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Zootango

PACT

La Boite Youth Arts

Theatre of the Deaf

free



August - September

Performance and the National Arts

RealTime 8

The *RealTime* 7 editorials on changes at the Australia Council provoked a lot of comment and gained a lot of support for challenging Council to put artists back in the picture through consultation on policy and on assessment procedures. In *RealTime* 8 artists offer their responses to recent events and speculate on what can be done. Rachel Fensham expands the picture by looking at the language and goals of states' arts policies, particularly The Kennett governments *21C Arts Policy*. In the context of the hierarchal, managerial tendencies of *Creative Nation*, the Australia Council, state arts policies and the Cultural Olympiad, it's clearly time for artists to consider their positions individually, collectively and certainly politically.

On a more mundane level, but one for us of need, we're running our first readership survey. *RealTime* has been thriving with the support of the Hybrid Arts Committee of the Australia Council and our many advertisers. Now we need the written support of our readers. 17,000 copies of *RealTime* go out across the nation every two months, from Sydney to Perth, Hobart, Broome, Darwin, Townsville and many other centres. While your enthusiasm has been obvious we'd like to know precisely what you think, what you'd like to see and, yes, where do you fit in the marketer's dream world of potential purchasers. Help us help you and maybe win a prize for your generosity.

3-5 Three degrees of reconciliation: Darwin, Brisbane, Perth

Suzanne Spinner reports from Darwin on our featured dance company, the Tracks Dance Collective, working with Aboriginal communities, while Sarah Miller and Josephine Wilson outline responses to the issue of Reconciliation as felt in performance involving aboriginal artists.

6-8 Techno-arts: National

Chris Chesher enjoys the mundane realities of the arts Internet, pointing beginners in the right direction while Annemarie Jonson endures another *Creative Nation* Multimedia Forum and John Potts interviews the AFC's Michael Hill on multimedia funding. Ross Moore visits three Melbourne techno-art exhibitions by women artists.

9-12 Film: Sydney

Critical times, says Colin Hood, in a personal response to a weakened Cinematheque, limited exhibition possibilities for film makers and problems in university film education in Sydney. Annemarie Jonson steps out into the light for a critical look at the 1995 Sydney Film Festival and Daniel Cole celebrates some film festival innovations at Film West in Sydney's western suburbs. David Matthews has fun making sense of movies mediaeval.

13 Sound

Doug Kahn lends an ear to *Sound in Space* at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art. Reviews and previews of recent and forthcoming *Listening Room* and *Radio Eye* works on ABCFM and Radio National.

14-15 Visual Arts: Brisbane, Hobart, Adelaide

Nicholas Zurbrugg vigorously tackles Rex Butler on the visual arts criticism turf. Peter Hill tours the Tasmanian visual art scene and Linda Marie Walker enters a Graceland reverie at Adelaide's Experimental Art Foundation.

16-17 Writing

Bernard Cohen continues his occasional series on performance-in-the-everyday. This time he's at it behind the wheel. Linda Marie Walker anticipates the visit of U.S. writer and theorist Gregory Ulmer.

18-20 Music

Marshall Maguire sings the praises of contemporary harp works from around Australia for the 1996 Sydney Spring New Music Festival in an interview with Cathy Peters, Nicholas Gebhardt and John Potts review recent CD releases. Lisa Gerrard's solo album.

21-23 Arts & Politics

Rachel Fensham, focussing on Kennett's *21C Arts Policy*, detects the worrying emergence of a uniformly economic rationalist approach to arts funding by state governments. Artists respond to the restructuring of the Australia Council in interviews with Keith Gallasch. Roland Manderson finds the art of protest lacking in Canberra.

24 Festivals: Melbourne, Canberra

The press like Schofield's Melbourne festival but the model looks all too familiar. Robyn Archer concludes her trio of distinctiv National Australian Theatre Festivals featuring Red Shed Theatre Company and Company Skylark.

25-34 Theatre, Performance & Dance: National

Kirsten Dunlop enjoys and worries at an impressive new Tasmanian play, *Meatsafe* by Franz Docherty. After a too long absence, Sydney's Entr'acte mount *Eclipse*. Sidetrack's Don Mamouney announces Contemporary Performance Week, the company's acclaimed annual intensive training, performance and debate event. Theatre of the Deaf, just back from Vienna, do a musical, no less. Jacqueline Millner visits Theatre Spirale in Geneva and finds some things upside down. Playworks celebrate ten years in its innovative *Playing With Time*, a major gathering of women writers from across the continent. Brisbane's La Boite Youth Arts and Sydney's PACT distinctively engage with youth culture. Reviews of new books from Routledge and Currency Press.

35-36 Shorts & Sports

Arts news just in from around Australia. The intimidating Jack Rufus and the inimitable Vivienne Inch boot and golf their way through life and art.

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Front cover photo: from *Dust/Tap: Aural Translations of the Banal*

Julaine Stephenson's collection of discarded domestic noisemakers is put to creative use in *Dust*, a work which puts the spectator on record. The gallery floorboards become the grooves to be played by a sharpened fork prong stylus while a gramophone soundbox acoustically amplifies the sound of ... well ... dust. *Tap* is part of Emil Goh's conversation series dealing with electronic surveillance through people's database identities and daily electronic transactions (credit cards, ATM's etc.). This time mono radios talk financial transactions to each other as the listener taps in. *Dust/Tap* opens at The Performance Space Gallery August 9 running till September 2. It will be broadcast as part of AN EAR FULL, Eventspace on The Listening Room, ABC Classic FM Monday August 21. Live to Air 8.30 pm Eugene Goosens Hall, ABC Ultimo Centre. Info: The Performance Space 02-698 7235.

Page 17 photo:

Arunas, who photographed the garfish for the cover of *RealTime* 4, happily treads the line between art and commercialism, feeding off both to try to achieve the tenets of his favourite quotation from Ivo Watts Davies (4AD Records), that to "suggest is to create/to describe is to destroy". His photo book on coffee is about to go to print.

The opportunity of distance

Suzanne Spinner engages with the work of Darwin's Tracks Dance Collective

TRACKS, the Darwin based dance collective, grew out of the dance development program at Browns Mart Community Arts under the direction of dance officers Sarah Calver and David McMicken. Last year it acquired its own name and consolidated its direction. TRACKS functions as a part-time innovative dance company and full-time community dance program supported by the Northern Territory Office of the Arts and the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council.

The community it serves is broad in dimension and geography. In Darwin TRACKS runs classes for adults and teenagers, and a program with a 50-plus group, The Grey Panthers, as well as workshops with Corrugated Iron Youth Theatre. It also provides choreographic support for Darwin Theatre Company productions and directs *Gathering Ground*, an annual community dance event at Browns Mart, which brings together the diversity of dance in the town. Its activities outside Darwin are focused on Aboriginal communities, in particular Lajamanu.

This year TRACKS has staged a Darwin season of their work *Boundaries and Beyond* and taken it on tour to remote communities in the Territory, and just completed a five week residency at Yipirinya School in Alice Springs. In September, they are remounting *My House*, a dance theatre performance project in conjunction with Corrugated Iron Youth Theatre for a Darwin season and a tour across northern Western Australia in September. To finish off the year TRACKS will direct a cabaret show with the Grey Panthers.

Boundaries and Beyond showcased work from the last two years and included two extraordinary original works – *Silent Thought* and *Sacred Space*. While Calver and McMicken constantly hanker for more time to do this sort of thing – developing their own art as dancers and choreographers, they are the first to say that it is the community dance work that feeds their creativity and to imagine abandoning it would be cutting themselves off at the source. TRACKS' position is akin to that of many other contemporary dance groups across the country producing innovative work – funding structures and constraints mean they work as pick-up companies. However, TRACKS is in a stronger position than many because they have always combined community dance development with their own artistic exploration, rather than being force-marched that way by funding bodies.

In Darwin and the NT, the small population, the geography of distance and the relatively minimal professional arts

infrastructure has meant that a contemporary dance company or a contemporary art space (the position of 24 HR ART is very similar) must address itself to more than the cognoscenti. Rather than seeing such breadth and inclusion as compromise, TRACKS and 24 HR ART have used that matrix as a strength. Such an approach has led to an exploration of form coupled with content drawn from the community. The work is broadly accessible, strengthens regional identity and develops an audience through recognition of content, in time the audience becomes confident and familiar with the form and recognises style and innovation.

Such work is frequently celebratory but it can just as easily be critical and provocative and make its terms of reference for its audience as it goes. In this context *Silent Thought* and *Sacred Space* can be viewed as addressing gender relations between black and white Australians in works that both celebrate and provoke, and are read by predominantly white audiences in Darwin and Aboriginal audiences in communities in different and interesting ways.

Silent Thought was conceived, and choreographed by Tim Newth for Calver and McMicken. It was inspired by the Ted Egan song *The Drover's Boy* – a tragic lament about the coupling of white drovers and Aboriginal women.

*Shoot the bucks/Grab a gin/break her in/
Cut her hair/and call her a boy/
the Drover's boy.*

The practice was common but rarely publicly acknowledged. *Silent Thought* is a subtle and very moving piece about the reining in of public emotion, as the song hinges on the observation of another stockman who watches the drover silently mourn his love and sees him steal a lock of hair from the dead 'boy'.

Ostensibly the piece reclaims a hidden history and honours the work and contribution of these women to the pastoral development of the NT. It also shows that despite the brutality of the breaking-in, there was a mutuality, companionship and passion across the racial divide. Interestingly, because Calver is obviously not Aboriginal, it subsumes, even subverts the category of race allowing the audience to focus on the secret relationship between a man and a woman and the pain of concealing the extent of feeling.

But it also works at another level – not only is the dancer meant to be Aboriginal, she is also meant to be a boy – she does the work of a man and no concessions are made to her femininity, so it is possible to read it as if she were a boy which raises further questions about sexual politics on

the frontier. Newth says that it was those very ambiguities that attracted him to the story. In *Silent Thought*, he has made a piece about sexuality and work which is about gender and race but does not lock the audience into the fixity of either. It is about a larger and more felt emotional truth. On this frontier socially constructed boundaries are malleable, and in the aftermath of brutality there is space for an essential connection between two individuals.

Silent Thought is riven with ambiguity. Even the sequence of the 'breaking-in', by its repetition and subtle shift of attitude transforms from an image of subjugation into an expression of need and desire, with the boy holding the reins. It's a very sensual piece, its eroticism is understated, and true to the shyness of one and the awkwardness of the other there is very little eye contact between "the tall white man and the slim black boy who never had much to say".

Significantly, in the fucking sequence, there is eye contact preceded by an image of the two looking into each other's faces as one is supported above the other, and what it suggests is Narcissus drinking in his reflection; that recognition of love being recognition of the self in the other.

The feeling is elegiac and the pleasure in the physical is felt through the work rituals and the sense of freedom and expansion of self in doing this kind of work. The music takes the song in John Williamson's version and cuts into it the plangent cellos of *G Clef* by Kronos Quartet, and, to suggest the galloping hooves of horses, the syncopated drum beat of Not Drowning Waving.

The movement phrases are strong, graceful and elegant. Both Calver and McMicken employ the other's body as horses to mount and ride, as rocks or saddle bags to sit on by the campfire, and at other times carry one another. In the repetition of these actions with the roles reversed, the polarities of subject/object, active/passive, strong/weak dissolve into mutuality. Real actions are distilled, abstracted and repeated in sequences which resonate with charged emotion.

Sacred Space was created and performed by Calver and McMicken in collaboration with writer and performance poet Karyn Sasella, and centres on the community of Lajamanu in the Central Desert. From living and working there, all three have formed strong connections with the community, though they have never been there at the same time – each person's experience has been discrete and particular.

*In that hot/red land/I learnt/
so clearly/that it's not/
the tyranny of distance/
but the opportunity*

Sacred Space is about culture shock but firmly poses the question: Whose culture is shocked? Compared to *Silent Thought*, which had an historical distance and suffused feeling, *Sacred Space* is set right here in the full blinding glare of the present. It announces itself as a distillation of experiences lived by the two performers with their feet firmly on the ground and their eyes out on stalks. Sasella's poems, which are threaded through, are another experience which often parallels and complements Calver's and McMicken's.

Sacred Space is structured in three sections – getting there, being there and internalising there. The space is divided down the middle by an invisible line. At first this seems merely to reflect Calver's and McMicken's sides of the story, as we see them packing up to leave Darwin and then driving the long long way to Lajamanu. But once they arrive it becomes clear the space reflects the Walpiri division of the world into men's business and women's business and parallels the separate but continuous spheres of life they encountered at Lajamanu.

Only in the duet *Lover Boy Lover Girl* do they come together in the space and in so doing literally cross the line as the dance is not simply about courtship but about wrong skin love – a taboo but common occurrence in Aboriginal communities. The dance is set up with a game of flirting with torches in the rec hall after everyone else has gone to bed. The dance is both furtive and shy, cheeky and bold, pervaded by play and risk, and regarded as a wicked hoot by Aboriginal audiences.

Sacred Space is shot through with wit. We laugh with them laughing at themselves as we see ourselves reflected as strangers in a strange land. We feel the awkwardness



Sacred Space with David McMicken

Yoris Wilson

and confusion of being on the outer, in the minority. The piece is serious and respectful of cultural difference but is never precious or earnest. There are hauntingly beautiful images – McMicken binds his clothes with string into a rope as thick and lumpy as an intestine, or a snake, while exquisitely fine sand falls from the ceiling and Calver dances in its rain. The sand falls slowly and keeps on falling. There are movement sequences based on Walpiri sign language which look at the disjunction between the simplicity of hand sign and the complexity of meaning it evokes. The power of the imagery in the piece comes from the lived experiences of the dancers.

Sacred Space speaks most clearly and loudly of the trust and connection between these white artists and this Aboriginal community. This relationship of exchange and collaboration has been built slowly over the last eight years and produced a series of works for, by and about the community. Like all good exchanges it has been properly two way; *Lajamanu Kurra Karna Yami* in 1992 brought the community – men, women and children, dancers, performers and painters – to town for a show and art exhibition at Browns Mart.

In 1996 TRACKS is planning to take *Silent Thought* and *Sacred Space* and a group of traditional Lajamanu women dancers, Yawalyu, to Melbourne for Greenmill Dance Festival to present their work alongside an exhibition of Lajamanu desert painting. It will be interesting to see what a national audience makes of this unique collaboration. Greenmill next year will coincide with the Dance Alliance, a biennial event, so TRACKS will be exposed to international dance aficionados. What will they make of it?

Suzanne Spinner is a Darwin playwright and dramaturg.

t.c.m

TRADITION, CLOTH, MEANING - CONTEMPORARY TEXTILES

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sponsored by commonwealth bank and hobart city council

How would you know, you bastard?

Sarah Miller reports on a new production of Bindjareb Pinjarra

At the opening night of *Bindjareb Pinjarra*, Geoff Kelso leaned into the audience and addressed the Governor of Western Australia, "What do you know about Governor Stirling," he asked. "I know he was a good bloke," the governor replied. From the back of the audience, a voice responded, "How would you know, you bastard?" The audience cracked-up, but in fact it is this question: the how or the what we know – or don't know – or don't want to know about the horrors of our colonial past and present, that is the underlying thesis of this production.

Healthway and the Perth Theatre Trust, the project is now enjoying a mainstage season at the Subiaco Theatre Centre.

The river ford at Pinjarra was a nodal point for Aboriginal trackways and it was a place of ceremonial significance. Indications pointed to an Aboriginal presence there, so the fact that Stirling's force moved at a leisurely pace and camped overnight within striking distance suggests a planned early morning assault.

Encounters in Place by D.J. Mulvaney



Bindjareb Pinjarra from left: Phil Thomson, Trevor Parfitt, Geoff Kelso and Kelton Pell

Stirling also wanted to establish a line of garrisons between Perth and Albany, so Pinjarra was a logical place to begin.

Broken Spears by Neville Green

Bindjareb Pinjarra was first performed in 1994 at the Actors Centre in Perth. A tiny production produced on a shoestring budget, this group-devised work powerfully, poignantly and often hilariously tells the story of the 1834 Pinjarra Massacre, which took place five years after the founding of the Swan River Colony. With a grant from the Australia Council and support from Black Swan Theatre,

From the outset, the performer/devisors of this work committed themselves to creating a performance work which gave Nyoongah (South West Aboriginal Australians) and Wedjella (European Australians) "equal power and ownership over the product", a process which deliberately sought to experiment with traditional Aboriginal cultural skills understood in terms of improvisation, storytelling, oral histories and memory. The piece also takes a non-linear approach to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations thus developing a continuum between the overtly genocidal attacks of the past and

the more covert but equally vicious racism which still sees Aboriginal people living and dying in utterly appalling conditions and constantly subjected to the most grinding and petty acts of discrimination on a daily basis.

It became an urgent necessity that a check-point be put upon the career of that particular tribe.

Sir James Stirling, Governor

The Pinjarra massacre was the first in a series of systematic genocidal attacks on Aboriginal people in Western Australia. *Bindjareb Pinjarra* challenges European-Australian histories by insisting on the fact of the massacre – not a skirmish, not an 'accidental massacre'. There is a ridiculous but unnerving moment in the production where the performers play out the notion of 'an accidental massacre', running through the audience waving imaginary guns – "whoops you're dead – sorry ...".

So soon as it was ascertained that they were the obnoxious tribe, firing commenced at full charge.

Septimus Roe, Surveyor General

How many deaths does it take to make a massacre? Differing accounts put the number of Nyoongah dead at 15 (Governor Stirling), 70 (European eye witness) and 750 (Nyoongah history). Whilst the number of Nyoongah dead – men, women and children – will never be known, the fact remains that far from being an accidental encounter with unfortunate consequences, this was a deliberately waged campaign against the troublesome Murray River natives, who were trapped, herded into the river and shot down in cold blood.

The other point compellingly made is the horrific consequences of so many Aboriginal dead. The few survivors, banned from eating the totemic animals of their fallen family members, were left no option but death by starvation.

Yet it seems manifest that without some severe defeat to convince this tribe of their inferiority in power to the whites, a petty and harassing warfare might have been indefinitely prolonged ... it may now be confidently expected that this tribe will cease to assume a hostile attitude.

Captain Irwin, Deputy Governor

A key issue for the European coloniser seems to have been the disavowal of active warfare, in this instance between the Murray River natives and the Swan River Colony, preferring to present Aboriginal people as a dead or dying race of primitive savages. It was and is often argued that European colonisation simply hastened a process already in train. For Aboriginal

students in a white education system, any representation of their history is, as Kelton Pell points out, a matter for grief and shame. When represented at all, Aboriginal people were/are typically depicted as dead or cowed, under the heel of the white conqueror. More often they are simply absent, positioned as the curious, prehistoric remnants of a strange land.

Yet far from being harrowing, *Bindjareb Pinjarra* is a generous work, often hilariously funny, preferring to enact racism's fundamental absurdity and articulating the ridiculousness of discrimination. Even the title references the European inability to hear, to see, to understand. Pinjarra is the contemporary and Europeanised version of Bindjareb, just as Nyoongah (meaning man) is used indiscriminately to name the Aboriginal people of the South West.

The South West of Australia belonged to the tribe that called itself the Bibbulmun because their land was 'The Land of Many Breasts'. 'Bibbi' means 'breasts' and 'bula' means many. Their land was like a mother with endless food for them ... for many thousands of years (their) laws maintained stability and peace in a group that maintained its land (and) enjoyed a life of plenty.

The Bibbulmun by Stan Richards.

As with Deckchair Theatre's landmark production *Ningali*, this very different work shows that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal reconciliation is not simply a romantic chimera. With respect, with consideration, with full acknowledgment and recompense for the horrors of our mutual past and present and a healthy dose of wicked humour, the possibility for a shared future remains. In Western Australia, struggling under the yoke of the overtly racist Court government which has gone so far as to challenge the Mabo ruling in the High Court, this is no mean feat. Aboriginal Australians thus far have survived – despite colonisation – through the strength and commitment of their struggle and because of the richness and tenacity of a diverse and multi-faceted cultural heritage. That increasingly, European Australians are participating in (as opposed to directing or authorising) the ongoing struggle for human rights, an end to racial discrimination and the journey towards reconciliation, is surely a cause for cautious optimism and in the instance of *Bindjareb Pinjarra*, celebration.

All quotes from the program notes.

Bindjareb Pinjarra created and performed by Geoff Kelso, Trevor Parfitt, Kelton Pell and Phil Thomson. Set paintings and graphics by Ron Gidgup. Lighting by Mark Howett. Sound by Alan Surgener.

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Performing loss

Josephine Wilson seeks out the impulses for Kooemba Jdarra's new performance work

The message should be that there is nothing to fear or lose in the recognition of historic truth.

Prime Minister Paul Keating,
The Redfern Speech.

Picture this. A young woman alone. From above hang seven blocks of ice, rope embedded in their frozen form. On the edges four beds of red earth, boot marks, hoof marks, marks of invasion. The ice blocks light. One by one, dropping tears into the red earth muddying the woman's steps. Her wailing rends the air. Across the mud images appear, images of hanging feet, images of past time. But it is the same time, it is the same story.

Brisbane-based Kooemba Jdarra's forthcoming production, evocatively titled *The 7 Stages of Grieving*, promises to continue their remarkable success in presenting challenging Aboriginal theatre.

Since forming in 1993, the company has presented *The Cherry Pickers* (Kevin Gilbert's 1968 landmark play), Cathy Craigie's *Murri Love*, which follows the relationship between two indigenous women in the face of domestic violence, and, most recently, *Changing Time* (in collaboration with Tasmania's Salamanca TIE), in which a young Aboriginal woman struggles to balance her cultural traditions with the tensions of contemporary life.

Kooemba Jdarra is the only full-time professional Aboriginal theatre group operating in the country, and has a strong presence in the contemporary cultural

scene, fostering indigenous cultural practice through regional tours, youth theatre, workshops, and writing and performing for Aboriginal audiences. Therefore, artistic director Wesley Enoch is well aware of the pivotal role Kooemba Jdarra can play in interrogating contemporary Aboriginal issues, and locates the genesis of the forthcoming production firmly in the political present. The Mabo decision and the agenda of reconciliation place the question of historical truth at the centre of Australian national identity. The *7 Stages of Grieving* seeks to assert for Aboriginal people that it is not yet time to forgive and forget. In response to Paul Keating's words, it should be said that for these Australians the historical truth is fear and loss.

The 7 Stages of Grieving is a collaborative project between co-writers Deborah Mailman and Wesley Enoch, visual artist Leah King-Smith and musician-composer Roxanne Macdonald, with dramaturgy by Hilary Beaton. The work will be performed by Deborah Mailman at the Brisbane premiere in September during the *Warana Festival*.

The performance sets out to enact what has historically been denied Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders: the right to public mourning and personal grief. This denial was explicit under the doctrine of Terra Nullius ... how can you mourn that which never was?

For the writers of this production, reconciliation cannot happen without recognition of the terrible loss and personal pain that colonisation meant for Aboriginal people, and the public working through of



Deborah Mailman

Jim Fenwick, *The Courier Mail*

the emotions that this loss entails. Grieving is a ritual where the absent dead can be made present, reinvoked and, perhaps, laid to rest. It takes time. The discourse of reconciliation can too often have the ring of the authoritarian father admonishing the child – "Just get over it!" with non-Aboriginals having to relinquish neither power, property, nor right.

The performance is intended to develop a form of grieving which will emotionally engage the audience. The writers initially saw suggestive links between the Aboriginal experience of invasion and genocide with Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's 'the five stages of dying', culminating in 'acceptance'. But *The 7 Stages of Grieving* will not offer the harmonious figure of Reconciliation to close the show.

The collaborators have chosen to move away from realist characterisation and didactic form towards an open structure in which Aboriginality is not explicitly 'named'. The performance will establish different levels of detachment and intimacy, drawing on oral history, anthropological material, contemporary events such as the death of Daniel Yocke, personal memory and inherited stories. Stories will be narrated and presented through text, image and dance – integrated as they traditionally are in Aboriginal culture.

It is a convention within western funeral and memorial practices that images and the names of the dead are displayed. The Aboriginal prohibition of these practices creates a tension between demonstration and remembrance which has challenged the collaborators to draw on

other forms of memory. The body of the performer will articulate loss through lament, gesture, movement and song, the latter written in language by composer Roxanne Macdonald.

In my discussion with Wesley Enoch, we spoke about the anticipated audience. As the performance has been devised for Aboriginal people, the collaborators have assumed familiarity with the history addressed, and identification of the audience with the ritual of mourning.

Wesley told me a story that might well illustrate the structural differences between the relationship of Aboriginal and *migrant* audiences to the new production:

WE Have you heard the story of the chicken and the pig?

JW No.

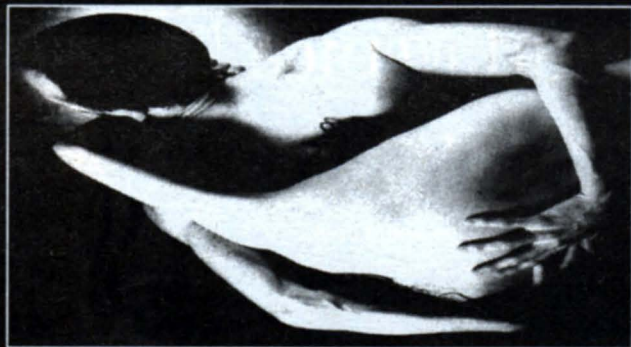
WE The chicken and the pig go for breakfast. The chicken orders for both of them. Bacon and eggs. The pig says, "I'll eat this meal, but you should realise we have a different relationship to this meal. For me, it is a sacrifice. For you, it is a contribution."

The 7 stages of Grieving, will be presented by Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts, at Metro Arts, Brisbane, September 13-23, Tues-Sat 8pm and Fri-Sat 6pm. Tel (07) 3229 1191. It is planned to tour the production nationally in 1995-96.

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Director: Sarah Miller

gallery hours: Tuesday - Sunday 11am - 6pm

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Art and the mundane Internet

Chris Chesher

"How long is this bloody thing going to take?"

I want to slap the screen to wake the computer up. It's been sitting there for at least five minutes doing nothing but giving an occasional vague flicker. This is barely enough to keep me from reaching for the reset key just to relieve the suspense.

But then I am confronted with a lurid red and green graphic and in heavy blue letters, the title *Putrid Afterthought*. It's a web page at <http://underground.net>, from somewhere in the US, with a new series of beckoning buttons underneath. It claims: "*Putrid Afterthought* is what is seen at the end of the double-barrelled, shotgunned cesspool of hyper reality. View at your own risk. May cause irreparable libidinal damage."

Once this appears it's a matter of following further hyperlinks, more waiting and potential frustration.

With all the hype in the media about the Internet you would think browsing the net should be a more dynamic experience. But it isn't. It's sometimes tedious. Often frustrating. Using the net is quite mundane.

When I say the net at its best is mundane, that's not actually a put-down. It is mundane in that it's a day-to-day thing. It's not extraordinary. It's ordinary. And once you have been using it for a while, it becomes just a part of your daily routines.

The World Wide Web is the most popular way of publishing material on the Internet. It's only one of the ways the Internet works, but is the best way to publish documents because it is easy to use and combines graphics and formatted hyperlink text. (See *How the web is woven*).

Net publishers name their sites by using familiar metaphors: sites are exhibits, publications, or spaces. Things on the net really are not much like the originals. The metaphors help give focus for the authors and set expectations for the viewers.

Check out on-line exhibitions

If you visit a gallery you expect to see pictures. In fact, quite a few art galleries have a presence on the net. The Andy Warhol museum in Pittsburgh in the US, for example, has a site on the World Wide Web. It includes a 'guided tour', which lets you choose a floor, see the floorplans of each floor, and a list of every work on display. There are images of many of these works. The site promotes the gallery's permanent exhibition and events, and is an end in itself.

Unlike a real-world gallery, you don't have to be in the same place as the exhibition. Without travelling or paying entrance fees you can see all sorts of contemporary art works or older collections. The only difference between a virtual gallery in Paddington and one in Pittsburgh is the time it takes for the images to download.

But the time you may have to wait can be annoyingly long, even for the 'local' gallery. This affects the experience. Where in a physical art gallery you can shuffle from one picture to another in a matter of seconds, on the World Wide Web an image takes anything from a few seconds to several minutes to turn up on your screen. What you can see is confined to the size, and the resolution of the screen (usually around 640 by 480 pixels at 72 pixels per inch).

Visiting a virtual gallery makes you aware – by its absence – of the sense of place you feel in a real gallery. This sense affects the way you experience the artworks. It takes effort to get to a gallery – arranging the time, travelling to the gallery, bringing friends and so on. Once you are there, you feel a sense of place: the space of the gallery, the light, silence and smells are part of the

experience of the gallery that are missing from the virtual experience. When you're browsing the world through the web what is stable is the machine you are using, and the nature of the way the Internet works.

Virtualler and virtualler

An exhibition on the net doesn't need to have a real world referent. *Kaleidoscope*, a web site for independent artists includes a maze of metaphorical places: the art studio, centre stage, cyberfair, a newsstand and reading and screening rooms. At each of these, the metaphor sets the expectation about what kind of information you should find there. Based somewhere (or nowhere) in LA, *Kaleidoscope* gathers material from independent artists and gives them virtual place and meaning. There are interviews with various artists about current theoretical and practical themes, graphics, sound and video clips (although downloading many will take you all night).

A new site from South Australia, *Parallel*, is a 'journal / gallery' that looks beautiful, and is rich in content. It is both a journal and gallery on the web, using the tropes of both to set the tone and structure of the web site.

Parallel opens with a well-designed first page. This is crucial, because it sets the tone for the whole site. At the top of the page is a graphic of their logo, followed by a brief statement of purpose, and a table of contents for the gallery and journal. Each item in the table of contents links to the work itself.

Also on the first page are a series of links to other sites in related areas. The articles deal with theoretical post-modern and post-structuralist issues. The gallery of art works is small enough not to alienate users. From small 'thumbnail' images in the main gallery there is the option of downloading larger versions or animated QuickTime video clips. This site makes good use of backgrounds and design using the capabilities of the newest browsers. It

How the web is woven

The easiest, richest and most popular way of browsing the Internet is the World Wide Web (WWW or 'web'). The web is not separate from the net, but is a way the network infrastructure is used. To use it you need a browser: a piece of software that runs on your machine to decode and display web 'pages'. The must-have browser of the net at the moment is *Netscape 1.1*, which has Mac, Windows and UNIX versions.

The home page is what first comes up – the browser connects to it automatically. A page of text and graphics will appear in the browser's window. From there you can follow 'links' to other pages by clicking on underlined words or icons within the text. When you choose a new link your machine sends a small message through the Internet to call up the information you want. This is the URL (uniform resource locator).

Three bits of information form the URL:

- 1 The protocol. On the web this is HTTP (hypertext transfer protocol) – the standard way the data is sent and received.
- 2 The IP address. The unique address of the machine, in the form of a series of letters separated by full stops: www.warhol.com. The IP address can also be a number, and
- 3 File path for the document: the name of the file and the name of the higher level directories (or folders) that group the files.

That's what those long strange addresses are: <http://www.warhol.org/warhol/>, for example, will use HTTP protocol to retrieve the file *warhol* from the machine whose IP address is www.warhol.org. If you know the address you can connect directly to it by typing it in rather than following other people's links.

To use *Netscape* you will need a full connection to the net (using PPP or SLIP if you are connecting through a modem). *Internet Australasia* magazine has an up to date listing of Australian service providers and costs. CC

also backs up the structure with solid content.

System-X is another group of electronic and computer artists. For some time they have used a bulletin-board, which is available through dial-up and they now have a net site. It includes exhibits by musicians, visual and installation artists. Work like Brad Miller's *digital rhizomes* finds a natural place here, growing in the cracks of the post-Cold War technology. SysX sees cooperation and collaboration between artists through the net as equally important to exhibiting work.

Read, hear, see!

Web sites are a means of electronically publishing all sorts of information that used to be published on paper and in other forms. Sometimes publishers have a physical version as well; other times they don't. The virtual version is different from the paper one. The virtual version has new possibilities.

Next Online is an elegantly implemented, commercially-oriented site from publishers of *Rolling Stone*. Their site includes an on-line promotion for *Rolling Stone*, an online games magazine associated with the publication *Hyper*, called *Hyperactive*, MM multimedia magazine, and *Geek girl*. Managing director Phillip Keir says attracting notoriety on the Internet today is easier than through traditional forms. The electronic version of *Geek girl*, for example, was called up 300,000 times, far more than the paper distribution of 500 copies. The net provides an international audience impossible to gain economically with paper distribution. It also includes multimedia material like sound and video that are not possible with paper.

Another site, *Artsnet*, has grassroots community-based material, from the Australian Society of Authors and the Australian Network for Art and Technology, but has a home page that at the moment is cluttered, ugly and unclear. There is some good material on the site, but the initial impression is bad. On the net,

clever and appealing design are critical in the impression you get of the material.

You could easily say the net is not as good as other media. It is slow. It lacks the visual impact of TV advertising. It doesn't have the sense of place of a gallery. It is not as easy to read as a book. It doesn't have the resolution of a photo. Being silent (except for grabs that take minutes to download) it is no competitor for radio. It is impersonal and antisocial compared with meeting real people.

But the point is the net is really a different medium. It has grown very quickly, and in many fields is becoming a real, lived-in resource. The net is now remarkably unremarkable. It's no longer a technological experiment or a spectacle, but a medium, where the attractions are what you can see and do through it.

Chris Chesher lectures and researches in desktop media at Macquarie University.

Sites referred to in this article:

Andy Warhol museum
<http://www.warhol.org/warhol/>

Kaleidoscope:
<http://www.kspace.com/>

Parallel:
<http://www.va.com.au/parallel/>

System-X:
<http://sysx.apana.org.au>

Sydney Morning Herald:
<http://www.smh.com.au>

Next Online:
<http://www.next.com.au>

ArtsNet:
<http://peg.apc.org/~artsnet>

Starting points:

Yahoo (General subject lists):
<http://www.yahoo.com>

Art History Research Centre:
<http://www.cam.org/~harmesen/research/intro.htm>



PERFORMING ARTS RESIDENCIES IN ASIA

Asialink invites performing arts personnel to register their interest in participating in residencies in Asia in 1996. The objectives of the program are to:

- promote increased cultural understanding and exchange with Asian counterparts arising out of collaborative work;
- provide an experience for artists which will influence their future creative work; act as a catalyst for further exchanges, collaborative projects, reciprocal residencies and institutional linkages with Asia.

Professional artists in music, dance and theatre as well as producers, designers and technical personnel are eligible to apply. The residencies will be for a 3-4 month period. It is expected they will be project-based, directed towards collaboration, exchange of skills or involvement in a production. There will be up to seven residencies in Asia in 1996, subject to funding from the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council. Some will be with identified host institutions. Others will be responsive to residency proposals submitted by Australian practitioners in association with an organisation or institution in Asia. At least two of the positions will be for Victorian performing arts practitioners, funded by Arts Victoria. Funding will cover airfares and basic living costs.

ARTS MANAGERS RESIDENCIES IN ASIA

Asialink invites professional performing and visual arts managers to apply for residencies in Asia in 1996. The objective of the program, which has been funded by the Myer Foundation, the Australia Council and Arts Victoria is to:

- develop a new generation of Australian arts managers familiar with Asian arts networks and cultural forms.

The residency program will provide opportunities for young Australian arts managers (up to 35 years of age) to experience working alongside arts organisations in an Asian country for up to six months. Applicants will be encouraged to devise their own programs, although they will be able to seek advice from Asialink. Some possible host institutions will be identified. Up to three residencies are available in 1996, one of which will be for a Victorian arts manager.

For more information about these programs and for details of application procedures, call or write to Asialink, Performing Arts and Arts Managers Residency Programs. It is expected that the closing date for applications will be 8 September 1995.

Asialink, 107 Barry Street, Carlton VIC 3053 Tel: (03) 9349 1899 / Fax: (03) 9347 1768

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More M & Ms

Annemarie Jonson finds more multimediority at the second of the *Creative Nation* multimedia forums: Sydney, 15 and 16 June, 1995

The second of the multimedia forums (presented by the Department of Communication and the Arts and the Department of Industry, Science and Technology as part of the *Creative Nation* cultural policy package) was a fairly predictable government/business talkfest: heavy on the market rhetoric and light on critique and analysis. Despite the misnomer – there was something about ‘creativity’ in the title for this forum – there was, once again, little genuine attention to the involvement of artists in the development of emerging interactive media forms.

Undoubtedly the forum would have provided some very useful pointers to aspiring commercial producers. Viktor Zalakos’ talk – he’s the marketing manager

for Firmware – made it apparent just how very difficult it is to crack the CD-ROM marketplace. Producers are now, for example, paying for shelf space: retailers will not even take product for free. Most CD-ROM sales occur through bundling with other software and hardware; a recent survey showed that a very large majority of people with a CD-ROM drive had no intention of purchasing a CD-ROM unless it came bundled with other goods. Zalakos’ maxim: know your market, plan, don’t try to do it all yourself, and be aware of the risks.

Another useful session was a hypothetical role play. It concerned an inexperienced player’s attempt to engage commercial interest in – and retain control of – her idea for a CD-ROM on a pioneering Australian aviatrix. In the hands of the money-men (for they were mostly men), the idea mutated into an action game based on the rescue of the American pilot Scott O’Grady shot down over Bosnia, providing a cautionary tale for all those unfamiliar with the ways of the market and the all-powerful imperative to global market viability.

Stewart MacLennan, MD of the Garner MacLennan group, spoke about putting together multimedia consortia. It was at least heartening to hear this major player emphasise the depth of creative talent in this country – designers, filmmakers, writers – and the need for the multimedia industry to draw on these people if it wished to produce high quality titles. This endorsement of the role of artists raises the question, however, of how well the industry is prepared to remunerate these people, and to what extent (if at all) their conceptual, aesthetic and critical skills will be allowed to drive or influence production.

The impression one gets in all this hype is one of rampant technological determinism. The hysterical fascination with all things multimedia recalls the mid 19th century preoccupation with prototypical pre-cinematic toys such as the phenakistoscope and the praxinoscope, and the gobsmacked hysteria that greeted the first cinematic projections 100 years ago. What’s notably missing from the cultural policy agenda is even the slimmest commitment on the part of government to fostering critical practice and a theoretical engagement with the formidable conceptual, philosophical, aesthetic, educational and cultural implications of nonlinearity and digital technology.

The final multimedia forum in this series was held in Adelaide in July. It cost \$150 to attend (excluding many individual artists, and those who don’t live in Adelaide and cannot afford one-day interstate jaunts). It’s focus was export. Needless to say none of the above concerns was on the agenda.

New media, new money

John Potts talks to Michael Hill, Project Co-ordinator, Film Development Branch of the Australian Film Commission

Since the implementation of *Creative Nation* in October 1994, the Film Development Branch allocates \$1.2 million per year for multimedia projects. Funding is granted for script writing, preparation, and prototypes for CD-ROM and interactive forms which are then developed elsewhere. Some low budget artists’ titles are completely funded.

JP What are your selection criteria for projects?

MH Without wanting to sound prescriptive, we’re looking for innovative projects that engage with the medium in a creative way. If it’s on-line work, we’re looking for something that instead of merely presenting information on screens in the World Wide Web, uses the hierarchy of the Web in a way that might give us an indication of how on-line works in the future might actually work. If it’s a CD-ROM work, we’ll look at its interface: how do you interact with it, how is it new, how is it fresh?

There seems to be so much in multimedia that hasn’t been explored, so if people are producing copies of what they’ve already seen, we’re not that interested. We’d really like to see unusual things. The only thing that everyone in the industry and in the arts agree on is the poor quality of work so far, so it may be a challenge to say, let’s try and go as far as we can. Our guidelines are fluid, they encompass the unusual project, rather than the project that sees multimedia as merely a shell to hold information.

JP What multimedia works of the last few years are exemplary?

MH A few works stand out. Jon McCormack’s installation *Turbulence* is one. I’m very impressed by Troy Innocent’s work: he continues to create iconic languages that defy meaning. There’s John Collette’s CD-ROM, and Linda Dement’s work continues to affect me, makes me laugh, and horrifies me. They’re the people who extend at least one thread of current practice. With these artists you’re beginning to sense that you can have a personal style.

JP How do you prevent the perception that you pander to a coterie of artists?

MH We are about assisting a diverse range of people, and we’re a national

organisation. We’ve found a growing band of people coming forward. We’re not only about making work, we’re about developing careers. We hope to assist people to go from a small project to a bigger one, so that they achieve something they otherwise wouldn’t have been able to. We want to find new people all the time and develop their work, but we have to be sure that those people we’re assisting have the skills to do it. We’re not a training organisation. So if people have the skill to produce what they say they can, we’d love to support them.

JP Is there a fear that the hype surrounding multimedia creates a fad, and little else?

MH There is a sense of frustration that digital media have let us down already, maybe the circus will move on. Last year it was all CD-ROM, this year it’s all Web. I know the people in the ‘virtual reality’ community are very happy that the circus has moved on from there, and they can get on with their work. And I think that will happen with interactive art forms. But I think the major problem at the moment is the tools. The basic languages embedded in the computer systems only give a very limited sense of interactivity.

JP What of the question of aesthetic criteria? How do you judge artworks in new media forms?

MH You can’t help but judge them in terms of past art forms. But then I’ve seen works where you can say, that’s an elegant piece of programming, it’s unusual or exciting, so there is a sense of a new language emerging. At the same time, to dismiss the new media as mere novelties is to forsake any real thinking about what’s going on. What we’re doing in digital media is finding new ways to tell old stories. The bankruptcy of the novel, the bankruptcy of many feature films is telling us something important. At *Perspecta*, kids rush past the paintings and go straight to the interactive works. If artists are finding it harder and harder to speak to modern audiences in traditional forms, their ideas can be re-energised by a new form. I get excited that there must be new criteria, new ways of thinking that non-linearity offers, that random access to material offers. But at the same time, it’s important to focus on what the artists are saying, as well as how they’re saying it.



SCREENINGS

Erwin Rado Theatre, 211 Johnston Street, Fitzroy

10 August 1995 at 7.30pm

PASSAGE - A TWO SCREEN FILM PROGRAM (Vic)

In 1995, Arthur and Corinne Cantrill, two major figures in experimental film, celebrate 35 years of filmmaking. MIMA will screen a program of rarely seen 16mm two screen works by these prolific filmmakers.

19 September 1995 at 7.30pm

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Curated by Janet Merewether and Greg Ferris, this program is designed to investigate the ways in which Australian and international filmmakers have explored comedy in experimental film and video and will contain a cross section of formal investigative work, satire and absurdity to amuse even the most earnest viewer.

CALL FOR ENTRIES

MODERN IMAGE MAKERS ASSOCIATION, in association with the Melbourne Fringe Festival, present *diGiTAL ciNEma*. Screened in a media lounge environment, *diGiTAL ciNEma* will be an exhibition of new digital works by Australian artists and is a way of furthering MIMA’s commitment to supporting artists and filmmakers who are incorporating and exploring applications for digital technology in their work.

Contact MIMA for entry forms.

P.O. Box 1102 St Kilda South 3182
Tel: 9525 5025 Fax: 9525 5105
email: mima@peg.apc.org

MIMA is generously supported by Film Victoria, the Australian Film Commission, Arts Victoria and Pegasus Networks.

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tues - fri
1 - 5 pm sat.
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DIGITAL ART,
ANIMATION
& INTERACTIVE
MULTIMEDIA
SURVEY

BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Gook girls, monstrous chimeras and the new technology

Ross Moore visits three Melbourne techno-art exhibitions

Alternative Realities at the Ian Potter Gallery featured "five Australian artists working with technology". Though the work was individually impressive, and I admit, I thoroughly enjoyed the show, the 'technological' theme as curatorial strategy seemed insufficient to hold the pieces together. Why should technological dreams recoup the failed modernity of the gallery space?

This said, I was particularly impressed with Patricia Piccinini's work, not only for its high, indeed, deliberately slick techno-



Martine Corompt detail from *Two Face*

production values, but also for its cunning pre-subversion of corporate plans for mass marketing genetically-designed babies. What better way to do this, she reckons, than by anticipating, then aping, a multinational-style billboard advertising campaign. Showing the same kind of insider 'knowingness' of a Barbara Kruger, she has designed giant glossy posters that display the babies as yours to take home today. Like all good consumer items they come in a variety of colours, shapes and sizes. *LUMPLand* from TMGP1995™ shows five delightful little lumps, variously limbed and proportioned – doesn't it warm the cockles of your heart?

One wears an all-too-cute piebald bow on a bald head while another a Maverick's Wild-Western hat – entirely appropriate for a frosted lunar landscape. *Your Sperm Your Egg Our Expertise* from TMGP1995™, while mocking the consumer empowerment strategy of big business also works as an educative primer for intending parents still presumably somewhat disturbed by the implications of the new technology for that obsolescent notion – biological paternity. Piccinini has also designed a hands-on computer baby designer program for intending 'parents' about to do it. Gallery goers get to create, view and cost their new offspring, simply by manipulating the mouse. A perhaps predictable evolution of safe sex.

Rosemary Laing's computer manipulated photographic landscapes in the same show seem to acquire poignancy as critiques of essentialism filter through to the feral environmentalist movement. Her digital versions of sublime landscapes, including forested arcadia, open out a problematic hiatus between Greenpeace nature and Baudrillardian simulacra. If transcendentalism was once incorporated in organicism, is it now to be found in pixel ratios? Her large format images are at once Hilton wall decoration and metaphysical critique.

Shiralee Saul, a long-term player in the new media network, has curated a small but powerful show at New Media Network, Southgate. Titled *Ada's Spawn* and captioned by the post-Kristevan cartoon cry "they're back ... and they're meaner, slimier and smarter than ever before!", it assembles the work of eight women. The 'Ada' reference is to Ada Lovelace, who collaborated with Charles Babbage to develop the first binary programming language. Amazing how these names conjure phallogocentric scenarios of vulvic seduction and cabbages! Ada's occlusion from electro-phallic history merely reiterates the vaporisation of those women who inaugurated the loom. Is the patriarchal scenario so palpable now?

Linda Dement certainly thinks so. Her interactive multimedia work *CyberFleshGirl Monster* carries out Donna Haraway's call for perverse cyborg unities to take on the "escalating domination of woman/nature." By cloning direct scans of numerous female

body parts into visceral hybrids, she not only hyperbolises the phobic construction of woman as formless castrating gunk, but also plays at re-inventing female bodies that can invade and collapse the male Cartesian body/mind split – that's if they care to!

What I enjoyed about *Ada's Spawn*, apart from its humour, was its appreciation of 'technology' as digital 'state of the art' and plastic techno-trash. Martine

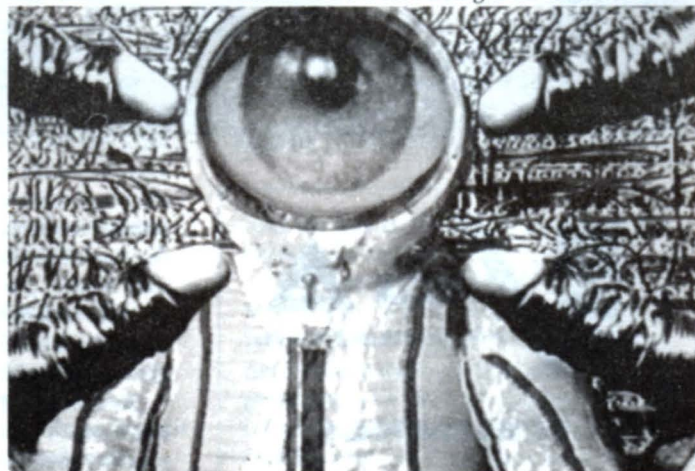
Corompt's fluorescent wall piece, *Two Face*, was a parodic reworking of Munch's *The Scream*. When you pushed the soft tongue, it let out a febrile electronic toy cry that seemed all the more poignant for being such a hopeless similitude of the 'real' thing. Here was the mechanical hysteria of TV soaps as well as the histrionics of cartoon culture.

Technothelylogia, at Monash University

Gallery, featured the work of 20 women artists "in/on technology" as Zoe Sofoulis puts it in her catalogue essay *Against the Grain*. More ambitious than the other shows, it provides an opportunity to explore a range of feminist responses to technology and hence to notice some prevailing discourses. Viewers are also able to tease out the issue of whether or not (especially top end) technology might be considered a male juggernaut. It is at this point that a certain stress appears in some of the work between seeing technology as phallic extension and regarding it as a potentially liberating set of tools for re-imagining social structures and subjectivities – even those of sexed bodies and gender boundaries. Clearly, critiques and contending strategies within contemporary feminist theory and art practice are also invoked here. 1970s notions of women as domesticated and disenfranchised workers, or even as prime baby-producers, seem insufficient to deal with the complexity of how machinery is now employed within, across, at and out of

the body, a body which is itself being remapped as a network of cognitive processes and energy pathways.

Janina Green's manipulated photographic image of modernism's Utopian promise of domestic bliss, *Geodisic Dome 1993*, with its potted cactus, vacuum cleaner, painting of solar sky and attractively reclining female mannequin complete with conveniently articulated joints, would seem to reveal how even the separate realms of public and private have collapsed into anachronism. In *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl*, Marion Morrison has taken Maria Kozic one step further, and beautifully morphed her own face into that of a fresh out-of-the-package Cindy, thereby confounding the gap between her own body and that of the ideal. She's a real living doll. In another



Lynne Sanderson still from *Need*

droll enactment of penile fantasies, Michele Baker and Anna Munster have morphed a dick in four stages into an authentically muscled gun. Significantly, even the original was a dummy – a dildo. Is even that gun for real? Lynne Sanderson in her MTV spoof video, *Need 1994*, celebrates the lesbian S/M nightclub scene. "NEED SUCK PROBE," says the text over and over, as bodies merge and penetrate in rhythm to the disco beat.

Does technology open out or fill holes in established meaning? Does it satisfy or aggravate our desires? "Do you always do what you are told?" asks Josephine Starr's and Leon Cmielewski's *User Unfriendly Interface 1994*. "Yes", you click, feeling naughty for once. Next screen carries only a single instruction, "Don't click here". You click. There's no other way out.

Ross Moore is a Melbourne based artist and writer. He recently exhibited in *Don't Leave Me This Way – Art in the Age of AIDS at the National Gallery of Australia*.

New media forum

Time for a New Image? was held at the Art Gallery of NSW on Sunday 4 June, 1995. The forum was the second in an occasional series organised by a group of artists, critics and curators who work with digital media: Maria Stukoff, John Potts, Rebecca Cummins, Nicholas Gebhardt, Victoria Lynn and Mike Leggett (who chaired this session) and was supported by the Australian Film Commission and the Art Gallery of NSW. The initiative began when a number of these people returned from the International Symposium of Electronic Art (ISEA) held in Finland last year. Australian artists were well represented at ISEA, in the exhibition program as well as in forum sessions. However, many of those who attended had not heard each other's papers, and also felt that it would be valuable to present the papers to an Australian audience. Australian artists working in new media are well represented at many international forums,

but opportunities to present work and to discuss issues and exchange ideas are limited within Australia. Galleries and museums have been slow to pick up the work and support organisations for artists working in these areas – such as the Australian Network for Art and Technology in Adelaide, which was represented at this forum by Jenni Robertson – are poorly resourced and limited in the amount of support they can provide.

The aim of this series of events, is to provide a forum that is primarily about creating a critical environment for ideas and debate, using as a catalyst a series of short papers.

John Collette discussed the current hype surrounding interactive multimedia, questioning the much-touted CD-ROM boom. He contested the notion that information or communication will be revolutionised by repackaging existing information into CD-ROM format and

argued a case for artists to be involved in the development of new media technologies. Collette argued that it will be artists who will push the boundaries of interactive multimedia: it will be ideas, not marketing, that will potentially produce competitive and challenging international recognition for Australian multimedia.

Sally Pryor discussed *Postcards from Tunisia*, an interactive multimedia work she is developing concurrently with her research and exploration of the human computer interface. She linked her research with an analysis of the development of writing, in an attempt to formulate new ways of navigating interactive space.

Darren Tofts followed on from Pryor's line of thinking in a paper entitled *The digital unconscious: the mystic writing pad revisited*, in which he undertook to explore Derrida's discussions of writing as a graphic process irreducible to speech. He went on to discuss digital art in terms of surrealism, analysing digital art as an aesthetic of the marvellous.

Jon McCormack outlined the emergent nature of his own art practice. He spoke of writing software as an intuitive process, a

process which for him was one of creation. Writing software is as integral to artmaking for McCormack as the aesthetic decisions he makes in the development of the synthesised 'unimaginable' images he creates.

The opportunity the forum provided for artists working in digital media to discuss their work in terms other than as a technical exposition was extremely valuable. There was potential to link discussions of interactive media to debates about the aesthetic qualities of digital art, and the opportunity to debate issues of interactivity, connectivity and transformability of new media. This was a welcome change from the hardware, software and technical debates that have surrounded interactive multimedia in recent months and which have generally focussed on commercial product and export viability. The next New Media Forums are planned for October 15 and 22, where artists will discuss their experiences at ISEA '95 to be held in Montreal in September.

Amanda McDonald Crowley

No show

Colin Hood surveys the connections between new media education and the film/video exhibition fringe in Sydney.

Those who fail to re-read are obliged to read the same story everywhere
Roland Barthes, S/Z

I'm winding back through the preview tape of this year's *Matinaze* screenings organised by the Sydney Intermedia Network (SIN), cross-checking artists' names, recording, editing and delivery platforms, and the schizoid assortment of themes, work histories and promising futures. Something like *Open Week* at The Performance Space except that most of these young film and video makers – unlike their 'performing' counterparts – would probably not find much of an audience on the club and cabaret fringe. Perhaps I'm wrong.

The *Matinaze* scene at the Art Gallery of NSW could have been an end-of-year student screening or one of those big Combined Studies lectures that have become so popular within the arts and media faculties of our rapidly corroding university conglomerates. Sitting five abreast, waiting for the work of a friend to show. Rapturous applause and a lot of nudging and congratulations – self and otherwise.

My audience choice award for best work went to *Fling* (SVHS, 1994, 1 min 30 sec.) by Hazel Milburn and *Sugarcoated* (Shot on Super 8, completed on BW Highband, 1994, 6 min) by Niamh Lines. Falling outside the overused video clip or joke thematic, both these works addressed memory and desire within a carefully chosen (and obviously economic) *mise-en-scène*. No marks to the real winners of the audience choice award: John Curren and Jackie Farkas, for *The Movie Or The Duck*, and *Back To The Happy Ever After* by Philip Hopkins, Shane and Michael Carn. The sickly-sweet, over-crafted work of these seemingly established filmmakers gave me no pleasure at all. Their elaborate joke-work gave me no pause to think about anything.

So why did I persist with this feeling of being a teacher (rather than an experimental film and video enthusiast)? Probably because a good quarter of the audience present on those two days had probably been in film and media courses I taught in second semester of 1994.

I hesitated before striking the keys that would dismiss the whole event as 'mostly student work', deciding instead to talk to the people who taught them. So what are the causes and possible cures for the muddling exposure of something old, something new, something 'enfant', something 'elder' that was *Matinaze* 1995?

What the people who taught them have to say reveals not only the depressed state of undergraduate and postgraduate media education within the corporate cultures of some of our universities but also a history of community – and student – initiated media events which have been gradually undermined by bureaucratisation within the Australian Film Commission and various university departments. Uneven professionalisation within teaching institutions, coupled with the 'take the money and run' attitude of a beleaguered humanities sector, has created a stand-off between educators and administrators. Yet speaking out on these issues – trying to seriously address the micropolitics of media and arts education funding – is like not speaking at all.

In an attempt to give myself an adequate voice, I undertook a brief literature search on the subject, trawling through a CD-ROM version of the Australian Public Affairs Information Service (APAIS). The result: a mere handful of relevant articles written by respected academics over the last six years, including Stephen Knight, Anne

Freadman and Simon During (whose article *The Humanities and Research Funding*, in a 1990 issue of *Arena*, still says a lot about the unspoken).

4-D Studies (covering film, video and new media) within the School of Art at the UNSW College of Fine Arts recently received \$65,000 for 'sight and sound' research through an external Australia Council research grant application. Sounds great till you read the small print. The words 'scientific visualisation' recur with uncomfortable frequency, alerting the reader to how poorly scientific and humanities research are differentiated by the money-brokers servicing our cultural and educational institutions.

A senior lecturer in the same department receives enough AFC funding to take a year or two off; freed from the pressures of teaching to devote more time to multimedia research. All well and good until you discover how the college has arranged how these spare teaching hours will be covered. The number of students the remaining staff have to supervise increases dramatically as do the number of 'just in time' appointed casual staff. Second and third year undergraduate students are feeling drawn to become feature film makers one semester – experimental non-narrative mavericks the next.

At the moment there is much anxiety being expressed by contracted and tenured staff that course and departmental restructuring will further undermine the

new medium dwelt on both the form and content of works by Andrew Frost, Stephen Harrop, Kate Richards, Mark Titmarsh, Michael Hutak and Jane Stevenson. Quite a few of these filmmakers – apart from being film-literate – had been caught up in the new wave of post-Marxism, psychoanalysis and semiotics which had swept through fine arts, communications and film studies courses all over the country.

The event was a sell-out and the stage was set for four to five years of regular screenings, discussion and ambitious 'no-frills' funding. Reviewing the Fourth Super 8 Festival for *FilmNews* late in 1983, Ross Gibson was able to cast a critical eye over the diversification and development of the Super 8 phenomenon: – "The Festival also served as a reminder that the medium attracts the creative gamut, from beginners with much to learn through to aficionados and professionals with impressive theoretical and practical competence."

By the mid-eighties, the weakness of Super-8 (as a non-reproducible recording and projection platform) started to wear on the artisanal economics – the short, inexpensive turnaround from filming to screening. The Super-8 Group became Sydney Intermedia Network and began to stage video as well as film events. Electronic Media Arts (EMA) hosted the first *Australian International Video Festival* in 1986 and a number of other smaller groups and events started to drag on the AFC purse-strings.

The new media/film festivals did not have quite the same integral audience-producer feedback as the so-called

membership to cinemathèque screenings. This enabled continuous and inexpensive access for both students and enthusiasts. In and out of art school in the early 80s, my film education was cheap and easy, lounging through CAE film courses, NFT screenings and a more committed alternative section in the *Sydney Film Festival*.

These days, the choice of programs and venues has diminished drastically, and a user-pays philosophy makes it hard-going for cinephiles on a limited budget. Take the current crop of cinemathèque offerings for example. At the refurbished Chauvel, the 1995 cinemathèque season (programmed by Melbourne Cinemathèque Inc.) – after a few years of much more detailed events programming – has collapsed into a mish-mash of cinema all-sorts. It looks as if someone has thrown darts at the National Film Library catalogue and chosen those films with the extra sprocket holes.

I spoke recently to a respected film historian who said he was told by the new managers that a proposed retrospective of Lumière films would not go down so well with its over-abundance of French subtitles. Cultural or nuclear cringe? Hard to tell, really.

The Museum of Contemporary Art – which promises a proper cinemathèque by the year 2000 – has made some effort to screen some interesting programs over the last few years as well as taking on part of the remainder of the 1994 cinemathèque program when the Paddington complex closed for renovations. Lacking a desperately-needed government subsidy, the cost of attending all these film and video screenings for a 12-month period would probably hit the two hundred dollar mark. I'm hoping the Art Gallery of NSW will continue with a much more creative retrospective and contemporary program beyond the big cine-centenary of 1995.

Film and video are more or less the same thing

There might be a difference in the treatment of light.

Like the difference between philosophy and science

Science is video philosophy is cinema.

Jean Luc Godard

6 In and out of art school in the early 80s, my film education was cheap and easy, lounging through CAE film courses, NFT screenings and a more committed alternative section in the Sydney Film Festival 9

quality of face to face teaching. While professional morale plummets in a dignified silence, university administrators smile through the glow of recently obtained management awards for cost-cutting their lean teaching machine even further. Still I suspect that staff conditions, the quality of liberal, film and media education (in art colleges barricaded within the new university system) can only be improved by allowing art and media students freer (degree credit) access to the larger humanities faculty on a main campus. Why restrain the agonistic impulse (dare I call it competition) that draws someone from Anthropology to Italian, from French Literature to Philosophy, and back through the side door of an art and media education.

"Lest we forget – before too long – the difference between avant-garde, independent, experimental, mainstream and ART-HOUSE cinema, and those who served to program, screen (and make) the difference."

I repeat these words from an essay-interview, *The Liberator of Spaces*, – *RealTime 7* – on the work of Ian Hartley, with a small addition. I've been talking to media lecturer and filmmaker, Kate Richards, who – together with a number of students from what is now The University of Technology – programmed the first *Sydney Super-8 Festival* back in 1980.

The venue was the Film-Makers Co-Op, home to the 16mm experimental push of the 60s and 70s which peaked in the mid to late seventies with experimental feminist documentary pieces like Jenny Thornley's *Maidens*. Resistance to the incursion of the

filmmakers' culture that preceded it (from The National Film Theatre days to the cresting of Super-8). This created a dilemma for the AFC in its choice of sponsored players and events promoters – the result of its own inability to administer or even conceptualise the diversification of media and audiences.

Cinemathèque programs continued to thrive however, with AFC-subsidised repertory cinemas screening historical retrospectives and special seasons. This seemed consistent with the assumption that industry development in the areas of film, video or new media requires balanced funding for both production of work and the education of producers.

The cinemathèque culture seems vastly different from the ritualised Film Festival events which occasionally toy with 'difficult' cinema but end up dutiful servants to tasteful art-house and documentary styles. The single screening of *A Personal Journey Through American Movies With Martin Scorsese* during the 1995 *Sydney Film Festival* created an atmosphere of what I can only describe as cinephilic desperation in the Pitt St Centre. Doubtless this mis-managed must see!! video event will end up on the box in the not-too-distant future, hopefully in tandem with Godard's *Histoire(s) du Cinema* which appeared – without the bellowing of trumpets and velveteen – during the 1994 cinemathèque season.

There was a time not so long ago where membership of the AFI (which cost between \$20 and \$40) automatically gave society

Past cinemathèque screenings have generally manifested a collective will to learn (or remember) about cinema history and individual film-makers (in both narrative and experimental genres), attracting artists, writers and an array of film-making talents. Moving into a period of speculation and experimentation in multimedia formats, it is important that we maintain a culture of informed discussion and programming around innovative narrative and non-narrative forms within the celluloid medium.

In a catalogue essay for *Passages of the Image* (a huge anthological exhibition of video, film and installation which travelled through Europe and the US in 1991-92), Raymond Bellour put it this way: "Thus is the gradation that goes from one to two arts founded on mechanical reproduction and set beside the visual arts that preceded them, a pattern of possibilities is established, formed by the overlapping and passages that are capable of operating (technically, logically, historically) between the arts." There is a small delirium of confluence implied here: the running together – backwards and forwards – of different media, concepts and personal poetics, an approach where the formal, technical and historical boundaries between different media become consciously interwoven.

I too would say – following on from these remarks – that for the benefit of our cinemathèque and multimedia futures (which must be integrally re-connected without petty institutional and personal rivalries) that turning side-on to both of them may offer more hope for creative innovation than simply scribbling on the blank cheque of a new digital millennium.

Camelot rules?

David Matthews sorts out the fantasies and the realities of the new mediaeval movies

Shortly after seeing *Braveheart*, I went to Luna Park because a friend told me that 'something mediaeval' was going on there. I walked the length of the amusement park, from the Chrysler Building to Coney Island, without seeing anything mediaeval. On my way back, though, I began to see what I was looking for. Moving amongst the crowd were several brightly-clad men, with rouged cheeks, stockings, and funny hats, grinning and laughing maniacally, always threatening to do things with swords, knives and leather balls, to the complete bemusement of the children whose attention they briefly held.

So here was a carnivalised version of the Middle Ages; the mediaeval as riot, play, fun, lunacy, glimpsed through the ever-popular, if historically dubious, character of the jester, fool, or minstrel. Where was the rest of mediaeval society? Where was the authority that encloses carnival? These questions are somewhat unfair, as the jesters were entirely appropriate in the context. The society the jesters moved among, it could be said, was the Luna Park crowd on the day; we were the rest of mediaeval society. We were the straitlaced, the workaday, whose grey image of the world was disturbed, as ever, by the violence and colour of carnival.

The same thing is, I think, behind the current wave of mediaevalist, or near-mediaevalist, films: *Braveheart*, *First Knight*, *Queen Margot*, different as each of these is from the others. Mediaevalists speak a lot about the 'otherness' of the Middle Ages, the difference of the period culturally, epistemologically, socially, and in the films, there is an element of

audience-attracting otherness: wow, look at that castle; check that armour. But what characterises the current wave is the success of the filmmakers in yoking one or another quintessentially modern idea to this context. Reviewers tend to miss this, and seize instead on some irrelevant unhistoricality: *Braveheart* is wrong because it uses uilleann pipes, which are Irish, not Scottish bagpipes; Mel Gibson's accent is no good. If this kind of authenticity were adhered to, then *Braveheart* should be conducted in Middle English, Anglo-Norman French, Middle Scots, and Gaelic, with subtitles in modern English. Such niggling remarks are not so much critiques of the films, as self-situating by reviewers, displaying their authority: look at me, I'm doing my job.

Mainstream mediaevalist films tend to play with history at a much more fundamental level which reviewers don't pick up. This has to do with making the films interesting to any kind of broad audience at all; with making them pay their way, in short, by placing the film's audience as the broader society surrounding the supposed mediaeval society of the film — just as in Luna Park — and having the fictive mediaeval society speak to the audience through the deployment of a modern concept. As it happens, in both *Braveheart* and *First Knight* this is achieved through emphasis on a single word and concept: freedom. It's the word on the lips of Gibson's William Wallace as he dies under the torturer's knife; it's the vision he puts to his troops as he stirs them to a great victory over the English; it's the guiding light of Arthur's career in *First Knight*, and he, too,

dies for it. Whether it's the Scots fighting off the English, or Arthur's racially ill-defined peacekeeping force fighting Malagant's rebels, it's 'freedom' they want.

Whatever that might be. It's hard to imagine a single less relevant concept in the mediaeval context. Without getting into a discussion of feudalism — which is currently under dispute again — it's difficult to envisage a concept of personal freedom in a society where one's boundedness to others was a social given. National freedom is even harder to see, in an era which understood race, but not nation in anything like the modern sense. 'Free', consequently, when applied as an adjective to an individual, tends to mean something like 'generous'.

Braveheart hangs its story of love, war and betrayal around this inoffensive and unhistorical message: freedom. Wallace is dead at the end of the film, but the English are held off, and greater defeat awaits them, as the film's narrator tells us, at Bannockburn in a few years' time. The film could almost employ, alongside the conventional disclaimer about the animals' good health, the assurance that no historical personages were harmed in the making of this film. Patrick McGoohan's splendidly loathsome Edward I shows us that we can hate the English unequivocally, Gibson's honest Wallace puts us on the side of the Scots, because this is not about racism, it's about freedom. We know the English won in the end, but by stopping where it does, the film lets us have a fantasy of oppression overturned, while history is left intact.

For all that, *Braveheart* is a pretty good film. The mediaeval battles are some of the best ever filmed, and someone has realised, importantly, that archers and heavy horse, not hand to hand combat, were the decisive factors of warfare in the era. McGoohan and Sophie Marceau are marvellous; the castles are convincingly grungy. (Have you noticed, too, how everyone in historical films now eats like a pig? Someone, again, has had a think about what it meant not to have forks.) The narrative, which is based on a mediaeval chronicle, is tightly and ingeniously constructed.

Oddly enough, the worst thing about the film is in many ways Gibson himself. He acts as our bridge between mediaeval and modern, as the star tends to overshadow the role. When Wallace asks his sweetheart's father if he can go walking with her, the gruff reply is "Not noo." Gibson raises those eyebrows, saying "not noo?", and suddenly

he's the Californian Caledonian, looking over the heads of the characters, to make a joke about dialect to us. If you can get past this, *Braveheart* becomes a very watchable film about the Middle Ages.

First Knight is a mess. I'll admit, here, that I don't like Richard Gere and haven't done since I first saw him camping it up in *Looking for Mr Goodbar*. I don't like someone who acts only with the eyes and the corners of the mouth: eyes flick downward, and back again. (I've just realised something of importance. Eyes look out from under heavy lids, corners of mouth twitch slightly. I am feeling a strong emotion, the precise nature of which will be revealed by what I say next). But Gere, in fact, does a good job of Lancelot. In this version, the knight is a wandering mercenary, not so much a knight, as a kind of samurai. With his dazzling swordcraft, Lancelot doesn't kill his enemies, he sculpts them to death.

It's not Gere, Julia Ormond as Guinevere, or even Sean Connery, who hulks inarticulately through a passive Arthur, who are the problem with this film. Its Middle Ages don't work. The film enters the enchanted forest of romance at the beginning, perhaps looking for John Boorman and *Excalibur*, but comes out again into an attempted realism. Camelot is a glittering otherworldly vision from a distance, but close up, tries for something more quotidian and ends up looking like Luna Park. The oddity of the film is that it takes a classic Arthurian situation — the love triangle of Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot — but then divests it of magic, and puts it into a largely non-Arthurian, would-be realist Middle Ages. The result is three characters in search of a genre.

Even the realism doesn't work. The peasants in this film toil away in the Dark Ages, but their betters seem already to be in the fifteenth century, and might even be bracing themselves for the switch to the Renaissance and bourgeois individualism. The film is never more absurd than when, at the end, Lancelot and Guinevere push Arthur's body off to sea on a funeral barge, and an archer sends a burning arrow into the fuel surrounding him: dim memories of Beowulf and Vikings have become mixed up with the opening ceremony of the Barcelona Olympics.

Amongst all the slogans characterising these films — "Freedom!", "Sometimes peace can only be reached through war" — there is one which sums up *First Knight*. Connery's Arthur mumbles, at a particularly bad moment, "Camelot lives!" I would have gone all the way: Camelot rules, OK. But not in this one.

David Matthews teaches at Newcastle University, NSW.

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Saturday August 19

COLOUR OF TIME

Presented by Corinne Cantrill

2pm Domain theatre, Art Gallery of New South Wales, \$8 / 5

Arthur and Corinne Cantrill are perhaps the most widely known of Australia's experimental filmmakers both for their distinguished filmmaking career now spanning over three decades and for their publication of *Cantrills Filmnotes* since 1971.

This screening will look at one of the recurring interests in their films —the exploration of colour. It will include works dealing with the emotional and symbolic use of colour, depth perception and experiments with hand printing, colour filters, saturation, print grading, aperture effects and a variety of film stocks. While focusing on colour experiments these films also indicate the range of the Cantrills' concerns covering the nature of film and visual perception, art, poetry, still life, landscape and expanded cinema.

Saturday September 9

THE SERIOUS ART OF THE UNSERIOUS

Curated by Greg Ferris and Janet Merewether

2pm Domain theatre, Art Gallery of New South Wales, \$8 / 5

Designed to investigate the ways experimental film and video makers have explored comedy, this program will contain a cross section of work to amuse even the most earnest viewer!

Sydney Intermedia Network inc. facilitates the development of innovative film, video, sound and digital media in Australia and receives assistance from the Australian Film Commission, NSW Film and Television Office, NSW Government - Ministry for the Arts and the Australia Council, the Federal Government's arts funding and advisory body.

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Sociopathy, Sarajevo and cinema

Annemarie Jonson rides the highs and lows of the 1995 Sydney Film Festival

Let's start at the nadir of the recent 42nd Sydney Film Festival. How's this for choice dialogue: "I want to see you in the moonlight with your head thrown back and your body on fire." So says 'performance magician' Petra Soft (Rachel Crawford) to befuddled Christian college professor Camille (Pascale Bussières) in Patricia (I've Heard the Mermaids Singing) Rozema's execrable feature *When Night is Falling* – a lesbian-lite, airbrushed romance tricked up with pastel, soft-focus arthouse shtick. True to SFF form, this meretricious bomb was a crowd favourite, just pipped at the post by Nikita Mikhalkov's compelling tragedy *Burnt by the Sun* for best feature honours. Together with several other festival hits (for example, Hal Hartley's overrated, smartass-absurdist *Amateur*, and Boaz Yakin's *Fresh*) both of the above also head straight to general release. *When Night is Falling* deserves special mention here solely because it calls attention to an endemic quirk in directorial policy: just why do films which are either devoid of merit, utterly mainstream-arthouse, and/or moments away from general release, so regularly make it into the director's selection?

Now for the highlights: first, Austrian Michael Haneke's *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance*, one of several features and documentaries in this year's festival which plumb the more chthonic depths of sociopathy. Haneke (whose equally bleak *Benny's Video* screened at SFF93) bases his film on the true story of an Austrian student who shoots dead at random three people in a bank after an apparently minor aggravation. The power of the film lies in Haneke's restraint: he withholds psychological and narrative plenitude, allowing the fall of fate's hand on the victims to remain as aleatory and capricious as the intent which drives the murderer. *Chronology* unfolds in a series of discontinuous long takes separated by ellipses of blackness – fragmentary glimpses of the ordinary lives which will ineluctably converge in the massacre at the bank. Haneke's style is detached and observational: one fragment is a fixed, two or three minute mid-shot of the student playing table tennis against a serving machine – the tension it creates is palpable; another devastating fragment shows a carmine pool of blood seeping silently across the frame. The minimalism of the film, its chilling quietude (there is virtually no extradiegetic sound), and its concern with the real-time minutiae of the everyday – a security guard, who will die later that

day, kneels in the morning to say a small prayer for his sad wife – renders it profoundly affecting in a Carveresque kind of way.

The same unwillingness to exegeticise characterises Michael Winterbottom's very different film, the edgy, lesbian serial killer road movie *Butterfly Kiss*. Eunice (Amanda Plummer), the scabrous motorway crazy, is on a mission to locate her imaginary lover (the biblical) Judith. With a trailer load of clattering chains excoriating her flesh, she proselytises, rants, fucks and bludgeons her way across the bleak wastelands of the English north; the meek, utterly devoted Miriam (Saskia Reeves) is in tow. *BK* eschews the lame frisson and fatuity of *WNIF*'s version of love and faith for a compelling meditation on the profoundly ambivalent and paradoxical forces that propel actions and relationships. Winterbottom's is a truant world of moral relativism – with deep soul.

Perhaps the most perversely fascinating engagement, at this year's festival, with the darker side of the psyche was *Crumb*. Terry Zwigoff's documentary on the American cartoonist Robert Crumb, inventor of *Fritz the Cat* and the once ubiquitous *Keep on Truckin'* motif. The melancholic misanthrope – an adroit chronicler of sexual and social grotesquerie whom Robert Hughes calls "the Breughel of the 20th century" – grew up right in the heart of main street USA. Crumb is a kind of teratological product of the ugly underside of the Rockwellian 50s: always the nerdy skinny guy with glasses, the young Robert found a release from the mindless *Leave it To Beaver* conformism of lower middle-class postwar life in his art. (Opinion on the latter is divided: to some, Crumb's cartoons are racist, priapic sexploitation trash. One strip features a decapitated woman being buggered; another, an incestuous, white-bread middle-American family opening a can of 'Nigger Hearts' for dinner). The most interesting thing about Zwigoff's film is its examination of Crumb's tragic family. Crumb remembers his father: he broke the young Robert's collarbone when he was five, and a few years before he died wrote a book called *How to Train Effectively*. Crumb visits his not-so-lucky brothers: Maxon, a serial sexual offender, lives in a flea-pit boarding house producing bad *art brut* and taking daily two-hour constitutions on a homemade bed of nails; Charles – who hasn't had a job since 1969 and is hooked on anti-psychotic medication – lives

reclusively at home with his unhinged amphetamine-addicted mom in a cat-piss-soaked hovel, holed up in his bedroom reading and rereading the 19th century canon. Charles is frighteningly erudite on his own pathetic subsistence: a postscript subtitle notes that he suicided the year after shooting concluded. Although Charles' early drawings show that he was a wickedly talented ironist around age 10 – perhaps superior in acuity and skill to Robert – Robert is the one that got away. Still, Crumb remains a sneering, enervated, splenetic figure who enthuses over his own cartoons as 'sickening' and exhibits negligible compassion for his family, or anything else for that matter. Zwigoff's exquisite portrait of the artist concludes with Crumb fleeing his reviled homeland for relative obscurity in rural France.




From American psycho to the madness of war: The Sarajevo Group of Auteur's *MGM Sarajevo – Man, God, The Monster* collages the quotidian rhythms of life under siege – people repairing shell-shattered windows with whatever scraps they can muster, fixing coffee on an improvised flame, fetching buckets of water to wash and cook. *MGM*'s gravitas lies in its dispassionate chronicling of the effects of war on the banalities of the everyday. Its occasional images of atrocity – one momentary sequence shows a group of people risking their own lives to salvage a semi-decapitated civilian from the line of fire – punctuate the grinding tableaux of everyday life in a war-zone like sniper fire. The film intercuts excerpts from an interview with soldier Borislav Herak, a functionary barely out of his teens charged with genocide for his role in the Serbian's 'ethnic cleansing' – the systematic depravities which have become the *lingua franca* in Bosnia. Herak recounts his exploits like rote-learned 'standard operational procedure' – pack rape and slaughter of girls one day, slashing Muslim men's throats like swine the next.


Sarajevo was also the focus of Marcel Ophuls' wonderful four-hour documentary on war journalism *The Troubles We've Seen*. Ophuls' deft touch exposes the bombast and braggadocio of the messengers and the perpetrators of war. He interviews correspondents covering the conflict in the former Yugoslavia – like the phlegmatic John Burns of the NYT (on whose life the conflict's leaders have taken out a contract) – and the megalomaniacal butchers pulling the levers, exposing the latter as fanatical and dissembling buffoons. Martha

Gellhorn, the first correspondent ashore on D-day, could certainly attest to Philip Knightley's aphorism that the first casualty of war is truth. In an interview with Ophuls, she recalls how her scoop report was appropriated by Ernest Hemingway to whom it had been entrusted under her name.

Along with Sarajevo and sociopathy, another preoccupation of the festival in this centenary year of film was the cinema itself, hence the predominance of excellent retrospectives such as *The Arts End of the World: Australian Cinema Revisited* and *Lumière's Century: 100 Years of French Documentary*. The highlight was *A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese through American Movies*, part of the BFI/Channel 4/Miramax series *The Century of Cinema*. Scorsese's influences are nothing if not catholic. He begins with a seminal moment in his movie-watching career, his viewing of King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946) which coincided with his first flush of prepubescent tumescence; he ranges through John Ford, Busby Berkely, Vincente Minelli, Orson Welles, Erich von Stroheim and John Cassavetes amongst many others, structuring his highly idiosyncratic essay around themes such as the studio-system, film-technique and the director as iconoclast. Highlights were for me, Scorsese's selection of rarely seen B-grade noir classics such as *Detour* (Edgar Ulmer, 1945) and *Kiss Me Deadly* (Robert Aldrich, 1955); his take on 50s dramas such as Nicholas Ray's *Bigger than Life* (1956) – which features James Mason as all-American family man plunging into cortisone-induced psychosis – and Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life* (1959); his brief attention to Ida Lupino's career as film director; and, the bizzarerie of the director of the sanguinary *Raging Bull*, *Mean Streets* and *Goodfellas* citing Kubrick's mannered, glacially-paced period masterpiece *Barry Lyndon* as a major influence (then again, perhaps *The Age of Innocence* is Scorsese's *BL*).

Scorsese rounds off his paean to American movies by reflecting on the function of the moviehouse as a kind of church, concluding with a heartfelt appeal to the spirituality of film art. Yet these are, as the aphorism goes, interesting times for film, a fact reflected in other aspects of this year's festival such as Liz Jacka's McPherson Lecture, *Audio-Visual Culture in the New Millennium*, which took up the question of the impact of emerging global media technologies on film. Clearly, we are now on the brink of a technocultural shift as profound as that precipitated in 1895 at the Grand Café. 100 years after cinema, in a climate with deeply ambivalent possibilities for the art of film, Scorsese's affirmation rings especially true.

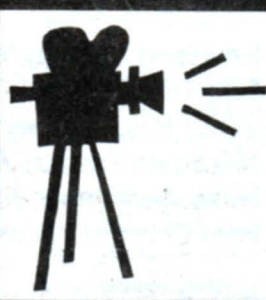






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West-Side cinema stories

Daniel Cole reports on the expanding vision of Film West

As part of *Film West 1995*, in Sydney's western suburbs, two exhibitions focused on recent examples of new film and video art, CD-ROM, sound and image installation, Australian and international.

With the centenary of film in the background for the curators, both exhibitions draw on the phenomenon of the 'image that moves'; to grasp again the original Edison 'joy-moment' within current film/video practice.

This is displayed in the work of two Japanese video makers in *New Territories 1* at the Campbelltown City Gallery. The artists seem transfixed – transfixed by the capacity of filmic reflection and repetition. In Ken Ikeda's *Dead Head: Regulations of Music* (1994), a city scene unwinds, repeating itself; unoccupied trains stop at stations for no-one, then depart. In *Pretender* by Noritoshi Hirakawa (1993), the artist has filmed himself and his lover in the carnal act; the soundtrack consists of a dialogue between an art critic and the artist (mind-fucking?). Apart from the theoretical concerns of the works, the pacing and filmic or *vidic* texture of both is remarkable.

The novelty of new image techniques is seen in a comprehensive selection of recent French film and video. Here, film/video practice, aesthetic theory and historicism is combined with recent computer graphic software. In one piece, static artworks are distorted and *re-drafted* as motion is



Jackie Farkas/Milvia Harder
ode to the one who knows how to touch me

reconstituted. With *L' Escamoteur* by Eve Ramboz (1991), images from the paintings of Bosch, fixed in painterly-time, begin to move; doors open, mouths announce. In Christian Boustani's *Citiés antérieures-Siena*, a traditional horse race becomes a connective figure for both the mythological and the present, where Siena's statues 'morph' with living figures with surprising ease.

On the walls of the gallery, promotional posters from French cinema, photographed by Magnum, and Indian posters from

popular Indian cinema add yet another corner to this exhibition.

Quite different from issues found at Campbelltown (voyeurism or re-scribing) is *New Territories 2* at the Casula Powerhouse arts complex. Four artists each attempt to extend the correspondence between the moving image and static, solid form.

In Peter Fitzpatrick's *Purple Heart*, fragments of historical stills are positioned in relation to a floor assemblage of war relics. Alyssa Rothwell's interactive CD-ROM *Getting Dotted Up*, a 'girls' room and its prescribed 'femininity' is revealed in cartoonish form.

Similarly, the audience is invited to delve into Bill Seaman's *The Exquisite Mechanism Of Shivers*, last seen at the Biennale of Sydney. Also CD-ROM based, sound, text and moving images are housed within electric software/hardware where the audience is 'free' to arrange random artistic forms and audition the results.

Both CD-ROM pieces require an audience to 'function' or 'make them work'. Collaborative installation *Ode to the one who knows how to touch me*, by Jackie Farkas and Milvia Harder, shows a loop of a figure skater projected onto a suspended block of heart-shaped ice. The image seems magically contained within the cool depth. A mesmerising piece.

Both exhibitions presented a fine and coherent body of work, serving as a progressive 'counter' to conventional viewing positions and expectations. *New Territories 1 & 2* have established a solid base for *Film West 1996*.

Film West is directed by Hunter Corday. *New Territories 1* (Campbelltown City Art Gallery) was curated by Kari Hanet; *New Territories 2* (Casula Powerhouse) by Greg Ferris.

Big and little

Melbourne Super 8 and Brisbane film festivals First developed in the mid-sixties to capture those unforgettable family fictions, Super 8 film attracted large numbers of independent film makers who liked its portability and relative ease of handling and its economy compared with more industrial film formats. Now with the dominance of video on the home movie market, Super 8 has become almost exclusively the domain of independents and an important part of a lively international film culture. The Melbourne Super 8 Film Group is the only group in Australia but one of many internationally representing individuals who still value and use the liberating medium of one of the world's smallest film formats. The group supports and promotes Super 8 film making and its membership includes some of the most dedicated and prolific film innovators in Australia. The Melbourne Super 8 Film Festival in September (Super 8 Kiosk) is the eighth festival presented by the Melbourne Super 8 Group now in its tenth year.

Brisbane International Film Festival August 3-14 has extended this year to encompass two full weekends, offering a more extensive program of screenings and events, an expanded schedule of seminars and forums and an impressive line-up of guests. Festival director Anne Demy-Geroe announces the now familiar film festival format of "popular new releases, witty shorts, innovative animation and thought provoking documentaries" (Could it be time for some thought provoking animation or is it just me?) Highlights include *Burnt by the Sun*, Wayne Wang's *Smoke*, The Sundance Film Festival's Grand Jury Prize winner *The Brothers McMullen* from Edward Burns and Tavernier's *D'Artagnan's Daughter*. The 'controversial' film is *Exotica* from Canada A series of late night thrillers includes *Mute Witness* from the US, *Angel Dust* from Japan, *Jump Into the Void* from Spain and the Australian film *Blackwater Trail*. Day 1 sees four sessions of short films while *Gay World Cinema* screens late night. Geographical spotlighting allows audiences to choose from Sri Lankan (*The Eldest Daughter*), Tunisian (*The Silences of the Palace*), German (Fred Keleman's *Fate*) and Korean (*La Vie En Rose*) and a little local product in Margot Nash's *Vacant Possession*. Animation features strongly and includes a retrospective of Faith Hubley's work, 'international'

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ENCHANTMENT WHEREVER YOU FLY

Sonic sophistry

Douglas Kahn surveys *Sound in Space* at Sydney's MCA

Sound In Space at the MCA is a good opportunity to see and hear (maybe) some very interesting works, despite the fact that the event overall is disappointing, the selection of works trepidatious and the conception of the exhibition unadventurous. Most aggravating is the incompetent installation of the artworks, where the sound of one bleeds into or masks the sound of another. To mask this, the curator sought caveat in cliché — people were directed to invoke the 'cocktail party effect' to cull sounds from constant interruption! In other sound art exhibitions, artists have been asked to address the

problem collectively and to adapt or create works for the site accordingly, staggering the operation of the pieces, triggering them with motion detectors and where sounds must overlap, putting works with the most indexical and intermittent sound, etc. The most sensible method is to distribute works throughout and outside the museum instead of packing them into a few adjacent rooms. It is really not so baffling. When the sophistry of bar room psychoacoustics is the main method employed, however, what you have is a *de facto* fallback on the visual

priorities of the museum, flying in the face of the critique of visuality within Western culture which has been the driving force of so much sound art and sound theory. As such, *Sound In Space* really does a disservice to the sound arts in Australia, which are much more exciting, diverse, and sophisticated than represented here. I could go on along these lines but I'd rather spend less spleen and more ink here on a few of the art works.

In the audiotheque curated by Alessio Cavallaro one can find *Song to Dissolve the World*, the work of Jodi Rose who went out to the Glebe Island Bridge with *The Listening Room* crew, wired it for sound and made like an industrial Harpo Marx with the pizzicato on the cables, the wind blowing its way through and so forth. This could be understood as a garage band cover of the long-winded Australian infatuation with things aeolian, but in no way is it a reaction: when Coltrane plays *My Favorite Things* do you ever once think of Julie Andrews? The mission of *Song to Dissolve the World* is much more exalted, like Scriabin who sought to bring about a "dematerialisation of the world" by performing *Mysterium* in Tibet, and it can be heard in Rose's written statement, which resounds with the zeal of a Judge Schreber on religious radio: "The city has become our temple; electronic networks our religion; the inaudible vibrations of the bridge cables are the voice of the divine. The world of the universe soaks through my cochlea in to the nerve centres. I am wired to god." The Bridge can no longer pass itself off as anything but a church — not a drive-in church modelled on drive-in movies but a drive-thru church modelled on fast food outlets for today's busy commuters — and Jodi Rose, with her cochlea hairs up in hackles, has created its first hymn. I would suggest that *Song to Dissolve the World* play continuously over a low-power transmitter attached to the bridge so that travellers could be transported into raunchy reverie, if not anywhere else, during gridlock.

Unfortunately, you will have some problem hearing the audiotheque works because the 'audiotheque film' is playing out into the same space as the headphone stations.

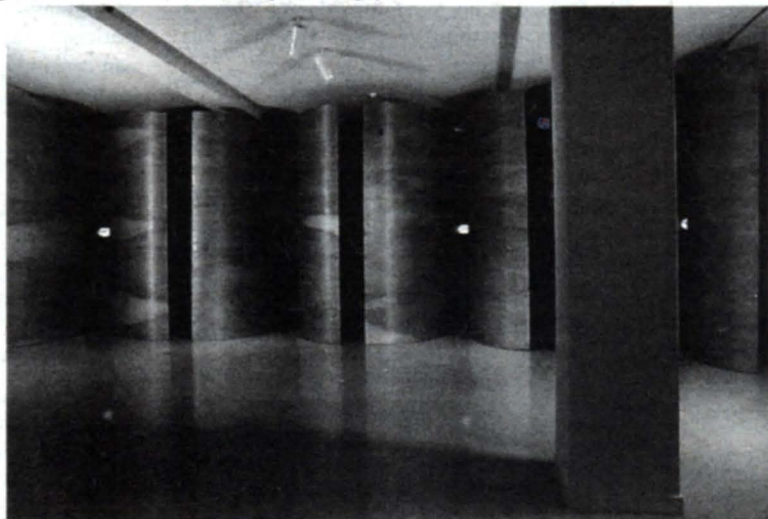
Ceci n'est pas une pipe, by Sherre DeLys and Joan Grounds, has the advantage of being located in the Glass House at the Royal Botanic Gardens. The installation is a wonderful metamorphosis of Rene Magritte's not-pipe into Leonora Carrington's hearing trumpet, mapped onto sound and mythology. If it wasn't for Grounds' objects, you might think it was similar to those attempts to make zoos



Nola Farman with Anna Gibbs *The Braille Book* 1993-95

more lifelike — humane is it? — by adding environmental sounds. But the birds you hear in this cultured nature are at least twice cultured: not only are they recorded and not-live, they are also all imitations made by humans (does this preclude humans imitating birds mimicking other birds?). In other words, these not-birds have larynxes not syrinxes. Even the virtuoso gum leaf player from Malaysia imitating a turtle dove has simply found a prosthetic larynx, much like Leonardo's laryngeal flute, among the birds in the trees.

Although there are multiple cultures engaged in the bird mimicry here, the Western angle might go something like this: *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* is a work about yet



Nigel Helyer *Oracle* 1995

another one of those unheard or unseen sounds — rumours, echoes — that Western women have made or, rather, have been since ancient times. Syrinx, according to Ovid, is the name of the nymph pursued by Pan to the banks of the River Ladon where, with the aid of her sister nymphs, she disguised herself as a reed. She was then gathered up with other reeds and as Pan sighed he heard the tone of his own lament, liked what he heard, and decided to reproduce the feeling technologically. So he bound the reeds fasci-style into the Pan-pipe and lived with her in harmony, albeit in a reduced state, aided by a parable of primitive recording. Syrinx was successful in avoiding Pan but was destroyed through musical sublimation, an ecological devastation of the wetlands for

entertainment purposes, and now finds herself in the throat of every bird, all the result of a prevailing conception that both women and music are natural phenomena. She has been given back her culture and her larynx in *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* and by doing so, the relations of seduction and destruction, the losses pertaining to simulation and the species connectedness practiced through mimicry, among natures and cultures and territories, among other things, become vertiginously provocative.

Within the exhibition proper is *The Braille Book* by Nola Farman and Anna Gibbs, an open book of braille upon which

the fingers trigger sounds, from an arc of small speakers suspended in front of the book, appropriate to specific points in the text, or so we brai-illiterates must assume. The book itself is a beautiful technological contraption, framed and supported by a transparent box revealing a myriad of wires soldered behind the lines cascading down onto a mother board; it appears to be one of those lunar sound books described by Cyrano de Bergerac. During the time of Gutenberg, letters were known as 'black teeth', meaning sighted people must have heard words

emanating from white space between the lines. The readers of the white pages of *The Braille Book* must run their fingers over teeth to hear the text and speakers speak: tactile hypertext meets sound f/x. What I find very interesting is how Farman and Gibbs' work here incorporates failure as a deliberate process (Keiko Toriogoe's suikinkutsu piece used a similar tactic). Because the text is not translated for the sighted and literate the only recourse — to infer from the indexical sound sequence what the text might say — quickly becomes obvious as no recourse at all. When this inaccessibility is taken into account, *The Braille Book* succeeds spectacularly (?) in commenting upon the visualist

presumptions of what constitutes 'the public'.

Finally, the massive construction of Nigel Helyer's *Oracle* looks like interior architecture designed by an aeronautical engineer. Wedged deep between the wings are small video screens with mouths uttering in French and English the prophecies of Nostradamus pertaining to architecture and disaster, machines of flying fire, boxes with lightning, war ships breathing beneath the sea, and the like. The construction acts as speaker horns melded with cabinets to transport prophecy in sound as efficiently as air flows over wings. Its imposing presence and beautiful parabolic design both attracts and commands listening, to hear the presumptive authority of prophecy as it speaks in our own interest. People place themselves willingly in its embrace in order to be informed of their own impending demise. Oracular statements were once spoken over holes in the ground that belched up fumes; then temples were constructed on the site. Helyer has built a contemporary model as a paean to power, where the labial actions of speech are at once transmitted into architecture and replaced with the belching hole of the screen. These titrated talking heads speak destruction. Do not listen at your own peril.

Radio reviews & previews

Not surprisingly, given French intentions in the Pacific, the Bomb figures in radio programming over the next two months as it has done recently on television. For *The Listening Room*, Gary Bryson and Donna MacLachlan will present brief *Pacific Moments*, "drawing attention to Pacific myth and legend as the French tests approach" (August 14 & September 11), and Bryson's *Hiroshima — A Fabricated Memory*, "a personal evocation of a visit to Hiroshima with borrowed sound to replace his recordings which were stolen along with his recorder" (August 7). Becky Llewellyn's *Five Minutes Past Midnight* takes us back to Maralinga in the 50s (September 11) and *Radio Eye* features Tony Barrell's *Don't Forget Nagasaki* (August 6), a new look at the impact of the second bomb dropped on Japan.

Worth listening out for are Donna MacLachlan's *Culture in Transmission*, an exchange between sound artists Joan Brassil and Joyce Hinterding (LR August 7), *Soundspace*, a joint venture with The Performance Space's *Eventspace* featuring sound works by Sophea Lerner, Dame Dildo Vile, Simone Patterson, Emile Goh, Julaine Stephenson and others live from the Eugene Goossens Hall. Sydneysiders can attend the event (LR August 21). Paul Carter's *Toward a Sound Photography*, "documenting a journey to Lake Eyre and questioning the act of recording itself" (LR September 25). *The Box Seat* (Radio National) features some deserving repeats — Paul Charlier's *The Touring Machine* (August 7), Virginia Madsen and Tony MacGregor's alarming Waco account, *Cantata of Fire* (August 8), John Pott's 'dramatic timepiece' *5.06am* (August 9) and Paul Carter's *Remember Me* (August 10). For cultists Soundstage (RN 8pm August 8) is playing Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* featuring husband and wife team Adrian Edmonson as the Maniac and Jennifer Saunders as Maria Feletti.

Don't Forget Nagasaki

Producer: Tony Barrell

Technical production: John Jacobs

Radio Eye, Radio National

August 6 Sunday 8.30pm 27'50"

Tony Barrell visited Nagasaki earlier this year. The result is a program that 'remembers Nagasaki', the A-bombed city so often eclipsed by the symbolism surrounding Hiroshima. The bomb that hit Nagasaki was 'Fat Boy', smaller but twice as powerful as Hiroshima's 'Thin Man'. Barrell's program made up of interviews and readings, evokes the pre-bomb calm and the surreal impact of the explosion and its after-effects, alternating his sound textures behind the voices between bird calls and a disturbing electronic score grained with phantom voices, Japanese and American. Its subjects include a Dutch-born Australian POW in Nagasaki at the time (describing the Japanese government's ill-treatment of its own people), a Japanese historian (explaining Japanese resistance to the notion of war crimes) and US researcher Richard Rhodes who reveals that American scientists had told Truman that this bomb was a stronger one but without the effects of radiation. The scientists were wrong.

First Blood

Producer: Eurydice Aroney

Technical producer: John Jacobs

Radio Eye, Radio National

Sunday August 13 8.30pm

A good idea but *First Blood* doesn't go much beyond the framework of the weekend Goddess workshop that frames it, and the participants, who sound young, don't have much in the way of insights to offer about menstruation. This experience of exploring their relationship with menstruation was presumably a big leap, the emotional release often centring, of course, on things other than menstruation. An older voice, the workshop leader, sounds calm and wise, full of folklore and, appropriately, the rituals we hear enacted are those of other folk. The voices are close, intimate and conversational.

Christiania

Producer Tony MacGregor

Technical production: John Jacobs

Radio Eye, Radio National

Sunday August 27 8.30pm

Christiania is a living social experiment, a self-managing anarchist community in the middle of Copenhagen in an old naval base that was closed in 1969, left empty for two years, and squatted during a housing shortage in 1971. A thousand people now live and work there It's the biggest squat in Europe and the longest lasting. It went through dark periods with a heavy drug scene and biker wars settled in the end by community action. This is a reflective program, the

• continued page 35

Just say "No" to 'Textual Manoeuvres'

Nicholas Zurbrugg responds to Rex Butler in the ongoing art criticism debate

Let me begin with the incongruous assertion that I have a lot of time for Rex Butler's conversation and critical intelligence. An incongruous claim, perhaps, insofar as I find myself reaching for my hatchet as I respond to what I take to be Rex's ill-advised thoughts upon *Textual Manoeuvres* in *Real Time* 6, April-May 1995. At its most affirmative, this article posits that significant art criticism – like significant art – can at times "actually change the world". So far so good. But how? Not, according to Butler, by "criticising it" or by "offering empirical evidence" in an effort "to persuade", but by "proposing a strange, non-empirical hypothesis, undemonstrable but irrefutable, which the world can only follow".

Wait a minute, Rex. "A strange, non-empirical hypothesis, undemonstrable but irrefutable". Sounds kind of familiar to me. Flip to Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End*, p.120, and – what do you know – "Against this general movement, there remains the completely improbable and, no doubt unverifiable hypothesis of a poetic reversibility of events".

So maybe great minds think alike? Or maybe R.B. is simply elaborating J.B.'s hypothesis that one can't actually discuss or evaluate one's object anymore, but can only exaggerate, manipulate, manoeuvre, and generally 'play' with those banal discursive and critical conventions within which such objects are usually considered. *Critics just wanta have fu-un*.

'Improbable', 'unverifiable', 'non-empirical', 'undemonstrable' ... fun. Poetically 'reversible' ... fun. In Butler's terms, the Duchampian fun of 'a new work'

which "must double all that comes before it, re-interpreting everything in its name". The 'textual manoeuvre' of telling it like it is, but somehow *unlike* it is. The fun of 'explanation' which "repeats exactly what is, without changing a thing", but which somehow "allows us to see it in a completely different way".

Let's consider Butler's hypotheses in more detail. What is it that fun criticism should not undertake? Answer: "Art criticism should no longer concern itself with the question of evaluation of art, but with the kinds of games that can be played with its internal logic".

'No', to evaluation. 'Yes', to internal logic. Why? Implicitly, doubtless, because most evaluative art criticism is so tedious. Explicitly, according to self-legitimizing Butleresque 'internal logic', because: "to an art which is no longer made with an eye to critical judgment, quality etc., one can only respond with an art criticism that takes this as its starting point and pushes it to its limit".

"An art which is no longer made with an eye to critical judgment, quality etc."? Just what is this strange beast, Rex? Nothing could be more fixated upon 'critical judgment, quality etc.' than an art purporting indifference to 'critical judgment, quality etc.', crying out for 'truly "critical"' critics to applaud its indifference to 'critical judgment, quality etc.'.

Such art is – one might say – obsessively *critically correct*, in the sense that it quite literally follows the old public school imperative of 'playing the game'; in this instance, playing the entirely predictable Baudrillardian game of being 'critical judgment unfriendly', 'quality-unfriendly', 'evaluation unfriendly', and very, very, 'internal logic-game friendly'.

Put more simply, Butler's predilection for 'textual manoeuvres' encourages nothing less – and sadly, nothing more – than the Pavlovian reaction of taking 'judgment 'n quality 'n' evaluation-unfriendly' poses as both one's predictable point of departure and one's predictable point of arrival. And what could be more predictable than that? As Jameson points out, such mechanical categorisation and conceptualisation of artworks reduces everything to the same level of banality, so that "they all turn out to be 'the same' in a peculiarly unhelpful way".

If, as Butler seems to assume, all art today is conveniently *critically correct*, and obligingly aspires to nothing more than 'textual manoeuvres', then the whole process of making, observing and discussing art can indeed "only be understood rhetorically today" (requiring no more complex consideration than Butleresque 'textual manoeuvres'). But why on earth *should* art today be typecast in such simplistic terms, and why on earth *should* art critics today consecrate their pages to post-evaluative, post-empirical play with agnostic artistic logic?

While Wilde's *Intentions* (1891) asserted that "The critic ... does not even require for the perfection of his art the finest materials. Anything will serve his purpose ... to an artist so creative as the critic, what does subject-matter signify? ... Treatment is the test"; what 'treatment' could be more predictable than the facile ritual of pushing cynical 'starting points' to their 'limit'? Should inventive critical strategies address richer examples?

In a decade of increasingly irritating *fin-de-siècle* trash-culture, what could be more depressingly misdirected – and *misdirecting* – than 'trash-criticism' complacently trashing the 'trash-logic' of 'trash-art' to its 'trash-limits' under the fond illusion that it has somehow addressed art criticism "in an absolutely original way". Having read Baudrillard's variations on 'N'th degree exaggeration, the Kroker's variations upon 'panic' theory and Delillo's parodies of such P-M critics as Alfonse Stompanato, the coiner

of the phrase "Only a catastrophe gets our attention", surely we have endured sufficient 'absolutely original' apocalyptic textual manoeuvres to last until the next millennium.

No more funny business, Rex, thank you. No more 'textual manoeuvres', thank you!

Riposte from Rex: "But what about Baudrillard, Nick – you like his writings too, don't you, Nick?"

"Sure, Rex", I hear myself reply.

But let's look at Baudrillard more carefully. Firstly, anticipating R.B.'s general argument, in 'a completely similar way', J.B. describes his critical strategy as "a way of raising things to their 'N'th power ... a way of following through the extremes to see what happens".

Secondly, proposing that 'truth doesn't exist', Baudrillard also repeatedly asserts that "The only thing you can do is play with some kind of provocative logic"; precisely Butler's argument when he proposes in turn that art criticism should abandon description and evaluation in order to play 'games' with its own internal logic.

Significantly though, Baudrillard's argument differs from Butler's imperatives in terms of its welcome sense of deconstructive discrimination, or of what one might think of as 'serious fun'. On the one hand, his argument in *The Transparency of Evil* certainly posits that the present "fractal ... stage of value" makes "all valuation impossible", in an era with "no point of reference at all" and with "no longer any equivalence, whether natural or general".

But elsewhere, Baudrillard also very interestingly rejects the passive, indiscriminate application of his ideas, complaining, for example, that "To assert that 'We're in a state of simulation' becomes meaningless, because at that point one enters a death-like state".

Clarifying this remark, Baudrillard distinguishes between 'marvellous' revolution when "there's some sort of eruption", and post-revolutionary tedium, when "one dedicates oneself to legislating" and "it's no longer interesting". For Baudrillard at his most convincing, "there's got to be something at stake" and there has to be 'a challenge'; since it is only by confronting this or that *substantial* challenge, "you cause things to exist", by a kind of 'magic'.

Butler's well-intentioned aspirations to identify kinds of 'strange new hypothesis' obviously aspire to identify similar 'magic'. But Butler seems convinced such 'magic' can – and indeed, *should* – be brought about exclusively from "an art which is no longer made with an eye to critical judgment, quality etc."; from an art towards which, apparently, "one can only respond" imitatively, by taking its internal logic as one's 'starting point'.

Three objections come to mind. Firstly, in the absence of empirical argument, Butler simply *asserts* that "art ... is no longer made with an eye to critical judgment, quality etc.". What art has Butler in mind? Majority art? Minority art? Feel-good, politically correct art? Feel-VERY-good critically correct art? How widespread, in other words, is this kind of post-judgmental, post-qualitative logic?

Secondly, how persuasive is this curiously fragile 'logic'? Any art obsessed with the avoidance of "critical judgment, quality etc." necessarily *foregrounds* these qualities, insofar as its very existence *depends* upon their ostentatious suppression; in Butler's terms, "bound together in a relationship neither can ... escape".

Thirdly, Butler fails to explain *why* the serious artist should deride "critical judgment, quality etc." Or indeed *why* the serious, art critic or art historian should consider themselves immune or indifferent

to "critical judgment, quality etc.", particularly if they wish their work to "actually change the world" in a 'truly' critical way.

Evaluating specific examples, Baudrillard, for his part, has no difficulty discriminating between critical merits, remarking: "I have great admiration for Andy Warhol, but none at all for the current New York artists who simply reiterate and reproduce familiar modes of simulation." Likewise, Baudrillard dismisses most journalistic responses to the Gulf War as a "heap of cowardice and stupidity".

Ultimately, as Butler himself acknowledges, textual manoeuvres signalling the general contradictions and interdependencies between conflicting critical 'logics' often seem "merely ingenious and without consequence". Acknowledging in his turn that most of his disciples could easily imitate his own fragmentary rhetorical manoeuvres 'rather boringly', Baudrillard himself differentiates his research from ritualistic "fragmentation for fragmentation's sake" insisting that his strategies "need to have some sort of hard target in mind".

Predicated as it is upon what one might best distinguish as *critically correct* 'soft targets' – the "soft points of departure" of self-consciously *post-judgment 'n' quality art*, Butler's argument seems most vulnerable in terms of its studied indifference to 'quality control', and its refusal to identify anything approximating to the kind of 'hard targets' definable only once one attempts to identify, describe and evaluate specific meaningful works of art.

In other words, rather than merely avoiding banal evaluative criticism by exploring innovative conceptual strategies within 'non-empirical' hypotheses, art criticism surely needs to confront, question, consolidate and redirect its most transgressive strategies by applying them to precisely the kind of rigorously researched 'empirical evidence' that Butler appears to wish one to exclude from radical 'textual manoeuvres'.

Yet 'what the Butler saw' should surely be both relevant as well as irreverent; meaningful as well as playful; documentable as well as manoeuvrable. Art criticism may never *change* the world, but it can certainly make every attempt to *empirically address, critically contest and conceptually recontextualise* – the most significant art in the world; a more demanding – and more rewarding – challenge, I suspect, than 'textual manoeuvres' bereft of empirical and qualitative reference.

A moment for prayer. From unempirical 'internal logic games', Good Lord, preserve us.

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Mark Titmarsh, *Onion Skin Airmail: The True Story of Art Hotline* [catalogue essay].
Distributed by Manic Exposeur.

Eluding the tomb

Linda Marie Walker sees *Toward Graceland, Installations from the home of Elvis, Priscilla and Lisa Marie*, Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, June 1 - 25

I walked into L.E. Young's exhibition, *Toward Graceland*, and laughed. It had such grave dream weight, and was, in some respect, overwhelmingly sad.

Laughter, as efficacy, in light of past hope, and as sighing of love, too. Personal disasters recognised. Not fleshed (though who can tell) but temporal ones, like hearing "Elvis is dead", or viewing his last concert, and stifling distress for that once too sensual body. A chalice is offered: Friday night, Saturday morning. Nothing. The Matterhorn.

Thoughts go haywire, unconfessed. The axe falls, and executes the past-future. And as event, is small sharp visitation. Not orgasmic, or tendentious, but 'everly' (the plane of the Everly Brothers, say). A white spread, billowing, in the gallery, a waiting cube. The haunted modernist one - a bed. Ready for *moi*. Not I, but me. The thing that sees, in the world. And is gestured toward. And asked: so, is the bed truly nothing. Delight crosses memory, and beyond. The fixed is unfixed. *Moi* shouts, and slinks, to shun longing, to experience not-longing, and not-loss for not-longing.

And the I is 'you' (finally stuttered), that old persona, who wills to remember old-times, as a threshold gives, and everything holds. And *Toward* signals the (p)reservation of far spaces. *Moi* Life: You(r) Life: in memoriam (I am 'it' forgotten).

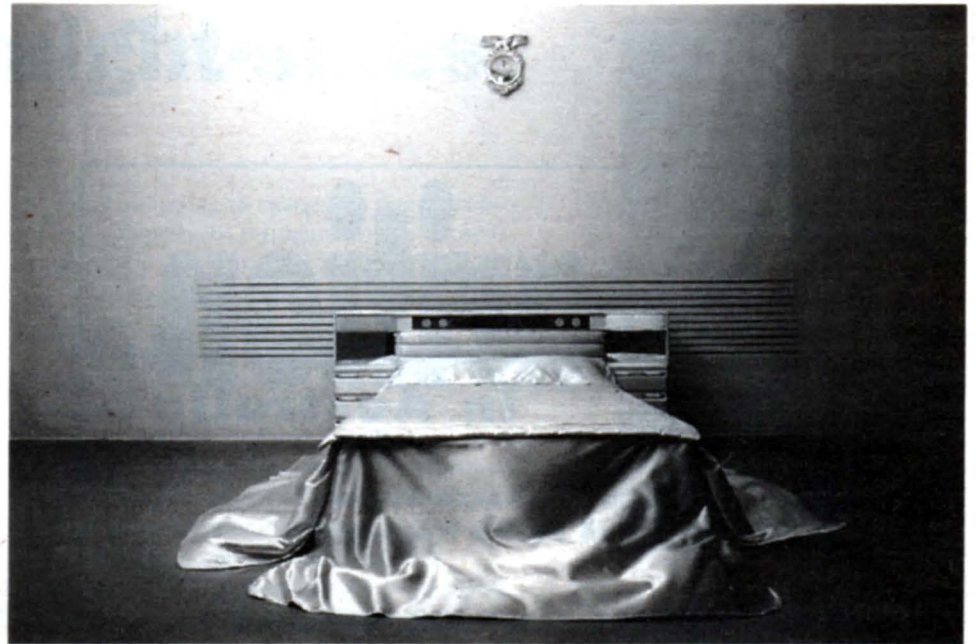
The show's 'reason' is a human, personal, quality: 'to forget'. Strictly speaking (some) one should feel pain. Perhaps 'pain' defines 'laugh'. [In Partridge's *Origins*, besides laughter's reference to 'a joke', there is the

derivative: 'clangor': to cry, the cry of human voice and of musical instrument (think of Presley's weeping voice), and to make a clang, or a loud twang. The body is a noise, often failing to be the sound it imagines (Elvis excepted). It gets worse (or better): 'laughter' then suggests 'lie': "bed, couch, lair ... a place where animals put their *young*, whence prob(ably) the dial(ect) *laughter*, a clutch of eggs." A constellation: *young* (artist's name), bed/lair, and eggs. On a wall, partitioning off the delirious alpine bread, was wallpaper of round smiling faces, just like you'd paint on an egg (for some reason: easter, parties, boredom).]

Imagine: you are floating. Oh my ... one room, the next, yours, 'you' are in a Presley song, a Priscilla film, a Lisa-Marie interview. And a panel-van cruises by, sprayed a gorgeous orange sunset. No-one knows what you are/see when you see. But you are dreamed, for a moment, gifted.

A mirror towers above the very best dressing table. And in 'it' I (*moi*) am thin, and tall, like an insect: ugly, and glamorous. With a little framed picture of David Cassidy, behind, watching *moi* watching herself. Reflection of you/*moi*, and dated as 'ensemble' called Grace(land).

Walked in, foolishly innocent, forgetting 'I' had forgotten - well, ghost comes and body explodes. Love is mediated by beams, wireless. Arthur Kroker says the (new) wireless body fuses speed, making the invisible visible by speaking *as* wire. It's electric, "a highly-charged theoretical and political site". Virginia Woolf in *Orlando* says the writer



L. E. Young *Masterbed*

Simon Cardwell

(the biographer) must plod, unenticed by flowers, until there is "an episode which lies right across our path, so that there is no ignoring it ... there is no explaining it ...". And: "Our simple duty is to state the facts as far as they are known, and so let the reader make of them what he may." Yes, and whose facts are they. Tricky.

The exhibition, as apparatus, is dedicated to inner laws: the cocktail cabinet, the shag-pile carpet (too high to touch, and carved as words: 'shag' and 'pile'), the padded headboard, the fluffy bedroom stool: lingerie territory. You are not lost, no way. *Graceland* founds you. The private is public, always was, but you pretend. The apparatus-as-method reveals that subterfuge is similar, in effect, to longing. You shimmer, you are beautiful, yesterday.

Young has taken protective ironic license that embraces and critiques. Its slippery business owns love's past, and passion for stilettos, lace bras, lipstick, perfume, and

exotic shores. And fame. As luscious garment/bed, meticulously made, and blowing-up, like Marilyn's dress. A faithful binding of two edges, one over, one under, as single matter. The cocktail cabinet is tenacious, the spumante is sad dawn. The glasses are washed, the bottles replaced. All is ready, heart races, again.

Suddenly, decades later, recall: a mirror world, (in computer culture) a tool for glimpsing the whole 'thing': as a single dense, swarming, changing image. You see total surface, patina, for an instant, 'on your way out', to face the music (*Mirror Worlds: or the day software puts the universe in a shoebox ...*, David Gerlenter).

And laughter bounces off, without humour, eluding the query: and where (are) do you come(ing) from. Laughter as irritation, as tonal "no no, I'm not yours". Laughter as pleasure, as warmth of passage. This laughter pacifies stirrings which drift like quotation.

Outlook Tasmania

Peter Hill surveys Tasmania's visual arts

Tasmania is like a spaceship hovering alongside the far larger planet of Australia, a country which itself becomes a distant planet to the rest of the globe. If you are involved in the arts in Tasmania you have to turn such tyrannical distance to your advantage.

I have now lived in Tasmania for five years and have been delighted to find that many Tasmanian artists network better internationally than do their mainland peers. Living in huge cities like Sydney or Melbourne, as I have done, can tend to make you look inwards. You get too involved in the battles within those cities, or the rivalries between them, to look overseas or to other states.

From the Tasmanian viewpoint, Sydney and Melbourne exist somewhere in the foreground of our vision, Tokyo and Los Angeles are in the middle distance and New York, London and Cologne are on the horizon. Debate within the state is informed by those parameters, by constantly looking outwards than by making internal adjustments.

Give me some facts, I hear you cry! OK, it is a bit difficult to know where to begin, but the schools of art in Hobart and Launceston, both of which belong to the same faculty within the University of Tasmania, are as good a place as any. Both schools have forum programs, flying in guest speakers every week and often sharing the same speaker who thus gets to see parts of the whole island - north and south. Over the past decade visitors have included Sophie Calle, Richard Demarco, Conrad Atkinson, Lloyd Rees, Marina Abramovich, Dan Graham, Joyce Agee, Barbara Kruger, Komar and Melamid and many more. Some stay for several days or do a short residency, and this really feeds into the

life of the schools, as do the long-term residencies such as the one between the Scottish Arts Council and the University of Tasmania which over the past three years has brought out three of the most dynamic of the young Scottish artists - Kevin Henderson, Anne Morrison, and most recently Claire Barclay. This residency is split between Hobart and Canberra and the successful resident is encouraged to spend two months out of the year travelling around Australia.

Launceston has hosted many artists from south-east Asia and is cementing these links through its annual *Crossovers* conference and exhibition.

Many of the post-graduate students of both art schools come from overseas and interstate including American Semester Abroad students and others from Asia and Europe. Some are enticed by the possibility of doing a studio-based PhD, while others are attracted by the fact that all postgraduate students from honours upwards have 24-hour access to the building and each has their own lock-up studio.

Even in the comparatively short time that I have been here I have seen numerous post-graduates leave and take up arts positions within Tasmania, in other states and overseas.

In the first category I could mention John McQueenie who is now arts officer for the trades and labour movement, Sean Kelly who is an arts officer at Arts Tasmania, Clare Rice at Contemporary Arts Services Tasmania, and Phillip Holliday who is an arts officer with the District Council.

Each of these organisations is providing a platform for the discussion of all sorts of dynamic visual ideas. Because so many of these arts administrators trained together as

practising artists, they work well together and with their clients. While we lose many of our graduates and lecturers interstate and overseas - Noel Frankham, Bernice Murphy, and Leon Paroissien to name three - they are good ambassadors for the state and its art schools. We also import many others from the mainland and abroad - Victoria Hammond, the Director of CAST and David Hanson at the Museum and Art Gallery spring to mind.

Two other projects should be mentioned. One is the healthy sponsorship of the visual arts which has come from Blundstone Boots. First, they sponsored the *Do Something with a Blundstone* exhibition which received enormous international publicity and originated at Chameleon in Hobart. Now, they are sponsoring one of Australia and New Zealand's biggest contemporary art prizes which is being organised at the Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston.

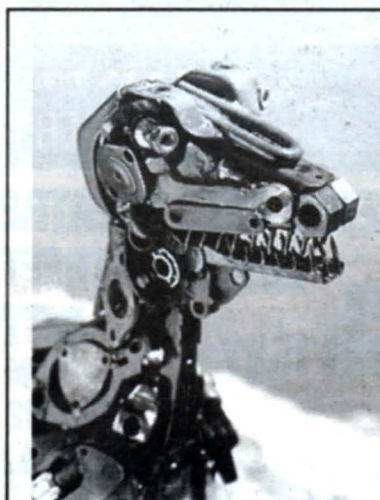
Finally, there are the Derwent and Tamar clubs, both of which were the brainchild of the Hobart-based gallery director Dick Bett.

Both clubs have a limited membership and each member puts in a certain amount of money to buy contemporary art every

year. The project has a ten-year limit and the results of the first ten years of the Derwent Club's collecting are currently on show at the Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart. Over that period they have built up one of the most impressive collections anywhere of Australian contemporary art with artists from every state and territory represented, often by some of their best work such as *Moet et Chandon* winners and exhibitors.

So what is missing? Well, my biggest grumble is that Tasmania really needs a *Museum of Contemporary Art*, even if it was just a single room showing a single piece of international contemporary art once a month. It could, however, be modelled on The Tate Gallery's St Ives outpost in Cornwall (they also have another one in Liverpool), which has brought both employment and tourists to a town far smaller than the cities of Launceston and Hobart. One day it will happen, I would just like it to be sooner rather than later.

Peter Hill is a Tasmanian artist, academic and curator of The Museum of Contemporary Ideas.



Do artists dream of mechanical ducks

"The 90s is all about recycling. I'm just making do with what I've got". What Christopher Trotter's got is an interest in mechanics and a whole lot of junk under his Queenslander-style house conveniently located next to Simsmetal's Rocklea recycling yard. Quitting his architecture course at QUT in 1987 he began experimenting with sheetmetal, first with paint then scrap sculpture, and on to the first of his animal experiments - a bird made from an axe-head, a set of handlebars and a hoe. These days his animals have moving parts "my dogs have all the right equipment and the cats have little arseholes". A giant roach looks like it could fly away.

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A matter of place

Jennifer Spinks finds national and regional issues comfortably balanced in two new Tasmanian magazines

It's increasingly hard to believe that the much-touted, often defensive concept of a 'regional identity' is everything that it's cracked up to be. Regionally-based projects clearly do have a level of inherent worth, but I sometimes wonder whether a 'provincial and proud' attitude isn't occasionally insular. Take the example of regional publications: local identity might be an attractive theoretical concept, but the everyday realities of pulling together a quality publication would seem to require at least an equal focus on a pragmatic interaction with the rest of the country.

Contemporary Art Tasmania (produced by Contemporary Art Services Tasmania) and *Siglo* (based in the University of Tasmania's English Department) were both established in 1993. They focus, respectively, on contemporary art and literature, although *Siglo*, in particular, has expanded its content to include the visual and performing arts. Both stress the importance of a particularly Tasmanian approach, and of a 'sense of place', but also aspire to a mixture of quality local and interstate material. So far, *Siglo* has seemed better able to pull off this combination, and is by far the stronger as a result. Perhaps its success begs the question: what is the difference between a regional project, and one that is undertaken in a regional area?

Over the last couple of years, *Contemporary Art Tasmania* has showcased the work of a large number of Tasmanian artists and writers on art. However, the magazine has an uneasily semi-professional air, compounded by the on-going problem of finding sufficient material within the state to produce a really interesting magazine. While the editorial team would like to increase interstate content, various administrative difficulties (including financial difficulties and the loss of two editors) have considerably slowed progress.

These problems are reflected in the current issue, where content is a little thin on the ground. There are some genuinely interesting articles, including Edward Colless's piece on the painter Alex Wanders. In an intriguing critique, he discusses the intrusion of the banal and comic into Wanders' pastoral religious allegories. Sean Kelly's interview with Boyd Oxlade (author of *Death in Brunswick*, and now resident in Tasmania) explores Oxlade's perceptions of the state – its off-beat, 'outsider' quality – and the particular problems of maintaining creative energy in

such a place. These articles investigate aspects of the Tasmanian experience without being parochial, and their content is clearly addressed to a national audience.

The future for *Contemporary Art Tasmania* is, in any case, looking a little brighter. The decision to use guest editors seems especially apt, given recent experiences. In another interesting shift of focus, the next issue (edited by Jonathan Holmes) will be based upon observations about Tasmania by interstate writers and artists. Hopefully, this might prove to be a positive step in evading the regional 'trap'.

In contrast, *Siglo's* editorial team has proved increasingly adept at combining quality Tasmanian writing and art with often high-profile interstate contributions. They have also maintained standards of design and reproduction which are surprising in a university magazine. (On this point, the editors are quick to emphasise that they anticipate the magazine running on a professional basis in the not-too-distant future).

They have developed a policy of producing each issue around a theme. The current issue, subtitled *Writing Landscapes*, arose from a desire to add a more thoughtful, subtle element to the debate surrounding Lake Pedder. (The lake was flooded in the 1970s by the Hydro-Electric Commission, and there is now a move to drain it in an attempt to restore original conditions). This issue includes interviews with environmentalist Bob Brown, artist Geoff Parr, Aboriginal activist Jim Everett and composer Peter Sculthorpe. An article by Kiera Lindsay discusses the work of Paul Carter, historian and writer of 'sound texts', while another by David Lawton ponders the significance of the fence in the Australian psyche.

Their next issue will be on *Technologies of Reproduction*, focussing particularly on the concept of the body. Associate editor Kirsten Dunlop predicts that a planned article on the land and the Aboriginal body is "... going to be extremely controversial because it's about something that most white Australians and Aboriginal Australians deliberately cover up and lie about ...".

Siglo's willingness to engage with national issues while retaining a regional edge bodes well for the development of Tasmania's critical culture. Most significantly, it's a well-timed reminder that while distance from the centre is not necessarily a cultural death sentence, neither is it an unqualified virtue.

Book review

POST: *Photography Post Photography*

Edited by Stuart Koop

Centre for Contemporary Photography (CCP)
Melbourne 1995

This is not a bad way to satisfy your Zeitgeist hunger, especially if you couldn't make it to the series of eight lectures this collection represents, held at the CCP between May and November last year. The writers are all well-established, but rarely placed together in such intimate contact as in this handy little volume. Their compound consideration of where photography is at right now, especially in light of new media technologies, is all the more interesting.

One striking aspect of the collection is the reiteration in several pieces of the importance of *poetry* in art-making, that is, the ambiguous, the fleeting, the ineffable. George Alexander's sparkling musings on the persistence of low-tech photography as a critical tool, Nicholas Zurbrugg's invocation of the artist's 'magic', and Edward Colless' reflections that photos "turn

bodies into lives", all affirm the value of the poetic dimension of art, at the same time poetically inserting the person of the author into the writing.

Also refreshing is the optimism which infuses most of the writing here. Zurbrugg convincingly argues against the pessimism of much contemporary mass-media theory, his observations resonating in William Roult's upbeat tour of the history of media transposition. Kevin Murray's new metaphor for interactivity – *excavating*, rather than *surfing* – adds a welcome profundity to the process.

The one low point is the rather out-of-context and less than illuminating rave by Anne Marsh on *photographe macabre* Joel Peter Witkin. With a subject like the inherent performativity of photography, the treatment is disappointing to say the least.

Overall, the collection is highly recommended. The concept itself, of a contemporaneous and inexpensive companion to a major set of lectures, is one to be applauded.

JM

High performance straight-sixes

by Bernard Cohen

I am sitting at an outside table at a Darlinghurst Road cafe. There is regular traffic, queuing into Kings Cross. I am telling my old friend how since I moved to the Blue Mountains I feel the urge to write about mist. My friend says that writing about mist could be okay, depending on how it was done.

A noisy, high performance straight-6 is stopped at traffic lights. One should not conjoin mist, gardening and diaries, for instance, my friend tells me. The light turns green, the driver leans out the window, calls out "yaaaaaaaaa", throws the Commodore into gear and screeches off towards the bright lights (the brake lights of the preceding Ford?).

Our conversation pauses while we concentrate on the frowning of brows.

"What did that mean?" I ask, selecting 'social scientist' rather than 'gun lobbyist'.

"It means he is deeply unhappy and doesn't know what to do with his discontent," my friend says, shaking his wise head slowly.

"Perhaps it means I'm going to give a chick some money and then I'm going to fuck her", I offer. He was foreshadowing his second ejaculation.

As the poet wrote, "the larynx is a valve".

Five minutes later, another Commodore pulls up, this time crowded with five young men (repeat scene).

"Why do they think that's an okay thing to do?", I ask. Science is a strategy against intimidation.

My friend explains that in other parts of the world, they either wouldn't dare (high level of weapon-carrying) or would be chased by other, equally aggressive people and the 'yaaaaaaaaa' culture wouldn't have the opportunity to evolve. I am

concerned that he is arguing that yob culture is peculiar to Australia. He is not concerned.

Later, we pick up one of his friends and I give them a lift through the city. With the windows of my car closed (it's a cool autumn evening), we are attempting to be meta-yobs. I say, "There's a chick, walking."

(Together) "Yaaaaaaaaaaaa."

(My friend) "There are two guys talking to each other."

"Yaaaaaaaaaaaa."

Driving in heavy city traffic, a dark suited man cuts in front of me as the lights turn red. I honk at him. Watching my response in his rear view mirror, waiting until he is sure I am paying heed, he shakes his head at me, almost sadly: "I am sorry you are such an idiot." I point my chin slightly into the air, gesture jerkily with my right hand towards the right bumper bar which he almost dinged, then tap my right forefinger to my forehead twice, rapidly. We are waiting a few seconds between gestures, for emphasis. He shows me the back of his index finger and raises it quickly about five centimetres: "Get fucked not quite as much as I could say if I wanted to." (Pause) I cup my left hand beside my ear, and rotate it about my wrist back and forth approximately 45 degrees, meaning "Your head is a penis and you are rubbing it." He drives off as quickly as he can, given the car-density, with much changing of lanes. The ritual is over. There will be no physical contact between the sumos. I must have breached some etiquette, increased the insult level too rapidly.

The night of the 'yaaaaaaaaa' cafe, driving along the tollway through the western suburbs on the way back up the mountain, my rear-left tyre blows out at 110 km/h. "Fuck," I say out loud, slowing down at first involuntarily. I drive across to a sodium lamp on three tyres and a wheel

rim. I am trying to change the tyre quickly and competently, trying to look composed so people won't drive by and yell

"Yaaaaaaaaaaaa" at me. Because of an ingrown toenail, I am wearing one Doc Marten and one ug-boot. I imagine this affects my composure projection level. The carjack is as old as the car, one of those screw ones operated with an other-purposed crowbar that takes forever to gain sufficient clearance. Also the jack squeaks. Cars pass me along the empty ramp, accelerating to breach the speed limit. Because of car climate control, no one yells anything at me. All windows are closed.

In heavy, slow-moving traffic, drivers of cars with closed windows can be observed snarling and screaming abuse (in cars, no one can hear you etc).

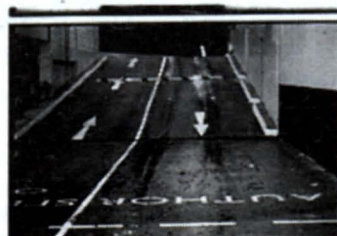
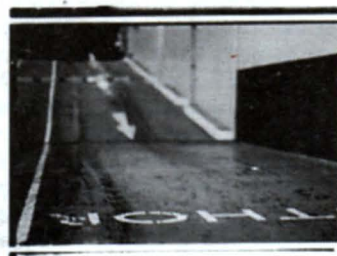
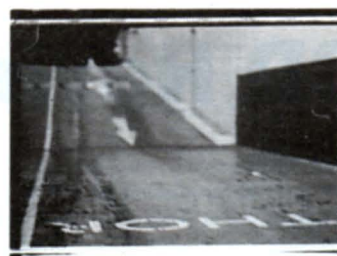
One might postulate an inverse function linking car speed with verbosity, at speed the mouth fixed into as straight a line as the go-fast stripes along the side panels.

Another time, someone was tailgating me along a single-lane road, so I deliberately slowed down. When we reached an overtaking lane, I heard a thump on the boot. Later, I found the remnants of a banana. Another time, I pulled out of a parking spot in York Street and a truck in the far lane honked at me. I made the shrugging motion meaning "What are you talking about, fuckwit?" The driver stopped and began to get out. He stood hanging out of the truck door, letting his muscled pendulum arm swing back and forth a couple of times.

I called out the window, "There was plenty of room."

The driver made the slow, upper-body-nodding action, meaning, "This time I have decided not to punch the crap out of you, dipstick."

Note that leaving the vehicle is a genre switch. In all Australian states violent naturalism is illegal and, even where police



Arunas

elect not to proceed with criminal sanctions, civil remedies may also be sought.

Sometimes people in cars move their lips rapidly, opening their mouths wide. Sometimes with the rapid lip movement, they only open their mouths a little. Sometimes they move their lips slowly, but open their mouths wide. Sometimes they move their lips slowly, barely open their mouths.

- (a) golden-oldies station
- (b) hands-free mobile phone
- (c) Wagner CD
- (d) converting from litres-per-hundred-kilometres to miles-per-gallon.

Bernard Cohen is the author of *Tourism (Picador)*. An extract from his work in progress, *The Antibibliography of Robert Fucking Menzies*, will be published in *Picador New Writing 3* later this year.

cat.

GALLERY

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C minor complex

Linda Marie Walker anticipates the visit of Gregory Ulmer

... a complex gathering of melodic lines and contrasting times and swinging beats

Gregory Ulmer, Professor of English at the University of Florida, Gainesville, visits Sydney this month, a guest of the Power Institute of Fine Arts and the Eco Design Foundation. He will give public lectures on the arts in new technologies and on invention and sustainability. His publications include *Applied Grammatology*, *Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys*; *Teletheory*, *Grammatology in the Age of Video*; and *Heuretics*, *The Logic of Invention*. His energized risky critical style attends to two (amongst others) crucial topics: writing for electronic media, and pedagogy, particularly as they are both 'research'. His work questions what, why and how research is, as prescribed 'thing', and the poetics and politics of it as hypermedia.

Ulmer's interventions come from taking Derrida 'at his word', inventing from his textual terrain applications of 'oneself' to theories/culture, at an historical moment, riddled by discourses/images of all kinds. It's an academic work of remembrance, that takes serious account of the 'subject', of self and topic. And of procedures, possibilities, and potentialities. And consequently of new means, structures, of knowing. A friend reckons the only way to

make art is to always be willing to fail, to fall over. And this is how I think of Ulmer, always almost toppling, and yet writing on. You can sense this in his topics, his language, particularly in *Heuretics*, which demands response. A sort of pushing that refuses containment.

I've been dipping into his Homepage on the Net. Reading his courses. And taking pleasure from his teaching notes. They start with the puzzle: how to write. To write now, to learn. This is fundamental research, a question of excitement, of intellectual practices/experiments. He employs the model of studio courses, of fine art studio courses. The emphasis is shifted from lecture theatre to workshop, from passive to active, or performative. "We are familiar with the practices of paper pedagogy – the research paper, in-class discussion and lecture. The assumption of our experiment is that the Socratic conversation now organizing class-time must be transferred to the computer (homepage, email, and MOO). Hence our class will be conducted as a studio course or laboratory rather than as a discussion class. Thus while there will be some f2f interaction during class time, there will also be time devoted to working on-line. In principle, the lab makes it possible to create a much looser relationship between the learning process and the regularly scheduled class." (*Pedagogy*, Critical Theory (Course),

Ulmer's Homepage:

<http://www.ucet.ufl.edu/~gulmer>

Research writing is regarded, in Ulmer's view, fetishistically, or in the mode of the fetish (writing as fetish). It is not arranged/argued oppositionally, but is a matter of invention, of making theory from theory. This is a speculative activity, a learning/teaching which defies binaries and borders and insists on multiple narrative orientations, which are electronic and collaborative. A generative (art) practice, producing new texts, and motivated by speed, discovery, subjectivities and spatialities. Ulmer's obsession is thinking. The idea of thought in terms of screen and problem, rather than print and contest.

There is, in Ulmer's work, an ongoing problematic, perhaps called 'the paradigm': the process of environment, composition and a writing with 'the paradigm' (of communication technologies). And the paradigm is imaginary too, it's 'the chora': "an area in which genesis takes place". It's space, it's time, it's lines. Gregory Ulmer is an 'entertainer' who composes, in the musical sense, notationally exceeding, and yet relentlessly referring to, the lines of the score: "Chora is the spacing which is the condition for everything to take place, for everything to be inscribed." (*Heuretics*, p. 71)

One thinks of Lennie Tristano describing his form of jazz: "... to see how far you can stretch out in a given frame of reference." The possibilities, he says, are 'practically infinite, endless even in the most simple form. You are constantly creating form on form, a multiplicity of lines, a great complex of forms.'" (*The New Tristano*, CD, Atlantic 1357)

CD Reviews

Charlie Chan

1993, Sony Masterworks SMK47650

Re-released under Sony Music's new Alternative Contemporary Music Label (ACML), Charlie Chan's self titled album falls into that hazy ground between ambient, new music, film soundtrack and pop music. Gentle and unobtrusive, each song displays a strong melodic sensibility that is undermined every now and then when Chan falls into some awkward pop clichés that seem more reminiscent of early 80s American Top 40 than a recent experimental outing. On *Mermaids*, the languid appeal of trumpet player Eddie Quansah is enveloped by a strange melancholy only to be captured by a rather pedestrian drum program. *Clocks* is notable for its minute duration and in a sense embodies the fleeting nature of the whole album. In general, the structure of each piece seems lopsided, although this is probably more to do with Chan's self-conscious eclecticism than any obvious flaw in the overall conception of her songs. NG

Bang On A Can Industry

1995, Sony Classical SK 66483

Also released on Sony's ACML label, *Industry* is one of the best recordings of new music for a long time – both in terms of the level of the playing and the works featured. Marked by the indomitable presence of Dutch composer Louis Andriessen (who contributes two of the five pieces) and a general commitment to transforming the conjunction of American minimalism and the European avant-garde, *Bang On A Can* reinvent new music as a swinging visceral machine. They activate a massive percussive density, a timbral maelstrom, that overturns the tendency towards supine, pseudo-mystical forms that is currently plaguing the charts. Andriessen's *Hoketus* opens up a massive force field at the centre of the stereo sound-image, which then slowly collapses through a process of strange attraction as each repeated chord mutates into something exactly the same, while his *Hout* takes on the canon form and makes it hum and heave as it turns in on its own canonic momentum. Julia Wolfe's *Lick* is a series of percussive fragments that are combined and reconstituted across a droning, undulating surface. *The Anvil Chorus* by David Lang is the weakest piece on the CD. Lang transforms the metallic force of the anvil into a collection of irregular rhythmic patterns that position a range of percussive and junk metal sounds in relation to the expectation of the powerful rhythmic consistency of the blacksmith's hammer. And finally, Michael Gordon's title track *Industry*, written specifically for cellist Maya Beiser, carves out a fierce wall of sound that impels the structure of the work into the heavy pulse of the feedback, setting up an impenetrable loop that dissolves the idealised stereo spectrum and depth of field. *Bang on a Can* are part of the 1996 Adelaide Festival. NG

Geoff Smith

Fifteen Wild Septembers

1995, Sony Classical (ACML) SK66605

British composer Geoff Smith's latest offering blends a minimalist urgency with all the lush sensibility of English pastoralism with its propensity for Romantic poetry and languid brooding landscapes. Smith's melodies are rigorously built around his debt to American minimalism (particularly Reich) as well as the obvious influence of composers such as Frederick Delius. The CD is given an extra boost by the strength of the vocal writing (for soprano Nicola Walker Smith) which rides over five of the songs with a surety and catchiness that open up the songs to all kinds of 'crossover' possibilities. In this case, remixes have been done by the Pet Shop Boys and another is on the way by The Future Sound of London. While this is definitely the lyrical end of the new music scene with its connections to English pop or projects like Philip Glass' *Songs For Liquid Days*, there is the question of just how far this sort of work can go before it becomes banal or sounds like a lot of the innocuous ambience that labels like Wyndham Hill release. NG

Charles Lloyd

All My Relations

ECM 1557 527 344-2

Reedman Charles Lloyd has run the jazz gamut over his long career. His trajectory goes something like this: from the hard bop idols of his youth, to rhythm and blues playing at the beginning of his career, Coltrane-influenced early 60s experimenting, and the African inspired musical colourings of the later 60s and 70s. All of these influences can be heard on his new album, and this range is both its weakness and its strength. There's no shortage of musical interest on *All My Relations*. Lloyd plays sax, flute and Chinese oboe within a variety of styles. This eclecticism, however, raises doubts about Lloyd's voice: he sounds generic across a number of genres. He isn't the only sax player to fall under Coltrane's spell, but lacks a distinctive presence in other styles as well. The best track, *Hymn To The Mother* stands out because it doesn't sound like

anyone else. A lilting melody played over shuffling percussion by Billy Hart, this tune blends Lloyd's influences with a success he is unable to match elsewhere on the album. JP

Keith Jarrett, Gary Peacock, Jack DeJohnette

Standards In Norway

1995, ECM 1542

This is the third of the Standards Live series released by these three extraordinary musicians. The whole CD floats and swings, using the power of these standard jazz tunes to set up a mood or an expectation of a jazz world or life. Each song is then exquisitely unravelled, crystallised, bent into a new shape in terms of its specific frame of reference as a jazz standard. Cole Porter's *All Of You* is gorgeous and Jarrett's playing seems to mark out the gaps into which Peacock and DeJohnette move their effortless swing. NG

Frederico Mompou

Musica Callada

ECM NEW SERIES 1523 445 699-2

This disc is part of the ECM New Series, presenting accessible twentieth century composition. Generally, this means resolutely tonal music, any discord functioning as gentle dissonance resolving back to a re-assuring tonic. 'Easy Listening Twentieth Century' may be an unkind label, but the more challenging harmonic and rhythmic directions of the twentieth century are usually excluded from the ECM canon.

This is certainly the case with *Musica Callada*, piano works by little-known Spanish composer Mompou. Composed in the 1960s, they're written in the musical language made famous by Debussy and Satie many decades previously. The work comprises 28 pieces arranged in 4 books, some pieces lasting barely a minute. All are elegantly simple and understated. The delicacy of Debussy's piano works is distilled, eliminating much of the dynamic range. Mompou's markings for the pianist evoke the prevalent mood: *angelico, plaintif, luminoso, semplice, in lontananza* (in the distance). This is rarefied, melancholy music.

As the music of the so-called French impressionists is an enduring part of the twentieth century musical landscape, Mompou's reiteration of their sensibility, played with gentle touch by Herbert Henck, will be gratefully received by many listeners. Taken one book at a time, *Musica Callada* is eminently listenable, with its aching harmony and lingering sustain. Any longer than that, however, and you may find yourself longing for a strident discord or rhythmic flourish – some reminder, that is, of the century we live in. JP

Olivier Messiaen

Méditations Sur Le Mystère De La Sainte Trinité (1969)

Christopher Bowers-Broadbent (organ)

1995, ECM New Series 1494

Messiaen, more than any other composer, has tackled the potential of the organ for twentieth century music. The scope of *Méditations Sur Le Mystère De La Sainte Trinité* is bound to Messiaen's examination of the mechanism, and therefore, structure, of the organ as a musical process in itself. His attempt to render 'complexes of colour' through the relation of clusters of notes to a series of possible durations, bird songs, and the 'stop' capabilities of an organ, create an array of shifting states and events that reorganise the organ in terms of an implicit modernity, as though its very size anticipates and then dissolves the historical transition of sound from a mechanics and acoustics of the work to the invisible and inaudible processing of microelectronics and information technologies. NG


Social Interiors

The World Behind You

1995, Extreme XCD029






Composers Rik Rue and Shane Fahey have put together a melancholy series of sound works that draw on a vast range of recording and editing techniques to effect sound as a landscape. The result is overwhelmingly 'noir', full of drifting, alienating textures that move across each other, that set off an exchange between elemental and cybernetic forces, an exchange that seems to bind the landscape to the structures of the sound rather than the opposite process. Throughout the various works, the residue of specific sound events produces a fractal surface that gathers the world into an aural collage that both demands and then displaces an image of sound as the limit of what can be amplified (or subjected to an advanced microphony). At another level, however, there is a sense that 'soundscape' work like this is still unsure how to extract itself from the power of the cinematic image to overcode sonic movement and thereby move beyond simply replicating the trajectory of the 'soundtrack'. NG

music for the hear & now



Geoff Smith's haunting new album *15 Wild Decembers* has drawn comparisons with Philip Glass, Kate Bush and The Cocteau Twins. Produced by Steve Nye (Sakamoto, Eno, Fripp & Stockhausen), *15 Wild Decembers* is a feature release from Sony Classical's new label: ACML.

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One from the harp

Cathy Peters interviews harpist Marshall McGuire featured in the 1996 Sydney Spring New Music Festival



Marshall McGuire

CP Looking at the repertoire you've chosen to play over the last six to seven years, contemporary music seems to have overtaken your interest in the traditional harp repertoire of fairly seductive and romantic music?

MM I think the fairly seductive and romantic music is very superficial repertoire for the harp. It stemmed from the salon music of the late 19th century where substance went out of the music and became pure technique. I got really sick of playing that stuff. It became meaningless. And, it was hard work getting the technique worked up, for no musical reward.

In 1988, I collaborated with the contemporary music ensemble Elision, and found that difficult music could be musically very rewarding. We did a few concerts and then I was taken in as a member of the group. Since then, contemporary music for harp has really become an intellectual focus of mine. It's also become a bit of a crusade for me to get new music written for the harp. I think it's important to keep real composers writing for the instrument as opposed to early 20th century harpists who wrote for the harp because they easily understood the complexities of the instrument. I want real composers to write real music for what I consider to be a real instrument.

CP How difficult has it been to encourage Australian composers to write for the harp?

MM Australian composers have actually been quite ready to jump on the bandwagon. A lot of composers, not only Australians, are interested in the sound qualities of the harp – the sonorities and the percussion qualities of the instrument. But they need to be introduced to it, and that's part of what I do – I initiate composers into the mysteries of the harp world.

CP It seems as if some of this new repertoire you're generating is exploring a hidden sound world within the instrument, a reinvention of the instrument if you like.

MM It's something that also happened back in the Baroque era when the instruments were used more as percussion instruments, in a similar way to a rhythm section. When that disappeared, the harp was used more as an expressive, impressionistic type of instrument. Now, that sound world is again changing.

CP So I guess the interesting thing from your point of view is to see the way various new composers approach the instrument – what different concepts they come up with.

MM Absolutely. There are some composers who will go all out to write for the extended techniques and use the harp purely as a percussion instrument – to bang on it, to kick it, to scrape it with bits of wood and so on. There are others who steer completely away from that and go for the tonal qualities produced by the plucking of the strings. Each point of view is perfectly valid and wonderful for me and there's everything in between.

CP Let's look at some of the composers in the program of contemporary harp music you're preparing for the Sydney Spring New Music Festival. Isang Yun and Elliot Carter are the best-known composers in the program.

MM Both pieces are late works in their output. Elliot Carter's *Bariolage* is part of a trilogy written for Heinz and Ursula Holliger. Carter wrote this piece in '92 as a homage to them. Isang Yun has used the harp in a purely expressionistic way, it's a very mesmeric piece. What really appeals to me about it is his well considered approach in a sense, a homage to the harp. This is something that Berio pioneered

back in the 60s, looking at the whole instrument, the pitch qualities, the tonal qualities, the range of the instrument which after all is vast, at six and a half octaves.

CP Can you describe the commissioning process and the development of the premieres?

MM Gordon Kerry's *No Atmosphere* was written for me earlier this year. Gordon eagerly responded to the commission and we sat down and looked at a lot of techniques and sounds that he was curious about. We worked on the manner of the piece and the way it would be put together. Elena Kats-Chernin came up with the idea of 'chamber of horrors' for a harp piece. She wanted to make something that was completely outside everybody's expectation of harp music.

The other world premiere is *Tract* by a young Canadian composer Paul Steenhuisen for amplified harp with instructions to amplify the harp until it is oppressively loud. I'm interested in electronics and harp as a means to keep expanding the sound world, to produce a sound that people don't expect from the harp. It's a piece that's only about five minutes long but, it's in-your-face, it's out there.

I commissioned the Michael Finissey piece because I knew him at the Victorian College of Arts and was impressed by his extraordinary passion for music and his reputation as one of the bad boys of the new complexity field.

CP Let's consider this notion of new complexity – what other pieces in the program fall into this category?

MM Well the Finissey, although dubbed a new complexist, is rather mellow but still the complex rhythms are there, although you are not aware of them when listening to the piece. Part of the confusion surrounding the new complexity issue is that complexity conjures up so many images of inaccessibility, of too hard etc., but all it's really dealing with is notating very clearly what's going on in the music. Some of the music is as lyrical as anything you'd ever hear.

CP I don't think that many people would be aware of the complexity of a piece like that unless they attempted to decipher the score.

MM Absolutely. People don't know how a Bach concerto is constructed or a Mozart symphony, but they listen to it and they respond to it purely from an aural sense. Yet somehow there's this expectation nowadays, from audiences and musicians, that when they're listening to a piece of new music they have to understand how it's been put together. I think that's going down the wrong path. I think we have to respond to new music exactly the way we respond to old music, and that's in a very emotional sense.

The Sydney Spring New Music Festival September 1 - 29, 1995.

Marshall is releasing a CD of contemporary Australian harp music later this year on the Tall Poppies label. Cathy Peters is a freelance music producer and radio maker who worked for ABC radio for twelve years on contemporary music and radiophonic works.

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Arse about arts

Rachel Fensham at the business end of State Arts policies.

There has been a sea change in arts policy formation. The federal government's *Creative Nation* has been the most vigorously heralded, and debated, but the states are neither far behind nor shy in claiming new advantages from their support for the arts. Both Victoria and Queensland have recently released policy statements, respectively *Arts 21* and *Building Local - Going Global*. South Australia and Western Australia have dramatically reshaped their policy priorities following changes of government and have produced marketing strategies called respectively *Arts about Adelaide* and *West Coast Arts*. In New South Wales, artists wait for elaboration of new Premier and Arts Minister Bob Carr's plans after the Murdoch-Fox Studio announcement. Already the talk is of 'marketing the arts' and the Department of the Arts has been relocated - into the Premier's Office.

It would seem that the argument that the arts are part of the economic life of the nation has been won (though not in the way that many artists would have in mind). This is perhaps to the credit of the Australia Council, who have consistently produced reports documenting the statistical value (and cheap labour supplied by artists) of creative activity in enhancing the cultural life of this country.

Following from this, *Creative Nation* emphasised the links between the arts sector, more broadly defined as cultural industries, and the big-game players of the communications sector. An important connection these days given the centrality of technologically mediated information, leisure, education and entertainment. *Creative Nation* also reaffirmed the idea of national significance, a very 1950s concept,

as a determining criteria for government support. The beneficiaries are 'major organisations', 'creative fellows' and key national institutions, like the National Gallery. This has left the 'Funds' of the Australia Council and the states taking care of the small fry of the arts industry - other arts organisations, companies, individual artists, special projects, community-based initiatives, local and regional activity etc. In the states the context is of a pervasive economic rationalism based on 'small government' and 'self-sufficient' 'enterprise' in 'service provision'.

There are two sorts of pressure on state funding of the arts. Firstly, there are the ongoing commitments, including support for libraries, major institutions and government infrastructure. Many parliamentarians believe the only money allocated to culture should be these legislative responsibilities. The actual amount remaining in the budget for other arts activities is relatively small. Secondly, there is pressure from existing groups and artists to be supported weighed against the competing claims of newcomers. As many artists know, they work for nothing or low wages until such time as the public or an influential commentator endorses them. No matter how extraordinary, no groups or individuals will get ongoing funding to generate new work from a state government.

How should the states spend their money? Perhaps not so surprisingly, since cultural ministers and heads of arts departments talk to each other in regular meetings, the states are coming up with remarkably similar answers to this question. Their new policy initiatives are framed in economic and corporate terms:

'financial management', 'leadership', 'cost-saving', 'marketing', 'success', 'best practice', 'export and tourism benefits'. Gone are words like 'access', 'communities', 'diversity', 'multicultural', 'regional'. (The Queensland policy retains these terms perhaps because it was the product of a government mind-set which still had a social responsibility, or more cynically, a government about to face an election).

In this new cultural rhetoric, managers, promoters, distributors and audiences are emphasised over artists. These changes are not bad in themselves since they might be 'indicators', or measures, of the interest in a particular creative product. And governments, after all, need to know that they are spending their money carefully. But these criteria over-ride other considerations that may be equally as important in deciding whether something should be given the support of public money. 'Economic indicators' alone do not necessarily provide them with any more reliable means of assessing the relative merits of particular arts processes and products. They do, however, assume that the product (*sic* artist or artist's work) should be tried and true, that is, safe and clean. We are in a climate of funding with no risk; funding art that is already successful, commercially viable, having already found its market niche or got the backing of suitable financial interests. Artists have become clients of promoters backed by government and audiences are the customers of these same arts distributors.

Take the example of the Victorian government's *Arts 21*. It defines six strategies for the arts industry: 'Into the Information Age', 'Providing World Class Facilities', 'Creating Great Programming', 'Promoting Leadership', 'Customer Focused Marketing', and 'Delivering to Australia and the World'.

It begins with the premise that Melbourne is the 'cultural capital' of Australia, a dubious premise at the best of

times, especially given the flourishing of the arts in Western Australia and Queensland and the enormous activity, artistic and financial, in Sydney. But a policy must make a claim for uniqueness, for a centrally privileged position.

Arts 21 then jumps on the information revolution bandwagon proposing that Victoria will become a centre of excellence for multimedia and the 'arts industry will have a key role as a provider of original, creative content and information services'. Other states are presumably vying for the same access to the world of new technology but it seems unlikely that state governments will have much influence over the multinational decision-makers whose products are entering our homes and workplaces. Rather weakly, the policy mechanisms proposed include moving resources allocated to film towards research and development funding, converting the State Film Centre into an up-market Australian Centre for the Moving Image and providing prizes for the best multimedia products. I suspect the forthcoming Communications and Multimedia Task force will have to work pretty fast to catch up with the centres and cultural institutions already involved in this field. There is no suggestion of a strategy that might match multimedia developments with local needs or the interests of smaller group and individual artists. And it assumes that artists want to be the producers of this amorphous 'content'.

In terms of facilities, the government is spending big and perhaps that will be Kennett's legacy, an expansion of central city infrastructure. 'Bulldoze and get it up' might be his motto, but whether there are the staff to develop resources or provide activities, especially outside the glamour precincts, is not addressed.

In the section under 'Leadership' I am completely confused by the following: 'To realise the industry's potential, the *Arts 21* plan will target continuous improvement in enterprise level governance and management, promote excellence and strengthen critical links through advocacy and planning to create new synergies.' Aside from brutalising the English language, it seems to be about three year funding for the major organisations based on good management. The proposed 'Arts Heroes' project is not about making Stelarc a figure of myth but is intended to 'affirm the generosity and vision of the corporate sector and private benefactors of the arts.' Is this the function of government? Prize-giving seems a favourite form of funding with this government as there are at least five initiatives based on competition, as if that means merit. Strong support for touring is again a form of prize for product already made, but it does mean artists get paid and more people see the show.

For the first time (much later than Western Australia and Queensland) this government proposes to recognise Aboriginal arts and cultural activities by establishing a Koori arts advisory committee and an allocation of \$100,000. Not much, but something. The obligatory gesture towards Asia seems somewhat flimsy from this southern port, unless it's meant to include the vast number of Asian Victorians, but I don't think so.

The rest of the document focuses on high profile projects celebrating heritage or a somewhat spurious future. Projects entitled *Raiders of the Lost Archive* and *The Last Great Twentieth Century Exposition* make me feel as if Victoria is already a dead civilisation.

It may be too much to ask for but I would like one day to see an arts policy that has a good look at the present. Perhaps, avoiding upbeat jargon, it could ask what is exciting or important to do now, based on the understanding that even when individually executed, the arts is a collective process of imagining. This process might be unproductive in economic terms but it may be more significant to the survival of artists and communities than anything else.

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A perilous peerless future?

Keith Gallasch spoke with artists about their response to the Australia Council's Peer Assessment Review

The anger is palpable, the anxiety keen, the uncertainty about what to do all too evident. Artists barely had time to participate in the Peer Assessment Review before the Australia Council's response was made public. There's a feeling of betrayal among artists over the absence of participation and consultation, the silence with which any enquiry is met about how the new assessment model will work, and the sense that things are already happening at the Australia Council – we'll be told what later.

It might seem an odd idea, but for many artists, the Australia Council is the closest thing they have to an employer, however intermittent their funding, or if they are salaried, however obliquely and occasionally and only in part, through funded organisations (their employers proper). Council's attitudes to the arts not only reinforce quality, cultural relevancy and innovation but also many livelihoods. One of the best things about the Australia Council, despite the complaints of its detractors, despite its insufficient funds, has been an openness to debate, a democratic and high turnover of peers in the assessment process and a responsiveness to developments in the arts. Suddenly we are in a position where the Australia Council has cut us out. Its 'employees' can neither act coherently through a union or engage in workplace bargaining.

It is arguable that we have had little in the way of power in the Australia Council anyway. Sarah Miller, director of the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts and Wesley Enoch, director of Kooemba Jdarra, both former members of the Drama Committee of the PAB, think that participation in effective policy-making by the Committees has been steadily eroded over recent years. Some see the turning point as the Drama

Committee's decision in 1993 to compensate for funds lost by Drama to the Cultural Foundation by cutting the State Theatre Companies back. Council, in an executive act, replaced the State funds. Now, not surprisingly, we have MOB (the Major Organisations Board), a board without artist peers and its members safely cut off from the rest of its fellow practitioners.

Sidetrack's Don Mamouny sees the roots of the current scenario "going back to 1986 when the then Theatre Board introduced Ceiling Funding, limiting and indexing the amount that any one company could get. The fight over that ended CAPPA (Confederation of Australian Professional Performing Arts), which I was a director of at the time and I don't think the situation's been stabilised since. That was the point at which the Opera left the Australia Council. The groundswell of smaller theatre companies wanted a larger slice of a cake that wasn't growing. The Board at that time was responsive to the smaller companies – community, regional, what we now call performance. Then there was a backlash from the larger companies which hadn't until that time put their influence into play. Those people have high-jacked artistic policy in Australia. That's why *Creative Nation* is such a parody of a document when it comes to theatre."

While not being surprised that the Australia Council is being corporatised, like much else in our lives, Mamouny is non-plussed: "The very thing that gave the PAB a sense of purpose as an Australian arts funding organisation, that part's been diminished and it seems as though it's going to be neutered. And those organisations that don't produce much Australian work – mostly classics and recent works from overseas, reproducing other people's culture

for us – they're the ones which are going to be valorised. It's such a pity that that early vision of Nugget Coombs and Fraser even, in retrospect, that vision has gone."

Graeme Watson, the artistic director of One Extra Dance Company and a former member of the Dance Committee, also fears the devaluing of what is Australian: "MOB, from the point of view of dance, is part of a political agenda. If you want to be part of MOB you must fit its agenda. In structure and presentation, you're Anglo-European. None of them address the position of Australia in Asia and there is no indigenous company to compromise the political agenda of MOB. The companies are rooted in a tradition from England and Europe – hierarchical, celebrity-based and not really part of what is happening here. This is confirmed by the promotion of little mindsets like being told we have to ride on the back of tourism rather than the arts being a critique of our culture and history."

These cultural concerns recur: "The support we've largely had has been from disempowered peers and even that looks to have gone completely," says Sarah Miller. "Federal government support is now for flagships and blockbusters. It's ironic that the Labor Party has moved away from a policy that was entitled *Distinctly Australian* – even though the newsletter of that name still comes out of Canberra."

What particularly worries Don Mamouny is "the lack of continuity in the proposed assessment. If the artist part of it is just going to keep changing then it's going to be meaningless. What would be best is for the Australia Council to hold a really good seminar where they set out to consult properly with artists from all over Australia – in Albury-Wodonga, say, or a travelling thing, but not one of those events they've done lately where they make some decision and then tell you they're going to consult with you and the moment you question it the doors close. It has to be debate without recrimination." Inimitably, Mamouny turns up an apt quotation:

We trained hard but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams we would be reorganised. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganising and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing inefficiency and demoralisation.

Petronious, 65 AD.

The theme of change for change's sake is recurrent concern. Wesley Enoch observed, "In practice there will be very little difference. What I'm really upset about is that the process is going to be driven by managerial imperatives – there's too many applications, so let's make a new management structure. Its success has been that there are so many applications."

"They might come up with the same decisions but the way they're thinking of doing it, being ranked and maybe going to a next level of assessment, ignores the importance for assessors and decision-makers of knowing the whole breadth of work done by people who are applying. It's that breadth of work that helps you develop a philosophy of decision-making for that art form. How does the assessor work in the new system? Decide, 'they're good, they're bad' and go unchallenged? 'I don't know how to read this.'"

"I know this person's work but I haven't seen it in a year and a half. You can only be really informed in discussion. Unless you're challenged, you just replicate what you're used to. And when Hilary McPhee says that 'peer assessment will be used where peer assessment it's appropriate', what does it mean? Unless you're a MOB company, where peer

assessment doesn't apply, your future is uncertain."

"The most disturbing thing," says Anna Messariti director of PACT youth theatre and a former staff member of the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council, "is the ranking of the applications and the proposal that once ranked they might not go any further. I find this an incredibly difficult idea to accept. It sounds like a high school certificate of arts funding. It's a method of shortlisting like the Australian Film Commission uses, and the AFC does not have the reputation of being an accessible funding body – it's inscrutable. The Australia Council's good reputation has been built on an open process, but with short-listing and ranking and people not allowed to proceed past first base ... I'm cynical about it."

"If you lose committee assessment where every application is considered – the balance of artistic judgment is lost. On the Drama Committee you could have a Roger Hodgman and Sarah Miller at the same table and somewhere between those two poles you would find a balance and you would support a broad range of arts all of which had to be operating at a very high standard. If the initial assessment of these applications is going to be done in isolation, where's the balance?"

Graeme Watson feels "The danger is that the new model could make dance very parochial in the worst sense, if assessors are local, instead of having a bigger picture of the arts in Australia. How do you counter that – someone flies from Adelaide to Melbourne to make the assessments and break down that parochialism? But how will that save money?"

Richard Grayson, director of Adelaide's Experimental Art Foundation, first thought it all might be change for change's sake. "A few years ago there was a Green Paper going around about the visual arts infrastructure and everyone got terribly het up about it – it was supposed to loosen things up, knock some things out, open up money. In a way nothing came out of it. Now, all of a sudden, something major has happened – a consultation process about Peer Assessment. I missed it, I must have blinked. From an organisational point of view in the visual arts there's a strong feeling, I think, that all bets are off. Many organisations will be coming up for renewal of multi-year funding and find themselves on a new playing field with new rules – I can see the right wing chimera of economic rationalism. This could be paranoia – what would they do with all the decommissioned art galleries? I have a feeling that the Green Paper didn't do its job, the Australia Council has done a bad job of getting more money out the Federal Government, the VA/CB has done a bad job of getting more money out of Council, so the changes will achieve what the Green Paper didn't. If you add 'narrowing the gate', a bleakness is engendered."

Angharad Wynne-Jones, director of The Performance Space and a member of the Hybrid Arts Committee of the PAB, also argues that it's a critical time for contemporary arts organisations like TPS, PICA, EAF, ACCA, IMA, that have been the interface for artists and audiences for the last 20 years for developing forms. The kind of support available now is no longer sufficient. "We are committed to research and development – outdated, unfashionable, unsexy words now, but they are what we do. Unless that support is given we'll wonder where it all went in 20 years – a return to the old edifice complex?"

Richard Grayson concurs about the problems for experimental art practice: "It reminds me a lot of what happened in the English system where a process such as this which was seen as a small and internal shift ended up in the erosion of many grant lines. You not only started running out of assessors, the grant lines actually started being cut. There are no longer national grant lines for practising artists. It all goes

• continued page 34

Dear editors

We just wanted to drop you a line in support of your editorial regarding peer assessment and the recent review. Like many practising artists in this country we are increasingly concerned by the procedures and patterns of support meted out by the Australia Council, as well as being deeply troubled by the cavalier manner in which the review of peer assessment was carried out. Both seem to indicate a disinclination to genuinely consult the groups and individuals for whose benefit the council is supposed to exist, as well as encouraging the suspicion and antipathy that the review was ostensibly designed to address. These factors do tend to suggest that there is a fundamental breakdown in the manner in which the council operates, or that the council is not actually interested in the needs and wishes of whom it coyly describes as its 'clients', either one of which is a reason for serious concern.

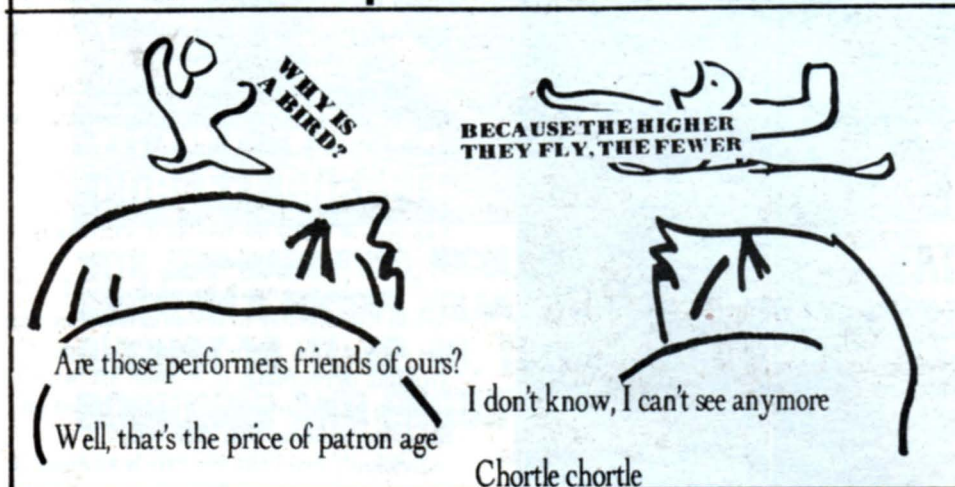
Yet the Council remains largely immune to organised criticism. The reasons for this immunity are probably diverse and complex, but one suspects that at least in part it may stem from an unholy union of the opacity of the assessment process and the tenuous finances of most artists. Those who are affected the most have too much to lose to rock the boat, and what's worse, no redress should they feel they've been unfairly done by. What criticism there is tends to be the O'Connor/Murray brand of extremism, and while we are in agreement with at least their general line of criticism, their brand of extremism is more likely to be a hindrance than a help.

In such an environment it is heartening to see a magazine such as RealTime, itself dependent (at least to some degree) upon council funding providing an articulate rebuttal of the position adopted by the Australia Council. Your views are both courageous and timely.

Sincerely

James Bradley and Mardi McConnochie
Sydney

The new "peer" assessment



Courtesy of the esteemed Canberra Youth Theatre



What do we want? Art!

Roland Manderson protests against nuclear testing, outside the French Embassy, Canberra July 9, 1995

The rally was declared open. This was a new experience for me. Apparently it was declared closed later on, but we'd gone home by then out of lack of inspiration. And the audience (is this the right word for the crowd at a rally which is opened and closed?) were commended for being large and diverse — but in fact we were neither.

Then we heard Peter Garrett tell us all that people these days are falling in love with the planet, and that's why the French would give up nuclear testing, praise the Lord. And we all called, he said, on the government to sell our uranium to the French really carefully. Grette and I, half way back in the crowd, shouted out "Ban uranium mining

ban uranium mining" and "Leave it in the ground". The gentle Canberra crowd laughed politely but did not join in.

What was the point in gathering with our strollers and bicycles and coats and scarves and clean cars? Well, we wanted to call on our governments or representatives to act in a decisive manner, didn't we? And we wanted to show the strength of our conviction, to demonstrate our commitment to our cause. Didn't we? And so, as parts of the rallying crowd we wanted to know when to cheer, when to shout, when to snarl. Because that's the fun, and more than half the point of the bloody event.

Of course the Labor Party and the Greens

and the International Socialists, and the Wilderness Society and probably the Liberal Party had all solemnly promised the police that there would be no threat to the French Embassy, or to police lines, or to anything; and so there was a lot of singing of songs by Islanders, and local Aboriginal people, and mixed choirs and what have you, saying "we shall overcome" one way or another.

No-one even spoke about ego, or the size of *Jacques le coq*, or government (read national) self importance, or the unchallenged rights of the rich and powerful across the world to do what they like. Everyone was just too busy saying "save our planet" very sensibly to get up enough steam to abuse anyone or do anything. No wonder it was such a limp affair.

I blame the arts. Because it was an artistic problem. We need an event to enlist our passions; a stirring and inspiring one which doesn't go on for too long, where speakers can show leadership, where our demands on the government, the French, or

the police are clear; where we have some business and we get on with it.

And writers who stick to the bloody point because mostly we know what people will say (that's why we are there aren't we?) and we just want it to be said well. A public rally is a place for eloquence, for rhetoric, for poetry. And people who read their lines in a flat, tentative, serious, uncertain voice do no-one any favours — if they were on a real stage they'd be out of a job. Addressing a crowd and winding them up is an artform and the organisers have to find the right performers.

Unless of course I'm barking up the wrong tree. And that's not what we need at all. People these days summon up passions over aircraft noise don't they? Not international politics. While we're all against the French, we sleep well at night, and we're far from the South Pacific. What we really needed on Sunday were a few more cake stalls, trash and treasure, lucky dips and a bouncing castle. Comrades, don't rally, for this last fight is a fete.

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Fat time

Keith Gallasch picks out the currents in the Canberra and Melbourne festival puddings

Check your brochures, count your coins, dream on. The festival season is about to commence – in Canberra and Melbourne in October, followed in a relatively minor but significant key by Greenmill Dance Festival in Melbourne in January. Then there's the Perth Festival in February and the Adelaide Festival in March. It is also the season of appointments – Robyn Archer gets the Adelaide Festivals of 1998 and 2000, a rare double dip, and Rob Brookman takes up the Canberra National Festival of Australian Theatre. With Anthony Steel (ex-Adelaide Festival, ex-Brisbane Biennial) in Sydney, Archer moving from Canberra to Adelaide, and Brookman (ex-Adelaide and Auckland) to Canberra, the musical chairs of festival directorships is alive and well. The Cultural Olympiad has gone to Jonah Jones for which many an artist will be provisionally grateful – Jones' interest in visual and aboriginal arts and performance is rare among Australia's festival directors. (However the narrow range of arts representation on the Cultural Olympiad committee is typical of current inclination to hierarchies in arts policies around the country. It seems the committee was set up before Jones' arrival, hopefully he'll expand its parameters.)

For Melbourne, Leo Schofield has lined up another largely innocuous event (pleasing to the press and the Melbourne middlebrow) with only the Bill T. Jones Dance Company and a few other events warranting a ticket to Melbourne, plus the curio of a Japanese theatre company performing John Romeril's *The Floating World* and Playbox's already programmed Japanese play *The Head of Mary*. The lack of originality in Schofield's festival is confirmed by his trotting out two-time (or is it three-time?) Perth Festival favourites Cheek by Jowl and two-time Sydney favourites Theatre Complicité, both progressive English theatre companies with a mildly European feel.

Kosky's Adelaide Festival remains the stronger contender for audiences that want a festival distinctively programmed and expanding the notions of what a festival can offer. Kosky's complete program has yet to be announced and is anticipated to include what is so obviously missing, yet again, from Schofield's festival, a major commitment to local talent. Let's hope Kosky lives up to his vision. Robyn Archer has embraced Australian talent with a passion over her three modest Canberra festivals and will doubtless transport that passion into her vision for Adelaide. Not that she has engaged the tougher, darker more demanding aspects of contemporary performance, but at least hers is a recognition that a whole new body of work

has emerged over the last decade with 'the body' often at its centre.

Adelaide's Red Shed Theatre Company has been programmed by Archer to present Daniel Keene's *Because You Are Mine*, originally presented by the company last year for a brief season in *Brave New Works* at the Festival Centre. The Red Shed Company commissioned the work, their third association with Keene (one received work and two commissions plus another coming up). Red Shed's ongoing commitment to writers is well known and fruitful – their fourth work from Melissa Reeves, the musical *Storming Heaven*, comes up later this year.

Tim Maddocks, co-artistic director with Cath McKinnon of Red Shed and director of *Because You Are Mine*, says that when Keene was working with the company on *All Souls* he discussed the idea of a play about Bosnia, about the rape camps, was offered a commission and subsequently submitted the play. Although amenable to changes to the script, Keene is not one for extensive workshoping (unlike Reeves whose *Storming Heaven* has been through a five-week development period and presentation by student performers. Changes were made to every one of the three performances). Maddock says that Keene's work has become part of the Red Shed house style and that there's a good feeling of mutual development between company and writer.

Asked about the play's texture, Maddock says, "It's not nearly as poetic as *All Souls*. It works with a simplicity of language and scenario, taking a situation hyped up by the media, a situation where you can fall into the hyperbole of 'tragedy', the aggrandisement of 'human nature and war'. This play makes it all very ordinary. That's why designer Mary Moore has set it in something like an underground carpark. It ruthlessly undermines anything that might seem to be ennobling. The characters are just trying to conduct normal lives. A lot of it is conducted around a dripping tap with people trying to understand what is happening at the very beginning of the conflict. It covers a very short period of time, but events rapidly escalate into brutality. Daniel's play was a response to the media – he'd read that a picture of a wounded girl had been doctored to make it tolerable for use in the western press. We've done a lot of research with people who'd been there or who have been trying to bring the rape camps to public attention. There's an 'any place, any time' feel about it, and audiences will read their own specificity into it."

Peter Wilson, formerly of Melbourne's puppetry-based Handspan, is now director

of Company Skylark and is living in Canberra where he finds he has more creative space in which to conceive his works, and where he's had the on-going support of Robyn Archer and her festival.

Mum's the Word, a premiere for the festival, "is about adoption, separation and reunion. I was an adoptee. The story is a bit about my own life, but I've tried to make it inclusive for others in a similar situation giving equal weight to all three parties – the adoptee, the mother who relinquishes the child and the adopting family. The character is only loosely based on me. I don't want to attribute blame. It's my viewpoint but I have to acknowledge the pain of the relinquishing mother and the pain of the adopting family when they have to tell the child of the adoption. Then the child wants to find its own history.

"I have met my mother, but it was important to tell her I was grateful. I wasn't judging her. We've all been promiscuous some time in our lives. And there was so little in the way of protection then. I haven't been angry, but I have felt rejected. That was the first thing I had to deal with and I found out that it wasn't rejection as such. The dynamic of the work doesn't come from external conflict, it's internal.

"I believe we all have some form of guidance, I call it a guardian angel so I have an angel fly into the play to begin it. The angel departs, revealing a child. There's a lot of magic in the play. Then we follow the child's growth and the realisation that it doesn't fit in. There are humorous scenes, fantasies. I always imagined I was chosen like a puppy-dog in a pet shop. You're told you were chosen especially, but in fact the adopting parents get a phone call saying we've got a child we think will be right for your family.

"The child (a puppet) becomes an adult male actor for the search and the reunion. Some reunions are terrific, some are shocking. But, rejected or not, we still have a life to get on with."

Richard Jeziorny is the designer, Cathy O'Sullivan the composer, and writer Mary Hutchison has developed the script with Wilson.

Also on Archer's program are Bangarra Dance theatre with *Ochres*, Meryl Tankard Australian Dance Theatre's *Furioso*, Stalker's *angels ex machina*, Somebody's Daughter Theatre (originally from the Fairlea Prison Women's Theatre Group) in *Call My Name*, Maree Cunningham's biography in song, *The Secret Fire*, Adelaide's Magpie with *Verona*, the Kailish Dance Company's *Ramayana*, a contemporary Indian dance work, and Pablo Percusso, "a three-piece band who use found objects from flower pots to mobile phones to create their own mix of high-energy junk-percussion."

Schofield's Melbourne Festival has Pacific Northwest Ballet from Seattle with a mix of Balanchine and current American choreography including a crowd-pulling *Carmina Burana*. Bill T. Jones presents his *Still/Here* a multimedia dance about

responses to AIDS, with video artist Gretchen Bender, composer Kenneth Frazelle, composer/guitarist Vernon Reid and folk singer Odetta. A second program of Jones' repertory works is a real bonus (though Melbournites are warned: "contains some nudity"). Yan Pascal Tortelier, one of the finest of a new wave of European conductors, will lead the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, choirs and soloists in Berlioz' *The Damnation of Faust*. Save for the David Chesworth Ensemble and the Safri Duo percussionists (surely time for something more challenging from Steve Reich than his *Clapping Music*, please!) the major music program only gets as contemporary as Australian pianist Michael Kiernan Harvey playing Messiaen's *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jesus* – but, like Kosky's programming of the Scriabin sonatas in Adelaide, a major treat. The China Beijing Opera Troupe will doubtless present one of their not too demanding evenings of spectacular excerpts – too much to ask, I suppose, for a complete opera. There's plenty of chamber music (Ravel, Poulenc, Barber, Carter, Shostakovich, Schnittke for moderns) but only at sunset; a celebration of the counter tenor, and a semi-staged version of Charpentier's rendering of Moliere's *The Imaginary Invalid* by Les Arts Florissants. Michael Feinstein and Barbara Cook (second visit) will celebrate the work of American composers from Gershwin to Sondheim.

The Australian contingent is led by Michael Kiernan Harvey, IHOS Opera and in smaller print the David Chesworth Ensemble, Playbox's *The Head of Mary* by Chikao Tanaka, Sarah Cathcart's eagerly awaited *Tiger Country*, created with Andrea Lemon. and (this is interesting) the premiere performances by Gideon Obarzanek's Chunky Moves dance company. Novelty items include a lecture by Robert Hughes, but will words be a substitute for the real thing? Will Hughes snarl at the bitty visual arts program in small galleries and foyers across the city?

Where is Australian music, a comprehensive look at the visual arts, the works of leading playwrights or indigenous performance companies? The one large scale Australian work is IHOS Opera's *To Traverse Water*. You can only yearn for Jim Sharman's 1982 Adelaide Festival and Anthony Steel's risky 1984 commissionings, again for Adelaide. Visiting artists in Melbourne will find themselves pretty much at any festival anywhere in the western world. The exchange of works and ideas will be minimal. This is 1995? Tony Strachan is programming the outdoor festival again, with a decent budget this time. Perhaps you'll have to look to the streets for real thing.

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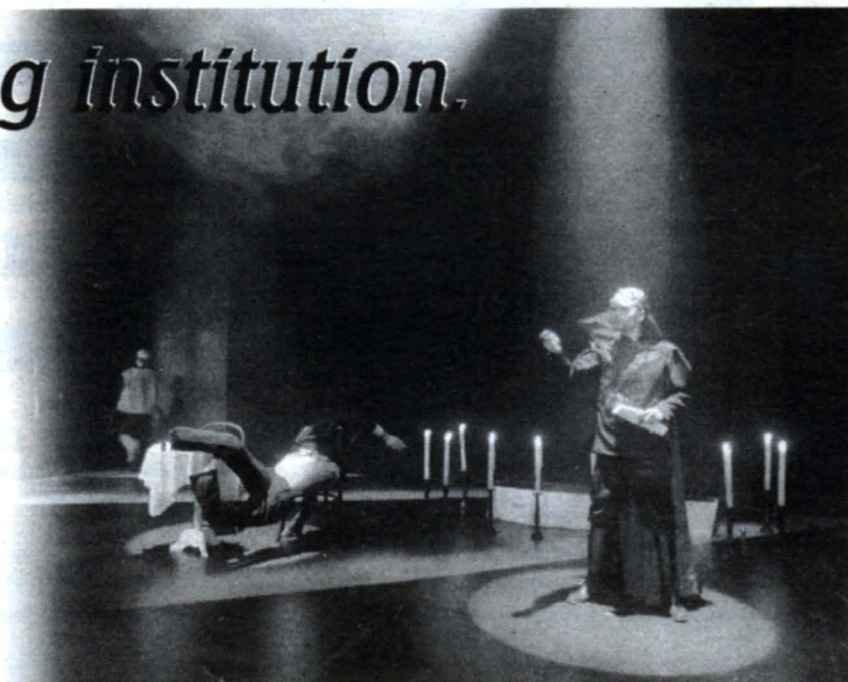
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The killing floor

Kirsten Dunlop talks to Tasmanian slaughterman-playwright Franz Docherty

Franz Docherty is an exponent of dramatic conversions. This isn't surprising, since his own conversion, if that's what you'd call it, has been dramatic in more ways than one. Docherty is an ex-slaughterman turned playwright whose new play *Meatsafe* has just finished its premiere season at the Peacock Theatre in Hobart, performed by Zootango Theatre Company and directed by Robert Jarman. The show was extremely good; those who made the mid-winter effort were rewarded with one of the best pieces of theatre Hobart has seen for a while.

Meatsafe is a powerful drama of parochialism, brinkmanship, and the violence, physical and emotional, of a slaughterhouse. In performance it presents a challenging mixture of vicious realism and raw humour which Docherty confesses to enjoy: "I wanted to have the audience laughing and squirming at the same time." Certainly, there's a lot of squirming as the facade of a small meatworks town is stripped back to expose a nasty tangle of betrayal and male aggression. In the midst of it, the central couple Nick (Strongy) and Nola attempt to hold their relationship together despite revelations that Strongy is sterile and their only child the product of Nola's final liaison with her ex-boyfriend.

Docherty argues that it's all about truth. "What I wanted to follow through was the pursuit of truth ... truth is a way of healing and destroying ... it is so hard to want to be truthful, but if you come out the other end it can be such an uplifting experience." This is important to him, one of the 'universal themes' to which he is committed. His characters use truth in various forms - guesswork through to boasting - in order to maim, or purge, or repair. I didn't find it quite so uplifting.

The play reminded me forcibly of a saying, "Truth is nothing but falsehood with the edges sharpened up, and ill-tempered at that." Truth is compelling in *Meatsafe* because it is so destructive, so much a



Bradley Hulme and Guy Hooper in *Meatsafe*

Richard Parkinson

matter of perception and manipulation. And as Docherty acknowledges, the carnage of the culminating scene in the slaughterhouse is "an example of what can happen when everyone goes after the truth at once."

The slaughterhouse literally and metaphorically dominates the play. It seems to have produced, in both Docherty and his

writing, an unusual combination of earthiness and metaphor. Nowhere is this more clearly felt than in the play's portrayal of masculinity. Docherty is hesitant on the subject: "It wasn't an issue when writing [the play], it was just there." Yet *Meatsafe* is a pointed indictment of so many stereotypes of masculinity. Rituals of emotional inarticulation and verbal aggression as a form of defence are accurately pin-pointed by spare and often brutal dialogue. At the same time, the play abounds in metaphors of perverse male

That pride and that perversity stay in the mind after seeing this play. Docherty sees much of the drama turning on contradictions, "Things seeming so opposite, but working together." This is true of the kill-floor with its superimposed strains of a haunting female aria, and it occurs in the simultaneous staging of key scenes. However, the female roles did not present much opposition to male intractability in this performance, with the exception of Wilma's (Nola's mother) capacity for change; and the bond between Strongy and Nola was not quite convincing enough to make their departure at the end the logical cleansing Docherty describes. I found myself attracted by the idea of an earlier, one-act version performed at La Mama in Melbourne, in which Strongy and Nola part over the phone in the closing moments. Perhaps I'm too cynical, but it seems more apt an ending for the brooding darkness of this play.

Docherty, as he points out, has married since then, and believes in the hope the ending offers. He has good reason to. *Meatsafe* is an impressive piece of writing. Docherty puts that down to verbal game playing, a skill learned in the meatworks, which as he says, is some education for a writer. He is vehement that his proficiency at dialogue is not subject specific, which means, hopefully, that more will follow.

Meatsafe by Franz Docherty, directed by Robert Jarman, designed by Jon Bowling, with Guy Hooper, Bradley Hulme, Josephine Lee, Andreas Litras, Jane Longhurst, Rick Mourant, and Nicole Parums. Zootango Theatre Company, Peacock Theatre, Salamanca Arts Centre, June 2-17 1995.

Kirsten Dunlop is a Fine Arts honours graduate from Sydney University who is currently completing a PhD in the English Department at the University of Tasmania at Hobart. As well as occasional lecturing, she is the Associate Editor of *Signlo*.

Sign singing

Keith Gallasch interviews Mike Canfield, director of Theatre of the Deaf's musical *Sign of the Phantom*

The Australian Theatre of the Deaf have just returned from Vienna where they'd been invited to perform *Hands and Tails*, a community cabaret performance, at the World Federation of the Deaf Congress. The Australian Association of the Deaf won the bid to hold the next congress in Brisbane in 1999. The possibility of a Deaf Theatre conference built into that event was discussed. In the meantime the very first Deaf Theatre Conference, to be held at the National Theatre of the Deaf in the U.S., will be attended by one of the company's board members, Colin Allen.

MC Our new production is called *The Sign of the Phantom* written by Melissa Reeves; it's a collaboration coming out of a three week Creative Development workshop. Our choreographer is William Forsythe, not the American in Frankfurt, but a big commercial-style choreographer who's worked on the Mardi Gras, P & O Starship Cruises and for Warner Brothers. He's keen to do something more creative and more theatrical. I've worked with him before, he's good with deaf actors and he's familiar with our work. Matthew Fargher is musical director and performer. He worked on our production *Savant*. And we have two hearing women singers performing with the four deaf actors.

KG Do the deaf performers do vocal work?

MC Never. Sometimes when we speak-sign when we need to explain something to the audience in schools but for mainstage, never.

KG What then is the relationship of the deaf performers to the music?

MC The music has to follow the deaf actors. In the past it's been the other way round - in Vienna, for example, we had the music so loud our bodies could feel it.

KG The rhythmic control of the deaf performers is very important then?

MC Yes. We're trying to get the *deaf essence* into everything and what you will see is not what you'd expect from a musical as such. It's the world's first deaf musical I think.

KG Of course, it sounds like a contradiction in terms.

MC It does. But I've done a deaf musical in America - that's where I'm from. I did the lead role in *Oklahoma* and I've seen others. But the way they do it is to use American Sign Language and dialogue and songs all together, but this production is different. The song will be signed in Auslan (Australian sign language) - that's the only time we use sign language - with the story

happening using our visual style of theatre and no voice, no language.

KG What is the Sign of the Phantom about?

MC It's about an deaf young man who finds a job as a cleaner in a mental institution. He gets to know the patients. He gets in and out of the worlds in their minds. In the meantime the institution is threatened with closing.

KG What is central - choreography and movement?

MC Strong symbols - wind, butterflies, a wall of hands, all very surreal but mixed with reality. The young man is confused about which world is real.

KG Does his character's deafness play a role in the narrative?

MC The character is deaf but it's not an issue. A deaf character goes into another world.

KG How important are the hearing singers for a hearing audience?

MC They are singing what we're signing. Actually we're sign-singing which for me is like a new artform. We're trying to popularise that style. We've been using it for four years now in our productions and others do it too. It's the art of sign language with music - a new visual concept. I've been told by hearing people that when they hear a song and see it sign-sung they understand the song better, they hear it and see it. There's more depth to the gestures



Caroline Conlon, Damien Walters and Lisa Mills
Tracy Schramm

than those on MTV. *Sing and Sign* for primary schools was very heavily booked.

KG Who is the Sign of the Phantom for?

MC Everyone; deaf and hearing audiences, for adults, for families, although some concepts might be difficult for children.

Interview interpreter: Pam Spicer
Sign of the Phantom, The Performance Space, Sydney, Thursday September 7 to Sunday October 1, directed by Mike Canfield, designed by Andrew Raymond, musical direction by Matthew Fargher.

Light dark light

Entr'acte directors Elisabeth Burke and Pierre Thibaudeau tell Keith Gallasch about their new work *Eclipse*

EB One of the things driving *Eclipse* came from Pierre wanting to look at light and the use of light within design. Originally we'd wanted to have objects that would produce most of the light we'd be using.

KG *Is your work driven by images, by ideas?*

PT I really relate well to conceptual ideas or to graphic input as starting points. In this case it was the simple idea of using the word 'eclipse' in conjunction with the possibility of trying to develop objects producing specific light moods and shadow effects and relationships between light and shadow and body.

KG *Elizabeth, what is your starting point for a project?*

EB I do respond strongly to visual stimuli but I also have another agenda as well which I'll come to. In considering the set I had been thinking of *Eclipse* in terms of heavenly bodies and looking upwards. But I encouraged Pierre to think about the possibility of looking down into space. So the audience will be several metres above the floor.

KG *Why above, why the reversal?*

EB It provides an enormous challenge for us as a movement company – you have to address things very differently with the audience looking down into a pit onto our bodies.

The other thing that is important for me is that Entr'acte have generally worked with a theme through a number of processes and at some point we bring the results together and construct what you might call a meta-narrative. This time I wanted to start with a narrative. This became both exciting and problematic. I've always argued against working from a script – as typical theatre in the west does – and articulated a case for text and voice and design and movement to co-exist in a parallel rather than one interpreting the other. I wanted to maintain that vision and reconcile it with starting with a text.

KG *Was the text created in consultation with you or by the writer in isolation?*

EB The writer and dramaturg Elio Gati knows where my concerns are about performance. We've come up with a model where we have a story but we also have an interwoven sense of multiple narratives because each of the characters brings narratives to it – not always necessarily verbal.

KG *Will it clearly be a narrative?*

PT Yes, in specific scenes and as it grows throughout the whole performance. You will know when the narrative is being continued. The story is the sustaining spine of the performance. It was adopted because there were relevant metaphors in relation to eclipse – a life, a death, a transformation of some kind.

EB When I look back over our works, sometimes I think because the texts were from various sources they felt bitty. I asked Elio to write something of his own so that it would have integrity as a text. It's not a backward step to work with narrative, it's the way you do it. For example, we are seemingly unable in the west to deal with the unseen in contrast with, say, Japanese theatre with its ghosts and spirits. Therefore in *Eclipse* we have

the voice of a woman who never appears – she is an immaterial presence, the subject of Elio's narrative.

There are also 'beats', recurring scenes that convey the journey of this woman's life, not fragmented but continuous, 'bridged' by the audience as they recognise recurring elements. So we juggle the contemporary interest in the fragment and the sense of the whole. As well I've chosen images that are only black and white – videos, slides, costumes.

PT The idea of black and white was there from the beginning, of using all forms of white light, each with its own quality, until we bring in colour.

KG *You'll have to use theatre lighting?*

PT Not for lack of ideas, but because we don't have the time or the money to fully explore the idea of light only from sculptural objects. The idea is still in the show, metamorphosed in various ways. For example, Elizabeth's idea of the pit with the audience steeply above it, has given us the floor as our backdrop with the advantage of our projections going onto the floor.

EB Although the set and the lighting are abstract, we're trying to get a hint, a hue, a sense of Sydney, of a place ... and we've never worked that way before. There are references in the text, in Paul Charlier's sounds, each actor drawing on personal stories – not explicitly told though, but in the manner of the playing of each character. The woman's story is a stream through the show, the others are not interpretations of her story. Actors have brought in sounds, place and animal references, stories ... building up characters, yielding a deeper life, very quickly, via a range of disciplines. And then the performers locate themselves in the broad brushstrokes of the direction.

KG *Where does Eclipse fit in the Entr'acte opus?*

PT It's more pre-planned: having a text, each scene or bracket worked out and then fleshed out. But in many ways it's how we have worked before.

EB I think it's different ... using a woman's death. It's not about death but a journey and a question – is death the end of the story? Is it light-death-and-light again. We took the bold decision to start with the woman's voiceover in the dark – a sense of inside her inside a room and ending with some sense of transcendence – not necessarily 'everlasting life' but ...

PT Her spirit.

Eclipse, The Performance Space, Sydney, August 17 to September 3, 1995. Director, Elisabeth Burke, design by Pierre Thibaudeau, dramaturgy by Elio Gatti, sound by Paul Charlier, lighting by Simon Wise. Performers: Sarah Dunn, Benjamin Grieve, Bruce Keller, Gisele Milon, Katia Molino, Pierre Thibaudeau.

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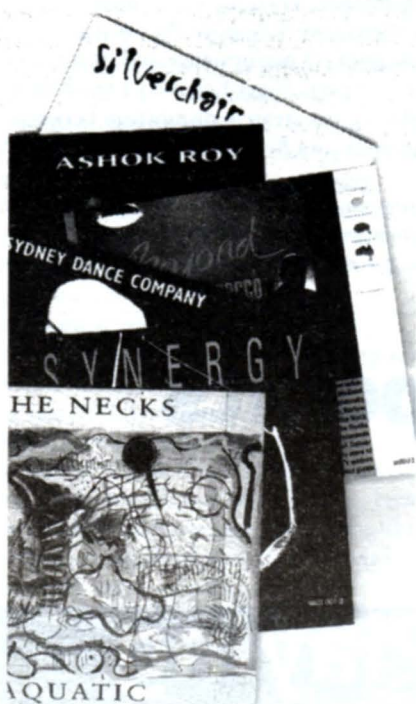
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25. Where do you get your information about the arts? (Tick all that apply)

TV—
ABC ☐
SBS ☐
Commercial ☐
Radio—
ABC ☐
Community ☐
Commercial ☐
Newspapers ☐
Magazines ☐
Specialist magazines ☐
Newsletters/mailings ☐
Posters/fliers ☐
Word of mouth ☐
Other ☐

(please state) _____

26. Do you ever travel interstate for arts events/festivals?
Yes ☐ No ☐
How do you travel? _____

(please state) _____

27. Do you ever travel overseas for arts events/festivals?
Yes ☐ No ☐

28. Which of the following credit cards do you hold:

Visa ☐
Mastercard ☐
Bankcard ☐
AMEX ☐
Diners ☐
Other ☐

(please state) _____

29. Do you own a CD player?
Yes ☐ No ☐

30. Do you own a computer?

Yes ☐ No ☐
Mac ☐ PC ☐

If yes, does it have a CD Rom player?
Yes ☐ No ☐

31. Do you have Internet access (either on your own computer, or through university or work)?
Yes ☐ No ☐

32. Do you have an email address?
Yes ☐ No ☐

33. Would you like to see RealTime establish a World Wide Web site?
Yes ☐ No ☐

34. Do you subscribe to, or are you considering subscribing to Cable TV?
Yes ☐ No ☐

35. Do you own a car?
Yes ☐ No ☐
Less than 3 years old ☐
3-6 years old ☐
Over 6 years old ☐

36. What is your postcode? _____

37. Age?
Under 25 ☐
25-34 ☐
35-44 ☐
45-54 ☐
55+ ☐

38. Gender?
Male ☐
Female ☐

39. Are you
Single ☐
Married ☐
Defacto ☐
Divorced/Widowed/
Separated ☐

40. Annual Personal Income?
Under \$20,000 ☐
\$20,000-\$30,000 ☐
\$30,000-\$40,000 ☐
\$40,000-\$50,000 ☐
\$50,000-\$70,000 ☐
Over \$70,000 ☐

41. Education Level?
Primary ☐
Secondary ☐
Tertiary ☐
Post-graduate ☐

42. Are you currently:
Employed full-time ☐
Employed part-time ☐
Student ☐
Self-employed ☐
Unemployed ☐
Other (Please specify) _____

43. Are you employed in the arts?
Yes ☐ No ☐
In what capacity? _____

(please state) _____

Please complete these details to be entered into our prize draw:

(if you don't want to enter the draw, but would still like your comments aired, you may leave the following blank)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Phone BH: _____

Phone AH: _____

Please note, all responses will remain strictly confidential

Conditions

The first nine entries drawn on Friday September 15 at 84 Womerah Avenue, Rushcutters Bay, NSW 2011, will be the winners notified by mail. Prizes not redeemable for cash. Entry free and open to all residents of Australia. The contest closes last mail August 31, 1995. Winners will be announced in RealTime 9. All information is treated as confidential. NSW Permit No. TC95/3873, ACT Permit No. TP95/1551, Approved by Northern Territory Racing and Gaming Authority.

On average, how many times a month do you	more than 10	9-5	Less than 5
13. go to live performance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. go to the cinema?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. go to art galleries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. go to a concert?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. eat out at a restaurant?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. On average, how many books do you buy per month?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. How many CDs/cassettes do you buy per month?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. How many videos do you buy per month?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. How many video rentals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Fast track to skill

Robert Daoud talked to Director Don Mamouney about his plans for Sidetrack's *Contemporary Performance Week 6* (CPW6).

DM Contemporary Performance Week is an annual festival of new performance which encompasses theatre, dance, opera, circus, their various co-minglings and their relation to new technologies.

The event runs over five days. It includes seven programs of performance, eight different workshops and masterclasses given by practicing artists, plus forums and seminars.

RD Who is it for?

DM For anyone interested in glimpsing the new developments occurring in theatre and performance-making. In previous years the week has attracted a whole range of people, from aficionados of the art world to those members of the public who have long since given up equating theatre with a comfortable seat. But it is also a community event. It's a ground where artists and interested public can come together, drink good coffee, work out, learn new skills, see and discuss performance, form new alliances, break some old habits and develop some new ones.

RD Punctuated by the odd plane overhead.

DM Well, they're there and I'd rather they were flying over Keating's house but what can we do?

RD Pass them off as part of the urban fabric perhaps?

DM Somehow the interruptions of the odd aeroplane add to the atmosphere and test Cage's dictum that an art work unable to survive the noises of the modern world is not modern.

RD Is that why you've titled CPW6 *Transportations*?

DM Perhaps that's where the germ of the idea came from but I'm more interested in the notion of *vehicle* as a metaphor for theatre. Also, interestingly, early on there were quite a few works offered with quasi-religious themes, so I thought it would be interesting to explore some of the affiliations of theatre and religion – they're already transportation machines.

RD So we can expect to be moved at CPW6?

DM That's a promise.

RD Who have you lined up to perform in this years program?

DM This years program has a marvellous line up of established and emergent artists. Not all of the entries are in yet so I'll mention a few of the highlights. We have those spindle-legged movement magicians from Stalker Stilt Theatre performing *Angels Ex Machina*, Annette Tesoriero and Sonia Ryan's new opera *Song Cycle With Cement Mixer*, Nigel Kellaway's *This Most Wicked Body*, Deborah Bookbinder, Ros Crisp and Jai McHenry's *Maria Maria*, Scylla's *Memory Machine*, Andrea Aloise's *Mala, Negra y Fea*, Catherine Hourihan's *neverness*, Gravity Feed's *OMEN-AMEN* with sound artist Rik Rue and guest archers from The Society of Creative Anachronisms, plus new works from Regina Heilmann, Gerardo Rodriguez-Bruzzesi, Chin Kham Yoke, John Baylis, Mémè Thorne, She55, Deborah Leiser, Mia Mortal, SPG and many more.

RD The Workshop and Master classes have been a feature of past CPWs.

DM I'm delighted with the artists we have teaching this year. Anna Shelper of Circus

Oz will be teaching aerial skills. She'll be concentrating mainly on trapeze work but also doing some work on web and cloud swing. Richard Moore is taking a workshop called *Video/Performance*, which will be an opportunity for practitioners to experiment with the possibilities and the practicalities of incorporating video in live performance. We have Mémè Thorne's *Salon Suzuki*, a masterclass for artists who have some background in the Suzuki Tadashi method and who want to expand their technique and play with its possible applications. Chin Kham Yoke will be taking a masterclass exploring ritual using the Noh and other Eastern techniques as a starting point. Lindzee Smith, who some readers might remember as the director of *Night Shift* at the APG, has been in New York doing really interesting work with a lot of those people and groups you read about in TDR ... Foreman, Squat, for example. Lindzee is going to take a workshop for performers who want to explore text-based performance-making. This workshop will culminate in a performance. Then there is Annette Tesoriero's workshop on the voice, contemporary performance and opera; and finally there is Nigel Kellaway's workshop exploring the creative disjunction between biography and fiction.

Contemporary Performance Week, September 26 - 29, 1995. Call for a brochure on (02) 560 1255.

OPEN 95: Just (some of) the high points

OPEN 95, The Performance Space's annual program of new performance works, was played out against a background of agitation, bewilderment and concern regarding the very real and material effects that recent changes to the Australia Council's peer assessment would have on artists' lives.

With this in mind, a dinner forum explored how (the body of work encompassed under the umbrella of) performance might position itself in relation to other forces which seem to play a determinate role in shaping it. It was no surprise then that discussion hinged on the topic of trauma. Gerardo Rodriguez-Bruzzesi spoke on torture, comparing his personal experience of pain and suffering to that which some performance artists (Stelarc being the celebrated example) voluntarily impose on their bodies and selves. However, and this was the interesting part for me, Bruzzesi wasn't arguing an essentialist position; that one kind of torment was more real or disturbing than another. Rather, he aimed to explore possible points of connection between the different experiences.

In his OPEN '95 performance, *Australia, My Country, My Heart, My Flag*, Bruzzesi appeared as the archetypal 'Norm' in stabbies shorts, knee-length socks, akubra and t-shirt over beer belly. Sitting at a table draped with the Australian flag he scoffed eight meat pies and guzzled eight cans of Fosters while giving the audience the thumbs up, "she'll be right, mate", despite obvious growing discomfort (read belching). Discovering an ingenious way to relieve indigestion, Bruzzesi took a blade from the table and cut a gash in his belly from top to bottom. Sticking his hand into this self-made wound, he pulled out his innards and heaped them onto the flag while the audience squealed and squirmed.

Nikki Heywood's *Remember Me*, performed with Ari Erlich, similarly played on tensions between the grotesque and humorous. Leaning against a side wall in black evening dress, Heywood's body trembled and shook as she tried to find a voice. Erlich, in black suit/hat, stood next to her facing the wall in silence. Finally, a deep, soulful wail emitted from the bottom of Heywood's belly and she was soon



Nikki Heywood

Heidrun Löhr

accompanied in a repetitive chorus of "remember me" by Erlich. This desperate and disturbingly drawn out performers' lament was thrown into comic relief by Heywood's demented gesturing and the contorted facial expressions of Erlich as he hesitantly turned to face the audience. Their abject melodrama was distinguished by sublime voice work and a refreshing use of space.

In *Gloria*, an angel (Joel Markham) in yellow robe and huge wings delivered a monologue on homoerotic desire, murder (most foul!), necrophilia, putrefaction and redemption by (backyard) burning. Standing directly in front of the audience, centred in between two large incense holders, the angel turned his back on the audience at the end of the monologue and walked towards a single light source centre back stage. As he did, his wings cast a huge shadow which hovered over the heads of the audience like a dark, malevolent Tolkien presence. Expert visual and sound effects and Markham's triangular use of space chilled me to the bone.

Beth Kayes' *Sole*, performed with Brian Keogh, was a piece on breaking apart and becoming alone which may have held resonances for the performers as ex-members of *Legs on the Wall*. It began with a spotlight on Kayes in the centre of the space holding on to a trapeze several feet above the ground. She spoke about the breakdown of a relationship and her inability to let go at which point she released the trapeze and fell to the floor. Here she was joined by Keogh and together their bodies played out a drama of trying to find a fit, frustrated desire and parting. In many ways the piece was familiar *Legs* territory; the physical interaction of the performers' bodies playing points of resistance and vulnerability to create conflicting narratives. It was precisely this interactive dynamism that was missing from some other dance/performance pieces in OPEN 95 and which is why I look forward to the various becomings of Kayes and Keogh.

The dynamic tension between structure and play was courageously tackled by two recently formed theatre groups, Level Crossing and Naked Eye Theatre Co. In their respective performances, *Imposed* and *Where The Wild Things Are*, the source of their performance ideas and structures were sometimes evident (the Sydney Front and Post-Arrivalists, for example). This isn't a criticism. It is fascinating to see a tradition of experimentation carried through into new work. Moreover, there were moments in both performances when the lived experiences of different performing bodies inflected past work in unexpected ways. In these moments, the audience glimpsed, simultaneously, a tradition of work and new performance possibilities.

Currie Schaefer

Currie Schaefer has been appointed Lecturer in Drama at the University of Southern Queensland from January 1996.

Playing With Time Festival

Oct 13-15, 1995
Wharf II Theatre,
Sydney

Celebrate Playworks' 10th anniversary at this national festival for women writers for theatre and performance.

A living history from 22 Australian women writers who describe the influences, dilemmas, choices and real life events that have shaped their writing over the years 1985-95.

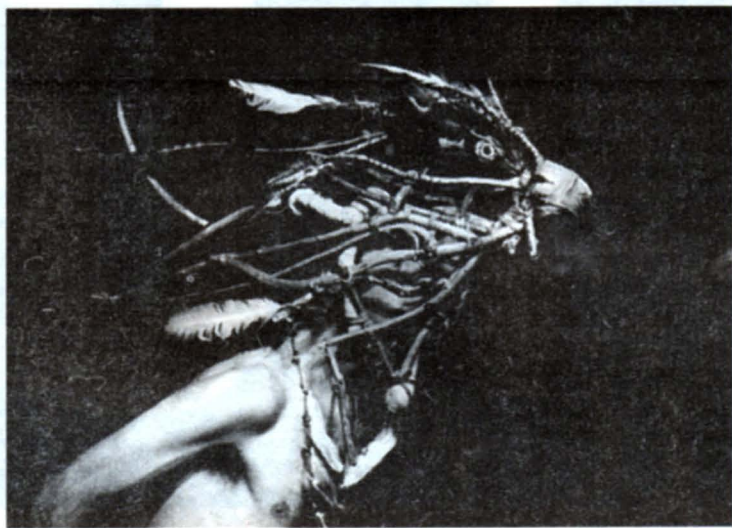
Readings, performances, interruptions, discussions, commentaries and questions from performers, theatre historians, critics, publishers, directors and others.

UK Writer, Deborah Levy's *The B-File* opens the festival on Friday night.

To book, contact: Rosemary Cameron on Ph 02 569 7696, Fx 02 569 3267

Circle in a square

Jacqueline Millner contextualizes the work of Geneva's Theatre Spirale



Jean Mohr

The city of Geneva first strikes you as defiantly monocultural, pristine and uniformly wealthy. Its manicured public spaces and clockwork precision are far from the rag and tag of Parramatta Road. But appearances are not always the sum of the world. Smack bang in the centre of Europe, host to several major international organisations, and destination for thousands of guest-workers and refugees from all over the world, Geneva is indeed far from the monocultural city it first appears. Moreover, it lives out Switzerland's inherent cultural schizophrenia, between Suisse Romand (French Switzerland) and Schweiz Deutsch (German Switzerland), a near impenetrable divide known locally as the *roster* line, after Schweiz Deutsch's signature dish of potatoes and sour cream.

The *roster* line might explain why in Australia we are somewhat familiar with what's happening in Bern, Basel or Zurich, but have little idea about what's going on in Suisse Romand. Schweiz Deutsch has strong ties to the vibrant cultural scene of Germany, while Geneva does not necessarily feel a close affinity to the city its architecture mirrors, in fairy-tale style-Paris. Many Geneva-based artists wistfully acknowledge the vitality of Swiss-German practice, but find it more difficult to crack their own national scene than to go international. This can be a source of strength. Geneva's wealth might work against a fervent 'fringe' scene, but it also engenders a 'can do' approach to artistic projects. This combination of relative wealth, accessibility, and international status allows Geneva to provide a, dare I say, *neutral* crucible for the concoction of multicultural cocktails.

One company whose trademark is precisely its ability to bring together actors, musicians and technical staff from all over the world is Theatre Spirale. Founded in 1989 by Swiss Patrick Mohr and Chilean-born Australian Michele Millner, the company was launched with a revised production of *Soundjata*, first staged at The Performance Space for the 1989 Festival of Sydney. *Soundjata* recounts an ancient African fable according to the *griot* tradition of oral history, together with music and acrobatics performed by a cast from Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Spain, Italy, Senegal, France, Switzerland and Australia. *Soundjata* in many ways defined the identity of Theatre Spirale, whose stated aim is to "bring together artists from different cultures and mix text, image, music and gesture in order to develop a *common* language, to find a very direct and dynamic rapport with the audience, and to revitalise direct oral communication and the *human* values it implies".

It's interesting that Theatre Spirale's unabashedly humanist approach finds little resonance in avant-garde theatre in Australian practice. According to Mohr, there is more concern with postmodern

intertextuality in mainstream companies in Geneva than in the fringe, seemingly a reversal of the Australian situation. The concern with the boundaries between audience and performer are still there, however, if subject to a different inflection.

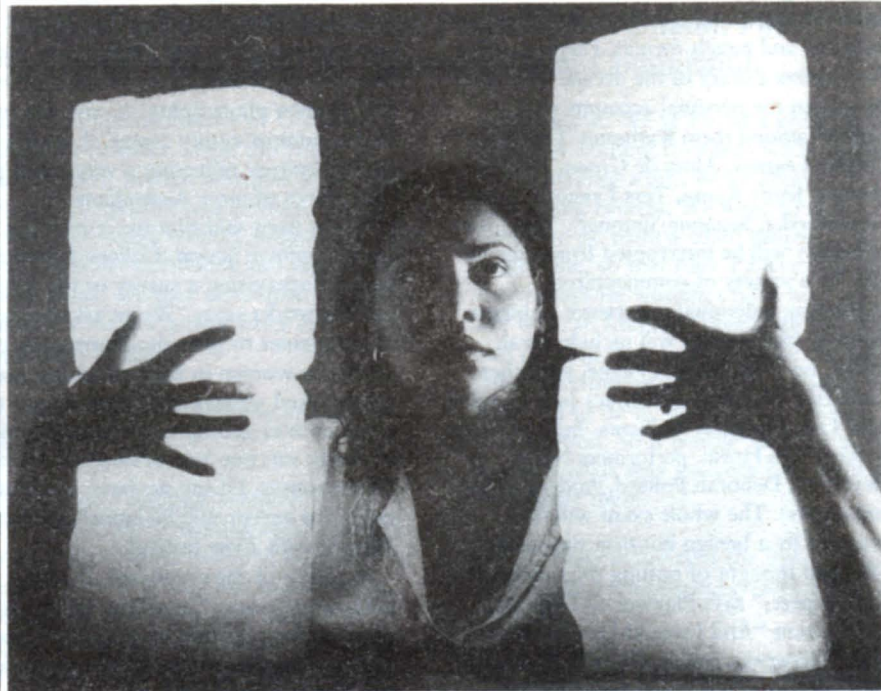
The attempt to involve the audience in the spectacle is patent in the production of *Coeur Ouvert* (Open Heart) at the Theatre de l'Usine in May this year. The foyer is dressed in garish Mexican artefacts, the bar sells red wine and burritos amid the tinny strains of cloying Mexican ballads. The atmosphere is suddenly pierced by the squeal of a saxophone, whereupon the protagonist appears, a dead ringer for one of her famous self-portraits. *Bienvenidos a mi casa*, Frida Kahlo (Michele Millner) personally greets each of her patrons as they step through a picture-frame into her enchanted blue house, offering cups of *vino tinto* before asking the audience to join her in a toast, thankfully not "Viva la Vida!", but "A mi!" ("To me!").

Frida Kahlo is a familiar theatrical subject, with both *A Few Small Nips* and *Viva La Vida* recently available for Australian consumption. She is less well known in Switzerland, where, presumably, feminist revisions of art history are not so current. However, the story of Frida Kahlo proved to be perfectly suited to the inter-cultural and inter-disciplinary approach of Theatre Spirale, which realised *Coeur Ouvert* using the cultural baggage of a Chilean/Australian actress/singer, a Spanish actress/singer and an Italian saxophonist/percussionist and working with song, text, marionettes, projections and movement. *Quel melange!*

The production is intimate, the performers never further than some five metres from the audience, echoing the claustrophobic intensity of Kahlo's tiny paintings. The action proceeds through an overlaying of monologues, recounting Kahlo's dreams, letters, memories, counterpoised with exchanges with the paintings, instrumental music and song. The music, a deliberately inelegant hybrid of Latino, free jazz and minimalist rhythms, enhances the intensity and closeness. Kahlo communicates in broken French and in Spanish, absurdly mixing the two into a hilarious idiosyncratic argot which owes much to Latin American expletives. She flirts with and cajoles the audience, bringing not just the verve and pathos of Kahlo to life, but also her vulgarity, her humour, sexual rawness and infuriating masochism.

This Kahlo is refreshingly arrogant and brash, well-aware of her historical significance. She is larger than life, unique, but at the same time it is impossible not to see her as a synecdoche for woman. Through her sheer idiosyncrasy, the poignancy of her experience becomes communal. In this, Theatre Spirale may well be approaching their objective to forge a 'common language'.

The 7 Stages of Grieving



Photograph by Jim Fawcett - Queensland Newspapers Pty Ltd

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CURRENCY PRESS

The performing arts publisher



This month Currency is publishing Anna Broinowski's acclaimed play, *THE GAP*. Originally directed and performed by the author, the play addresses the cultural differences between an Australian tour guide and her Japanese tourists.

"Broinowski's succinct, funny and elegantly told story... is also a quietly moving exploration of the mind-sets that separate two cultures."

Bob Evans, *Sydney Morning Herald*

ISBN 0 86819 412 3

RRP \$14.95

Also this month, Noelle Janaczewska's *THE HISTORY OF WATER*. An engrossing interchange between a Vietnamese woman and an English-born Australian woman that reveals the difficulties of translating literally and physically to another culture. The author has described her work as 'a multi-media performance score'. ISBN 0 86819 395 X RRP \$14.95

The long-awaited *COMPANION TO THEATRE IN AUSTRALIA* edited by Dr Philip Parsons AM, with Victoria Chance, will be published in September. This authoritative alphabetical reference work covers every major development and significant figure in the history of Australian theatre, from the earliest colonial times to the present day. Order before 31 August and receive the special pre-publication price of \$75.

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Playing with Time

Virginia Baxter on Playworks' 10th Anniversary

Playworks is 10 years old this year and celebrating with a festival that will be an unusually performative event. Avoiding the podiums and panels format, *Playing with Time* offers a diary of the decade over three days from the personal accounts of 22 writers (among them Katherine Thomson, Tobsha Learner, Alma de Groen, Dorothy Hewett, Jenny Kemp, Tess Lyssiotis, Noelle Janaczewska, Suzanne Spinner). This flow of history will be interrupted from time to time by a variety of commentators connecting individual experience to bigger pictures. Interrupters will include Sarah Miller, reviewer Pamela Payne, publisher Katharine Brisbane, academics Jane Goodall, Peta Tait, Margaret Williams, Julie Holledge, director Ros Horin, performers Nikki Heywood, Deborah Pollard, Andrea Aloise and others). The whole event will be overseen by a benign but firm timekeeper. "We had thought of putting the timekeeper on a trapeze," says Playworks' Director Clare Grant "And I would have liked to bring Playworks patron Dorothy Hewett in on a palanquin but it was too difficult to organise. But the theatre space will definitely be dynamic. We want the whole event to fire the audience's imagination, play with their sense of time and history".

The progress of women's writing for theatre and performance is full of interruptions – it streaks forward, backpeddles and sometimes grinds to a halt. For example, at the moment women lead the way in multi-lingual writing, youth and children's theatre, the collective writing

of community theatre. Women are at the forefront of the new performance writing and physical performance. But such important work is still pushed into the 'margin' while the 'centre' admits only a few women playwrights. A crowded margin and an almost empty centre. A mainstream theatre culture reflecting a very small part of the lives of most Australians.

It has been said that we're past the need for affirmative action. Colleen Chesterman who is supervising a survey of the decade for Playworks says, "We've asked a range of companies to provide information on works by women in their programs and we've asked writers themselves about their experience in getting work to production. It's early yet, but just looking at some of the responses, I'd say we have a way to go yet". The survey will be launched at the *Playing with Time* festival.

Another of the organisers, Noelle Janaczewska says "In asking writers to describe their writing histories we hope to counter the idea that writers' careers follow one 'onwards and upwards' trajectory. By refusing to put writers in panels and ask them to speak about 'youth theatre' or 'eroticism' or 'the politics of funding' we hope to encourage a freer discussion of aesthetic and cultural questions focussing on writing itself and its production for performance."

"The audience engages with a spectrum of experiences, an expansive idea of performance writing," says Clare Grant. "What links the writers is words. For this event we've omitted



Women's Circus 1993

Viv Méhes

the important work of physical companies though we acknowledge theirs as a performative 'writing' too".

This festival reflects the history of Playworks founded in 1985 by Ros Horin and a group of female directors and performers who wanted more plays by women to perform and direct. In its first ten years Playworks has contributed to the success of many individual works for theatre as well as providing an emotional and intellectual forum for the exchange of ideas and forms. In 1995 it's a small and important national organisation which is influential in setting goals and challenges for the broader theatre and performance community to do

with the way as Australians we theatrically express our imagination.

The venue for the festival will be the Studio at the Wharf Theatre, home of the Sydney Theatre Company. The event will run for three days, opening on Friday with a presentation by visiting UK writer Deborah Levy who, at Playworks invitation, will be working with 10 Australian artists on a production of her erotic interrogation *The B File*. On Saturday night Sally Richardson will direct a presentation of Playworks' works in progress which will later be broadcast on ABC radio.

Playing With Time October 13-15, 1995.

Book reviews

Thomas Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*, Routledge 1995

Thomas Richards' book on Grotowski is an American romance, a fairytale of sorts. In 1984, 22 year-old Richards, a final year undergraduate at Yale, became entranced by classes given by Ryszard Cieslak, sought out Grotowski, went through a period of rejection and ridicule at the feet of the master, fled in horror, and then eventually made it back to become one of Grotowski's assistants and, in the words of the mentor, "my essential collaborator".

The book, Richard's personal coverage of his early years with Grotowski, is at once the story of a young man's search for truth and an experiential account of the most recent phase of Grotowski's work. As such it is both irritating and fascinating. On the one hand, the uncritically naive tone throughout is redolent of some of the worst examples of New Age guru worship. On the other, the determined search and the struggle of the raw, young ivy leaguer to come to terms with *Art as Vehicle* (as Peter Brook has called the work) brings to life many of Grotowski's processes in a way that is more accessible than the somewhat solemn pontifications of Grotowski himself (one of his essays concludes this volume).

The connection between *Art as Vehicle* and the ideas explored by Stanislavski, in his final years, on the methods of *Physical Actions* are especially illuminating. The rejection of the psycho-emotional technique, so associated with Stanislavski through its development in the academies of America, is familiar but clearly presented here because it is a process of direct and personal adjustment that Richards recounts.

The strength of the book lies in its earlier chapters when the writer's search for a method is the informing action of the journal. This is apt because it becomes clear that Grotowski's method of replacing represented actions with "really do(ing) them" and his way of rejuvenating action in the stranglehold of repeated performance is to make all action the search for the right action. The search is always new. This perforce leads to greater and greater detail in the work, a spiralling into the infinitesimal and infinite links between mind and body.

Richard Murphet

Acting (Re)Considered: Theories and Practices, edited by Phillip B. Zarilli, London: Routledge, 1995.

Nearly two-thirds of this impressive addition to the *World of Performance* series (edited by Richard Schechner), comprises essays exploring acting techniques from a cross-cultural perspective. This emphasis sends the reader a very clear message: the

dissemination of character/actor unity revolves to a greater extent around non-western, culturally integrated styles of acting and ritual performance, rather than the well-trodden passage from 60s experimentalism to deconstruction which characterises only one history of the theatrical avant-garde.

Phillip B. Zarilli, director of the Asian/Experimental Theatre Program in Wisconsin, has brought together both historical and contemporary commentaries and source material, establishing critical and stylistic connections between theory and practice, acting and non-acting (a disputable position for the ever-signifying body), the emotional man (Willem Dafoe) and the constantly-rehearsing woman (Rachel Rosenthal). Contributors include Tadashi Suzuki, Philip Auslander, Michael Kirby, Deidre Sklar, Eelke Lampe and Zarilli himself. CH

The History of Water/Huyen Thoi Mot Giong Nuoc
Noelle Janaczewska
Currency Press

The Gap
Anna Broinowski
Currency Press

Hot on the heels of their English-Vietnamese edition of Bruce Keller's *Puppy Love*, come two works from Currency Press which engage directly with cross-cultural relations between Australia and Asia. Janaczewska's *The History of Water* is a meeting between an Australian photographer and a Vietnamese translator. Their exchange is a meditation on meaning and language. It's calculatedly anti-theatrical (but quite performative) in its refusal of plot and precise character delineation, and pleasurable in its brisk shifts between reflection and conversation. The production at the Gate Theatre won best production award for the London New Play Festival and a new production opens shortly for the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography and the New Theatre of Ottawa. The original production directed for the Sydney Theatre Company by the writer was overly choreographed and didn't do full justice to what is essentially a spare but very evocative script. Broinowski's *The Gap* addresses similar issues in a more conventional but nonetheless playfully theatrical manner. Like *The History of Water*, *The Gap* makes us really listen to another language. This time it's Japanese. The gap again is between language, meaning and cultures, both amusing and potentially tragic (and melodramatic), but this time it's also Sydney's suicide site, the Gap. The play has been successfully played in Sydney, Canberra and Tokyo. Both plays feature female protagonists, both are by writers whose skills go beyond writing (Broinowski played the tour guide Alex, a role she'd played in life, in all three productions of *The Gap*), both are a significant addition to the publication of new kinds of writing in Australian theatre. KG

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No gloss, high sheen

Pamela Payne puts the shine on PACT Youth Theatre

How many theatre companies in Australia have the luxury of developing a performance work for as many characters/participants as the scenario or themes demand? And how many can practise the generosity of offering their work to the public at a modest, break-even ticket price?

Perhaps there are companies in the MOB (Major Organisations board of the Australia Council) for whom such freedom to pursue artistry is part of the territory. But apart from those anointed few, the only companies that might slip happily under the above banner profile are youth theatre companies.

They exist in every state and territory of Australia, in major cities and in country towns. They're powerful networkers, on local and national fronts. They're part of an Australian arts movement that is rightly deemed to be among the most interesting and vital in the world.

One of the longest established and most vigorous youth theatre companies is PACT in Erskineville, Sydney's inner-west. To walk through the doors of PACT's Sydney Street Theatre Space is to be immediately aware that this is a shoe-string organisation with no sympathy for fuss and gloss, shiny advertising or smart office space; that this is an organisation that involves a spectrum of age groups, all hard at their respective work; that commitment, professionalism and camaraderie are palpable.

While PACT offers after-school and Saturday morning workshops for six to 12 year olds, participation is essentially project based, a tradition of which this co-operative organisation is proud, and is intent on upholding. Through local schools,

free local press, community radio and word of mouth, PACT lets the next project be known. Everyone who wants to take part contacts the company. There are no auditions. "A way will be found to involve



Antonino Lo Giudice, Maria De Marco, Anna Campbell, Maryanne Puntoriero, Ana Maria Dumitrescu, Kira Carden and Jade Carden in *Looking for Alibrandi*
Michael Bates

everybody who wants to participate – somehow at some level", says PACT's artistic director Anna Messariti. "We have always believed that specific learning and skills-building is implicit in the project, rather than something that happens out of context, in preparation for a project that might happen further down the track."

PACT demands a lot from participants in its major projects. They each sign an

agreement in which they undertake to attend, regularly and punctually, "all workshops and rehearsals" for the project, with "an attitude appropriate for cooperative group work". They agree to take part in all publicity initiatives – including poster-running and leaflet-dropping; to show "respect and consideration for all PACT staff, property, board members and other participants"; and to contribute \$50 towards project costs

around three rehearsal/workshop sessions a week – more, of course, in production weeks. For some, however, involvement was even more extensive. The final two months rehearsal schedule, for example, for first year university student Maryanne Puntoriero in the central role of Josie, was 65 hours every week.

Like so many cooperative arts organisations, PACT is a lean affair. With funding of \$31,000 through the Youth Arts Program of the Australia Council, \$33,000 from the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts, and a rental subsidy from South Sydney Council, there are no banquets for the boys and girls at PACT's Sydney Street Theatre Space. Indeed, this entire hectic organisation is mobilised by two three-quarter time employees, Messariti as artistic director and Warren Crabb as operations manager. They're supported by a team of workshop tutors, paid casual hourly rates, and a veritable battery of volunteers.

PACT is determined to offer its youth (officially six to 25 years old) as varied a choice of projects as is feasible. In this latter part of 1995, for example, Messariti is directing a second, tighter version of *Waiting for Alibrandi* which closed its first season with a staggering list of audience members waiting for a seat. Then there's the *Oedipus Project* with ex-Sydney Front member Chris Ryan; a collaborative writing performance *The Train Almost Stops at Erskineville – Inner City Stories*; *Tjukurrpa Dreamtime Workshops* with Noel Tovey and Victoria Kennedy; and a project with Koori students at Cleveland Street High School.

PACT has already more than three decades of experience and achievement under its tough working belt. And enough momentum to keep it moving, growing and charging into the future.

Pamela Payne is a theatre critic and regular commentator on youth arts.

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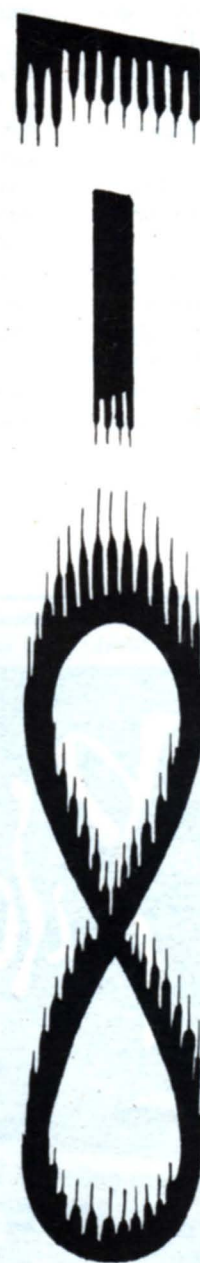
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Parish art house

Pianist and administrator Ben Abdullah talks with Keith Gallasch about Sydney's St Laurence Arts Centre

Many artists these days, out of sheer economic necessity, but also because of talents in other areas, have a second career often running parallel to their first, or they switch from one to the other as the need arises. Ben Abdullah has been full-time administrator at Sydney's St Laurence Arts Centre since the beginning of this year after a part-time association with the organisation for over a year. Before that he was working pretty much full time as a freelance pianist and teacher. Except for occasional performance work, Ben has left the world of the piano for a while. His solo live playing of Chopin for One Extra Dance Company's *Cannibal Race* in 1994 was widely admired.

KG Was it the need for work that made you take up this job?

BA No. I used to stabilise my income by teaching piano. I really love St Laurence. It's a wonderful place to work. It's unique and much needed. When you're a performer and a teacher you get to see a very small proportion of the arts activity in your community, whereas in the administrative arena you have an input into so many more things.

KG What are the aims of the centre other than being the home of several arts organisations?

BA There are three strands. The first is that of a professional rehearsal space and performance space. This is mostly on a casual basis – a lot of short term activity. We don't yet stage full scale public productions but book space out for private concerts, for example. We are looking to extend our licence early next year and doing some further acoustic work in our main hall.

Then there's the educational aspect. It's the home of the Sydney Youth Orchestra. We have the Actors College of Theatre and Television which is accredited and has a big student intake. It's become our largest client. We also have the City of Sydney Children's Choir who have a subscription season and high standing. Then there are groups and private tutors who book rooms here.

One Extra Dance Company are resident here and have a large space separate from the rest of the building. It was originally conceived of as an apartment. It has kitchen, bathrooms, meeting and office areas and access to the main hall for rehearsal.

KG Is your role administrative or is there an artistic directorial strand?

BA It's primarily administrative. I'm responsible to the board of the Parish of Christ Church St Laurence, which is Anglican. This building was originally a school, it was derelict in the Depression, I think, became the home of the British Ballet organisation and later of squatters ... and it burned down. With the help of the state government and the then arts minister Peter Collins it was restored. The church is proudly involved in the centre as part of its parish and as a means of generating income for its activities. They give me a great deal of independence.

The third thread of our activities is as a community centre. The Sydney Male Choir, for example, meet and rehearse here. We support a lot of fledgling arts organisations, trying to work within their budgets. If we don't lose money we would rather put people in our spaces than have them lie fallow.

Parnassus' Den, a group of actors, came to us with the idea of providing playwrights in Sydney and across the country with a pool of actors, directors and space to try out new scripts at a low cost. We've offered them free time and space to set up a prototype in exchange for an appropriate return when they're financially established. This offers us a continued association with a developing group. We've had a good relationship too with the performing group from the Australian Museum.

KG The centre has a growing profile.

BA Through One Extra, the Actors College, the Youth Orchestra and especially through the large number of theatre rehearsals and classes. Later this year Theatre Complicité will be here after their Melbourne Festival appearance for five weeks or so in the main hall.

KG There's some renovation going on?

BA A bridge is being built between the church and the centre for the choir – they have their own room in this building. It's hard to sing if you're wet and cold, so the bridge will solve that. They're a fine choir who travel internationally. I think this church sees itself in the tradition of churches of the past as patrons of the arts. They were a driving force in setting up this centre which, in turn, has become an integral part of the parish.



The Hereford Sisters

Growth spurt

Louise Gough measures the ambitions of La Boite Youth Arts

Susan Richer has worked as artistic director for La Boite Youth Arts over the past three years. In that time the company has attracted greater funding, a broader clientele, expanded its areas of operation and evolved a firm philosophy with an emphasis on and commitment to young women. "It's challenging, it's fun. I think the most exciting concepts happen in youth arts. You develop processes and product that can't be found elsewhere. There is an incredible amount of satisfaction, the challenge never runs out. Youth cultures are constantly shifting, youth artforms undergo rapid change and as a facilitator you don't work in one art form. I'm continually learning new arts-related skills and skills of facilitation. I enjoy young people's ideas, their wealth of knowledge, their diversity of experience, chatter and humour."

The commitment to young women comes from the imbalance Richer saw between those who are controlling the arts and those who consume, advocate and participate. "I see this organisation more as a support organisation for young people as opposed to an organisation which 'provides'." La Boite Youth Arts recognises that young people are artists in their own right and where possible they are encouraged to take control of their art form and the organisation of the company. Opportunities are given to members of the youth theatre to provide feedback. The company has also established a young people's steering committee to inform its artistic direction.

Over three-quarters of the clientele are young women and the participants are catered for in five main areas of activity. The in-house workshop program serves around 170 young people per term and although the majority are from inner city areas, there is a growing number of participants from regional locations. The participants represent a range of cultural, social and economic backgrounds.

Project work is the second area of activity and "is fundamentally focused on young women. At the moment we're in a project involving young mothers (predominantly Murri) and *The Romance Project* involves young women with disabilities."

The Hereford Sisters is the third area of operation. The Herefords is an ongoing young women's physical theatre troupe "which aims to empower young women through focusing on physically based work." The Herefords have been in existence since 1993 and have been involved in three major projects to date, *We Have Received Orders Not To Move*, a physical piece based on the myth of Vasilisa the Wise, *After Dark*, a collaborative

project between groups of young women (Murri and non-Murri) combining the artforms of dance, circus, video and silk printing and *The Romance Project*, which looks at young women's perception of romance. This is by far the largest of the three projects involving The Herefords and the Wild Women – a group of women with mild intellectual disabilities. *Romance* will combine dance, circus, big screen video, music in collaboration with Brisbane band The Dream Poppies, and design elements from the participants.

The last major area of activity is being undertaken in collaboration with Youth Arts Queensland (Queensland's networking, advocacy and sector development organisation). *Two High* is a festival of young women and the arts. *Two High* is now in its second year and has more than tripled its funding. "It's primarily a festival to celebrate the achievements and development of young women in and through the arts."

The company is currently in a period of growth, with Susan as artistic director, Wendy Denham as workshop coordinator and seven part-time workshop leaders and outreach workers. The company also employs arts workers on a project-to-project basis including dramaturgs, choreographers, musicians, video artists, physical theatre practitioners and designers. "All staff are under 30; there is an explosion of interest in youth arts in Queensland and a lot of emerging arts workers are specialising in this field. I like to employ younger workers as their ideas are fresh, the participants respond well to them, and it's part of the philosophy of the company to develop young workers."

The future bodes well for La Boite Youth Arts and there are many plans to expand the company's operation and develop a wide range of commitments. The company will incorporate legally as a separate organisation from La Boite Theatre. 1996 will see the company undertake a collaborative project between the Hereford Sisters and a young women's physical theatre troupe in Mareeba, the development of a show by and for 5-10 year olds for the *Out of the Box – Early Childhood Festival*, a young men's cultural development project focusing on skate culture and video, and the development of two emerging local writers, Valerie Foley and Stephen Davis.

La Boite Youth Arts can be reached on (07) 369 1622 or at 57 Hale Street, Brisbane QLD 4000. Louise Gough is a Brisbane dramaturg.

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Shake it or break it

Tony Osborne looks at Western Australian independent dance works and issues

Dancers in Perth who work outside the company systems often feel isolated from one another as well as from the dance bureaucracies, which do little to reduce the atmosphere of heap-scrabbling competition. *Independent New Choreographers* (INC), a bi-annual project funded by the WA Department for the Arts, is attempting to redress the balance. INC's administrator, Gillian Edmeades, convenes programs by inviting available dancers to participate in a six week workshop process which culminates in the showing of works-in-progress to a paying audience. The latest offering from INC was shown in the performance space at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA) in July.

In their respective dances for INC, choreographers Bill Handley and Sasha Myler both chose to construct a movement 'score' which drew the performers' attention to particular body parts. This created in Handley's *Miss Understanding* a meditative pace which brought new meaning to dancerly athleticism. Sasha Myler's duet, *An Exploration, A Relationship* employed contact improvisation and spoken text. It subtly evoked for me the questions about cruelty, obsession, intimacy and passion which surround heterosexual liaisons.

These two explorations of body intelligence were complemented by the louder energy of Billie Athena Cook's *Turn Me On* and her superbly executed acrobatic duet *Shake It, Break It* with Setefano Tele and Angela McDonald-Booth. McDonald-Booth choreographed a synchronised 'techno' trio *This Is Contagious* and the material in Tele's self-devised solo *Last pre-*

empted the trio *Play It By Ear* which he directed as the closing dance of the evening. This piece brought together the disparate energies of the group to finish with a humorously thoughtful impro-based experiment which ruminated on the implications for the individual of sensory/mobility deprivation.

The program juxtaposed young bodies flying in unison to a techno accompaniment against body-practice investigations of motion, creating a dialogue over the evening which was both strange and enriching.

INC provides an on-going forum for dancers to try out raw ideas on an audience even though much of the material is only at the beginning of its evolutionary path. The fact that dancers in such a vulnerable forum perhaps lose sight of this was manifested in the INC project by some of the rather self-conscious program notes.

Retaining confidence in one's skills is, for any independent artist, part of the on-going challenge of participating in and producing art works. Dancers who generate their own creative work invariably supplement it with teaching or unrelated employment. Dancers Bill Handley and Sasha Myler, for instance, told me that they balance their performance passions with a teaching career in dance. They feel fortunate that their 'day jobs' are not completely disconnected from the business of creating art and find that the two activities inform each other very well.

In a dance community which rarely seems to publicly celebrate difference, projects like INC are important to the development of dance in WA because they bring together its disparate strands.

Mainstream dance discourses dictate that dancers and dance-makers subscribe to a putative universal standard of physicality which promotes an image of the dancer as young and supremely athletic.

Consequently a dance mythology has evolved which discounts anything other than the extremely aerobic forms of motion. A mythology like this not only reduces the status of older practicing dancers and their valuable contribution to the dance community (the wider arts community does not seem to have this problem) but also devalues work which is

To invoke the rhetoric of the economic rationalists, "no business survives without creating new interest in its activities", and if performance dance is to continue, then new audiences must be constantly generated. One way is to break down long-held stigmas, which for many are attached to traditional venues, by staging dance outside of the theatre.

PICA, in part, performs this function and bridges gaps for independent dancers with development opportunities for work such as *Putting On An Act* and its (inaugural) dance festival in November.



Independent New Choreographers

motivated by a different intelligence from that of the conventional forms.

Many dancers believe that if the dwindling support for those working in the margins continues to spiral downwards, then less innovation will occur. And if the unmarked vitality which the independents bring to the practice is absent, then the mainstream dance body will also atrophy.

The eternal frustration for independent performers, however, is that the value to, and influence on, the mainstream that their work has is rarely acknowledged. Many independent dancers therefore must form their peer support group amongst the practitioners of other art disciplines. Without these liaisons, life for many independent dance artists would be very lonely.

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Fright

Heidrun Löhr

More frightening than Nigel Kellaway's ambitious *Fright* for Sidetrack at the Enmore Theatre, Sydney was the press (and some but not all of the public) response ranging from outraged to dismissive. In turn some of the performance community were outraged by the extremity of the critical response, especially since a couple of recent mainstage theatre productions had been treated more than generously by the press. Even so, while *Fright* was impressive in part, Kellaway is never easy on his audiences and if Sidetrack were expecting a popular show (as indicated by their very creative advertising campaign with high profile sponsors, generous giveaways and pre-tastes at western suburbs clubs and *Rocky Horror* screenings) then what did they think they'd get? What's important is that it's rare to see a performance work on this scale in Sydney by a local company. Tasmanian IHOS Opera's much praised *To Traverse Water* was certainly played on a large scale in Sydney and shared some of *Fright*'s problems – an attention to scale at the expense of the audience being able to connect with the performers. I hope that Sidetrack doesn't feel so punished for their ambitions that they back away from a radical re-working of *Fright* or from tackling another big project.

VB

A perilous peerless future

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to organisations. You're told to refer to your local organisation, not all of whom run artists' grant lines. The British right-wing arts backlash has resulted in pursuit by artists of European money or commercial support, but I can't imagine that ever happening here: the corporate base is not big enough and experimental art practice here is still not as sexy as it is in the UK. Damien Hirst seems to have made people alert to the benefits of this. I can't imagine Stelarc having the same effect on the Smorgons."

When I wonder why the arts community hasn't come out to loudly protest the changes at the Australia Council, Angharad Wynne-Jones puts the position of many artists in perspective: "Before I was on the Committee, it felt important that it was made up of people who knew the work and that artists had access to them. The workings of the Committee from the outside seemed mysterious. People feel it's a lucky dip and know that there are limited funds. Becoming a member of the Hybrid Committee changed my perception of how that process worked – I experienced the integrity of the way it was carried out by a group of professionals from different areas well integrated into the performance and visual arts culture. They had daily dealing with artists, knew what the issues were and what was happening, and received fantastic applications and got a national perspective. Personally, this perspective is what I will really miss when this Committee is finished. It's as democratic as is possible for humans to be. It's reliant on personal integrity and I saw many examples of that. But, in the end, whether it's democratic or not, when such a small percentage of artists are funded, what type of connection can an artist feel to the Australia Council?"

"In terms of the changes to the Council, if transparency was one of the issues, and it was touted to be, it should have been faced. The changes are dealing with the part of the process which is least at fault. The major issue really is lack of money available for the arts and that's not going to change with the new system. However, I suppose that the Australia Council is reviewing its procedures so it can get more money. It does have triennial funding now, so it can claim to be meeting its aims and the

government's. But if the review had been made clear as a restructuring of the Australia Council, then we'd have been in a better position. Once you're on that back foot it's hard to get off it.

"It would be good if we could set up a working committee with the staff of the Australia Council to look at how the new assessment system could operate.

"But we also need to think, as Jane Goodall has argued, in terms of sowing confusion, not just reacting to the changes. The Hybrid Committee is very vulnerable, but very moveable, it's hard to nail down. It could be a great time for Hybrid to step outside the Performing Arts Fund and get the different Funds talking to each other."

Of course, I observe, that's if the already provisional Hybrid is set up annually as a one-off committee of the PAF on which, presumably, there'll be a Hybrid person, a Music person, a Dance and a Drama person or two. What we should be arguing for, is that the Funds do set up committees and that these committees have some continuity, say for at least a year or two plus turnover of members.

Anna Messariti reports, "Most people I've spoken to feel threatened by the way the notion of peer has been changed and that the MOB economic model will discriminate against artists who don't have those kinds of application skills. It's like turning back the clock." Graeme Watson worries too about the potential pervasiveness of the MOB economic rationalist model as it trickles down through to the Funds: "The new definition of peer has been very eloquently put, that is, these non-artist peers understand Council's political agenda – the business side. The new definition of peer fits the manufacturing of culture, artists having to prove themselves economically rather than, I hate to use the term, spiritually. The spirit of art is becoming less and less significant. If this is the MOB set-up, if the MOB model is operative with the feeding down of its criteria, if staff will be involved in what you could call the 'culling' and the selecting of assessors, then the criteria for assessment will be the MOB's."

A prevalent anxiety is about power being located in a few hands, especially with Hilary McPhee being now an employee Chair of the Australia Council and being positioned on the most influential arts

committees in the country including the Cultural Foundation managed by Morton Craddock (reputedly the force behind *Creative Nation*) and the Australian Multi-Media Enterprise. Roland Manderson, director of Canberra Youth Theatre, feels "it's all controlled by a small bunch of boys and girls at the top, all buddies. Artists are seen as wingers, so it won't matter what we say. We're heading back to the days of patronage, except it's going to be patronage for the top professionals. There'll be some good marketing and some things will do very well. It's ironic that the arts have finally made it onto the political agenda but the upshot is that it means it gets into the hands of a small number of people who do what they like." Richard Grayson is unnerved "that any sort of democratic process is being ruled out, which seems to reinforce the idea of a cabal rather than negate it, which has been the rhetoric".

Also of concern is the way the states seem to be falling into line behind *Creative Nation*, though Sarah Miller points out, "The states in a lot of instances arguably led the change. They've always had a commercial orientation, their focus has always been on the flagships. The Australia Council was the organisation that had the moral right to insist on other issues being considered, but if they move away from that there is no-one to actively defend and support the artists."

Richard Grayson sums up the new mysteries: "Until we know more you can only generate very strange pictures of two assessors. In the VA/CB does it mean a craft person and a visual arts person – a heavy metal welder looking at a body piercing performance application? It narrows down any sense of expertise. The old system was full of faults, but necessary faults generated through an attempt to be even-handed. The old process was in part mysterious but at least it was a repeated mysteriousness. If you were unhappy you could argue for change, but that seems to have gone."

If you think that this survey of opinion is a narrow response to the issues, you should be reminded that the changes have not satisfied the Australia Council's detractors who are also acutely aware of the lack of sufficient funds, that the press response has been minimal, that many artists don't want to talk about it – they're waiting to see what happens or they fear recrimination because of the unforgiving nature of current Labor politics from the top down. I've been called reactionary on several occasions now for 'resisting change', 'clinging to the status quo', for worrying about peer assessment instead of looking at the 'bigger philosophical picture'. For me, assessment is the big issue and if the assessments reveal that more money is needed for artists then that's the bigger picture. Specific criticisms of specific Boards, like the VA/CB ones voiced in this article about the VA/CB's share of funds, also need to be addressed in this context.

Even so, the response to our special editorials in *RealTime 7* (June-July) has been 99 per cent positive. The biggest question has been, What do we do? We know that a committee of Council is working out new assessment procedures. As for the Boards, who knows? They're soon to be reconstituted as Funds presumably with new members replacing current Board and Committee members. Now is the time to approach Council to meet with artists across the country to confirm the priority status of original Australian work; to query the peer assessment definition and operation; to argue the need for continuity in assessment; to point out the implicit lack of transparency in the new procedures and the reinforcement rather than the reduction of the impression of a cabal-driven Council. Artists should have access during this process of change to a body that is, in effect, their employer, in order to discuss their creative working conditions as they will be affected by any decisions Council makes.

Big and little

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animation in *Animadeli*, the outstanding puppet films of Britain's Barry J Purves. On the documentary front the Festival is presenting *The Pacific War on Celluloid*, a major retrospective including Dwyer Daves' *Destination Tokyo*, John Ford's *They Were Expendable*, Harry Watt's Australian classic *The Overlanders*, David Lean's *The Bridge on the River Kwai* and Nagisa Oshima's *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*. There'll be seminars on Film Propaganda and on the work of cameraman Damien Parer. Festival films will screen at the magnificent Hoyts Regent Showcase Cinema. Very reasonable prices including \$5 for day sessions and \$10 top price for evening sessions. Info: BIFF Hotline 07-2200444.

Shorts

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Peripheral Visions: A Forum for the New Screen Culture is seeking entrants for its 1995 screening in the *Global Cafe* to be held in conjunction with the 17th Annual Rozelle-Balmain Festival, Ellington Park, Balmain. Young filmmakers and animators are invited to submit work - experimental, haphazard, bizarre, 16mm or dodgy handcam all welcome. Entries for preview should be submitted on VHS or SuperVHS. Include a pre-paid SAE if you want it back. Send entries by September 14 with details to Peripheral Visions PO Box 283 Rozelle NSW 2039. Info: Luke Alexander 02-555 8988.



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Radio reviews & previews

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recordings not cut and polished but left feeling very live, the voices serene and settled, save for anxiety about the number of meetings: "Christiania works best when there are not a lot of meetings ... when one group gets too big that's when there are problems, that's when there are meetings." The work is pleasantly anecdotal with moments of immediacy – a song, the producer offered a coffee, bursts of street sounds. Like the producer you feel cast as a visitor. There's an accumulative sense of a whole culture inside another, a culture where work is not the central ethos, where a community can gather quickly and effectively.

Out of the Chute
Producer: Matthew Leonard
Radio Eye, Radio National
Saturday September 2, 3.30pm
Out of the Chute is a compact, engaging slice of social and sporting history, the voices alone worth the listening as we meet riders, their families, callers and broadcasters speaking a sometime less than familiar Australian English of bygone years. The sense of history, the question of our relationship with animals, the threat and actuality of rodeo deaths are all strongly felt, accentuated by the adroit, absorbing layering of sounds and the spontaneity of the speakers.

Tracks and Traces
Producer Mike Ladd
The Listening Room, ABCFM
Monday September 4 9pm 40'00"
Mike Ladd strapped a tape recorder to himself, a binaural microphone and traced a straight line through his own suburb in Adelaide, over fences, upsetting neighbours, rousing dogs, wandering across a giggling school yard and along a freeway. The walk is accompanied by an ambulatory bass-driven jazz occasionally interrupted or musically suspended by events along the way. Another journey is made from Adelaide southern suburbs down to Cape Jervis tracing an Aboriginal dreaming track with sites visited and described and dreamtime stories elaborated on the way. The track provides water sources and caravan sites for city dwellers unconsciously adopting dream sites – "caravan dreamings" says Lewis O'Brien who guides Ladd on this path. Amongst seaweed Ladd finds a strip of magnetic tape which he plays revealing the voice of a small boy saying "I love this one". Out of a mix of Eno-ish sublimity and the sharp rhythmic slapping of feet skipping through the shallows, we hear the boy's distant voice slowly emerge. The sound throughout is richly ambient, the tone semi-documentary, the work punctuated by definitions of and elaborations on the word "track" and Ladd's pithy personal reports of his journeys.

Things Change: Things Remain the Same
Produced by Rik Rue
The Listening Room, ABCFM
Monday September 4 20'30"
Not recommended for playing on the car radio. It pulses, it throbs, it shapes itself suspensefully with secondary pulses moving quickly in out of nowhere. The impression is of traversing broad landscapes. A very different interpretation of landscape. No twittering birdies. It's enjoyably agoraphobic. The beats get close to sounding like accelerating hearts, the layers of sound multiply, metallic & rhythmic. *Things change* ... is very musical. According to the program note it's "an audio work created from sampled and processed sounds from outback road movie of the mind. ... Time passes and everything looks pretty much the same – the road's so straight, the sun so bright, images flicker at the edges. A delirium approaches, a dangerous state. It's an effort to stay awake". Definitely one for *Bladerunner* fans right down to the clanging metals from Rik Rue in his thinking person's Vangelis mode. Warrants commercial release. Instructive listening for the people who make those RTA Driver Fatigue commercials. This driver had gone beyond the reviver. At the end of the program his being has evaporated into a thin transcendent metallic whine.

Five Minutes Past Midnight
Designed by composer Becky Llewellyn
Produced by Jaroslav Kovaricek
The Listening Room, ABCFM
Monday September 11 9pm 52'.00"
Five Minutes ... works best in its simple dynamic of juxtaposing revelations about Maralinga (delivered by men who worked there) pitched against the assuring platitudes of the 50s in the form of what sound like radio broadcasts of the time. It's played out against bush sounds, a melancholy string and punctuating percussive score. There is another element, the work "draws on the Greek myth of Daedalus and Icarus, told in the manner of a dreamtime story." This is handled less than effectively and the cultural motivation is less than convincing. KG,VB

Sport
TOOTH AND CLAW
with Jack Rufus

The world of professional hopscotch is deeply divided this month as players take sides in the great Packer/Murdoch split. Players' representatives are poring over rival contracts, but legal sources say the Industrial Relations Tribunal is likely to favour Murdoch's Foxtel organisation. The Packer camp has retaliated in advance, signing all known marbles players to loyalty agreements. Several star players, however, are disputing the imposition of a salary cap.

This, of course, is merely the beginning. Both sides have sent out their scouts, flanked by the accountants, merchandisers and lawyers. *Tiddleywinks* has already fallen, gobbled up by Packer. *Drop The Hanky* is holding out for the highest offer, but *One Potato Two Potato* may have shown its hand too early. Letters of intent have already been signed, and Murdoch executives are adamant they will hold up in court.

Negotiations with *Ring A Ring A Rosy* have stalled, pending legal advice. A world-wide *Skiping* tournament is threatened by a breakaway Super League. Murdoch has announced his vision for *Chasey*, but a lucrative *Red Rover* franchise has been trumpeted by Packer. Both sides, however, are considering their options for *Doctors and Nurses*.

TEE OFF
with Vivienne Inch

Teeing off this week with Muffin Spencer-Devlin I was paged by the State Selectors to score at the State Opens for this year's Shakespeare Competitions. I jumped at it, of course. I am a stickler for diction and pleased to be able to give an Inchalong to an under-reported sporting activity. How widely known, for example, was the recent win at the Metropolitan-East regional finals of the Globe Centre Shakespeare Festival, by two Year 11 Cranbrook lads who took out the duologue section for their delivery of a scene from Julius Caesar defeating 15 other competitors? These boys are now heading for the State finals. Teachers report overwhelming demand for drama in the classroom since the introduction of the 'Competitive Shakespeare. State netball and hockey selectors report massive drop offs as girls set their sights on outings such as the Desdemona Open and the Ophelia Handicap. In the latter category, players will be battling to better last year's flamboyant display by Rosemary Wu, a young prefect from Wilberforce who hurled the bouquet a record 6.7 with a showy "Here's Rosemary for you!" before executing a perfect triple-turn with pike.

A troubling aspect of this sport is the incursion of the corporate sector.

Unconfirmed rumours of Bell Shakespeare's young King Lear in hessian and Nike Airs, and Viola sporting a prominent Libra Whispers logo are just scary enough to be true.

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Shorts

Future Tense is a project of the **Sidetrack Performance Group** who will be joined by electronic artists and guest performers to create a set of four public events to be staged in four of the largest of NSW's regional shopping malls. Combining video, computer applications, sculptural installation and performance **Future Tense** will explore new technologies and their potential relationship with the public, especially the working and private lives of women. Add it to your shopping list and head for the centre courts at **Penrith Plaza** 17 August, **Newcastle Charlestown Square** August 19, **Bankstown Square** on August 24 and **Wollongong Crown Central** on 26 August. **Future Tense** combines a sense of shopping centre showtime with layered and multi lingual texts from women's daily lives and their interaction with technology. Video footage includes real-life as well as in-store real time interviews integrated on screen with the computer applications. The entire day becomes a performance in which installation work extends the formal performances, the private narrative of the Homebase into the public sphere of the mall workplace. From an idea by writer **Catherine Fargher**, conceptually realised by multi-media performance artist **Peggy Wallach** with support of **Art in Working Life** funding and sponsorship from **Lend Lease**. Info: 02-560 1255. Fax: 02-560 9167.



Elliott Dalglish
Strawberry Hills Forever. SIMA's August program offers another outstanding lineup of performances 8.30 to 11.30 Tuesdays and Wednesdays at **Strawberry Hills Hotel**, Surry Hills, Sydney including on August 8 **Artisan's Workshop** led by saxophonist **Elliott Dalglish** with **Jon Dimond** on bass, **Adrian Sherriff** on trombone, **Roger Dean** on keyboards, **Ken Edie** on drums. **Artisan's Workshop** performances are based on a repertoire of original compositions with the accent on contemporary composition and improvisation. Later in the month **Micronesia New Music Forum** – some of Australia's leading instrumentalists drawing on Asian/Pacific basin, Afro-American and western art music traditions; Later **Recipe for Three** featuring the eccentric compositional talent of **Tim Hopkins** and **Australian Creole** ("ethereal melodies over rhythms rooted in the earth ... bursts of Brazil meets India, with a look in from sundry other nations – works brilliantly" (John Shand reviewing **Australian Creole's Travelling On** on the Tall Poppies label) Info: SIMA 02-938 2180.

At 200 Gertrude Street – **Mutlu Cerzek**, **Tony Clark**, **Kerrie Poliness**, **Jacinta Schreuder**, **Kathy Temin**, **Constanze Zikos** are working independently and collaboratively directly on to the walls of the gallery, drawing by instruction, by commission and as performative practice. **Wall Drawings** involves scenography, text and histories and is curated by Max Delany for the **White Cube Black Hole Project**. August 4-26 Info: 03-9419 3406. Meanwhile **Susan Hewitt** transforms floor coverings into synthetic pleasure garden in **Nature of Things** in Studio 12. Personal space becomes gallery in **sub rosa** in Studio 18 the top floor live-in studio of California-based artist **Sabrina Ott** currently in residence.

At the **Centre for Contemporary Photography**, **Hiram To** (*The Skin I'm In*), **Sadie Chandler** and **Stephen Birch** (*Winterhouse*) and **Pravid Santavanond** (*Linescape*) deal with the inanimate (the missing body in the clothes used to cover and define the living, moving self) the line as language and artform (beginning with cavedrawing) and a pas de deux of simulation (the residue of a pre-modern museum). Believe it when you see it. Till August 19 CCP 205 Johnston Street Fitzroy. Info: 03-9417 1549.

Kathy Temin brings the outdoors in for her **Three Indoor Monuments** in the three gallery spaces at ACCA. The works relate to art history, Jewish history

and notions of ritual and the home. Eschewing durability **Temin** uses synthetic fur, felt and video to demonstrate some other monumental possibilities. Until August 13. Info: 03-9654 6422.

Perth curator **Maggie Baxter** navigates space in *Lo Spazio* featuring paintings by **Julia Ciccarone**, **Judith Dinham** and **Rina Franz** three artists who share a common determination to reconcile cultural, spatial and geographical differences between Australia and Italy. For each artist each place has different histories and memories to be interpreted. The space implies not simply reconciliation but vastly different levels of consciousness, a fusion of time, travel and illusion. **Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts** August 10-September 3. Info: 09-227 6144.

Tangos, sambas, songs about cars, shopping and interactive domestic mayhem are some of the starting points for **PICA** artists in residence **Jon Burt**, **Katie Lavers** and **John Patterson** who are writing words, recording sound, generating movement, creating computer based sound and visuals and developing interactive elements for their performance in September (skadada@pica) Open Studio at PICA Fridays 2-4pm August 2-25. Info: 09-227 6144.

Difficult to see the walls at all at the opening of the new **Byron Mapp Gallery** in Sydney where **Bart Cummings**, **Kamahl** and a sea of serge mingled with the black and white photographic community all with fingers crossed for the success of this ambitious enterprise to combine the innovative with the commercial. **Sandra Byron** and **Penny Mapp** (both formerly of the Art Gallery of NSW) have created two classy gallery spaces in the former plasterwork showroom – one for exhibitions of photographers represented by the gallery – including **Jeff Carter**, **Elliot Erwit**, **Rose Farrell** & **George Parkin**, **Gerrit Fokkema**, **Constantine Manos**, **Robert Mc Farlane**, **Max Pam**, **Wolfgang Sievers**, **Henry Talbot**, **Ingeborg Tyssen** & **John Williams** – leaving the second larger space for a changing exhibition (turnaround every 6-8 weeks) of Australian and international contemporary works. Info: 02-331 2926.

Going up. **La Mama & Raft Network** is staging *The Harvest* by **Jason Cross** on the ninth floor of Australia Unity House which provides a spectacular backdrop of the city and Port Phillip Bay. Not that it seems there'll be much time to take in the view in this fast talking, fast moving, physical production with original soundscapes by **Roger Alsop**. August 2-20 Info: 03-9347 6948.

Queensland's **Expressions Dance Company** is ten years old and celebrating with sell-outs in June for their production of *Decadences*, statistics (a precise 29% increase in audience over previous record season) and standing ovations for their four performances in Europe in July for Experience Australia 95. The company is currently on a 5 week residency in the highlands of Papua New Guinea creating a work with the **National Performing Arts Troupe of PNG** for **Brisbane's Warana Festival** September 15-October 5.

"Act 1, To clean: Fiona, a bee specialist working in a museum hires Gianni an Italian sculptor to build a scale model of a worker bee. Gianni, a womaniser, fascinated by Fiona's obsession with cleanliness covers himself in spaghetti as a means of seduction. Fiona can't resist cleaning him." Theatre once again holding up a mirror to society. See this and the other six acts in **Tobsha Learner's Seven Acts of Love as Witnessed by a Cat** a multi-faceted look at obsession, lust, nostalgia, illusion and fear, an emotional experience of extremes. **Budinski's Theatre of Exile** August 9-September 2 Info: 03-9459 7845.

The Electric Bookshop: a report into current and future markets for interactive multimedia publications on CD-ROM includes background to the emergence of multimedia; market information on the world wide adoption of CD-ROM technology for both computer-based and set-top formats; the roles of industry players; major distribution channels and niche market specialists; Australian government assistance. \$10 from **Australian Film Commission** GPO Box 3984, Sydney NSW 2001.

Congratulations to **Margaret Trail** recipient of the first **Hybrid Arts ABC Radio Fellowship** which will allow her to work with *The Listening Room* team for six months at the ABC's Ultimo Studios in Sydney. Margaret's sound installations take in the social text of sound and express an 'audiology of society'. This \$20,000 Fellowship will involve a number of projects each of which will include a broadcast component and a performance installation.

The Jazz Cellar – featuring the best of creative and innovative jazz from Australia and overseas (Old Windsor Tavern Hotel, Cnr. Park & Castlereagh Streets, Sydney) Every Friday & Saturday 10 pm till dawn. From September 1. \$10 Cover. Info: 018.866 314 or 02-267 6650.

Brave New Works at Adelaide's Space initiated by the Adelaide Festival Centre in 1992 to help local companies reach larger and wider audiences and to assist in bringing works from development stage to stage proper. **Red Shed's Because You are Mine**, previewed at the 1992 New Works season turns up at this year's National Festival of Australian Theatre in Canberra This year's program offers two premieres: one from the bi-lingual **Doppio Teatro** presenting *Eremophila: Pulcinella (Australian Desert Flower)* in which three Pulcinellas find themselves on the outer in an outhouse in the outback; and **Gigibori** an ambitious new work from the **Restless Dance Company** (a troupe of dancers with and without a disability, a project of Carclew Youth Arts Centre). Plus music created by **Colin Offord** (Great Bowling Company) leading an eclectic musical ensemble. August 16-September 2.



Childhood fears of those dangerously sharp black patent leather bags of the 50s re-surfaced for me at a preview of **Kendal Murray's** exhibition of drawings and feminine accessories at the **Beatty Gallery** in Darlinghurst. In an interesting essay (*Beautiful Anatomies*) accompanying the exhibition Alison Gill cites Murray's work as evidence of the existence of both fetish objects and the activities of the female fetishist: "Feminine accessories such as shoes, stockings, handbags, fur, and female body parts such as breasts, genitalia and feet are classic male fetish objects." In *Female Fetishism: A New Look* (Lawrence & Wishart, London 1994) Lorraine Gamman and Merja Makinen compiled a list of possible fetish objects for women found in use in London sexual subcultures including silk, macintoshes, plaster casts, white socks, string and books. After seeing Murray's work, we might add pins and hand-bags to the list. Here handbags simulate body parts – there's a luscious velvet mouth (*Compulsive Beauty*), a skirt of pins hanging on flirtatious hips (*Flirt*) and a malicious vagina dentata (*Temptress*). Murray is testing the boundary between the accessory and the body, the cultural and the natural, for these pieces are part anatomy and part commodity – anatomical accessories". **Beatty Gallery** 6 Kings Lane Darlinghurst August 1-12. Info: 02-360 4244. Fax: 02-360 4322.

New Blood, an exhibition of 62 student works in ceramics, textiles, glass, jewellery and metal from Edith Cowan & Curtin Universities and TAFE – and this deserves an *Ingenious Sponsorship Initiative* prize – 6 Student Works of Excellence Awards courtesy of the Red Cross Transfusion Service. Exhibition runs till August 27 at **Craftwest Gallery** 1st Floor, Perth City Railway Station, Wellington Street Perth. Info: 09-325 2799.

No sooner was a void detected between the art institution, pop culture and the club and rave scene than a need was declared and a group of artists found to fill it. **The Hooter Group** (employing the Ben Hur meets Barbie production tactics of Sydney's Post Arrivals) will cater to your performance needs one Sunday a month at a series of three performance based events at **Ex-Les Girls**, Roslyn Street, Kings Cross. *A Demonstrators Ball* Sunday August 27 and *To The End of Theatre*, September 30. See if you can get through to Rose E. 02-519 6118 or Dave V. 015.415 240 or just front.

Caught in the Act: Film and Performance – a symposium to be held at the School of Theatre and Film Studies, University of NSW. Speakers include **Laleen Jayamanne**, **Ross Gibson**, **Lesley Stern**, **Adrian Martin** et al. Papers on *Slapstick*, *Cassavetes*, *Heavenly Creatures*, *Tarantino*, *Hartley*, *King of Comedy*, *Barbra Streisand*, *All About Eve* and more. 2 days \$25. Students \$10, 1 Day \$15, Students \$5. September 23 and 24. Info: George Kouvaros 02-385.4861; Lesley Stern 02-385 4857 Fax 02-662 2335. email: lesley.stern@UNSW.EDU.AU

Lucy Guerin, choreographer and dancer, appears at **The Performance Space**, Sydney, from August 3-13, in *Practice*, composed and directed by **Ion Pearce**. Lucy has recently returned to Australia after six years in New York where, among other things, she was awarded a New York Foundation for the Arts choreographic fellowship. Info: TPS 02-319 5091.

Body Works a mini festival of new dance works and films. **Dancehouse** is seeking expressions of interest from credentialed dancemakers and movement based artists, for this three week season in October 95. Works of 30-40 minutes in length will be selected to be performed within this festival. Chosen works will

be guaranteed both a choreographic and performance fee. A written description of the conceptual framework and technical requirements plus CV should be forwarded to Dancehouse: Centre for Moving Arts 150 Princes Street North Carlton 3054 no later than August 18. Bodyworks will also provide a framework within **Dance Lumiere** for the viewing of new dance videos. Info: 03-9347 2860.

"...and yet" New work on the subject of recreation, collusion, memory and its erasure by **Russell Dumas** with video installation (*Interventions*) produced by **Dance Exchange & Eat Carpet (SBS)** including work by collaborating artists **Gay Bilson** (whisking dancers with eggs), **Joan Brassil**, **Sandy Edwards**, **Paul Healy**, **Ion Pearce**, **Greg Stonehouse**, **Stephen Jones**, **Leslie Solar**, **Helen Grace**, **Solrun Hoas**, **Mahmoud Yekta**, **Andree Greenwell**, **Susan Norrie**, **Meaghan Morris**. A narrative with no single point of view; a choreography that is the site of speculation between mediums. August 21-September 10 **Artspace**. Sydney Info: Ph/Fx: 02-358 5863.

Arts Law announce a Monday evening legal advice service in Hobart, modelled on similar programs operating in Adelaide, Perth, Sydney and soon in Melbourne. The service is staffed by volunteer lawyers on the Arts Law Centre's Tasmanian panel and offers an opportunity for artists in all forms to consult experienced arts and entertainment lawyers face to face. The Tasmanian service launch August 1 at the **Peacock Theatre Foyer**, **Salamance Arts Centre**. Info: Phone 002-202 740 or fax 002-207 623.

Another alienating clay animation short on SBS sent us screaming to the video stack for something ELSE!! We found it in a tape from the **QUT Dance Dept** where the 54 dance students have been working throughout the year with artists from a variety of dance disciplines (including **Nicholas Rowe** and **Leigh Warren**, **Natalie Weir** and **Diana Laska-Moore**). Beginning with bodies meeting at parties (not so new) *In Touch*, choreographer-director **Wendy Houstoun** and camera operator **Wayne Taylor** create some less familiar movements of both dancers and camera catching close up furtive touches, alcoholic lurches, finally dissolving with the bodies into end of party shuffles, a lone dancer lost in the music. Info: 07-864 3685.

As well as being a good place to eat, Adelaide's East End has always been a good place for art and opening soon in Synagogue Place, East End another initiative of the ever inventive **Linda Marie Walker**, **Paul Hewson**, **Jyanni Steffenson**, **Curtis Weiss** and **Jo Holmes**. Next to the Synagogue, **The Mad Love Centre** will incorporate performance and music spaces, gallery and a centre for new writing.



John Cage at MOMA from *The Real World* by Judith Ahern at **Stills Gallery**, Sydney until August 12. Info: 02-331 7775.

At last! Something to prise the eyeballs from the purple axminster between the frozen beer and Bronte Lamb Tongue advertisements. **BIG NEW SITES** comprising works on slide by 12 Australian contemporary artists on mainstream cinema screens across Australia for 12 months from August 31. In an unusually benevolent gesture Greater Union and Village Cinema purplexes in metropolitan and regional centres will feature artists' works amongst the advertising before the main feature. Conceived by **Lynette Wallworth** as part of **The Performance Space's** Off-Site program, artists include **Johannes Schmidt-Sisternans**, **Simon Hunt**, **Stephen Cummins**, **Pat Hoffee**, **Brenda Croft**, **VNS Matrix**, **Paul Hewson**, **Linda Marie Walker**, **Robert Cole**, **Ted Colless**, **Tracey Moffatt**, **Mathew Jones**, **Paula Dawson** and **Linda Sproul**. Season opens with **Rea**, an artist who uses computer generated imagery to deal with issues of race, gender and sexuality at the Greater Union Albert Cinema in Brisbane on August 31. Info: 02-310 2370.