vibrant.

Gay Hawkins unwraps the Creative Nation package

Gay Hawkins teaches cultural studies in the School of Sociology at the University of New South Wales.
How to Get a Bite of the CD-ROM Action

David Harrington on the commercial steps to the CD-ROM platform.

With Microsoft CEO Bill Gates and the Pope in Sydney at the same time in January this year, inevitably comparisons arose, with one newspaper declaring that "the Pope is here and God is too". But while the Pope beatified Mary MacKillop, Gates preached a new religion of digital information.

Paul Keating ratified Gates' vision in his Creative Nation statement, by committing $84 million to supporting the development of indigenous CD-ROM and on-line information services. But how can this happen? Commercially, to enjoy the advantages of the multimedia hype and successfully build and market their own CD-ROMs or on-line information services?

Given that multimedia developers typically fall into two camps, the technoheads and the artists, the first challenge is marrying creative with technical and software skills. Here, the internet or physical bulletin boards of universities and colleges can help. Also useful could be Microsoft's "Multimedia Jumptape", a CD-ROM developer's kit, and Interactive Multimedia Development Guide, a free publication on how to develop CD-ROMs, available from Microsoft.

The second challenge is getting access to funding to develop your concept commercially. It can cost up to half a million dollars to successfully develop and market a CD-ROM globally. Commercial information services can cost similar amounts.

There are five main development phases for making, and replicating, the artwork. There are several possible avenues to secure funding for each phase:

- Friends wishing to take a share of your business. Many small high tech companies begin this way.
- Small business loans from the bank, difficult to get if you are a sole proprietor, and do not have four or five years of business success under your belt.
- Australian or overseas multimedia companies that may want to invest in your title. All global multimedia companies have departments to assess acquisition or investment in start-up companies. New on-line information gateways being established in Australia such as On Australia, the joint venture between Telecom and Microsoft, may also be interested.
- Venture capital funds in Australia or United States. Depending on their assessment of your business plan, market forecasts and management ability, these companies take a share of your business in return for providing funding.
- Federal arts or small business loans and grants. The Australia Council, Film Australia and the soon to be established Australian Multimedia Enterprise (AME) fund a variety of multimedia and will generally review your business plans in a similar manner to the venture capital funds.

Distribution is the third big challenge.

With the flood of CD-ROMs coming onto the market there will soon be a 'shelf space' problem, where smaller independent publishers will have difficulty selling their products because the majors will dominate the shelf space for CD-ROM sales. The most successful approach seems to be negotiating a licensing or distribution deal with one of the majors, such as Microsoft or Broderbund.

Independent developers will also need to rapidly acquire new skills in the field of user interface design. If Microsoft's success in developing icon-based graphical user interfaces is any indication, the multimedia titles that are most intuitive for users will also be most successful.

When AME is established in March this year, its mandate will include providing advice to new Australian developers seeking multimedia project finance. This will go some way to creating a much needed information node and coordination point for the multimedia industry in Australia. It could be a useful starting point for you if you require advice about how to take your multimedia idea one step further towards commercial development.

David Harrington is a consultant with McKinsey & Co. specializing in multimedia.

CD-ROM - The 21st Century Bronze?

Mike Leggett on the potential of CD-ROM technology for artists

Those of us who have been keeping an eye on the creative and meaning-making possibilities of the computer since the early '70s have always been daunted by the technology with which it is associated, by its cost and by the complexity of the metalanguage. The developments in multimedia computing technology of recent years have to some extent addressed these concerns, although the time, effort and precision required to assemble a series of images for interactive purposes are still considerable. The cost of transferring computer file details about the Artists CD-ROM Show or e-mail: M.Leggett@unsw.edu.au. or contact Mike by fax: (02) 252 4361 or e-mail: M.Leggett@unsw.edu.au.

The deadline for proposals is 17 February, 1993.

The MCA is on the lookout for artists whose work uses CD-ROM for possible inclusion in their show planned for September this year. The curators' main aim is to represent the diversity of practice being pursued worldwide by artists working with computers, giving particular emphasis to work that is extending the possibilities of the medium, for example its potential to alter the nature of engagement between a work and its audience. Innovative presentations by artists using CD-ROM of work in other media will also be considered.

Those interested artists should send a copy of their work or address any enquiries to: Mike Leggett, Artists CD-ROM Exhibition, MCA, PO Box 1286, Sydney 2000. 

Ariel now has a Multimedia PC installed - so everyone can investigate CD-ROM. As well as flight simulators, reference titles etc. we will be stocking local artists work including "50 Words for the City" by John Colette and Perspective 95 exhibits "Cyberflesh Giralmon" by Linda Dement and "IDEA-ON?" by Troy Innocent.
Teledomesticity: @HOME on the net

Amanda McDonald Crowley and Brad Miller at the Doors of Perception 2: @HOME conference, the Netherlands, 1994.

Doors of Perception 1994 was staged by the Netherlands Design Institute and Mediamatic magazine. Over 1000 delegates from all over Europe, the USA, Japan and Australia, from the fields of technology, design, psychology, philosophy, art, and architecture were in Amsterdam for the event.

The conference organisers started from the premise that when a new technology enters a culture, the culture changes. In response, speakers focused on a particular culture, 'home', home as market, as metaphor and as medium. Speakers compared the qualities of telematic space and domestic space, and analysed changes in communication, both public and private. They looked at the psychology of belonging - to a family, group, or community, and the question of architecture of information and the creation of shared meaning in virtual communities. There was concern expressed that vast resources are being devoted to digital versions of existing human activities - teleshopping, video-on-demand, telemessaging, but attempts to create entirely new uses for the technologies have been unambitious, to say the least. As the concept of 'home' developed, various speakers engaged in debate about the political and cultural potential of new media and its impact on domestic space. What 'home' might constitute in light of advances in telematics physically as well as psychologically became a key issue for the conference.

For John Perry Barlow, lyricist for The Grateful Dead and co-founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the global interpersonal links facilitated by "the new term" only that one can go out and make everywhere 'home'. Pauline Terreerhoo, journalist and author, speculated on the other hand, that the introduction of communication technologies into the physical home would transform the home into a place where people could also work thereby fostering positive changes in relationships between men and women. Her argument was founded on the belief that home played a much more positive role before industrialisation forced people to separate the domestic sphere from work. Amy Buckman, a doctoral candidate at MIT, and founder of MediaMOO (a text-based virtual reality environment designed as a professional on-line community for mediamatic's director of Amsterdam-based company which has pioneered electronic communication systems and also chairs CAFE, the European research consortium investigating the technological infrastructure and equipment for electronic money in Europe. He described the possible introduction of purchasing power via the internet, which raised concerns amongst many of the conference participants about what sort and how much personal information about users would become readily available via the net.

While artists such as Jeffrey Shaw from Karlsruhe, and Lynn Hershman from California provided some insight into how media art can provokes a mediating space and place in the impending telematic age, more concrete issues of how to maintain or indeed gain equitable access to the "infobahn" tended to be marginalised by the debate.

Given the mediamania-mania which has arisen out of the Federal Government's recently announced Cultural Policy, you too may wish to think about these debates. You can do this by accessing papers delivered at the conference at the World Wide Web site set up by Mediamatic and the Design Institute, where, sitting in a dark bedroom bathed in the light emanating from your computer terminal, there is also the opportunity to reply. http://mmol.mediamatic.nl

The Netherlands Design Institute, established in 1993 as an independent foundation, was set up on the initiative of the Dutch Government, aims to identify new ways by which design may contribute to the cultural, political and social infrastructure of the community. It is a "think-and-do tank" which develops scenarios about the future of design and undertakes research projects to test them.

Contact: * e-mail: desk@nl.mediamatic.xs4all.nl * fax: +31 (0)20 6201031
Mediamatic magazine is a quarterly on art and media and the changes being wrought by technoculture, hypermedia and virtual reality. Apart from the print and CD-ROM publications, Mediamatic magazine is also published on the internet. Mediamatic Interactive Publishing also offers content driven research and development.

Contact: * e-mail: mediamatic@nl * fax: +31 (0)20 6267973 * World Wide Web: http://mmol.mediamatic.nl

Brad Miller is a Sydney media artist; Amanda McDonald Crowley is an arts administrator.

Friend, It’s Cartoons For You

Linda Marie Walker at Hypertext #3 in Adelaide

Sunday evening, seven short 'items' and a video. The MC moving the show along, a concert, barely a hitch. A second storey white room, window, audience sitting on concrete floor, moved from here to there. A 'post' position, with infinite angle, where the Event.

Mitch Ratcliffe, editor of Digital Media and co-author of Powerbook: The Digital Nomad's Guide, was particularly concerned to ensure that the event's mixture of speech and thought along with privacy in all personal transactions are protected by the networks. He stressed that public participation is crucial to the development of information networks, given that currently these networks simply resemble an 'infomercial superhighway'. To Ratcliffe, the Church, the State, and the Corporation have to date been the dominant influences on society, whereas we now need to focus on a sense of community.

While the sense of family, or community on the net provided the audience with a positive - indeed almost warm and fuzzy feeling - as the conference progressed the issues related to privacy and access and the fear that the internet already appears to be slipping from the public sphere provided a counter argument. This tension exploded during David Chaum's paper. Chaum is a computer engineer and inventor of a Dutch-based virtual reality environment designed as an extension of the domestic sphere from work. The revenge-of-the-victim is brutal.

For many of the 'post' artist begins (again). Almost an Event.

We'd come to see Hypertext #3, a curated project of Safe Chamber Studio, a performance group of five recent theatre graduates from Adelaide University. A terrific monthly project: word, sound, song, movement of performed text as art. Or, for that matter, new performance (a revival, then). It's while since performance stood its ground here, and acted out such raw, rattled, brittle cries. Things were said that have never been said before. Heard again and again. Repetition as insistence. New memories are old memories.

Each 'item' has a distinction, with a flash, or 'X' quality, adding up to a tough night out.

Blue/Fist by Jason von Adrichem-Sweeney (MC) was polished and concise, the singing (in a brief black slip) of To Know Him Is To Love Him almost poignant, leaving an afterimage of someone (audience, male) standing (having been serenaded) at a microphone, with nothing to do, while the rest of us were read to. All slightly, tellingly, underdone. Nerve Bubble then tried to lift us from surfaces with a sound piece, Eat Shit & Die (Thetan Overdose). Like a physical dream where menace is faceless, voice dust, ears nothing. A lovely structured melody intruded despite beating, bent sounds. No Cage, silence, no OK gesture. My Body My Car by Steven Noonan made me, woman, think of Margaret Dodds's film This Woman Is Not A Car. This was not the work's premise though, as his body was car. But I washeeded (big black rubber band), carwoman was invaded, what should I do ... walk. Then the Jungle Songs of Jenny Weight, their thin tone, bare, bitty too. Serious, like a hot night, unforgiving. Nothing to conceal this offhand voice. The taped carnival music left it, itself, a clown body, to watch. The first floor and up gigs and somewhere the line: "friend, it's cartoons for you".

The Evening With A Perfect Stranger by David Phillips used Frank Sinatra's Strangers In The Night as its motif. The text, spoken by Phillips, explicitly gay-sexual. With a terror theme: silent night, which never is, ever. A recorded voice finally details a gang bashing. Caroline Daish offered a song-dedication at the beginning of Audition Piece No 1 with Steve Noonan. They who got "7/7 me up" . It goes (in harmony with Noonan): hhhhhhhmmmm. They rapped off, and freely begged us to comply, says, no, in, out, come, go. Tie me up don't. The last event, Pandora's Box by Alyson Brown and Fiona Sprout, were dense on its sleeve, with much to say: "fear is a bitch." It began behind doors, with whispered voices: "The wind goes through my head" and "I can't get hold on these thoughts". Black tights, red lingerie - easy trapping - for the "pedestrian who is interested".

The revenge-of-the-victim is brutal.

Hypertext #3 worked hyperaesthetically as a concert (not event). This was a new and familiar. And tense, due to the fracture between 'item' and format. Adding the idea of 'choral work'. Drawing upon the device of MC, and the shape of concert, to invent a running joke (no punchline). Barthes' definition of ideal-text matches that of hyper-text: "... it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilises extend far as the eye can reach, they are indecipherable ... Hyper-text is ... perennially unanchored ... dense, complex, layered. The SSCS project is that.

Linda Marie Walker is an Adelaide writer and artist.
The Web of History

Gary Warner walks RealTime's Colin Hood through the new Museum of Sydney

The Theme Gallery of the new Museum of Sydney is alive with the sound and light of metal work as Marcus Skipper cuts hinged links to size. These will blend into an intricate space of textures, materials and viewing screens that will transform mute objects (bottles, scrimshaw - and the silent objects of colonial bond-store commerce) into 36 video shorts about their place in Australian history. It's a style of exhibition that breaks with most conventions of museum display. Here objects will speak for themselves - transformed into short stories (the work of Vincent Sheehan, Ross Gibson and Jackie Farkas) told by the characters who made, possessed or sold them. The histories that surround these minutiae will also raise questions as to what kind of historical narratives are being negotiated.

Constructed on the original site of the first government house (which was demolished in 1846), both audio-visual co-ordinator Gary Warner and senior curator Peter Emmett are co-ordinating the delivery (in May this year) of an array of high tech or rather, para-tech exhibition sites working up three levels - complete with a two and a half storey video wall and installations by contemporary Australian artists.

In its first outing as a project space, The Focus Gallery will feature works from the Natural History Museum of London. The Eora showcase (named after indigenous inhabitants of the Sydney region) features Aboriginal works with video accompaniment (produced by David Proser and Michael Riley). The Theatre of Authority traces the exploits - and misdeeds - of colonial administrators from the time of first settlement, and a special viewing platform provides both an overview of the courtyard and a space for reflection. From this vantage point, visitors will be able to view the traces of the original foundations of Government House (marked by stone of different textures and colours) as well as The Edge Of The Trees, an impressive sculptural installation (by artists Fiona Foley and Janet Laurence) which stands as a "telegraphic" monument to the diversity of Australian languages and contact histories.

The building itself was designed by the architect Richard Johnson, and both architecture and display design are in some ways reminiscent of the work of the Venetian architect and designer, Carlo Scarpa. Here, the monumentality of rough-hewn stone and steel are softened by the luminosity of glass and light. Inside the main foyer, Clive Lucas and Associates have re-created a feature wall of the old building using original material from the archaeological excavation. Lost Subjects - a sound-scene by Paul Carter, running the entire length of the third level - will add a critical tuning to the space with its fragments of diaries, letters and historical records.

CH: You speak of the museum as containing active sites of interpretation - what conceptions, methodologies of history, especially Australian history, are being explored or disputed do you think?

GW: It's an idea of opening up history again. We see the museum as being a site where those kinds of arguments have got a point of focus, creating a place where all voices converge in the broadest possible sense. It's not a commemorative approach. It's more a matter of getting down to the fibre of history - the way that authority, discipline, government and commerce reach into ordinary lives and objects.

CH: It's good to see writers and artists like Ross Gibson and Paul Carter actively working on sound and video projects. I feel some confidence - even at this early stage - that their involvement will bring other kinds of historical narrative and story-telling media into play.

GW: There are programs in place for the museum once it opens, to bring artists and archaeologists, musicians and historians together. We want to set up transitional communities of professionals who deal with cultural meaning, making it a site where they can come together for specific short term projects. This is one of the reasons why we're setting the museum up with digital networking capabilities.

CH: I noticed that even the lecture theatre podium is patched into the AV and computer network. This would enable a tremendous amount of information and images to be accessed and then presented by a member of staff or visiting speaker. Will this networking extend to remote access for internet users?

GW: Certainly a home page, or site on the World Wide Web, is part of the forward planning of the museum. Like many schools, colleges and museums that are developing as interactive sites, we're keen to move into new areas of electronic publishing as well as producing CD-ROMs. Yet we're also working against that kind of overwhelming tele-aesthetic. Different exhibition sites require different media and different modes of reception. We want to alter the public's perception of the high-tech museum - that of flashing video walls, constant noise, of overactive interactivity, by working within - but also challenging - the conventions of museum display, design and content.
The error of his ways
Diana Prichard talks to Edward Colless about his new collection of essays.

It was with some trepidation that I approached Ted Colless to discuss his forthcoming book, The Error of My Ways, Selected Writing 1981-1994. Leaﬁng through the ﬁnal draft it was clear much of it was informed by art theories, practices and movements, and not being of the art world myself, let alone sipping champagne on its periphery, I wasn’t sure if I could do it justice.

But once I sat down and seriously began to read, I discovered it was accessible to both those “in the know” and those in “the dog’s know”, but interesting to this ﬁeld. Although the language is complicated at times and the references speciﬁc, the ideas linked to them can’t be missed.

The range of writing is diverse in tone and content, but it is always a pleasure, to some event, as in “Losing It”, a response to “an occasion, an exhibition, a commission, a conversation, a moment while travelling, perhaps just a sudden idea”.

The essays, a format dictated by the times he can write, late at night and on weekends, include scathing criticisms of the style consciousness 1980s and what the decade represented; melancholy autobiographical pieces, the pain of an outsider palpable; a survival travel story (one informed by a sick body and a feverish mind); slick exercises in linguistics and textuality co-written with David Kelly; and generous reviews of artists’ work promulgated whether he only wrote about work he liked. It has to have a “spark”, he said, something that “gets it moving”.

A characteristic of Ted’s writing style is fragmentation, where the seemingly disparate ideas are skillfully linked. “I develop ideas by unpredictable associations between things,” he said, and it is these “connections” which inspire him to write.

In “The Possessed” for example he links style, acting, pornography and performance art; in “Folly”, the mysteries of women and UFOs, and the existence of God; and in “The Imaginary Hypermemorial”, hip but shallow ﬁlm theory courses, teachers as entertainers “making the substance of their classes the very absence of a subject”, and a ﬁne reading of Frank Capra’s Mr Smith Goes to Washington.

His beef with the 1980s, speciﬁcally the boom in “phoney” tertiary courses like “cultural studies”, academic hyperopia, and “smart” artists working as “operators” led me to ask if his writing was ever motivated by revenge? He laughed wickedly and ﬁnished exhaling a cigarette. “A degree of revenge,” he replied, “self-recrimination too... and by way of parody.”

The most interesting writing takes part in debate... crosses all passions - desire, revenge, enthusiasm, frustration, love...”. This form of writing, he added sadly, was purged from teaching. Academia disciplines language, and this in turn “represses students passions”.

A recurring theme in Ted’s writing is the “feminine”, touched on with a certain wonder, sometimes a grudging admiration, at times a deﬁnite crankiness. In “The Imaginary Hypermemorial”, a “seductive, accusatory, empty delirium of language” is provocatively called “feminine”: “No man can win against a woman, and a limply graceful sophistry”; he goes on to write. In “Place, Taste, Tradition”, a woman can successfully assume a new look, like the androgynous for example, but still remain true to her femininity, the “spectacle” part

of her “presence”, whereas a man “parades of that spectacle, that clown, only by mere mimicry”. In “Woman of the Night”, he writes it is easy to see the evening as “feminine” - “beneath the masquerade, nothing: within the maternal embrace, death”. He draws on the myth of night’s attendants personiﬁed as female: nocturnal hags, banneros, sphinxes, and lunar goddesses. “Whether these are terrible or serene creatures, they act from incomprehensible motives”, he writes, whereas night’s men, “a secret fraternity of necromancers, vampires, ghouls, criminals, seducers - display their motives clearly, even if these motives are perverse, cruel or irrational”. So, Ted, I ask, is this how you really see women? He admits depicting women in this way gets “a rise out of people”. Can men and women ever be friends without there being a gender consciousness? I ask. “There will always be a war between them”, he says, “always a degree of incomprehension of the other”.

After receiving a Writers Fellowship from the Australia Council’s Visual Arts and Crafts Board last year, Ted has begun a second book, To the Edge of Things, a collection of new essays about peripheries. The subject is ﬁtting, given he lives in southern Tasmania. “It is an interesting place, because it’s on the edge of the world,” he said, “where deformations of time and space exist. We’re close to the Tasmanian wilderness areas - ﬁguratively areas of the unconscious are near us - and then there’s the Southern Ocean and Antarctica, blank, indifferent parts of the earth, expressionless, uncarved”.

Edward Colless is a writer and lecturer in art theory at the University of Tasmania. The Error of My Ways, Selected Writing 1981-1994 will be published by the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane this year. Diana Prichard is a Hobart-based writer.

Tony Buck Solo Live Wire Recordings/ Shock

A one-man digital workstation, Tony Buck produces enough power to run a post-industrial city. Samplers working overtime, he rummages through electronic culture, snatching noise, media bits, rifs and junk. It all becomes percussion of some sort: tinkering, clacking, jarring, 25 tracks, some as short as 20 seconds, feed into each other, sounding like the 1990s on fast forward. Play this if ever you think life has become slow and boring.

Alison’s Wonderland Once Upon A Timelessness... Newmarket Music Violinist Alison O’Carroll leads her band through eight of her own compositions on this sprightly album. Jazz laced with folk, carnival numbers balanced with introspective ballads, Saxophonist Andrew Robson exults, and listen out for Adam Armstrong on acoustic bass. Ideal for playing in the back yard, late summer afternoon, with a large bowl of punch by your side.

More CD reviews in RealTime 6 including: the Lulu Lunch three CD release Crimes Against Nature (Triple X Records), DisClosure, Voices of Women (Nine-Alliance Records) and Australian Dave Cubby’s Art and Kindness (DCRC), all available at Ariel Bookellers, Sydney.

Sport

Tooth and Claw
With Jack Rufus

The recent expulsion of Frenchman Eric Cantona from English football has exposed a crisis in the contemporary world: the incomparability of philosophy and sport. Cantona was well known in Britain for his television appearances off the pitch dressed in a black hoodie, wearing glasses of red wine in his hand, he eviscerated on aesthetics, he held forth on ethics, he pontiﬁed on existentialism and was in a philosophy course, he proudly told the bewildered Brits, who were as ill-equipped to understand him as if he had zoomed in from Mars.

Confrontational of the prosaic English game, with its plod and graft, he was the complete continental footballer. Unfortunately, this poet of the pitch carried his mastery of twentieth century thought into his midfield strategy. Annoyed by the persistence of an irritating off-side trap, he would lash out at the nearest opponent with a ferocity worthy of Bataille. Sent off one time too many by many too uncertain to Anglo-Jesuit rules, he responded to the barbaric goading of opposing fans the only way he knew how: a flying drop-kick to the head, followed by a series of robust jabs and uppercuts. This perfectly Aristotelian performance, if indeed he did, was much too profound for the English orthodoxy. The door opened by the game sent the brilliant Frenchman into exile.

In hindsight, Cantona’s ﬁnal performance can be seen as the last act of his own Theatre of Cruelty. His savage onslaught on the crowd exploded the dialectic of performance in front of horrified spectators around the world. In one last heroic gesture, he hurled himself boot-first into the Nürtenbach vortex and as he well knew, there could only be one outcome. Footballing Diogenes, Cantona paid the ultimate sacriﬁce: being a semi-serious man, in a philosophy course, and perhaps, much too profound for the English orthodoxy.

The door opened by the game sent the brilliant Frenchman into exile.

Others were more pithy: “Not having spoken word is like burying the last witch-doctor without learning the secrets” (Bill Shankly, ex-QP manager).

Other Winners: Stephen Faulks (W), Elly Pinczewski (VC), Julian Bull (SA), Tim Dunne (NSW), Dr S. Green (NSW) Stephen Huby (VIC), Dan Deno (SA)

There’s still one Gang of Seven CD to be won if anyone else would like to show his style. Write to: Simon Killen, Mushroom Distribution, 55 Danks Street, Port Melbourne. Fax (61-3) 643-2909

Tea Off
with Vivienne Nieuw

Vivienne Jack was last spotted at Perpetua contemplating in plus fours the ﬁssures and features of modernity in Jon Nelson’s Between a Cabbage and a Basketball. She will be back in RealTime 6. Fore!!
Jazz lovers have a chance to sample a European start
on the modern development of this art form when
Sydney's twentieth anniversary of contemporary music
SIMA joins force with Dusseldorf's Foundation of Art
and Culture to bring The Gerd Dudek, Rob Van Den
Broek and Ann Harwood's superimposed, subverted, made into pie (charts) by
Jay Younger IMA

Bronwyn Platten, Maria Kozic, Justene Williams.
Judy Watson.
works developed by Lucille Martin while in residence
Also in February at PICA for the Perth Festival • A
Women, an exhibition of Australian women artists that
practitioners including Annie Newmarch, Ruth Waller,
the 1890's to 1990's. Artists include Kathleen
in Tokyo last year.
Fairskye, Kim Mahood. Also included Christine
Pamela Harris, Eliza Campbell, Maria Kozic, Merilyn
ARX is interested in hearing from you.
Associa ted ARX event s i n cl ude artists' talk s, a
exhibition and video of the event will be available from
piloting a nationally accessible electronic
ARX (Artists Regional Exchange) dedicated to
also publish the quarterly Top Loading featuring local
developing innovative models of cultural exchange
debate affecting younger artists. ISNT PO Box 39,
these credentials, no Australian publisher has shown
reviews, artists pages and a range of discussion and
Each month ISNT presents at least two exhibitions as
(breaking with the Melbourne premiere of the
Ptickford Disney and Jack Hobert's latest play, Slam
Neus Gallery run by Adelaide's Multicultural
Arts Board, Australia Council, PO Box 788, Strawberry
(02) 319 0718.

Also in February at PICA for the Perth Festival • A
series of Hi fi and computer integrated text and sound
works developed by Lucille Martin while in residence
in Tokyo last year.

The award was established by the Museum and Art
Gallery of the NT in 1984. 40 entries were received
that year. This year 140. The Award recognises
contemporary Aboriginal art in its stylistic
and technical diversity and is the only writer's
work to be filmed in early 1996 and screened later on ABC TV.
Dancers, directors and choreographers in Australia
and from Austra lia: nm
Ana Labrador, Tony
Arts Guild) , Norberto
Enriquez , Karen Flores,
include Francesca
Leano (all from Man ila)
symposium. Participants
include Francesca
Enriquez, Karen Flores,
Ana Labrado, Tony
Arts Guild) and
Michael Canning.

March 4 to March 5.

Museum of Contemporary Art February/March program includes The Mapptlethorpe
program was held by the ITI but also to communicate with
sets of individuals/groups) ; to independently input and
access material to and from
There's still some room. Among the guests, Philippe
Gaulier is quoted as saying "Truth is for the Salvation
Army, lies are for the stage." Other guests include
Surajah Hidi (Egypt), leading exponent of the erotic
solo female dance called Ragi Shrap; Monika
Pagano (France) whose approach concentrates on
"rightness of movement," voice trainers Patry
Rodenburg (UK) and Frankie Armstrong (UK).
Bangarra Dance Theatre (Australia), bush dancer
Ariz Fuwaka (Japan), dancer Rosario Cardenas
(Cuba) and physical-theatre exponent Nigel Jamieson
(UK-Australia). Information Adelaide Fringe (08) 231-7780

Microdance is a joint project of Australian Film Commission, Australia Council and Australian
Broadcasting Corporation. 420,000 has been allocated to
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The three-stage project will begin with a series of
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video editing, performance and choreography for the
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In the final stage, four proposals will be selected by
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Philips Gaulier

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