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Melrose Place

RealTime

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and the

national arts

Oct–Nov 1995

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RealTime continues its focus on the current fascination with multimedia and the uneasy intersection of new media forms with the economic rationalist rhetoric of *Creative Nation*. Bruce Johnson argues that in contemporary music, 'mediation'—the rhetoric of industry, product packaging and the infatuation with new technologies—is marginalising the question of creative content. M. Billsson joins the 'suits' for the recent National Entertainment Industry conference in Sydney. Here, musicians, creators of the 'product', are reduced, in the words of one conference delegate, to 'plentiful, cheap and disposable talent'.

Marius Webb fares little better at the ABC's *Delivering the Digital Future*—Radio 2000 conference, dominated by managers and technocrats, with a token two program makers present. With the techexecs running the show, the grass roots artists and media workers who have historically explored the potential of the new technologies don't get a guernsey. As Keith Gallasch points out in his overview of the ongoing debate around the Australia Council's restructuring, the emphasis on corporatisation of new media and the negligible role afforded artists is a recurring theme in the post *Creative Nation* world. The recent Biennale of Ideas, as reported by Jacqueline Millner and Annemarie Jonson, provides something of a contrast, with local speakers addressing some of the critical issues around the cultural, artistic, socio-political and ethical impacts of new technologies in emerging cybercultures.

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Keith Gallasch's response to the emerging picture of a restructured Australia Council. Letters to the Editors.

4-6 Public and other spaces

Colin Hood goes to the pub for some communal *Melrose Place* viewing and Jacque Lo and Jules Pavlou Kirri go to a Newcastle shopping centre for Sidetrack's shopping show, *Future Tense*. Eye-Phonics brings U.S. artists Kathy Acker and Ellen Zweig to Australia.

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Noel King interviews Gerard Lee, writer and director of *All Men are Liars*, Clare Stewart continues our discussion on the state of cinemathèque. Lesley Stern talks about Film and Theatre Studies UNSW in the first of our university arts courses surveys. Annemarie Jonson takes a critical look at film institution reviews. Paul Andrew responds on the Paul Winkler retrospective in Sydney. Reviews of new films from Atom Egoyan, Wayne Wang & Paul Auster, and Tom Noonan.

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Annemarie Jonson and Jacqueline Millner at the Biennale of Ideas. Natalie King interviews Next Wave's Zane Trow. Marius Webb at the ABC's *Delivering the Digital Future* forum. *Listening Room* and *Radio Eye* previews.

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In an expanded coverage of music we take a close look at industry issues, techno musics, Brisbane sounds and something special happening at Uluru. Plus our new column Jazzwatch previews live performances. Plus CD reviews.

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Mutsuhara Takahashi at the Pinnacles. Barbara Campbell does Patty Hearst in Perth. Jane Sutton on art gallery magazines. Daniel Thomas reports on Simryn Gill and Robert MacPherson at the S.A. Museum. Big New Sites for the arts in Australia's cinemas. Photography from Wollongong and New York.

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by Vane Heart Artery, Art Performance Collective who will be producing a series of site-specific art performances for the Artrage festival in Perth.

PLAYING WITH TIME FESTIVAL

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On the road to where?

Keith Gallasch puts the national forums on the restructuring of the Australia Council in context

It sounds prime ministerial—Hilary McPhee hitting the road to sell the restructuring of the Australia Council in a series of forums with opportunities for artist feedback. Oddly though, we don't know what we're being sold, except change, except revised grants for individual artists, and new marketplace priorities. What about plans for the greater part of Australia Council spending—performing arts and other arts organisations? What are we to debate? An incomplete draft of major changes? What kind of vision? Perhaps if we have faith, but no, it all sounds too familiar.

It's getting a bit late to be offering us a fleeting voice against changes which began with the demolition of peer assessment at the beginning of the year. This was well prior to artists and the public being offered an opinion on the alternative assessment schemes proposed in April and without any subsequent consultation. The faithful, the many supporters of the Australia Council, as opposed to the deeply antagonistic Australia Council Reform Association (ACRA), have waited long enough. Hilary McPhee will need to be in finer fettle than she was on ABC TV's *Lateline* and Radio National's *Late Night Live* last week, safely insulated from direct debate.

On those programs, McPhee's lack of vision, of passion for her task, and her

inability, unlike her Council Chair forebears, to understand and promote Australian culture intellectually and artistically was disappointing. Nowhere is this more evident than in her promotion of youth and the new technologies while deriding the Australia Council's 'fashionably correct' funding policies of the immediate past. These 'new' areas are not culturally or politically neutral, they do not fit all artists. Artists are not fodder for the new technology. Artists under 30 warrant funding but how many want or need mentors? How many young artists are already indirectly subsidised, already working with older artists? Even worse is McPhee's line that the Australia Council is not for artists, it is for Australians. The ability to think that the Australia Council is both for Australian artists and for Australians at once, appears to be beyond her. This phrase has been repeated in an Australia Council press release and is in fact another example of putting artists in their place, a very old Australian place.

This is a dark moment for Australian culture. Perhaps the negativity of McPhee's approach is partly attributable to the very real pressures relentlessly applied by the ACRA. They have made obvious their goals—destroy the Australia Council, devolve massive funds direct to royalty payments for established artists,

set up their own funding committees. They have thus made a nonsense of the motivation for their criticisms. Wildly conflicting proposals from members suggest they need to clean up their act if they want to be part of the debate.

The irony is that ACRA's noise is probably what misled Keating to believe that the Council was on the nose and to employ McPhee to clean it up—but she'll never be radical enough for ACRA. ACRA can only repeat itself now, but the damage lingers. The litany of their accusations drives, for example, *The Bulletin's* hatchet-swinging coverage this week of Keating's relationship with the arts, employing all the usual antagonists plus Sydney-Melbourne rivalry dug up and thrown in for good measure. ACRA's preoccupation with allegations of cronyism can only obscure the real damage McPhee is doing the Australian Council.

What is becoming clear as plans for a restructured Australia Council emerge, ineptly and in bits and pieces (no sign here at all of the great communicator Hugh Mackay to whom McPhee now attributes the plans for change), is a crude economic rationalism applied to the arts and the corporatisation of the Australia Council. The emotional and rhetorical framework is Thatcherite i.e. combative, name calling ('enemies', the 'greedy', the 'vicious', delivered with dismissive arrogance), divisive (babyboomers versus the young, the good artist versus the bad, value free versus correct), but with an ill-fitting pathos (hers a 'thankless' job, 'a prison sentence').

The language and shape of the restructuring are in terms of the marketplace: 'thousands of content producers', a 'mentor' scheme ('quasi apprenticeships'), 'performance agreements', devolution of funds (a move away from the direct subsidy which McPhee believes has created all the greed and envy she has conjured) and the implicit culling of artists, "narrowing the gate", some of it aimed at the babyboomers who allegedly hog the grants—forced early retirement but without retirement benefits? This latter is effected by one-off fellowships, 'once in a life time', a nonsense that would decimate the working life of established writers alone in this country. This is a reduction of grants to prizes, a lucky dip of where and when to apply (Phillip Adams called this, in his only pertinent comment, 'a poisoned chalice'). Add to this the creation of the Major Organisations Board (MOB) driven not by criteria of artistic quality but by economic performance and the model is complete.

To clean up the Australia Council, McPhee has to first dirty up its good works as 'fashionably correct', slander artists across the board and denigrate the rigorously democratic committee processes of peer assessment. Artists, McPhee says, repeating 'Hugh Mackay's marvellous phrase', become dependent on the 'iron lung' of Australia Council funding. For someone who accuses Australian artists of being ungenerous and mean spirited, this a horrific analogy if you think about it at any length.

Does McPhee include Australia's most prominent choreographers, theatre directors, artistic directors and others as those dependent on the iron lung of funding? Or are they absolved by being elevated to the MOB. Many of these have never been 'off' funding in their artistic lives—not as direct recipients of grants but as members of heavily subsidised arts organisations. It was not amusing to read David Williamson's 'satirical' jibe in *The Australian* that given there were already enough artists, "Who would drive the trams?" (*Australian*, Sept 2-3 p27) This from a successful writer whose success has

been predicated almost entirely on support from Australia Council and state subsidised theatre, subsidised film and a subsidised publisher! Wasn't it publishers from McPhee Gribble to Penguin who published growing new Australian writing in the 80s (and still) with a per page subsidy from the Literature Board of the Australia Council? Aren't the arts in this country still growing?

Isn't the argument that there are too many applicants, too many artists and not enough grants to go around a red herring? Saying only one in five applications can be funded suggests an extreme situation and therefore a need for extreme measures. Isn't the issue how many of the applicants are worthy of funding and how many can actually be funded and how do you then make up the difference? Council's job, for Australians, for artists, is to find more funds and funding sources not only for the growing number of artists, but a growing Australian population. Ironically McPhee heralds more spending from funds allocated from Creative Nation but the rhetoric is of cull, cut, divide, perform.

Really distressing is the way McPhee's rhetoric and her plans for the Australia Council make it a sitting duck for the Liberal and National Party Opposition. If you deride the nation's artists and if you turn Council into a machine driven by economic criteria it can easily be dismantled on those terms.

The role of artists in the re-election of the Keating government has been widely touted; the reward—Creative Nation. Creative Nation however has proved a very limited reward as any one attending its Multimedia Forums will know with their emphasis on the corporate sector and a negligible role for artists. Equally, the dismantling of peer assessment in the Australia Council, the deriding of Australian artists and the squeezing of them into the quaint ('quasi-apprenticeships') and the fashionably economic without consultation, suggests a massive undervaluing of the artist, cultural insensitivity and electoral naivety.

In the wake of the Sports Rorts Affair, the Australia Council was highly praised for the accountability of its funding mechanisms. The big question now is why is it in need of radical change? It has done Australians great service for many years and yielded an international profile which Creative Nation can and must build on. Finding additional funding and patronage has increased with the setting up of the Foundation for Culture and the Humanities. The Performing Arts Board has already reduced the large number of funding categories to an accessible three or four with radically clarified guidelines. The task of promoting and marketing Australian arts has already been initiated by the Australia Council in many ways over many years, including recent excellent support for overseas touring and the visible success of the first performing arts market in Canberra in 1994. Of course it can and must do better at selling the Australian arts, now that has the funds to do it, but that doesn't require the kind of restructuring McPhee envisages and certainly not at the expense of and without the consultation of artists and staff. And yes, its assessment procedures should be regularly reviewed, its methods made more transparent—they certainly can't be under the new system with its distant register of one-off peers.

Hilary McPhee has not convinced artists or the public that the corporatisation of the Australia Council and the re-shaping of artists' lives in this country are necessary or wise. We are not sharing a vision of the future—we are being peddled a set of clichés. When McPhee hits the road, she'll hear voices. Let's hope she sees the light.

Reprinted from *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

Dear Editors,

Hilary McPhee surprised no-one but herself when she discovered there are arts feuds of biblical proportions. What has surprised everyone I know who works in the arts is Hilary's assumption that the arts are all about truth and beauty; which shows a strange predilection for setting the arts apart from business, sport, the media, and agriculture, which are all about survival, struggle, achievement, competition and probably passion. The real problem is money, and *that* comes as no surprise to people who don't have any.

Being at the top of the business, arts and politics worlds, with friends whose substantial incomes almost entirely account for Australia being the richest country on Earth, might obscure from Hilary what is evident to all of us, that the Prime Minister's laudable interest in the arts actually ends at his own arm's reach. It's the sort of arms length funding which looks very good when you are one of the MOB: the Australia Council's Major Organisations Board with all those State Theatre Companies, the occasional Symphony Orchestra, the nominated high achievers, the favoured friends.

Angry? Bitter? Yes, I bear grudges towards arts advisers such as Craddock Morton who now appear comfortably ensconced in the new Australian Foundation for Culture and the Humanities, and to Michael Lynch who has moved from the MOB's Sydney Theatre Company to be head of the whole Australia Council on a salary worth two or three youth theatre companies all by himself.

This is not just a call for more government funds. When all Australia's governments are in thrall to some bizarre moral tenet that private money is good money, and from Victoria to Queensland they are privatising the telephones and the buses, why doesn't Keating, with his passion for the big picture, set up tax breaks for business investment in the old fashioned high arts?

If ever there was an Australian theatre production, for example, worthy of support from the new responsible capitalism, it was the MTC's fabulous production of

Australia's only theatre classic—*Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*. But it took a lot of government money to get that show around the country. And wasn't the Sydney Theatre Company subsidised to mount and tour a gloriously huge and shiny production of a light weight, meaningless and incoherent new play from David Williamson, national playwright of the richest country in the world ... with nothing to say? Very skilled in writing one-liners as he is, Williamson ought to be perfect commercial material. Sadly, *Playing Australia*, the Australia Council, and all the state governments funding are still the preserve of the rich; and the STC and the MTC are a big part of the McPhee-Lynch Mob.

So after this MOB have had their cut of Australia Council funding, there's but a pittance left over to cover innovation, diversity, risk and social justice (!!). Yes, the richest country in the world is keen to deliver a very tightly targeted safety net which sets the poor against each other, by design, even in the arts. Feuds of biblical proportions? Bitterness? Quite so.

Sorry, the arts are really all about truth and beauty aren't they, Hilary? Money means nothing in the richest country in the world, of course. And it is truth and beauty that have proved a fabulous comfort to all artists as our average income has contracted so alarmingly. But the truth is that things never look more beautiful than when you're hanging around self-importantly at the top, in the arts as in everything Australian.

Roland Manderson

Dear Editors

I'm baffled by the need to erect baffles around sound art which naturally lends itself to psychoacoustic collisions rather than to the deafening silence of laboratory anechoics. (Douglas Kahn, "Sonic sophistry", *RT8*)

Aural gridlock: no thanks. Keep those sonic cocktails (eg *Sound in Space*) coming!

Less spleen and less ink of a negative hue, please.

Olev Muska

Kiri-uu, song:sound:vision

Out of the theatre into the everyday

Jacque Lo and Jules Pavlou Kirri shopping in Future Tense

Shoppers in Newcastle's Charlestown Square Centre Court are met with a seemingly arbitrary assortment of contemporary "labour-saving" devices – white goods (tumble dryer, fridge, microwave oven), kitchen and cleaning appliances, communications technologies

shopping malls – like, but not like – Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, hand-crafted glass sculpture displays, Miss Newcastle Showgirl heats, indigenous art exhibitions, appearances by local identities such as football heroes, Senior Citizens' Week concerts ...

discourses about cheeses, a retail services employee addresses us, a child is sent off to 'virtual school' by a mother: "Don't forget we're going teleshopping tonight." Video monitors display images and a journalist reports on a woman who is lost in a shopping centre. Much activity. Lots of talking. Poor amplification. The performers are very watchable, each simultaneously engaged in their story. Fragments are heard. Confusion.

A computer sits, ready for use, on the Homebase soundboard. On standby for interaction are two computer artists.

Most people stay a while, watching, curious, for maybe 10 minutes or so then move away. Others replace them. Teenagers

complement to our experiences and knowledges of promotional displays and shopping centre shows. Subversion? 'It's Showtime', but what time is it? Intervention? *Showtime* effectively intervened in the culture and space of the shopping centre in that it arrested and re-directed our attentions away from usual shopping centre activities (to perhaps reflect on their everydayness and its difference). Most of us looked on for a while.

Yet this was a different sort of looking. It was neither the kind of gazing of window shopping in which a succession of images are (pleasurably) consumed, nor was it the close, engaged attention that may be provoked by a popular pantomime/spectacle. There was a cool distance between most onlookers and performers. Remote and bemused spectators rather than rapt voyeurs or audience. Lack of audibility presented a great problem.

A young person is videoed reading out loud from a provided text: "Hi. I'm, Trinh Nguyen. Today I'm shopping at Best and Less, Target and the Asian groceries store. In Vietnam I ran a chain of footwear stores. In Australia I work as a part time machinist from my home and I have a job in a snack bar."



Bob Phillips

(touch phones, computers), electronic leisure and entertainment items (video camera, TV/video monitors). We had touched down at 'Home Base', and passing through it, notice other objects which also suggest everyday domesticity and housebound labour: a chevalier mirror, sofa, treadle sewing machine. Amongst these wander individuals dressed in identifiable work clothes and uniforms, name-tagged. Yet this at first apparently random mix of household and electronic goods (especially the numerous monitors placed atop stacks of packing boxes featuring the *Future Tense* logo) bear more than a passing resemblance to a product display. But that fridge has leather bound volumes in it, a vase of flowers and a sort of shrine.

A woman sits inside a cage-like structure typing on a word processor. She prints out text onto small paper squares. She pegs them up on the structure until they obscure her from view.

A sandwich board indicates a schedule for three *Showtime* performances, and an EDU provides project information and text such as 'Victoria Spence as Casey Case New Age Babe' ... 'What time is it?' ... 'Future Tense' ... 'Showtime'.

A blurring between the senses of viewing a promotional product display and awaiting an imminent performance generates both inquiries about the purchase of items and recollections of the experience of the popular and high cultural mix of spectacles and entertainments offered by local

The Food Court. A woman writes on long strips of paper. She pastes them onto pillars. 'I miss you. Are there telephones in heaven?'

The workers/performers hand fliers to those who are diverted from the disciplined calculations of the purchase and pleasures of (voyeuristic) consumption. According to the flier, *Future Tense* promises an offering of:

contemporary performance and multimedia forms which will both complement and subvert the shopping centre's dual atmosphere of leisure and consumerism, provoking an encounter between the intimate and the social. The technologies ... incorporated in the show, which include computer applications and video footage [were] developed to encourage interaction and demystify some of the concerns which workers may have about new technologies.

What time is it? Not long 'til the scheduled *Showtime*. Loud techno music signals a beginning as does the miked performers' taking of position. They move around Homebase, strike exaggerated poses, repeatedly announce 'Showtime'. More shoppers gather around the space and on the mezzanine level above. Performers move intently about the space, some utilising appliances and goods: here one is sewing (piecework?), there another (a media journalist?) is engaged in agitated phone conversation and enters data on a computer, another (a migrant worker?)

dangle their limbs and shopping bags over the rails which border the mezzanine viewing space. An older female shopper wanders through the show – for her, there are no clear boundaries between performers, products, workers, shoppers and onlookers. She asks questions of one of the project artists/workers. Self-conscious realisation: I'm in the middle of a show!

More conventional shopping centre performances may provoke pleasurable senses of reading competency and knowledgeability amongst familiar audience members as the shows play upon recognition of popular cultural characters and local knowledges. *Showtime*, although having identifiable and familiar character types, scenarios and objects, presented a bewildering melange of sounds, images, spoken narratives and actions, and not many stayed for the 40 minutes.

A man sits behind a large pane of glass. He mumbles inaudibly. A woman videos him. Passerby: "I think he's forgotten his lines!"

Rather than showing a sustained engagement with the performance, people curiously viewed both the installation and performers for a relatively short time before returning to the (more reassuringly familiar?) everyday goings on in the shopping centre.

Did *Showtime* deliver its promise to 'complement and subvert the shopping centre's dual atmosphere of leisure and consumerism'? Both the Homebase installation and the *Showtime* performance provided an arrestingly ambiguous

Future Tense and *Showtime* aimed to "explore the implications of new technologies, and their particular and potential interrelationship with the working and private lives of women". The artists possessed expertise, experience and knowledges of these new technologies. Yet their experience and knowledges did not seem to resonate with those of their onlookers, especially the knowledges and expectations provoked by the experiences of shopping centre culture.

This gap between the intentions of the project and the more familiar everyday lives of the people present at the event suggests that the everyday (particularly the cultures of shopping centres themselves) would have been a most fertile field for research. Such research, in addition to the interviews conducted with women about the impact of new technologies and changing work structures, may have afforded more resonances with onlookers. And it could well include attention to the relationships between shopping centre culture (especially the surveillant use of video monitoring in the privately owned 'public' space of the centre) and plural notions of performance (of selves both looking and on display, and of centre spectacles and entertainments).

Future Tense, both as public event and a community cultural development project, was a daring move beyond the more conventional realistic plays so often associated with the concerns of 'Art and Working Life'. As such, it took on the not insignificant challenges of both contemporary performance and multimedia forms, and our experiences of everyday public spaces. We hope that *Future Tense* signals further engagement with such challenges.

Writers Jules Pavlou Kirri and Jacque Lo may be seen in a shopping centre near you.

Future Tense with the Sidetrack Performance Group and guest artists (featuring performances, video, computer applications, and sculptural installations over a full shopping day) at Charlestown Square, Newcastle, 19 August, 1995.

Concept & direction, Peggy Wallach; research & performance text, Catherine Fargher; producer, Sidetrack Performance Group; sound & computer applications, Sandy Indlekoser-O'Sullivan & Ali Smith; video, Maria Barbagallo & Tina Stephen; vocal workshop & 'Lost Woman', Bernadette Pryde; performers, Robert Daoud, Jai McHenry, Victoria Spence, Meme Thorne, Rolando Ramos.

Forking paths to Melrose Place

Colin Hood leaves behind the cobwebbed semiotics of free-to-air TV for the hybrid ensemble of public TV and TV Webzines

One of the few things I learned at library school—an undercover recruitment camp for the Australian Graduate School of Management and alas, no longer a haven for professional booklovers—was a wonderful phrase describing the symptom of the entropic profusion of information: “disjointed incrementalism”.

I think Daniel Bell coined the phrase, and Barry Jones might have used it once or twice in his former role as junior minister for science in the Keating cabinet, but in any case it sure hangs well with some of the freaky algorithms we're about to fall into: a labyrinth of free-to-air, time-shift shuffle, cable channelling and more quick-time movies than you could poke a mouse at.

When and if I get to the other end—“you choose the through line and the denouement”—spare a thought or a glance for that oldy third worldly kind of public TV you used to see in films set on the outer limits of the barrios and poor urban fringes of Mexico, Bombay, Havana and a multitude of sites in what was once called the Third World.

Entering into the low-level cyberspace of inner-city public TV is an exhilarating experience. Just an hour of watching *Melrose Place* at the Beresford Hotel a few weeks ago—in the company of friends and regular enthusiasts—got me thinking about the complex refiguring of the public and private in a media-scape filled with traditional free-to-air, cable and internet media futures.

Watching TV not by oneself opens up a whole new world of interactivity. A video projector and a large screen turn TV into an unhushed (pub-noisy) cinemascap. Squeeze a sweaty body towards a crowded bar for that penultimate round, converting lonely-guy blue-light desperation into a full-blown carnival of reaction-shot conviviality and hilarious back-chat against the flow of absurd stock phrases and expressions: “The longer this goes on, the weirder it gets”—spoken by Billy, the “transparent shell of the modern sensitive man”.

A mad grab for soggy coasters and ball-point in lieu of microcorder or notepad left me with very little to package the article fill apart from on-site photo-reportage. Cut to <http://www.speakeasy.org/melrose.html> and the mystery of this perverse contamination of traditional TV soap and the “forking paths” of hypermedia is quickly resolved.

Ian Ferrell describes himself as a “frustrated technology industry employee”. He was also one of the founding editors of the *Melrose Place Update* page on the Web. No meandering donkey track through adolescent feedback and puerile chit-chat to be found here. For example:

sequential or 'linear' are not the first Melrosian adjectives that come to mind. The traditional television situation comedy or drama consists of a corporate body with distinct group goals. Some element, a plot complication, threatens these goals and ultimately the group's well-being and existence ... Melrose, by contrast, is an environment populated by free electrons, individuals who float aimlessly in a thick plot-like syrup until a passing gamma ray of fate strikes them. There are no corporate goals, there is no coherent group to be threatened. Each individual stands on his own worth, mercilessly assailed by the gods and subject to their whims.

Taking these words of wisdom back into the public realm of fan frenzy pub TV—

which is unlikely to give way to anything too virtual faced with the unquenchable carnival spirit of embodied eyes rubbing together in lubricated inner-city communitas—I recall a remark by that eminent French critic Jean-Francois Lyotard. For Lyotard, to “experience publicly and together that something is without form” is the truly sublime moment. Would it be too optimistic to find such exemplary “goings-on” happily ensconced at a regular big screen TV pub night filled with queer culturati, future-breeders, card-players, *eminences noires* and grungies? I hope not.

In *Melrose*, everything falls apart into atomistic disarray, a return to the primal scene of the hero's unconscious struggle for civic unity through personal sacrifice. The savagery of *Melrose Place* plot machinations and white-anting is breathtakingly tragic—in the original sense—at any time. So I was bitterly disappointed to miss the public screening of that particularly gruesome episode when Bruce, the head of D and D is found hanged in his office after a carefully orchestrated Amanda hatchet job (with the aid of that particularly nasty Wilshire Memorial Hospital director). The first drive-by-suicide in TV history watched by myself alone. Gone in the blink of my private eye. A beautiful moment of brief and careless depiction of mortality, speculation and greed.

A large glass screen mounted on the walls crackles with static and images burst onscreen with a hollow pop. The young man crosses the room and settles into a massive leather armchair, his glass of port and a fresh notebook next to him. Silently, from the shadows, others stream into the room taking their places at the desks and preparing their research materials. Onscreen, the Melrose Place logo appears and the theme song resounds throughout the rocky chamber. The stage is set. The players have assembled. the watchers wait.

Glass in hand we also wait. The BH logo mimics the MP logo, on T-shirts, walls and coasters. Our drinks waiter shies away from a photo op. I think to myself: “Probably working privately on a far superior secret history”. Others offer names and pet names for what they assume will be captioning the sushi photo pages of 3-D World. S-O-R-R-Y. We're the wrong crew!

In any case, no one here seems to read *Melrose* for any kind of definitive end or closure. It conforms in many respects to most contemporary interactive hypertext narratives. The structure is not episodic in any conventional sense. It could go any way any time. Bad acting and sloppy narrative development make it seem real enough. The finale it seems is about you (the reader/viewer) and you (the author) arriving at some agreement as to how long the deferment of closure can conceivably last. We the viewers may yet reign again from the Olympian heights of the box (tall-boy cabinet model circa 1958).

Away from the monotonous lines of static text, behind the rigid walls or organisation lies a non-linear world; the real world [my emphasis] we live in but one which many are ill-prepared to deal with. The twisting path brings us, inevitably, to Melrose Place.”

ROUTLEDGE

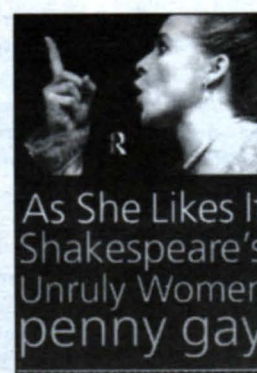
first in performance



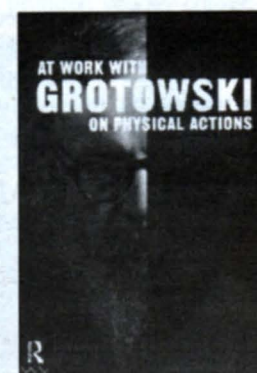
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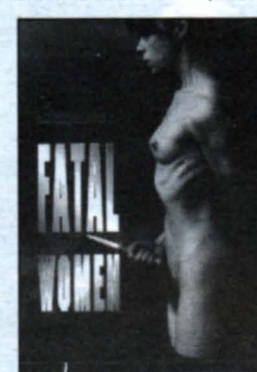
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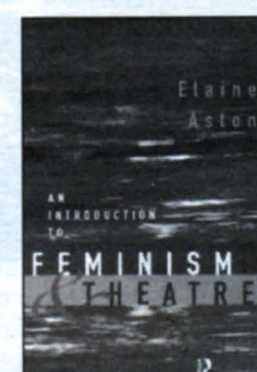
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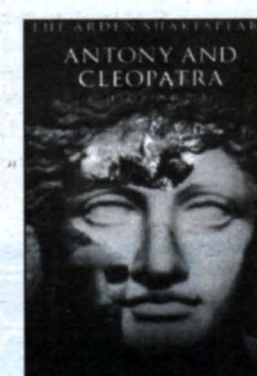
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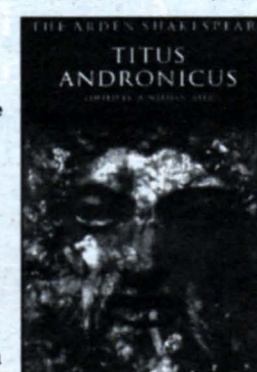
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From A to Z: Acker and Zweig in Brisbane

Maryanne Lynch reports from the Eye-Phonics program

Sifting through my thoughts about the Brisbane visit of Kathy Acker and Ellen Zweig is not an easy task. It's a jumble of microphone cords, media demands, too much wine and a dose of retrospective learning culminating in the utterance: We'd do this like this if we had our time again! But here goes:

Acker and Zweig visited Australia as the guests of *Eye-Phonics*, an Australia Council sponsored 12 month program examining the relationship of sound and performance. This program is run in Brisbane and Acker and Zweig spent most of their visit here—that is, the Melbourne and Sydney legs were additional to the main event.

The visit's aim was to enable *Eye-Phonics* artists to exchange ideas with these two international artists. Subsidiary to this was the chance for Brisbane audiences to encounter the work of Acker and Zweig. Another motivation, I'd have to say, was to skew the customary cartography of Australian culture where nothing *happens* save in the two biggest capitals. (Or at least that's the perception.)

Kathy Acker arrived first, in a blaze of

These included an interest in issues of subjectivity, gender and identity more generally, excavation of US culture and history (or parts therein), and perhaps—implicitly—an experience of Jewishness in the American context.

The visit included performances by both artists, a public seminar by Acker, an arts industry dinner and *Eye-Phonics* workshops—plus the incidental meal and conversation. These events varied in style and rigour with, I think, the greatest insight afforded by attendance at a range of functions rather than just, say, the performances.

This was most true of Acker who carries on her skin and in her biography a post-punk reputation that seemed to obscure the concepts and practices under investigation. During her performance, crowds of pierced and head-shaven young things gathered in rapture at the feet of the Deadly Diva as she read of pirate gals and hidden treasure. Responses seemed horribly literal, and Acker herself complained several times that 'no one [media, locals, the literati] wants to talk about my work'. The problem was

exacerbated by the historical scarcity of her titles in Australia.

To a certain extent, you get what you ask for. That is, Acker courted the groupies and the inner-suburban marginalised. Moreover, post-punkism is a philosophy that embraces marginality, and who's to say that the adoring ones weren't identifying with the dislocations of place, time and self in which Acker deals? Nor are surfaces always superficial. But when it was the *cosmetics* that

were mostly discussed, I couldn't help losing the plot.

This problem was highlighted by the uneven response to Zweig. Many people didn't 'get it'; at least, not in performance. Zweig's intentionally 'non-performative' presentation and the overtly High Theory

content of her work deterred those who were looking for flash and bauble. The few who made the connections within and between the two artists' work had, on the other hand, plenty to think about.

One of the discernible similarities was a return to the narrative, fractured and twisted as this might be. Acker could be said to have never utterly left the Western narrative tradition. However, she made a distinction between past and present work in relation to her new attention to 'story' and 'character'. Zweig spoke of a desire to engage with the general populace rather than an enclave of familiar friends and foes. (Given her performance, this might be an occasional rather than a sustained aim.)

Recently exhibiting on 42nd Street, New York, she'd experienced the potency of thousands of spectators daily passing her work. Unfortunately, neither artist extensively discussed the question, and we were left to speculate on why this shift, or return, might be occurring, and on a wider scale too.

The two-day workshops faced similar problems. In the main, however, the sessions allowed wide-ranging discussion about such matters as working processes, issues of context and re-contextualisation (appropriation by another name), American and Australian politics, and the Net. Also, and this worked to varying levels of success, the *Eye-Phonics* artists got the chance to present current projects, and to receive feedback from Acker and Zweig as well as from the other participants.

Acker and Zweig adopted different strategies in the sessions. Acker—who confessed to being a bit bored with teaching (she's been attached to an art college for the last six years)—'wanted to talk', mainly about Australia. There was, however, room for other topics, and a fascinating discussion about the theatre/performance divide stands out. (Acker didn't understand these terms on first reference.) Zweig, on

the other hand, engaged with local artists' work in a role that was equal parts teacher and peer. Both artists, let me add, were extremely generous with their time.

Yet I have to admit to an occasional sense of frustration. While the *Eye-Phonics* artists did all the right things, maybe I have unrealistic expectations of what can be done in a workshop setting. At times there was a woolliness of focus that seemed preventable; perhaps a text on which we all worked would have been the solution. The question is really, I suspect, about the expectations of both parties (invited artist and participant) in a workshop or masterclass.

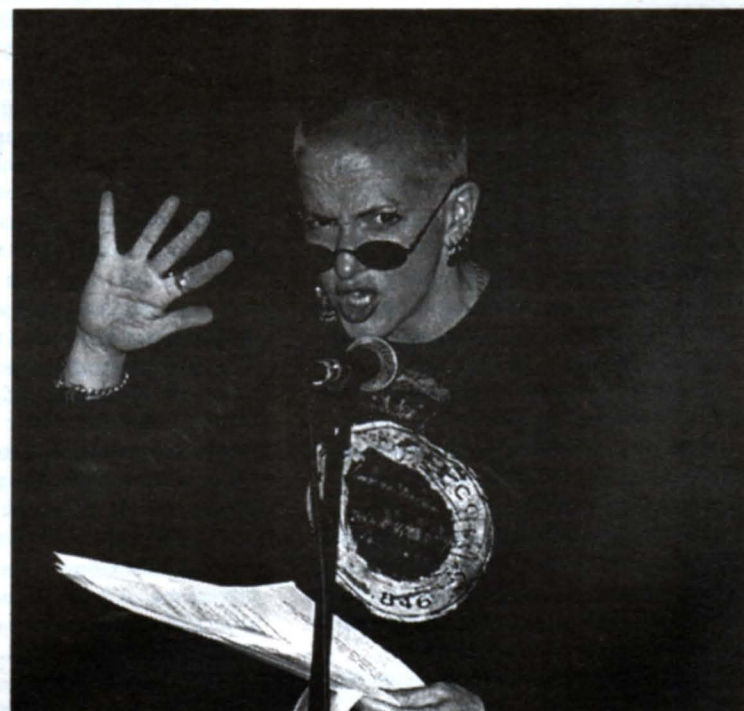
As to what I was left with from the visit;



Ellen Zweig

publicity and a long black leather jacket. Ellen Zweig made a quieter entrance, with a presence that became more pronounced as time and people allowed it space. The two made an unlikely couple at first glance but it became apparent that there were several points of juncture between them.

Nicola Chapman



Kathy Acker

Nicola Chapman

well, as I've said, I'm still thinking about that, but, like the other *Eye-Phonics* artists, the exposure to different ways of working and seeing was probably the most valuable experience. As for Kathy and Ellen: hopefully, something; I'm not sure what. They were last seen wearing sunglasses and lipstick kisses at the airport.

Kathy Acker and Ellen Zweig were the guests of *Eye-Phonics* 20-30 July.

Maryanne Lynch writes at the intersection of performance art and theatre, and is a co-convenor of and participating artist in the *Eye-Phonics* program.

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Over the Barbed Wire Fence: From Dutton Park to Beverley Hills

Noel King interviews Gerard Lee, writer-director of *All Men are Liars*

NK *You've said that you think a certain 'heartfeltness' underlies your form of comedy. What do you mean by heartfelt?*

GL I mean that you have a point in the story where people cry. My ideal—and it happens sometimes in *Sweetie* and in *All Men Are Liars*—is to have a moment where people don't know whether to laugh or cry. They're sitting on a fence with one leg in laughter and the other in tears. It's a very uncomfortable place for them but a delicious one as well. They're the moments I like best.

NK *Where are they for you in All Men Are Liars?*

GL At the climax, Irene comes into a crowd of the townspeople, all of whom know her and know about her difficult relationship with Barry. And they're all saying "she's a saint, mate, she's a lovely, lovely lady" and she is but it's a humorous scene as well because it plays on a kind of American cliché, and the music highlights that cliché. You go with the emotion and with the sense of humour which is presented. And I know it works because I've seen the tears come. I don't watch the film anymore, I watch the audience. There's a smile on their face and a tear on their cheek.

NK *How would you characterise the humour in the film. It's very Australian, even very Queensland but there seemed to me to be a touch of Mark Twain in there.*

GL Structurally, that's right. Twain wrote a lot about small towns on the banks of the Mississippi in *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn* and in the story *The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg*. I've always seen that as a convenient way of presenting society, a small town.



All Men are Liars

NK *How would you describe your film's mix of humour? You've got a person cross-dressing in order to save the family unit, you have elements of romantic comedy and Shakespearean comedy mixed in with vulgar humour, vulgar in the literal, non-deprecating, sense of 'the people.'*

GL I embrace the vulgar. I think the sense of humour is *faux naïve*. The humour is juvenile. I think that's the proper nature of humour because once it stops being juvenile it becomes 'wit' and then it starts to smell a bit for me. Sure it's good but it's exclusive, it's a little bit elitist. But I'm also trying to appeal on a few different levels at the same time. You might have a character playing to the pits, operating within the vulgar, and it's also carried within a symbolic language, with

allusions to Freud and Jung that some other viewers might pick up on.

NK *A big part of the look of the film is the town. Was it difficult to get that distinctive look?*

GL Yes. It's basically an unreality so we had to find an existing place that could represent an era that was well and truly past. And we were very lucky that the producer John Maynard stumbled onto South Johnson. When you drive in it looks like a film set. The buildings are very close together because the river flows around each side of the main street when it's in flood. So all these little buildings are squashed together in the main street and there's a train running down the middle. The idea was to have it look like a western town, a boys' town, and then these girls arrive in it and it's the overthrow of the male domain by a commando female band. It's that convention of the bad guys riding into town, only here it's all these women in a rock band.

NK *What have you got out of the experience of your first feature film. Where has it taken you that your previous work hasn't?*

GL It's taken me from Dutton Park to Beverley Hills! When you're born in Australia you tend to think that other countries are more sophisticated or complex or so different that they won't understand our lifestyle or our culture. But I've watched this film work on people in Cannes, Paris, Los Angeles and New Zealand.

NK *Do you agree with the line that says the more you ground your film in a local specificity the more chance you have of playing universally, that it's a mistake to try to begin from some notion of the universal?*

GL There has to be a kind of universality as well, I think.

NK *The three-act structure?*

GL Yeah, structurally, but also thematically. I think writers have to humble themselves before the altar of narrative. They've got to realise that story is an ancient thing and there's a reason for that. If you think you can come along in the late twentieth century and say "that's crap, I'm gonna give people something they've never seen before" then that's incredibly arrogant. I find it a sad but edifying thing to see people fail in their attempts at novelty. They haven't bowed down sufficiently at the altar of narrative. It's like that Carl Sagan time clock thing where the history of the earth is a 12 hour clock and humanity comes in at three

minutes to 12. That's what it's like for writers. We're coming in at three minutes to 12 in the history of narrative. You think you can look back to Chaucer and say there's 600 years of stories there and it's progressing all the time. Well it is but it's all been done so



All Men are Liars

you pick out the bits that you like and you join them up. And of course it goes back a lot further than Chaucer. So, a word of warning to people wanting to write. I've been humiliated by my struggle with narrative, I've come through the fire, I've had ten years of pain in trying to break new ground.

NK *What's the difference for you between your stories and novels and your films? When we've chatted in the past you said you were very dispirited by the fact that you'd put an enormous amount of effort into the writing of a novel which had a small readership and brought small financial rewards.*

GL I think most people now get their stories through film or video or TV. But the good thing about a novel is that it allows more intimacy than film and TV. Written prose is such a fluid form. You can slip from dialogue to interior monologue to description and memory, present and future, to depicting yearnings, to working musical effects with your language. All of that can be woven into one thread. And for me that makes prose a more charming medium. You can draw people into a state of consciousness, or a mood, that can be sustained even when they've put the book down and are walking around. They can live within that novel as they walk the streets and go about their everyday life, it's with them like the presence of a lover they've just left. I think reading a novel can bring about a chemical change in your physiology which stays in your system and very few films can do that. Sure, while you're watching them you might be more kinetically caught up but you come out onto the street and you're pulled out of it much more quickly. It doesn't hang on as strongly as prose can. The thing I most aspire to in my prose is an intimacy mixed with humanity. And it's painful to have to leave that to write in a medium that's less intimate and less personal. But ... that's where the bucks are! And you reach more people. Also in *All Men Are Liars* I've tried pretty hard to be myself. I think of it as a celluloid form of my personality.

NK *Could you talk about the visual style, the look of the film. What were you after?*

GL I wanted bright, almost gaudy colours. The mutedness of colour is something that Southerners seem to favour. They privilege it over brightness because

they think it's more subtle. For them, bright's alright so long as it's done by black people. But when you come from a sunny place you see an hibiscus in the morning as you're having your porridge. You don't see a blue backyard, you see red against green and in the afternoon when the sun's going down and the cloudbank has come over from the west, the luminosity of the colours is amazing. And when you've been hit by that magic there's a power to it that you won't find in the muted colours of Sydney, Melbourne and Western Australia, all of which are so celebrated around here. So if you come from a place where the sun shines a little bit brighter, you see colour,

it's in your soul and it's gotta come out. You've got to be true to it. So I worked closely with the production designer, Murray Pope, who is also from Queensland. And we've tried to give the film's colour scheme a unity that many Australian films don't seem to me to have.

NK *And how closely did you work with your cinematographer, Steve Arnold?*

GL Steve is a meditator, like me. He was very easy to work with. We did a storyboard of most of the film before we began. It was a gruelling exercise. There was a nice tension between us; cameramen always get excited at the possibility of doing crane shots and tracking shots whereas I prefer plain coverage. I find tracks and cranes a bit of a distraction.

NK *But if you've got a house on stilts you might have some justification for a "plain" crane shot.*

GL Those stilts are very low! Steve was prepared to go along with the idea of plain coverage but bucked against it a little bit—and I'm now very thankful for that because it means there's a bit of stylish camera movement in there. It's just that generally I find that sort of thing anti-dramatic and even alienating. I think too many film directors are undermined by the magic of the big shot. In *All Men* the landscape is incidental (after a few establishing shots) because I think that gives it more power.

NK *You've seen the film with several overseas audiences now. Was there any particular screening that impressed itself on you?*

GL The most thrilling overseas screening for me was when we showed the film at the Directors' Guild of American Cinema in Los Angeles. It's one of the most technically up to date cinemas anywhere and we had an audience of 600 that we'd got in off the street. And they went with the film so thoroughly that it really touched me, it gave my heart a buffing. For all these years that I've been writing books I've felt like I'm in a paddock surrounded by barbed wire, trying to throw copies of my novels over the fence to normal human beings. This was the reverse, I'd finally got over the barbed-wire fence to other people and it turned out to be in the biggest cinematic market in the world.

(il)legitimate cinema: Melbourne Cinémathèque

Clare Stewart continues our survey of Australian screen culture

A paraphrase from *The Ruin of Kasch*: Legitimacy is the only force that guarantees continuity, but in order to be legitimate it is necessary to already have lasted a long time.

The issue of cultural and infrastructural legitimacy is particularly hot at a time when the Australian Film Commission (AFC) is undergoing a substantial reviewing process, when the absence of an established and consistent cinematic/multimedia pedagogy is bemoaned ("No Show", *RealTime* 8), and when it is possible to hear a representative from the Next Wave tell a room full of jobkillers in a funding forum that cinema is dead, and you know he means it. The problem currently facing the Melbourne Cinémathèque—both independently and as programmers of the National Cinémathèque calendar—is how to inhabit a legitimate exhibiting position when the confluence of text and moving image in new technologies has got funding bodies and practitioners looking forward, while a substantial audience base (in Melbourne over 2500) also want to look back.

Operating in various guises and at a number of venues for close to 50 years, and in its current manifestation since

1984, the Melbourne Cinémathèque has fiercely retained its independence while managing through an awkward relationship with the Australian Film Institute to take its program national in 1993. The MC's perceived role of providing a dynamic alternative to the rep circuit has left it to occupy something of a maverick position on the exhibition scene. A commitment to screening classics, experimental, avant garde, animation and short works is often criticised for its tendency to shift between the canon and the margins without announcing its specific agenda in doing so. It is, however, precisely this 'mixed bag' approach that provides a more fluid context for understanding the history of cinema and for formulating a personal realm of critical response.

It was a pleasure to discover while viewing the much talked-about documentary *A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese through American Cinema* at the Melbourne Film Festival that I had accessed about a third of his chosen flicks through regularly attending Wednesday night MC screenings at the State Film Theatre over the past few years. The 1995 program has seen a huge increase in

attendances with a considerable number of sellout evenings including such diverse offerings as Welle's *Touch of Evil*, Jarman's *Blue* and Egoyan's *Calendar*. Continued alliances with the Melbourne Super 8 Group and the National Film and Sound Archives have broadened the potential audience for projects such as the locally produced *The Bush Studies* and a belated retrospective of the unfairly ostracised Australian director Cecil Holmes. That the MC (together with Melbourne Image Makers Association) should also be responsible for avant-garde's cinema stalwart Michael Snow's appearance in Melbourne and the screening of the entire Lumiere centenary program suggests the scope of its content and dedication.

This year also saw the introduction of the OtherCinematheque, screening on a seasonal basis at the Erwin Rado Theatre. This program seeks to present material considered too obscure or esoteric for the national program and is free to current MC subscribers. So far it has presented a season of Taipei features and one of American silents. It is envisaged that the Other Cinematheque will be consolidated in 1996 into a continuous

program that will feed off and inform the Wednesday night agenda.

The Melbourne Cinémathèque's activities are legitimised to a certain extent by the organisation's longevity, its sense of responsibility to the local scene and a membership base who consider Wednesday nights something of an institution. This legitimacy is not, however, reflected in its operational infrastructure. The MC is self-funded and relies on the commitment of volunteer labour for its survival. The AFI happily acknowledge the importance of the National Cinematheque to their own exhibition component (*The Last Filmnews*) but provide little in the way of real organisational support. In addition to this it appears that the National program cannot lay claim to its own name, as recent developments at the Museum of Contemporary Art should testify. While its current position provides the Melbourne Cinémathèque with a great deal of flexibility it does not guarantee an ongoing existence.

What becomes critical at this point in the Melbourne Cinémathèque's history is how to make the necessary expansion of its exhibition parameters on its limited financial resources, and how to ensure that its project is not engulfed by the rush of multimedia hype and activity. While the MC's governing ethos echoes Mae West's "It's OK honey, I can hold it myself", some added support would not go astray.

Clare Stewart works for the Melbourne Cinémathèque.

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Saturday October 14

CINEMATIC EVENTS

Curated by George Kouvaros

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

The program will include a paper presented by George Kouvaros and a screening.

This program takes up Thomas Elsaesser's conception of film 'not as film, but as a reality existing in its own right, a reality existing next to other realities'. The program will examine how this rethinking of the cinema's place is played out in the work of John Cassavetes, Shirley Clarke and Jean Rouch and will use the work of these three filmmakers to explore a strand of film modernism that first emerged during the '60s and, as Elsaesser's comments indicate, has a strong claim on contemporary debates and discussions on film.

Saturday November 4

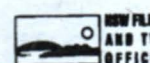
DIVERSE DYKES

Curated by Colleen Cruise and Fanny Jacobson

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

This screening will feature experimental British lesbian films with a focus on Jewish lesbian content. These are recent works mostly completed in 1994.

Sydney Intermedia Network inc. (ph 264 7225) 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 Governments arts funding and advisory body.



Value added

Annemarie Jonson surveys reviews of the AFTRS, FFC, National Film and Sound Archive and the AFC

Australian film and screen culture organisations are being placed under the bureaucratic microscope as part of a series on ongoing evaluations of Commonwealth funded programs.

The results of the reviews of a number of Commonwealth funded screen culture organisations undertaken in 1994 have recently been published. The Department of Communications and the Arts released its report of the review of the **Australian Film, Television and Radio School** mid year. The review committee found that the school's programs are "appropriate and effective" and that—in the econo-speak increasingly applied to the cultural realm—the school continues to "add value" to the screen and broadcasting industries through its major role in training industry practitioners.

The committee overseeing the review process also developed a number of conclusions it considered fundamental to the ongoing development of the AFTRS: these included the need for the school to formally consult with stakeholders before finalising its curriculum review process, and to develop systematic consultation mechanisms with the film and broadcasting industries, suggesting that such consultation has been less than fully adequate to date in the view of some submissions.

On the upside the committee noted that employment outcomes indicate a high level of industry acceptance of AFTRS graduates; that teaching staff are well qualified and bring substantial experience to their teaching; and that the school has established appropriate planning mechanisms to take account of the impact of new technologies. The need for adequate funding for new technologies was recognised in an agreement to significantly increase the yearly funding for capital expenditure on technologies to the year 2000. The report notes that the AFTRS has also had, courtesy of *Creative Nation*, a financial boost of close to \$1 million over four years for multimedia production training. Rather more cryptically—and despite some concerns in the margins and independent sectors of screen culture that AFTRS 'product' tends to

be formulaic and sometimes less than cutting-edge—the committee "acknowledged the inherently problematical nature of the concepts of creativity and excellence but noted the school's impressive record in terms of awards won and achievements of graduates".

The Department's review of the **Film Finance Corporation** was also reasonably favourable. The review found that, in general, the organisation is successfully meeting its objectives, bar the minor matter of not having developed a corporate plan. The committee overseeing the review rejected the suggestion made in some submissions that creative quality and cultural values should become criteria for investment funding, finding that other bodies in the film development support infrastructure have this specific responsibility. For the FFC, the main touchstone for investment will remain marketplace interest and perceived commercial viability. The committee overseeing the review also concluded the FFC would do well to improve its consultative mechanisms with industry bodies.

In July, the Department of Communications and the Arts released its review of the **National Film and Sound Archive**, commissioned in September 1994. The review endorses the NFSA's detailed review of client access to the collection (likely to be enhanced by a CD-ROM version of the archive's collection holdings), especially noting the need to recover costs without jeopardising access and equity. Recommendations include that the NFSA be made a statutory authority as of July 1996, and that an independent consultant be engaged to examine issues relating to new technologies.

On the issue of new media, the review notes that the new convergent information technologies are increasingly impacting on the NFSA. The proliferation of formats means that the NFSA needs to make skilled decisions on which formats to collect, amongst, for example, the dozen or so different contenders for digital storage of audio materials; and on what to do with materials held on now obsolete formats, such

as 2 inch video tape, given the immensity of the task of copying onto contemporary formats and the gamble involved in selecting formats which will become industry standards. Further, the introduction of interactive multimedia presents a particular challenge to the NFSA's historical focus on recorded material for one-way transmission. Until relatively recently the source industries for the archive were relatively easy to define—film, video, radio etc. The convergence of these industries and the development of the multimedia industry has added a level of complexity to the archive's acquisitions policy. Sidestepping the inextricable relation of medium and content well understood at least since McLuhan, the review recommends that the NFSA continue to "focus on product, not process and content, not carrier" in determining its collection strategies. The review also notes that several submissions pointed out that the NFSA's collection is light on in some areas, specifically experimental film and sound recordings.

Submissions have just closed in the Department of Communications and the Arts' review of the **Australian Film Commission**. The AFC, Australia's primary developmental film agency, is charged with the development of "a stable and diverse Australian film and television production industry of quality" amongst other things. Key activities the AFC undertakes include the provision of development and production funding for screen projects; the provision of assistance to organisations to support the development of audiences and a vigorous screen culture in Australia; and now, with the advent of the ubiquitous imperative to multimedia development, the provision of support for Australian initiatives which explore the creative potential of multimedia.

The review committee will consider the "appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency" of the AFC's programs. It aims to examine how well the AFC is faring in meeting its key objectives, including its responsibility to support originality, diversity and risk-taking in the development of screen projects, to encourage a vigorous and diverse screen culture, and to foster self-representation by indigenous Australians. An issue curiously singled out for consideration, in the background notes to the terms of reference, is the question of continued funding of the AFC's production program—which supports innovative, high-

risk projects including multimedia and experimental works—beyond June 1996. The review comes at a time when the important role of the AFC in the leading edge of Australian screen culture has been underscored by the Commonwealth's *Creative Nation* cultural policy of late 1994, which committed \$5.25 million to the AFC's New Image Research Program for multimedia project funding—one of the few places artists can go for direct funding of leading-edge multimedia works.

The AFC review overlaps with an AFC sponsored multimedia needs analysis project focusing on **state-based screen culture organisations**. An AFC appointed consultant has been meeting with policy makers, industry representatives, multimedia developers, artists and filmmakers around the country to discuss how screen culture production bodies such as Sydney's Metro TV, Melbourne's Open Channel, the Film and Television Institute in Perth and Adelaide's Media Resource Centre should respond to the emergence of multimedia screen culture.

Early findings indicate the unanimous view that the screen organisations must broaden their existing analogue focus into the digital domain to ensure that communities, artists and cultural producers have access to new and emerging technologies. A key point to emerge from the consultations is that if the state rhetoric around creativity and innovation is to be realised, artists, communities and cultural producers need access to a digital production base for non-commercial "cultural R&D" and experimentation. Equally, community-based service providers require access to the new media which will be the platform for communication with and delivery of services to their clients. Since the establishment of digital facilities is cost-intensive, a major consideration in the screen culture organisations' transition into digital media will be the formation of alliances with various institutions to allow the pooling of resources.

Information on the review of the AFC is available from the Film and Multimedia Development Branch of the Department of Communications and the Arts on tel: 1800 651 899 or fax: 06 279 1688. Information on the multimedia needs analysis of screen culture organisations is available from Strategic Media on tel: 03 9629 5585 or fax: 03 9629 5586.

Starting Out

Convenor Louise Messara talks about the 1995 National Student Film Festival

LM It's only the third year that we've run it nationally and each year we've been trying to broaden the number of applicants and reach out to campuses we haven't heard from before. It's working. We have entrants from the Northern Territory, northern Queensland and quite a few from Western Australia and Victoria. The least number of entries is from Sydney, a real change from last year.

RT Why the improvement?

LM We advertise and last year's results were widely publicised. We also have a strong line up of judges, including the chief censor John Dickie, critics Lynden Barber and Peter Castaldi, and Jane Mills who is head of film studies at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School.

RT Is it essentially a competition for short films?

LM We set a 20 minute maximum, but most are quite short. We've even had some entries which are edited down from longer films!

RT What about the gender of the film makers?

LM Pretty even numbers and a lot of team work, especially from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology where some classes have sent works and you have six or seven directors listed on one work.

RT What are the entrance criteria?

LM The makers have to have been a student (university, college or TAFE) at the time of production. It includes postgraduate students as well and ranges from professionally to self trained film makers. It is hard to tell how many have actually been formally trained—we don't ask that.

RT Is there a sense of occasion?

LM We screen the films on campus to reach as many students as possible, and on the 18th of October we have the awards night at the Valhalla cinema—first, second prize and merit awards. All these films are screened.

RT Will you include multimedia works in the future?

LM We'll cater for what is there, perhaps as soon as next year. Of course multimedia work often relies on film making, animation and video skills.

*National Student Film Festival, Sydney University, October 11-18.
Contact: Louise Messara, Clubs and Cultural Projects 02 563 6162.*



Prominent contemporary photographers of Australian performance include Melbourne's Jeff Busby and Ponch Hawkes and Sydney's Heidrun Lohr and Robert MacFarlane amongst others. The impressive new Byron Mapp Gallery (two showing areas, camera, coffee and book shops) in Sydney's Paddington features *Stage and Screen: Stills by Robert MacFarlane*, showing to November 3. As we all know, black and white production stills can make even appalling shows look good, but this is a collection of images from Australian films and plays that have worked or got at least halfway there. MacFarlane lives up to his aim "to produce images that preserve the ephemeral nature of performance and yet exist as potent visual statements in their own right" though compared with younger photographers there's more often an inclination to the latter. This shot of Brooke Shields in *The Seventh Floor* waiting to perform off camera lines stands out in its focus on time and process, as does the image of Lucy Bell resting off camera on *The Nostradamus Kid* in another way. KG

Surmounting amnesia

Film-maker Paul Andrew's film memory is jogged by the Paul Winkler retrospective at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art

Frenetic, eclectic and highly personal films by artists like Paul Winkler comprise a vast repertoire of film-making which might be termed 'parallel cinema'—it parallels mainstream cinema but rarely interrupts or collides with narrative/Hollywood predominance or the popular imagination.

Paul Winkler's retrospective is perhaps the most significant foray into this realm recently undertaken in Australia. Comprising film program, artist's studio installation and monograph, the retrospective was comprehensive, timely and thought-provoking. A reminder of the potential of this parallel cinema legacy, those forgotten, low tech films which have been relegated to our popular amnesia, discarded in the face of new technologies in an echo of the discrepancies between high and low art that have figured largely in recent academic debate.

Winkler is a builder/bricklayer by trade—which may be why he is particularly notable for an approach often termed 'structuralist'. He employs low tech special

effects (like home made mattes, prisms, drinking glasses and filters), low end optical printers, single frame exposures, rapid zooming and peripatetic hand held camera movement echoing the language of the body. His films are paroxysmic and iconoclastic, the views of Australian cityscapes and naturescapes are collapsed into fitful multinarratives and multilinear evocations. In so doing, Winkler creates emotional films which interrupt the very nature of cinema's spectacle and its orthodoxy of sightlines. Winkler's early films like *Mood*, *Isolated* and *Red and Green* are highly idiosyncratic films which resonate with Eisensteinian dialectical montage. British documentary film-making of the 1940s and '50s also figured largely within Winkler's early works. His low tech special effects and devices have been employed to rupture the social realist rhetoric of this genre.

Requiem No. 1 is where Winkler's work develops into a highly personal film language. At once cathartic and fitful, *Requiem No. 1* is an evocation of Winkler's

father's death. The film is about evanescence and also about its own evanescence as a medium. It is also the film which shifts Winkler's films into a corporeal cinema. The frenetic left to right to left camera movement is equivocal with grief, melancholy and the body language of negativity or saying no. This along with rapid zooming become familiar Winkler techniques which allow the camera to be more than prosthetic, to retain bodily memories as well as ocular memories, to enliven the body's multiple 'sightlines'.

Arguably, it is not Winkler's intention to change the spectacle of cinema—more to question the spatial imperatives which confine its prismatic possibilities. The negative space of the screen becomes a labyrinth for Winkler, whose multi-imaging is clearly dissatisfied with the anathema of cinema as a moving image.

Winkler's multiple images in films like *Backyard*, *Bondi*, *Urban Space*, *Cars* and *Long Shadows* travel and refract in multiple trajectories. Up and down, left, right, eastern, western, sideways, upside-down and around. What this achieves is a challenge both to the screen and to the monolithic architecture he portrays. Winkler invites film goers to do just that—to go. To enliven film's evanescence, to move as the moving image moves, to shift sightlines, to stretch the imagination and to allow film to proliferate in its virtual

screens, screens real, imagined and psychic. Winkler puts the prismatic back into film.

The MCA banquet hall where these films were screened and which temporarily houses MCA cinema events is at once a difficult and exciting space. It is the very architecture which usually houses cinema that defeats cinema's purpose, shelters it from its virtual spaces: Film's origins promised moving images to be prismatic and stranger than photographic. In this beautiful hall, with vast marble expanse, columns, high ceilings, windows, doors and corners, Winkler's films touch upon their virtual screens, spaces where the projected light, narratives and lines folded and eddied into a hall of mirrors and allowed the screen to become labyrinthine and slippery.

The combined efforts of the Sydney Intermedia Network's Brian Doherty, the Museum of Contemporary Art's David Watson, and Paul Winkler himself have helped many of us jog our memories to surmount amnesia and engage in film-going as an interactive process, something which lets us go, travel and move in many different ways, like film itself.

Paul Andrew is a film-maker and curator. Copies of the excellent catalogue are still available from the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Arts across the universities

RealTime initiates a university arts course survey

The first of an occasional series surveying the teaching of music, dance, performance, visual and hybrid arts as practice and theory in Australian universities.

In this issue Keith Gallasch interviews Andy Arthurs, Senior Lecturer in Sonology and one of the convenors of the Bachelor of Multimedia degree at Griffith (page 18). Keith also talks to Lesley Stern, a lecturer in the School of Theatre and Film Studies at the University of New South Wales offering a distinctive academic course with strong practical ingredients. In future issues writers will look closely at the effectiveness and philosophical underpinnings of multi- and interdisciplinary degree courses. Of particular interest are the emerging multimedia courses and degrees. But first ...

Theatre at James Cook University, Townsville

Some of our readers would know Townsville as the now permanent home of Inter-Play, the International Festival of Young Playwrights. Appropriately, "James Cook is introducing a playwriting course as a separate strand in the Bachelor of Theatre course".

Course director Mike Dickinson, recently arrived from the Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, Wales says, "We want a small number of committed writers who see theatre and media as their primary interest". Because Dickinson also directs Theatre UpNorth, a small professional company resident in the university, playwrights will have the possibility of having their works read or produced. The company is committed to nurturing the work of Queensland playwrights.

Similarly, students studying theatre can use the company as a resource, even act with them if the opportunity arises as one honours student did recently in a production of Joanna Murray-Smith's *Love Child*. In 1995 theatre UpNorth toured Townsville, Cairns and Ayr. There are plans to go as far as Weipa.

If you want to study and train in theatre and playwriting in the relative isolation of

Townsville you have the benefits of few distractions, tropical comfort and a resident theatre company.

School of Theatre and Film Studies, University of New South Wales

KG To what extent do you see the course as a cross disciplinary, or interdisciplinary one?

LS We see it very much as interdisciplinary. Theatre and film disciplines aren't often brought together. That's what makes our school particularly interesting. In recent years, we've been trying to open it up quite a lot to other areas as well. You simply can't be teaching and studying the sorts of things that we are without taking account of contemporary critical theory, cultural studies, and so on. We introduce students to a range of contemporary theorists, but that might mean, of course, alluding to earlier writers. We don't simply start, say, with Derrida: we always try and situate ideas within a larger historical context.

KG Why did you have an interest in interdisciplinary film and theatre work?

LS Partly through my own practice of making films and working in theatre, something that I'd always done. And I came from Murdoch University in Western Australia where there had been good opportunities to explore those sorts of connections.

KG Is it the notion of performance that links them for you?

LS For me it is. And I suppose that would broadly be the case in the school, although it varies a little.

KG You're not trying to turn out actors and directors, but it says in the course booklet that you're trying to give people a critical language for dealing with the

experience of theatre through practical work.

LS It works quite successfully. There are a lot of courses that are critical, historical, theoretical, whatever. But they also have workshop components and project strands. So for instance, I teach a course called 'Performing Bodies' with Margaret Williams, and that has a practical component looking at the range of possibilities for performance. There's a major piece of writing and a practical project right from the proposal stage to production. We do workshops as well. The performer Vicky Spence helps us with that.

KG Beyond basic skills and completing a performance or a production, what's important for the students to develop?

LS How to think of an audience. Their work is always performed for an audience, even if only for the class.

KG What about the film and video side?

LS We have less actual production of film and video and that's partly because of resources, but it's also a question of what we feel is necessary. In the Video Exercise course students get basic training in video and then produce a work that allows them to work using video in other courses. At Honours level, students can undertake practical projects. They can involve other people, but they have to initiate it, they have to put in an extensive proposal about what it is that they want to explore. The emphasis is on process, not so much on the end product.

KG How important is screen culture in the courses overall?

LS Film numbers are really growing. And there's a strong film culture that the students are developing themselves. They have a very good film society, Keno, and a very good theatre society. They run workshops and screenings, and screenwriting competitions. We give them support with space and where we can we'll help with facilitating meetings with

film-makers, but it's very student motivated.

KG In our last issue of RealTime, Colin Hood was worrying about the state of cinematheque and screen education in New South Wales.

LS Screenculture is very lively, and those students who are interested in film really do seek things out but we haven't had a decent cinematheque in Australia anywhere, for a long time. The AFI (Australian Film Institute) is going through massive changes. We'll see what happens. We do need a better cinematheque, but I don't think it's disastrous. Any cinematheque is fairly often unsystematic in its programming. It doesn't worry me too much. That's how you acquire knowledge and culture.

KG You have courses on script writing, and there's an Honours course in dramaturgy.

LS The script course is very popular. That's run by John MacCallum. It's geared more towards theatre than film. Scripts are presented as performances or readings at the end of the course. Dramaturgy is done in cooperation with NIDA. It's for Honours students doing theatre studies and I think also some MA coursework students. Each student is seconded to a current production in Sydney and acts as a dramaturg.

KG What is the role of conferences like Caught in the Act which you are currently holding?

LS We're holding smaller conferences around the sorts of research areas that we're interested in—this one's about film and performance—where we can connect with other people doing that kind of work inside and outside the university and opening them to the public.

The Caught in the Act conference will be reported in RT10.

Film reviews

Exotica

Dir. Atom Egoyan; distrib. New Vision Films.

I suspect the best time to watch movies is on waking but a 10 a.m. preview is nearly as good with the theatre almost to yourself. And the best kind of film to watch at that time of the day is something like Atom Egoyan's new film *Exotica* in which the world seems always night.

The camera picks you up and takes you on a slow pan along a wall of fake plants lit by fluorescent lights outside the Club Exotica. The music is film noir with an Armenian edge. Cut to some airport and a black customs agent face to face through the one way glass with a man who has the eggs of exotic birds strapped to his torso. In a while we will leave this story for another where tickets for the ballet are exchanged in a taxi but not before we have just enough detail from this incident to hold on to it.



Mia Kirshner and Arsinee Khanjian in *Exotica*

Eventually we'll wind up inside *Exotica*, a club which must exist somewhere—if not, someone should probably open it. It has something of the spirit of the times. Desire is on display. The place combines the rarefied world of a Paul Delvaux painting with the atmosphere of a theme restaurant. There's one here in Sydney that's covered outside in oyster shells and inside people sit in little caves. It was named recently as one of the places chosen by criminals to hand over large sums of money to corrupt police. The film version was designed by Linda Del Rosario and Richard Paris who created the lush tropical jungle in an empty room at the Party Centre in Toronto. The club looked so authentic that passers-by had to be turned away and told it was not a strip club.

In *Exotica*, the women dance privately for the exclusively male clientele who sit at tables and watch but like us, never touch. Above the heads of the customers the MC Eric (Elias Koteas) oozes his strangely personal patter as Christina (Mia Kirshner) in schoolgirl skirt and blouse takes to the catwalk and begins her strip to Leonard Cohen's *Everybody Knows*.

There are plenty of stories to entice us, like the pregnant manager Zoe (Arsinee Khanjian) peering through the body shaped windows for any infringement of the rules set down by her dead mother; and Francis (Bruce Greenwood) the tax auditor investigating Thomas (Don McKellar) the bird smuggler in his humid pet shop and at nights seeking intimacy in the private dance of Christina.

Apparently the real story goes that *Exotica* began when a government tax auditor visited Atom Egoyan's office. "For a few days this complete stranger had full access to various aspects of my personal life. As I watched him sift through my financial records, I began to fantasize about his personal life." In the movie the auditor is shocked by a fish jumping from a fish tank on the desk "At the same time I was developing a story about a table dancer and her main client. Suddenly I found this mysterious client and my fantasy of the auditor began to emerge." The strength of the auditor's story of unresolved grieving and loss now holds the film together.

And what it holds is a set of incidents and an oddly believable set of characters who are all bound to each other by desire, loss and coincidence. All of Atom Egoyan's films occupy this world of reality at a remove and this is certainly one of his best. I walked out into the world and its edges and colours were sharper for having experienced *Exotica*. VB



Stockard Channing and Harvey Keitel in *Smoke*

Smoke

Directed by Wayne Wang, written by Paul Auster; distributed by New Vision.

Smoke is bliss, a dense Paul Auster fable, rich in accumulating coincidences and synchronicities that say lots about how we deal with fate, separation, reunion and masculinity. Harvey Keitel and William Hurt are in top form as a cigar shop owner and a writer respectively whose lives intersect through a black youth's inadvertent involvement in a robbery and his search for his father. Fathers and sons and surrogate versions thereof are the real subjects of *Smoke*. The female roles are small, but it's the male capacity to care for women against the odds which is also put to the test. Auster purists who like their novelist hero as austere neo existentialist complain that Wang has whimsied the script, but not so. Auster the fabulist is always playful, can be whimsical, even jokey as indicated by his screen appearance at the end of the film version of *The Music of Chance*. As in Atom Egoyan's *Exotica* the sound design is worth particular attention. KG

• continued page 14

Future flux

Natalie King interviews Next Wave's Zane Trow as he plans for 1996

NK *I'm interested in your background as a practicing artist since all of the staff members of the Next Wave Festival are practitioners.*

ZT I am a composer and a performer. I've been influenced in my thinking about music and sound by English members of Fluxus; a tradition of experimental music that sits on the edge of improvisation but has a formal compositional structure. I worked as a composer with a theatre company called Common Stock. At the same time, I was making videos, films and site-specific installations in inner London. My work bears a relationship to minimalism and the one American composer who I find completely inspirational is Meredith Monk, who produces film, dance, music, performance, voice; she is absolutely the precursor of Laurie Anderson. Somewhere in that strange musical tradition is where I sit.

NK *In what ways have you been able to shape the program since you became Artistic Director in 1991?*

ZT I came into the festival with two real interests. One was digital through my background as a composer. It is obvious that digital recording has shaped the way we have listened to music over the last twenty years and it's beginning to influence the way in which other art forms are made and distributed. I want to build bridges between a variety of art forms and technology. We are the only arts festival in Australia with an art and technology program.

My other interest is in cultural diversity and by that I mean cultures of identity. A festival that focuses on links between young artists and young audiences needs to be diverse, eclectic and not didactic. It needs to make clear connections between popular culture and contemporary thinking.

NK *You have kept the brief for each discipline quite separate. Barrie Kosky, the Artistic Director of the Adelaide Festival, has talked about his program overlapping and being interdisciplinary so that architecture for example, is seen alongside the visual arts.*

ZT There are certain projects that sit between the art forms which are our special events. I would like to get to a point where the whole festival is able to have a single brief. The way that young artists are trained is incredibly linear and closed. When you study the visual arts you don't get a contextual history of cultural developments in the theatre. So what is the dynamic between the visual arts and the theatre in the twentieth century? It's a very exciting dynamic from Picasso to Mike Parr.

NK *I've noticed your resentment of the term 'youth arts festival'.*

ZT We have always called ourselves 'a festival of young people and the arts' or more recently we have used the terms 'contemporary'. I have a lot of problems with youth arts policy in general as a separate entity. It is obvious that not many 18 to 30 year olds are interested in the Melbourne Theatre Company. My view is that if you put something interesting on, they will want to come.

NK *How do you see the Next Wave festival in terms of other national and international festivals like Adelaide or Melbourne.*

ZT We are focussed on the gap between college and the profession, the space between emerging and established. The scale of the festival allows us to focus on new ideas and new work which can be contextualised in a program that can be viewed by a younger audience. A young audience in Australia spends a lot of money on rock and roll and comedy but it doesn't spend much on serious art. And we fill a gap by providing a freedom to make work that is not driven by either a marketplace agenda or massive budgets. I don't think another festival in Australia at the moment has that focus. I think I might have more freedom than Kosky, Archer and Schofield.

NK *For the performance brief you use a quote from Peter Brook in 1968 which points to the moribund aspects of theatre. Isn't this a negative way to present a brief?*

ZT I'm interested in Brook as a flexible theatre maker even though his influence here is minimal. A lot of theatre in Australia that ought to be for a younger audience is excruciatingly boring and incredibly patronising. If we want to make the arts in Australia relevant with emerging audiences, we will have to deal with that boredom.

NK *What kind of performance work can we expect in the Festival?*

ZT Most are non text based, a mixture of visual and movement work and the majority are produced by young women. We received 25 responses (only one of those was scripted) which we have narrowed down to a program of six or seven shows which gives the audience the opportunity to see all of the productions.

A range of young choreographers responded to the brief, particularly forthright young women. Donna Jackson, the Director of the Women's Circus, is producing a one woman show called *Car Maintenance, Explosives and Love*, at a non-theatrical venue, probably a transport depot.

We have also received a very interesting proposal from Arena Theatre Company, one of the oldest companies for young people in Australia. Their new Director, Rosemary Myers, wants to explode some of the myths about young people's theatre, so the production draws on a dance party aesthetic.

Kooemba Jdarra, an indigenous performing arts company in Brisbane, responded with a proposal called *Seven Stages of Grieving*. The response was like an art object in itself comprising pieces of ripped paper, quotes from Aboriginal histories, theatrical text books.

NK *What kinds of spaces and sites are you interested in utilising for the festival?*

ZT The large cultural institutions, the smaller arts organisations like contemporary art galleries, independent spaces such as artist-run spaces and the sites around the city that artists want to interact with as public interventions. I am anti-street theatre, fireworks and 'festival art'. I am much more interested in a subtle intervention with public spaces. Next Wave attempts to accurately reflect the contemporary and independent thinking of the city every two years. Next Wave is about collaboration so it is one of the few opportunities where an artist-run space, an independent choreographer and the National Gallery of Victoria can all be in the same festival.

NK *What about the visual arts?*

ZT As well as about 18 exhibitions in contemporary art spaces and artist-run spaces across the city, there will be some lateral thinking about cultural heritage and role models in education. A forum and conference series as part of the Expo at the National Gallery will consider artists' relationship to learning and teaching.

NK *Could you discuss the Art & Technology program whose brief is 'perception and perspective'?*

ZT It will bring together work in the Murdoch Court at the National Gallery as a focal exhibition with local, national and international work. We think CD ROMs are boring and we are cynical about the *Creative Nation* initiatives. I am very critical of computer art that just looks like graphic design. So, we will gather work in computer animation, visualisation and installation. Hank Bull, our international guest last year, is currently involved in ISEA and is assisting us with the international selection of works.

NK *In terms of the young writer's program, you will be considering fanzines and logo appropriation. How will aspects of youth subculture be incorporated into the program?*

ZT We will be considering the history of fanzines and pamphleteering. For example, the World Wide Web is essentially an international magazine, a particular kind of reading experience. There will be a young writers' centre with a range of activities. Hopefully, after the Festival, an anthology of young writing will be published. We will have an Aboriginal writer in residence, Herb Wharton, at Healesville Sanctuary. There is an indigenous thread running through the next festival. We are working on a project with the Victorian Arts Centre and David Bridie which will bring together Torres Strait Islanders, Papua New Guinean and Aboriginal musicians.

NK *Where do you see the Next Wave Festival in the year 2000?*

ZT I would like to see Next Wave organising the local component for the opening of the Melbourne Museum of Contemporary Art.

Zane Trow, is currently working on Big River: Soundings on the Lower Yarra, an installation for the Melbourne International Festival.

ESSAYS IN SOUND

2

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Insights and conundrums in cyberspace

Jacqueline Millner and Annemarie Jonson at the Biennale of Ideas

The Biennale of Ideas (prelude to the 1996 Biennale in Sydney) tackled "the changing role of technology in art, design and architecture", topics "of concern to a wider-ranging audience than a visual arts exhibition might normally attract". The pitch to a wider public was also reflected in the choice of the populist Powerhouse Museum, with its air of cutting edge technology and corporate-sponsored research.

Perhaps part of the problem lay in the inability to successfully resolve the tension between this avowed target audience and those who actually attended—a good part of the Sydney contemporary arts scene—but the Biennale of Ideas failed to fully satisfy. The opening paper by illustrious expat MIT Professor William Mitchell set the tone. Its argument was nicely structured, easy to follow, but alarmingly simple. Had he underrated his audience? Is it enough to address the complex impact of virtual technologies by recollecting drinking coffee in the Circular Quay sunshine, amid the buzz of cellular phones, exchanging philosophical insights via your laptop with a colleague on the other side of the world; so as to assert that, properly wired, you can have it all and more? Who said virtual reality would ever replace presence?

As for Michael Ostwald from Newcastle University's architecture faculty, he struggled with his first trial by technology by repeatedly wandering out of the spotlight in his awkward on-stage meandering—an attempt at interactivity,

perhaps? His research on the history of interactive games and theme-parks was very entertaining, but could have done with a more critical dimension. Here was another man entirely seduced by the internet and its promise of "fluid identity"—a phrase he reiterated time and again without once acknowledging its problematic status. That Barry can surf the net as Lola is all the proof Ostwald appeared to need of the explosive potential of virtual cultures.

The first day was almost redeemed by Scott McQuire's dense and scholarly presentation on the unhomeliness of the electronic era. McQuire wove together an impressively broad tableau against which to consider the political and cultural implications of the new technologies. From Freud's uncanny, to architectural and urban theory, to postcolonial takes on the nation state, he sounded a refreshingly thoughtful note in the midst of the day's utopian patter. Of particular interest was McQuire's focus on the conceptual and socio-political dimensions of "home" and "hereness". Juxtaposing the rhetoric of telecommunications multinationals—"there will no longer be any there, there will only be a here"—and Heidegger's dystopic prophecies at the dawn of the television age—"despite the conquest of distance, nearness remains absent"—McQuire asks what impact emerging cybercultures might have on embodied presence, cultural exile and homelessness. What happens to "home" when the solidity of walls and geostrategic

boundaries give way to luminescent screens, when physical access to space comes to rely on circuits and switches, when the home—the dwelling, the city, the community—becomes deterritorialised?

Thankfully, McQuire's attention to the often elided power stakes inherent in the new media was well timed to resonate through the spectacle of the all-male six-member panel wrapping up the day's events for the somewhat depleted audience. A disheartening flip through the program revealed indeed that no local female commentator had been invited to speak at all, let alone moderate or act as a respondent to the mainline speakers.

Day two proved more entertaining—at least we got to see some art. The Sorbonne's Anne-Marie Duguet showed documentation of some fascinating work while considering the importance of apparatus and interface in video installation and interactive art. Particularly striking were video installations *Tall Ships* by American Gary Hill, *The Forest* by Hungarian Tamas Waliczky and *Interactive Plantgrowing*, whose interface, a hand caressing the leaves of a living plant, produced digitalised images of developing plant life.

Invoking Andreas Huyssen's suggestion that we live in a "culture of amnesia", John Conomos appealed to the genealogy of technology- and interactivity-based artforms—such as fluxus happenings and early video art—to examine the potential of new digital technologies to transform both the lifeworld and art practice. Conomos' paper set in stark relief the stunning lack of criticality of the first two day-one speakers, raising a number of fundamental issues around the corporate and institutional deployment of new technologies: their relation to the military-industrial and military-entertainment complexes, the question of whether interactive technologies are genuinely democratising, and the ethico-political dimensions of the artist's role in using these technologies to expressive ends. Conomos also highlighted one of the key dilemmas in critical theory in this field: the exponential speed of technological development stymies the efforts of the theorist to keep pace. Unfortunately, the second part of Conomos' paper, which chronicled a number of new media works by Australian artists such as Linda Dement and Brad Miller, testified to the difficulty of translating a critical framework to actual artistic projects.

After Conomos' paper, the audience had an unexpectedly long wait for the next offering. An experienced performer knows how to incite the suspense of the crowd. And what a crowd! It was standing room only to be party to American digital queen Sandy Stone's reflections on liquid identity. While promoted as a "performance", Stone's presentation was rather a well-rehearsed animated lecture that relied heavily on anecdote and gesture but had more in common with academic posturing than artistic innovation. Indeed the content closely followed tracts from her latest book.

Stone confirmed in an interview that she locates her work not in performance but in the pedagogical tradition, that she's trying to sell a message, not experiment with artistic form. What that message is may not be so far from Ostwald's blind faith in the power of virtual reality to free us from an identity fixed by a particular body, but the moral tales Stone related powerfully and amusingly sketched out the dilemmas and complexities of virtual dimensions. The bind in which her altruistic psychiatrist friend found himself after sampling the rewards of

communicating to women as a woman on the net was a poignant illustration of the dynamics between "real" and virtual worlds. And yet McKenzie Wark's confession in the following panel discussion that there was something of the American liberal-humanist tradition in Stone's work which he was somehow "programmed to resist" struck a chord. Mortifying flashes of Karen Finley and confessional psychodrama ruffled the mood.

Despite reservations, Sandy Stone was value for money—compelling and provocative, a hard act to follow. The second weekend saw a switch to more familiar art crowd territory, slide shows at Artspace. As had Anne-Marie Duguet, Lynne Cook, artistic director of the forthcoming Biennale, sustained the interest of the audience with some riveting artwork, this time that of American artists Ann Hamilton and Gary Hill. Hamilton's work in particular, including a year-long installation pulsating in a maelstrom of horsehair and disorientating sound, gave heart to many local artists who are conceptually embroiled in the impact of new technologies but opt to work in more traditional media. Hamilton's work reiterated that interactivity is far more than a screen/keypad interface. Sight and sound concluded the day with recently uncovered work by Diane Arbus discussed with some wit by Elisabeth Sussman. You can't really go wrong with this material. Arbus' eerie shots of the interiors of B-grade cinemas in New York's Times Square in the late 50s prefigure a preoccupation with the grotesque with which she is now synonymous.

Artspace was bursting at the seams for the concluding session, Stelarc's third arm performance. Many would have been well-acquainted with this work, which may still have some conceptual currency but disappointed as spectacle. Stelarc undoubtedly pioneered the artistic handling of many current concerns, but one suspects that his project to supersede the body with technology is somewhat tendentious given the profound social and political implications of the telecommunications "revolution". More interesting was the chance to witness this Australian cultural icon discuss his career's work, alternating between alarmingly sweeping claims and disarming self-deprecation, all punctuated by an infectious cackle.

Overall, the more critical notes in the event were sounded by a theorist who made no direct references to particular artwork, or by artwork itself independently of its exposition. The excruciatingly difficult task of merging critical theorisation with critical artwork without compromising one to the other remained a conundrum at the conclusion of the Biennale of Ideas. When the scales tip towards the artwork next year, perhaps a different resolution might emerge.



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Hotwired flower power

Boris Kelly enters *Wired* magazine's world wide web site

There is a hyperlink between *Wired* magazine and the 1960s. The head office of the world's hippest computer publication is in San Francisco and when Grateful Dead singer Jerry Garcia died recently *Hotwired*, *Wired* magazine's Web site, posted a report on a memorial held by Deadheads who congregated in Haight Street in real time to mourn his passing beyond cyberspace into someotherspace. The junction of Haight and Ashbury Streets was a prominent site of the psychedelic drug culture of the 60s whose champions included Timothy Leary and, yes, Jerry Garcia and friends were there too. Leary, in a prophetic twist owing something of a legacy to Neil Young's song about 'silver spaceships comin' has evolved into an advocate of interplanetary migration as a solution for the ills of planet Earth. I remember visiting the Haight Ashbury district in the mid 70s and was struck by the number of brain-fried hippies begging on the streets both there and in the vicinity of the legendary Berkeley campus of UCLA. I despaired at the time that the idealism of my youth had come to this.

The 'world beat' fluorescent colours of Dutch designer Max Kisman do a download creep across the screen when you log in to the *Hotwired* cyberstation. The imagery is powered by Silicon Graphics who, amongst other presences, have staked out territory in Hollywood as the company most likely to succeed in marrying the film industry to digital interactivity. Is it any wonder that such heavies, and even the blue chip Conde Naste publishing group, want a piece of the action when at last count 237,493 people were members of the digital international *Hotwired* community?

There's a degree of exclusivity suggested in the *Hotwired* registration process. You need a personalised user name and password to make full use of the site which, to the paranoid like myself, could suggest that the folks at *Hotwired* might be using my e-mail address for marketing purposes. I became particularly suspicious of on-line registration

when it was reported that Microsoft had built a silent gopher called *Wizard* into the Windows '95 registration process which spied on the user's range of application software and reported it back to MS home base. This discovery was enough to put the Australian Navy off a bulk purchase of Windows '95. But having been a *Hotwired* member for over a month I can happily report that my mailbox hasn't been stuffed with unwanted e-mail. In fact, *Hotwired* even provides details on how it can be removed from their records if you so desire. Nice democratic touch.

You see, there's more to the hyperlink than geography. Some of the hippies who survived Haight Ashbury are now cybergurus who have taken the lessons of the 60s and brought them to bear on the development of the digital planet. These are people who read McLuhan's global village prophecies at face value and went with it, and who now quote *Future Shock's* Alvin Tofler (also on Newt Gingrich's reading list) to rationalise the evolution of civilisation from hunter-gatherer societies to info-gatherers. The people at *Hotwired*, like their paper-bound partners at *Wired*, position their product as being on the pulse of the future. They believe their job is to report back to the rest of us still here in the present. *Wired* has been compared to *Rolling Stone* magazine in so far as it has been launched at the same time as tremendous technological, cultural and economic change. Like its rock music predecessor, the *Wired* enterprise trades off a mix of specific cultural industry content with a liberal capitalist editorial spin. The fluidity with which the *Wired* graphic layout shifts between editorial and paid advertisements is virtually seamless and, to my mind, it moves with equal ease between the ethos of free market capitalism (although Bill Gates certainly doesn't seem to be *Wired's* favourite person) and the socially conscious.

The degree of interactivity available on *Hotwired* is an attractive feature of the site.

Club Wired, a chat (IRC) area which, unlike some commercial online services, is chaperone free, recently hosted an on line chinwag with music producer Don Was and, more recently, followed up with sexpert Susie Bright, 'radical feminist, pornography advocate and sex positive educator'. Also on line was psycho-botanist Dale Pendell who spoke about psychoactive plants. Sex, drugs and rock'n'roll are all on the *Hotwired* 60s hyperlink in a talk fest which is available in transcript if you can't be there in real time. You'll need to download some Telnet software to gain access to *Club Wired* but the how-to is all covered by *Hotwired*.

Threads is another interactive sub site where free speech rules. Members are able to blow their trumpet on any old thang but most of the postings appear to be responses to material appearing elsewhere on *Hotwired*. During the week when Netscape made its spectacular debut on the New York stock exchange there were lots of threads posted in response to the Davenet column which forcefully argued that Apple should head Bill Gates off at the pass by merging with the fledgling software company. The on line debate which followed was informed and provocative.

One correspondent made the point that Microsoft's bundling of Windows '95 with all new PCs put Apple and Netscape in a no-win situation because Netscape currently has no way of distributing its product to users without Web access or ftp. As Davenet pointed out, this left Netscape shareholders with a grossly overvalued stock that could only succumb to gravity unless Apple saw the light. You heard it first on *Hotwired*.

There's a sense that *Wired/Hotwired* has the future world's best interests at heart and that the future is inevitably digital because Nicholas Negroponte keeps saying so. There is also a sense, as there is with most American popular culture, that the rest of the world (if there is one) is just like America or should be. Given that the majority of *Hotwired* members are probably sitting in front of screens on the

North American continent that's probably fair enough but I find the cultural reductionism a little hard to swallow.

To thoroughly browse and selectively download *Hotwired* will conservatively take about an hour which, depending on your service provider, will cost you around eight bucks. That's about the cost of *Wired* magazine, published monthly. If you visit the web site once a week the sums tell their own story about the value of the journey. However, you can subscribe to the *Hotflash* newsletter which arrives in your e-mail box every week as a detailed precis reminder to visit the site. It's useful and interesting and indicates the spirit of constant change which characterises the *Hotwired* www site.

Like most Web journeys I find it's best to have a specific reason for going to a site. If you have time and money to waste you might surf indiscriminately but most netheads get savvy fast to the rate at which real money can disappear in the virtual world. *Hotflash* is a good way to check out the contents of the site before you commit to returning to it. Also check out *Your View*, a customising feature which allows members to preselect the sub sites they would prefer to visit, thus cutting short wading time. In a useful recent development *Hotwired* also began providing permanent access to an archive of all content—which means you can link to any *Hotwired* story, no matter when it appeared, from anywhere on the Web.

Visiting *Hotwired* is a worthwhile experience and has certainly made my hotlist, but bear in mind you have to tolerate a fair bit of that excessively laid back west coast geek speak which is evident in *Wired*. Considering that membership is otherwise free I guess tolerance is a reasonable price to pay. Despite the managerial and editorial crossover between the digital and material versions there is little editorial traffic between them. I'm still happy to buy *Wired* magazine knowing that what I access on the *Hotwired* web site will be new material and generally more up-to-the-minute reportage.

Yes, if I still had hair I guess there'd be flowers in it.

Hotwired at <http://www.hotwired.com/>
Boris Kelly is a Canberra writer and performer.

Digital dereliction

Marius Webb reports on the ABC's *Delivering the Digital Future—Radio 2000*

The Eugene Goossens Hall at the ABC Centre in Ultimo was the setting last month for the second Digital Radio Conference organised by the ABC to provide a forum for the discussion of rapidly developing technology. The conference attracted some 200 delegates from across the industry.

That we are living in a digital age can be attested by the number of forums, conferences and seminars about the digital future. The reality is that most of what is being discussed is actually happening now, or is at least possible. Those working with the technology generally know exactly what the machinery can do or achieve. It's just the

poor consumers who are in the dark. To illustrate. In the generous folder handed out at the conference there's an introductory page on ABC Radio's output. "There are six ABC Radio networks," the leaflet boasts, "the newest being the around-the-clock news update service, News Radio". A generation ago a small group of young ABC producers put a submission to the Maclean Inquiry into the feasibility of FM broadcasting. The year was 1974 and the substance of the submission was that the ABC should be running at least six networks rather than two.

In the early 80s at Metro Television, a community access TV outfit located in Paddington Town Hall, a mixed group of broadcasters, artists and assorted ratbags set up a so-called 'slow scan' audiovisual link with a conference of performance artists at MIT in the US. With a little technical help from Telecom, 'TELESKY', as it was called, was a very early experiment with the sort of technology that is now being routinely used on the internet. The point about these anecdotes is that it is very often the on-the-ground workers, artists and performers who realise the potential for new technologies and put the pressure on to get it developed.

At a break in the conference a senior ABC Manager asked me what I thought and I said there seemed precious little to do

with the creative side of things. "It's a technical conference," she hissed. And touché, she was right. Minister Lee promised to light up the airwaves with some test licences to begin digital broadcasting. This is great news for the techos, but as it will be some time before there are any receivers available there won't be much for the rest of us to talk about, much less any creative content.

Because of the way it was structured, the conference was essentially an opportunity for technocrats to strut their stuff and lap up the latest from o/s. Nearly half the participants were from the ABC, which is understandable but hardly balanced. Of these 90, only two were program makers! There was a sprinkling of people from commercial radio—all managers. Only the SBS and community radio managed to send any real people along and naturally they didn't get much of a look-in when it came to participating.

The keynote speakers introduced us to the wonderful world of interactive radio where we will be able to get instant traffic updates (whoopee) and order concert tickets at the press of a button. While admitting that content was what it was all about, Steve Edwards, the hot Canadian techexec of the moment, said "Radio's prime focus will continue to be companionship and high quality music entertainment". I can live with the music bit, but companionship! Sadly the conference never got much beyond this pathetic putdown of an exciting and creative medium. If Brian Johns is really going to encourage creativity at the ABC, they'll have to do better than this.

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Radio reviews

Radio Eye's Tony Barrell and technical producer Russell Stapleton have won the Prix Italia RAI Special prize for Documentary Making for Tony's *Tokyo's Burning* (reviewed in RT8). Hear it for yourself when it's repeated on December 10 at 8.30pm on Radio National. Another winner, the Irish production *Dreaming of Fat Men*, also reviewed in RT8, will be repeated on New Years Eve, a very special treat.

My Personal Board

Episode 6 Sun Oct 8, 9.30pm

Episode 7 Sun Oct 15, 9.30pm

One of the already quirky *Radio Eye's* stranger contributions to radio culture with Australian producer Eurydice Aroney locking into the friendships maintained via telephone and computer between "four middle aged American professionals, all veterans of personal development and analysis". The program is chatty, sharing and caring. As the blurb asks, "Is this the intimacy of the future?" Also one for those who relish the music of conversation.

Menagerie

by Virginia Madsen & Tony MacGregor

The Listening Room, Mon Oct 16, 9pm

No review copy. A response to the menagerie of the Jardins des Plants in Paris, the oldest zoo in Europe.

Smoker's Corner

produced by Tony Barrell

Radio Eye, Sun Oct 22, 8.30pm

No review copy but should be a good one for smokers active and reformed and cultural studies scholars. Smokers are interviewed outside buildings and Richard Klein the author of *Cigarettes are Sublime* has his say about the romance of smoking.

Mendicant Erotics

by Ellen Zweig, producer: Andrew McLennan

The Listening Room, Mon Oct 23, 9 pm

This one creeps up on you. It starts out with a monologue from Ellen Zweig, recounting fragments of a journey joined by the repeated sounds of flowing water. Familiar but seductive. The result of Ellen Zweig's studies of the book of rules for Jain wandering monks. On a map of Sydney she draws a square. Suddenly we're in real time with Andrew McLennan improvising his way through Kings Cross. Back in the studio, Ellen Zweig reflects on an imaginary city. She's a wandering mendicant, begging for erotic experience. Some nice cutting between the two by Russell Stapleton. McLennan: I don't fancy the strip clubs, don't fancy the fast foods. I would like to go inside the Capitol Hotel. You can have a full Korean-come-Japanese bath-sauna, massage. I'd like to know what's going on in there. Zweig: I was swimming in a liquor of black night. Skimming on the surface of the world. There was a black sheen to my thoughts. McLennan: I'm naked. It's slippery in here. There's a mural on the wall, watery retreats ... extra cubicles for very special washes ... for the pores. The sound is the sound of hissing water and the gurgling of taps. Zweig: "Another journey over water in the bright days when we were unacquainted with the world." The interplay between the abstract and the real makes for a challenging easy listening.

Transmission of the Scanner

by Michael Hodgson

Fourth Window series from New Zealand's Artspace

The Listening Room, Mon Oct 23, 9 pm

A composition based on the *Music of the Spheres* using sounds which relate to transmission culture. Eleven scanners will pick up transmissions from eleven frequencies based on planetary tone and manipulated to produce an orbital composition.

Blue is the Colour of Hope

produced by Marilyn Powell

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Radio Eye, Sun Oct 29, 8.30pm

This broadcast coincides with the meeting of the World congress of PEN International in Perth in October. The program details the struggle of journalist Martha Kumsa against Ethiopian authorities who arrested her in 1980. No charges were laid, no trial was held. She corresponded with Canadian writers Timothy Findley and Jan Bauer whom she subsequently met.

Murder Suite

by Keith Gallasch, Virginia Baxter & composer

Sarah de Jong

The Listening Room, Mon Oct 30, 9 pm

Yes, we did this one. Inner city paranoia with music. Originally five by five minute pieces commissioned by *Arts Today* and played as a non-linear radio serial. A couple wander the streets of a city full of holes, afraid to go home to the noisy renovations, to an inner city neighbourhood full of screams and sobs where a

mysterious graffiti artist is writing "Red" on cars. The Centrepoint Tower is swaying, a public sculpture is too dangerous to touch. As they try to avoid road accidents, they talk: She: You won't believe this He: What? She: The renovators are ... He: What? She: Artists. He: What? She: Artists, moonlighting. He: Are they really renovating? One for insomniacs who lie awake wondering what is under the floorboards and whether it's your surroundings that make you jumpy or you who cause the buildings to grimace. For architects and city planners and anyone interested in the poetics of space and murder. Listen with your lover.

The Ghost in the Machine

by Jane & Phillip Ulman

The Listening Room, Mon Nov 6, 9pm

Definitely one for train spotters, this has all the markings of the Ulman team—a meticulously recorded radio essay that uses quotation, repeated phrases and slices of oral history. The emotional soundtrack contrasts with a sometimes dry text delivered by many voices including railway workers. Some of the effects—whipcracks and zooming trains are frightening, sometimes melodramatic. The multitude of ordinary voices are made dramatic by being constantly repositioned in space. The repeated phrase "turning and turning and turning" takes over from the sound of turbines and trains. A real anxiety piece. Speed and calamity. "Change roars like a giant engine ..." Listen on earphones and decide for yourself whether there is a connection between the sound of machines and the human pulse. For a good companion piece listen to *Suite, Machines*.

Suite, Machines

Randy Thom & David Slusser for MOMA's

Territory of Art series

The Listening Room, Mon Nov 13, 9 pm

Equally musical but another time another place. This one takes human voices as documentary and weaves them together with the hums, buzzes and squeaks of the industrial world. What comes out is music and the question of whether human beings are in tune with technology. Laurie Anderson fans will find some resonances in this work. People talk about machines they have lived with, loved, hated, remembered. The roar of industrial noise becomes melodic. There's almost a romantic quality to this piece. Not so much fear of technology but a pleasure in its possibilities. A nice companion piece to the Ulmans' *Ghost in the Machine* piece which has beautiful sounds combined with a sense of anxiety. This has machines as big chords but doesn't preclude machines as potentially dominating, dangerous. There are stories of people losing fingers to machines. But the carefully scored voices, sirens and alarms skirt the melodramatic, subvert high anxiety.

Penina

by John Ioane

Fourth Window series from New Zealand's Artspace

The Listening Room, Mon Nov 20, 9pm

An ambient trance piece using contemporary sounds of the day and traditional Polynesian sounds, musical instruments and drumming riffs.

Formula 1: The Art of Speed

by Arsenije Jovanovic

The Listening Room, Mon Nov 27, 9pm

A very musical piece using as its central motif a popular classical piece the mood of which oscillates between victory and defeat. Circuiting the music is the high pitched buzz of formula one racing cars which you'd think would be enough to send you screaming from the room. But not at all. The piece is layered with commentary on international races, the voices of Ayrton Senna and Roland Ratzenberger, heroes and victims of the sport. The language is foreign for some of us, a level of intelligibility is removed but the program's operatic, slightly funereal feel is quite engrossing. The production is from Austrian Radio Kunst Radio.

VB, KG

Film reviews

• from page 11

What Happened Was

Written and directed by Tom Noonan
distributed by Premium Films

This is a tightly crafted, nervily performed encounter between a man and a woman who know each other at the legal firm they work for, but who have no inkling of each other's real selves. She has a fantasy version of him which will be sharply contradicted, he's not all interested in getting to know her. An invitation to a meal at her New York apartment unwittingly opens them out, or does it? Her life unfolds before him whether he likes it or not, he keeps his to himself until a burst of American style revelation. Director-writer-actor Noonan plays the man, Karen Sillas the woman, both investing their roles with a neurotic edge that you frequently fear will tip over into the psychopathic as secrets, lies and sharp objects are tossed about. There are only two performers, the tension and the claustrophobia of their overlapping lonelinesses is darkly engaging and often funny. The only other live action is of a television screen in a neighbor's flat—unnerving glimpses of violent video porn. The pacing and delivery of lines approximates somewhat the poetic deadpan of Hal Hartley and Atom Egoyan's studied naturalism, but the plotting is less New York cool than American Theatre's digging around in the dark side of the American Dream for truth—who lied, what for, the buried child. Noonan's second film is on the way, a third is being made—a lot to look forward to.

KG

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In *The Listening Room* during October and November you'll hear from the *4th Window* series; simulcast on ABC Classic FM and New Zealand's Concert FM.

- *Transmission of the Scanner* by Michael Hodgson on October 23 at 9pm.
- *Penina* by John Ioane on November 20 at 9pm.

Also in October you'll hear *Cell Songs* by Jo Truman ... *Coastal and Reef Islands* by Jane and Phillip Ulman ... *Menagerie* by Virginia Madsen and Tony McGregor ... *Mendicant Erotics* by Ellen Zweig ... *Frameworks* by Gary Bryson ... *Murder Suite* by Keith Gallasch, Virginia Baxter and Sarah de Jong ... and *Within One Square Mile* by Paul Charlier

And in November in *The Listening Room* ... machine music starting with *The Ghost in the Machine* by Jane and Phillip Ulman ... *Artificial Forms* by Herb Jercher ... *Suite, Machines* from LA's MOMA by Randy Thom and David Slusser ... *Mondi Diversi* by Claudia Taranto and Paul Charlier ... *La Fabbrica Illuminata* by Luigi Nono ... *Deus ex Machina* by Paul Schutze ... *Signal to Noise* by Jane and Phillip Ulman ... and *Formula 1: The Art Of Speed* by Arsenije Jovanovic



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The music industry: selling empty boxes

Bruce Johnson worries at the promotion of delivery systems at the expense of music

In the mid 50s, an Australian recording executive was quoted as saying that he and his colleagues hated popular music and would produce silent records if they thought they would sell. The date and the comment mark a major shift in the balance between music and its mediations to the consumer. I mean 'mediations' in the broadest sense—all the structures that stand between the music and the experience of hearing it, including packaging, distribution, promotion, discursive systems like reviews and symbolic systems like notation. They include of course the media themselves and their representatives. Rogers and O'Brien's history of early Australian rock has two particularly fascinating photographs, one of Gene Pitney, the other of Paul McCartney, each boxed in by DJs. The message is clear: the mediators control access.

Any assessment of the state of the music industry today has to begin with the

recognition that the balance between music and the mediating apparatus has continued to shift to such an extent that the music itself is now virtually inaudible at certain levels of discourse. The release of *Creative Nation* in October last year has provided a point of focus for debate about the arts in Australia. Yet that document arguably has very little to say about the arts. It is overwhelmingly fixated on how they are mediated, and this fixation has characterised the sideshows that have been staged in its wake. The extravaganza presented in Canberra earlier this year under the title Contemporary Music Summit (CMS) was not about contemporary music, but about the music industry—not about what is produced, but about how it is mediated. The emptiness at the core of the event was disclosed during Michael Lee's keynote address, in which he identified John Farnham as embodying 'the future of contemporary music in Australia'. As an attempt to address 'problems' facing Australian music, it was like shadow-boxing; apart from some voices literally from the margins, there was little engagement with the heart of the matter—contemporary music.

In evaluating the impact of technology, there was no interest in creative content. The GF4 CD-ROM, for example, was cited as evidence of the 'state-of-the-art' local technology, signalling the enormous vitality of our contemporary music industry. The banality of the content went unremarked. There's a limit to the number of times the purchaser will enjoy accessing an interview with one of the band to hear her affirm, 'Touring is great!' Technocrats, music producers and media representatives did not recognise that their own fixation on the 'package' and the quality of its presentation resulted in products so lacking in substance that the consumer simply lost interest in them. Much was made of the 'interactivity' of the CD-ROM. There was little discussion of what it enabled the consumer to 'interact' with. The CD-ROM fixation grew out of *Creative Nation*, which promises massive funds allocated to its development.

Ultimately, it is *Creative Nation* and its instrumentalities which currently legitimise this infatuation with mediating structures. Following the Performing Arts Board's *Music Unlimited* seminar in Brisbane, a report in *Artforce* (89, September 1995, p. 11), devoted only one of its ten paragraphs to 'the creative process', as addressed by Richard Vella. The rest concerns such matters as, 'music shopping', 'power bases', 'economic realities', and, inevitably, internet. Of course these issues have to be debated, but they have become

autonomous. The formalism of traditional musicology divorced music from its relations of production, mystifying it through ahistoricism. In recent decades, the chasm of mystification has been widened from the other side. The music industry increasingly withdraws from the contemplation of music itself. Music has become the margin. Mediations are the centre. The consequences will be profound. While the industry moguls are absorbed fatuously in delivery systems they remain distracted from the character of the actual product. The almost total ignorance shown at the CMS regarding techno and dance music hinted at the extent to which the industry's obsession with mediations has put it out of touch with music itself. This is terribly obvious, but it has to be said, because current industry debate is proceeding in blithe ignorance of this little axiom: you can't go on selling people empty boxes. It is the uncritical, breathless enthusiasm with which the industry lines up behind the priorities of *Creative Nation* that causes one to wonder in what sense anything 'creative' can flow from that centre of discourse.

Bruce Johnson lectures in the School of English, UNSW, is a writer on popular music and cultural studies, a broadcaster and jazz musician.

Beyond the picture-book CD-ROM

M. Billsson at the 2nd National Entertainment Industry Conference, August 4-5 1995, Sydney

The thing to remember about conferences and seminars involving that curious breed the world terms 'The Music Industry', is that they are predominantly entrepreneurs, business suits intent on convincing the world to part with hard-earned cash for a commodity none of us actually *needs*, very often devoid of anything but the flimsiest of connections to concepts of artistic creativity, and most importantly, disposable enough for the consumer to replace with another commodity of more or less the same disposable value almost the moment after purchasing the first item. These people have turned the creation of music into the production line. A recording artist is 'product', their work 'catalogue', their value determined by 'units' sold. The motive at the bottom of the 2nd National Entertainment Industry Conference was not the development of strategies to best utilise the 'new technologies' for the creation of better 'art', it was pure economic survival. How, in the face of these technologies, does the music industry maintain control over its investment?

The dilemma for those local music industry figures attending the conference was spelt out in no uncertain terms by guest speaker John Perry Barlow, an American currently being touted as the 'guru' of the issues of copyright on the internet, a larger than life figure who describes himself as retired cattle rancher and sometime lyricist for 60s musical hippie collective The Grateful Dead: "Most people from the music industry are in glassy-eyed self denial. Whether they like it or not, it is now possible for anybody practically anywhere to reproduce almost anything that human beings can do with their minds, infinitely, and distribute it infinitely at zero cost. This changes everything."

It's that 'zero cost' that was bothering almost everyone at the conference. It was in fact built into the conference agenda. Practically every panel discussion was directed at trying to find a solution to

overcome it—'Artist Managers Towards 2000', 'Protection & Collection', 'Piracy, Counterfeits & Bootlegging'—or in finding a way to access it to better financial advantage—'Breaking Into Asia And Beyond', 'Broadcasting & Narrowcasting', 'Going Interactive—Do Or Die?'. Conference convenor Phil Tripp was determined to put a more human face to the exercise: "[The new technologies are] an important way for artists to get closer to their audiences, not just by featuring their music, but by actually having conversations with their fans." Peter Farnan, guitarist with Boom Crash Opera and one of the most articulate advocates for overturning the recommendations of the Prices Surveillance Authority that CD prices could only effectively be made cheaper if the royalty rates to composers were changed, brought things back to the central fear: "Just don't expect to be making money out of it—yet."

There *were* musicians at the conference, the 'creators' of the 'product' being discussed, described so perfectly by Tripp: "Talent is plentiful, cheap and the most disposable." Surprisingly, however, only one of them, Tom Ellard, who has for 15 years led the exploration of experimental electronic music that goes by the name of Severed Heads, seemed prepared to make a stand for the 'art' that was to be presented by the emerging plethora of technologies: "Have we really got things coming out that you could not get from video or from CD or CD-ROM? Have we really broken away from the talking book? I don't think we have."

After the event, I asked Ellard to extrapolate. He'd been a panellist ostensibly discussing 'Creativity Caught Between Internet & Interactive', with drummer/composers Rob Hirst (Midnight Oil) and Lindy Morrison (Cleopatra Wong/The Go-Betweens), Farnan and drummer Cameron Goold (Songlines).

"The buzzword throughout the industry at the moment is 'content'," said Ellard. "The Minister for the Arts, Michael Lee,

came along to tell us that the Australian government is very concerned with content, that they want Australia to be a content provider. So I figured the most important thing to do at this conference was to actually *show* some content, to bring along something I was working on. That seemed essential so I was quite surprised to see how very few people had anything that *they* were showing.

"Most of the discussion was along the lines of 'We don't need record companies any more, we've got the internet. We'll put our records on the internet and people can download them!' And I cannot believe that anyone would say that if they actually *knew* the issues. Quite apart from whether or not the artist is paid, how many people have 650 megabytes of space on their hard-drive to download a record onto? And that's just the music, without any visual content.

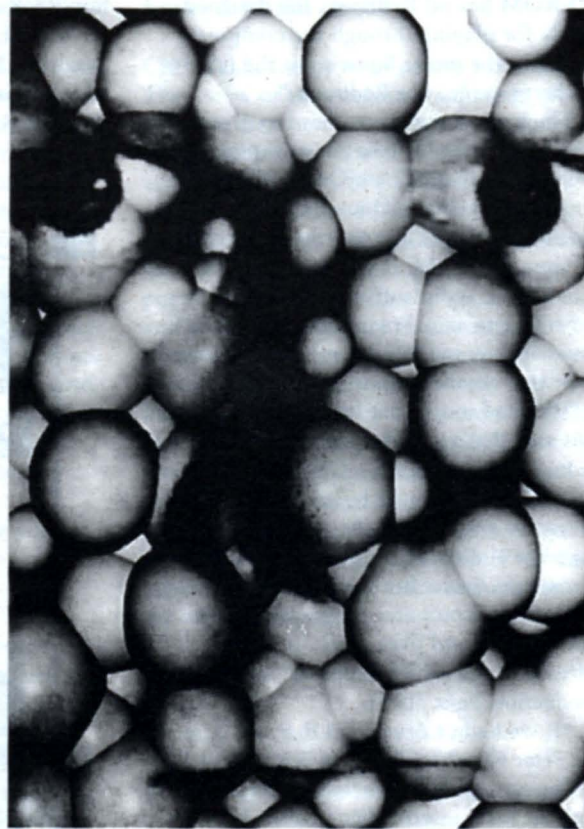
"When it came to my turn to speak, I felt it was important to point out a number of things. For instance, what these people seemed to want the internet to do for them was reinvent the do-it-yourself aspect of punk, in an ultra-glam, ultra-tech sort of a way. It was a completely hollow concept they seemed to want to develop. I said that the artist should be very, very concerned with the *art*—get the art right, don't worry about the packaging—fuck the *medium*, do something beautiful. People were screaming and yelling, record companies yelling at us, us yelling at record companies, so I decided to show off the CD-ROM I've been working on. It wasn't a picture-book.

"What I had was an environmental thing where you could wander through and pick up sounds, so, for instance, you could build up a musical piece

like Lego, by, say, dragging furniture around. It isn't a remix thing but real *musique concrete* sort of stuff for people who had never heard of *musique concrete*, who don't need to know the history or theory but might love to hear the sound of a big metal thing being dropped in one part of a room. They all looked at it uncomprehending and went back to arguing again.

"The guy who came up and asked me something about it asked if there was a way he could turn off those options so it could run in a conventional linear way. In other words, defeat the purpose of the whole thing!"

For all its shortcomings, the conference at least put many of the issues of accommodating the possibilities of the new technologies onto the music industry agenda. And perhaps these technologies are just what the industry needs, to shake it out of its complacency. As Ellard says: "I see these formats as allowing the reintroduction of fear into the process of creation. Bringing out a CD-ROM should be like trying to stir up trouble."



Severed Heads

Not a band—an electronic art collective

Amanda Macdonald Crowley introduces Clan Analogue

Clan Analogue is a non-profit collective of electronic musicians, video artists, DJs, writers and hackers. That's the opening line of the collective's world wide web site. But membership seems to be anyone with an interest in electronic music, and associated electronic art practices.

The emphasis of the collective is on electronic dance music, so the majority of the members are musicians and DJs who produce or play electronic music. But all styles of electronic music are accepted. And all styles of members, from artists through to musicians to people who just like the sense of belonging to a growing community of people interested in the culture of Clan: the key issue is simply 'electronic'.

In Sydney, Clan Analogue perform live in places as diverse as the Bentley Bar, the Big Day Out, the Goethe Institut, the Art Gallery of NSW and at various parties and raves around Sydney. They project slides, video, film and computer animation and erect installations where they perform. They record music, make CDs and records. They're on the world wide web, hold discussion groups on the internet, publish a newsletter...and have a good time doing it.

Clan's publicity information ambitiously claims that it is the only organisation of its kind in Australia, if not the world. And indeed when I investigated the collective and its activities, it seemed so amorphous as to defy description, but that is how Clan Analogue members like it!

The collective began in Sydney in 1992, when a group of like-minded musicians tired of operating in isolation decided to get together. They created a forum for experimentation and collaboration that has grown exponentially in the last couple of years. Not all the members believe the growth factor is a good thing, but it seems to grow regardless. Branches of the collective are now being established in Canberra, Wollongong and Melbourne and there are individual members as far afield as Perth.

Essentially, Clan aims to promote and develop innovation in electronic music and art. It facilitates exchanges of ideas, and Clan members prefer to work outside the mainstream of commercial, or even independent record labels. Indeed Matthew (aka Amnesia), who is involved in starting a Melbourne branch of Clan Analogue, summed up the value of Clan: "The issue of style is not of paramount importance as it

is with the established labels or even the more established independents. In fact that's where Clan differs radically from a record label. There is a great deal of value in the DIY thing. It is about setting up a more creative space, without profit being the driving factor."

For Garry Bradbury, who has been performing and recording electronic music for more than a decade, Clan is not just an alternative avenue for manufacturing and distributing music, it's more of a forum, a context in which to work. "It's not just an alternative label, it's kind of a think tank. I had become very disillusioned working in a vacuum. What Clan has provided me with is peers and an audience to recontextualise my work. The Bentley (where Clan did a regular Sunday afternoon gig for a few months in 1993 that turned into a Wednesday night gig during 1994) did just that. It provided something to prepare music for; it generated an energy, and a context for making work."

"There is a lot of cross-fertilisation in Clan. I am currently working with three different 'bands', and the line-up of each changes all the time. Sometimes I don't even know who is going to be in the line-up at any given time."

But Clan is not just about performing, or playing music. Lisa Bode who has recently started editing *Kronic Oscillator*, the Clan newsletter, says that "lots of people get involved with Clan just because they like the sense of belonging". Whilst *Kronic* is essentially a vehicle to get information out to Clan members who are not on-line (although a large proportion in fact are), she is also interested in publishing articles and short stories by Clan members, to broaden the artforms represented in the collective. *Kronic* is also a forum for reviewing performances and recording by Clan members, and Lisa is interested in expanding and developing this area of *Kronic's* role to include some critical discourse on the role of Clan, its music, and the social milieu in which it operates.

Clan's events and other output are always varied, and always, as you would expect from a collective, mixed artistically. Though largely driven by a techno and dance music aesthetic experimentation is the key to the collective.

Clan Analogue performs Electronic on Wednesday nights at Mr Goodbar in Sydney.

Australia's Asia Pacific interactive option

M. Billsson profiles Pacific Advanced Media

"We pipped them at the post in 1993 when we released (guitarist and composer) Guy Delandro's *Pool of Reflection*. Everyone was talking about multimedia in music and we produced Guy's album with interactive liner notes," explains Peter Higgs, until recently Chairman of Sydney-based multimedia technology company, Pacific Advanced Media, of the interactive CD-ROM programming his company has developed called ActiveAudio.

"That still had the Track One problem but as a concept for an album no one had done interactive liner notes for a popular CD until we did. Six months later came Peter Gabriel with his CD-ROM. Gabriel's CD-ROM has no Redbook. It's designed purely for playing through the computer. You hear the music but it's not the full 44 kilohertz stereo, not Redbook."

The major innovation that has given Pacific Advanced Media the advantage is in overcoming that "Track One problem". This is where Track One of a CD is used for the interactive information to be read by your CD-ROM. If you want to play your CD as audio software, unless you remember to skip Track One, you'll find yourself listening to a lot of very unpleasant noise, for anything up to 20 minutes."

"We had a contract from BMG Records that said that we had to deliver a CD by a Sydney-based girl group GF4 with Track One solved. The main technical problem to overcome was to hide the computer data from the audio CD component, and deliver it cost effectively. In other words, producing a computer program that you can use over and over again for many different titles, which keeps the cost of production right down."

"If we hadn't developed that, we'd be in the Peter Gabriel CD-ROM position of having to reprogram each title from scratch, with an attendant cost of between \$150,000 and \$200,000 per project. We've

brought production costs down to around the same as an average video clip, \$25,000 to \$35,000. What we're aiming at now are the hundreds of bands out there that can afford to spend between \$30,000 and \$60,000 on adding an interactive component to their audio CDs, rather than merely on a clip."

Pacific Advanced Media, utilising their ActiveAudio system, have already created three titles for BMG Records Australia—the multi-platform CD-ROM single, *Sooner or Later* by GF4; the album *Born Again* by Boom Crash Opera; and the single, *Truckload of Money* by Anti Anti—and one for Warner Music Australia, for hip hop/R&B quartet Kulcha.

As well, Melbourne-based label, Gotham Records, distributed by BMG Australia, have released two AudioActive titles—guitarist Richard Pleasance's *Colourblind*,

and the eponymous debut album of Melbourne group *The Lovers*.

"We're working with all the CD-ROM driver people to make certain that their drives run it, because no-one's ever done anything like this. There was nothing to comply with except the Redbook Standard which is the native audio signal which plays through your CD player. So we took a technology path that gave us 100% compatibility on Macs and about 60% capacity on Windows. Now we're working on that other 30% or so."

"These discs work on what's called a tri-platform basis. They work 'Native', unadulterated, in the normal way, as a simple CD. You can put them in a Mac and in Windows and they work fine. We've also been testing them on Pippin, which is the Apple competitor to Sony's PlayStation and the Sega and Nintendo games machines and they work on them too."

Pacific Advanced Media are currently finalising details of a joint venture with Japan and joint ventures currently being negotiated with the US and UK.

Pacific Advanced Media is on the Internet, Web site—phiggs@pams.com.au

FESTIVAL INTEGRALES

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John Rodgers, Ken Edie

OCT 14 St Mary's Church South Brisbane
8.30PM Geoffrey Morris, Laura Chislett,
Music for the heart & Mind.

OCT 15 Princess Theatre Woolloongabba
3.30PM Sue Newsome, Yorum Levy,
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Adelaide Performances

October 10 - 8.00 pm &
November 14 - 8.00 pm
ABC Studio 520
Collinswood

October 20 - 8.00 pm
Elder Hall
University of Adelaide

October 22 - 2.30 pm &
October 25 - 7.30 pm &
November 29 - 7.30 pm
Recital Room
Flinders St School of Music

ACME will also perform at the Mad Love Cabaret when it re-opens late November

ACME New Music Co is supported by the South Australian Department for the Arts & Cultural Heritage

The monkey with the digital touch

Christopher Coe in conversation with James Compton

Calling his musical project *Digital Primate* was a bit of a pisstake, says Christopher Coe, a little bit pompous—but he wanted to get across the idea of evolution. He started out like any other lounge-room musician by demo-ing a set of songs on guitar before throwing them away. Hadn't he done this stuff before? This time the species had to have room to mutate. Rules had to be broken.

Digital Primate began as a conceptual musical experiment—setting up a conversation between the organic and the technological to explore what he thought was a dichotomy. "It became just as important to turn on the computer switch as to think of a melody in my mind," Coe says. "Watching the lights blink on the reverb unit was just as inspiring as reading Tolstoy. Every machine was used as an instrument in its own right."

Coe has spent the last couple of years working on a virtual reality installation in cahoots with performance artist Stelarc—well known for his ongoing probes into the parameters of the human-machine interface. Their major collaboration was "developing a virtual environment that created music when you walked through it and manipulated objects".

Watching Stelarc merge his body with various elements of technology—both physically and virtually—gave Coe food for thought. His preconception that there was a dichotomy between body and machine began to alter, morphing into what he now describes as "an articulation". A connection became apparent between physical human movement and "the way we move through technology". On Coe's *Digital Primate* CD, Stelarc ended up as a new "body of work" archetype. By committing his bloodflow, brainwaves and muscle strain to tape, Stelarc donated an electronic signature, a digital

omnipresence. Using Doppler bloodflow and bio-feedback units, Stelarc's sonic *corpus* became the backdrop to the entire work.

Fiber, the first track on the CD, is a good example of the techno-collective's ideal—a kind of loose format into which things just evolved. At least that was the way it seemed to work out.

"*Fiber* started as purely a techno track, then Arthur Arkin jammed on it for an hour. Then I analysed it and edited it, then came back with Helen Mountfort's cello and live percussion. It became the organic and the technological working together to create a very fluid, balanced piece of music—from the high-pitched squealing of Stelarc's brainwaves up in the top register right down to the cello."

Coe's friend Maria Tumarkin added some Russian vocals over the top of the hybrid, turning the piece into an icily sensuous mantra. "I gave her a list of fibres to work on, then she came back to the studio and we talked about what we were really saying by listing all these fibres back to back," Coe says. "We came up with this hypothesis on the direction that society's going. The fact that fibres are going in certain directions."

He suggests optical fibres being laid under the ground as an obvious physical thing, but contends the existential or spiritual side is just as important. Tumarkin's Russian sequence echoes that idea, including everything from cotton to muscles, tendons to electrical cables—through to the moral fibre of society. She put the vocal track down in one take, and as Coe says, it sounds like poetry from another world.

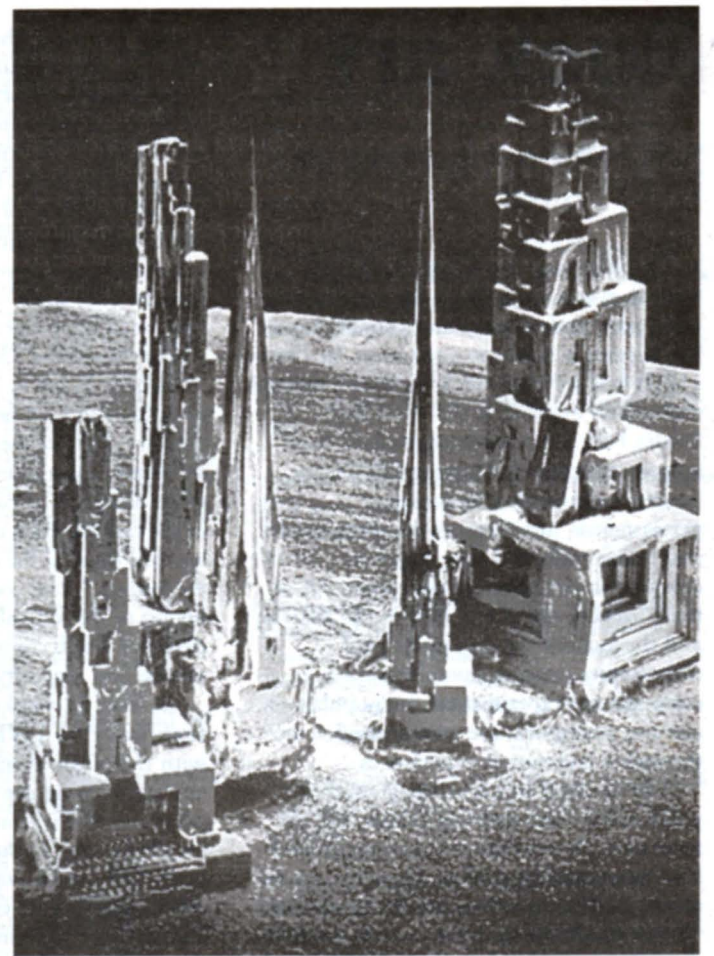
Ideas and musical genres—from rock and funky rap through ambient atmospheres and even some searing white noise—meshed in what became a fluid synthesis. By chance and synchronicity,

various collaborators played a vital role in the final recording of *Digital Primate*. Ollie Olsen, a musical techno-primitive from way back—beginning with *Whirlyworld* in the late 70s, then in *Orchestra of Skin and Bone*, *No*, and more recently *Third Eye*—was one who sat in. "Ollie liked the idea from the beginning," Coe explains. "He came down to the studio and we did a full-on acid track, *Invoke Your God*, probing the harder side of technology."

On *Obsolete Body*, Stelarc contributes a trademark rave about the inadequacy of the human body's soft tissue structure in the face of the inexorable evolution of technology. And in a chance meeting, Killing Joke vocalist and fellow musical explorer, Jaz Coleman, provided a crucial link to the album's finale—*Evolution Ends*. By invitation from a mutual friend, Coe dined with Coleman and invited him back to the studio. It was a chance meeting which helped Coe nut out a troublesome keyboard part. "He came in with this very fresh attitude and said: 'Nah, don't worry about that, do it like this'. It was a nice, inspiring, random collision."

The common philosophical thread manifested in the overall work, Coe says, is how humanity is dealing with what's happening between ourselves and technology. Concurrent with this was his own incorporation of different musical genres, "and the connection of digital music to the re-wiring of the world as we know it."

To define exactly what the album attempts to communicate, Coe defers to the



Lead tin telluride crystals found on semi-conductor alloy, magnification x60
Digital Primate

liner notes written by his 'reality adviser', Johann Fahey: "The binary oppositions of previous philosophical and critical systems are displaced by more fluid motions. What was live is reproduced as technology, and technology is subsequently played live. The epoch of simultaneity, of juxtaposition, and of the dispersed infringes on us. Sharp divisions are blurred. Sound is mobilised and transitory. At some moments it is distorted, at others it is pulled back into focus. There are no lines, only links, articulation replaces demarcation. Music is a nomad that violates all boundaries. The aural revolution continues ..."

Christopher Coe, *Digital Primate*, CD id 0039-2, distributed by Polygram.

Ego in a jar

Chris Knowles tells Jim Denley about working with Anangu at Uluru

On October 27, 1995, Anangu (aboriginal people) from the Mutitjulu Community, the resident traditional owners of Uluru and Kata Tjuta, will open a new cultural centre at Uluru. For three years Chris Knowles has been working with and on behalf of the Anangu to create a music/sound/video installation to be housed in the new centre. Jim Denley spoke to Chris Knowles recently at Uluru and then again in his Melbourne studio where he was editing sound recordings and videos from Uluru for the project.

JD Chris, can you describe your work in this project?

CK I'm working with sound and projected image, including some sounds installed in the approaches to the building, and some audio interactive sorts of things ... mostly so that people have the opportunity to hear Pitjantjatjara words and hear some of the sounds associated with Uluru ... and also projected images on video and slides, mostly to do with the singing and dancing, or *inma*.

JD Was the cultural centre developed specifically for this project, and has the relationship between the installation and the building been close from the word go?

CK Yeah, it has been very close. Sonja Peter, who is the principal designer for the installation was on the design consultation team when the building was first proposed and planned about five or six years ago. The architect is Greg Burgess from Melbourne. Sonja was asked to be on the team because of her background as a designer who had worked closely with Aboriginal communities. There's been a lot of collaboration from the ground up.

JD Do Anangu have specific aims for the cultural centre?

CK They've got totally clear ideas about why they want a culture centre. Their primary aim is to give visitors the opportunity to understand something of the way Anangu understand the landscape. To give information and background on the *tjukurpa*, the stories associated with the place, the dreaming, so that visitors can understand the depth and cultural significance of the place.

That's really the main aim, to try to encapsulate it. They have an amazing rapport with the land, an amazing understanding of things like ecology and land management, how to maintain the land and sustain life. That's what their whole law and spiritual beliefs centre around. They're eager to promote that understanding with the visitors, so Uluru is not just seen as a big rock, something that

you go and gawk at and ride your motorbike around. They want to try to encourage a deeper understanding of the whole of the rock, the land surrounding the rock, and their life, Anangu culture. Of course there is a lot of law that's not public knowledge, but they're wanting to share the law which is able to be shared.

JD Can you talk about your role as a facilitator, a kind of transparent artist, for the community's aims and aspirations?

CK Previously I've worked as an improviser in music, and as a filmmaker, always on projects with a total western orientation, because I'm a total white boy. But one of the learning things (because this is Anangu's project, they are the ones who have total ownership of all the information) has been to try to act as a skilled medium, so the information that Anangu want to convey can be put into the form visitors can comprehend. It's not so much interpretation but facilitating, to get the information onto the walls, the CDs or the video projectors, in ways that are compatible with Anangu ways of seeing and being in the world.

JD As an artist do you subjugate your interests and aesthetics in this collaboration?

CK In a way. It's like trying to put your own ego in a jar. I'm trying to use my skills in order to bring their vision and information onto the screen or into the speakers. When I first started I was full of fantasies of things that I'd love to do in terms of imagery and sound. It was a

totally western way of seeing, because that's where I was coming from, who I am. Now, after three years I've been able to understand a little more about how they see things and what their priorities are. Totally different to the way I would see it if I was asked to just go up there and produce a piece of work. It would be nothing like what it has become.

JD Would it be more like it now, having done this work?

CK Yeah, well now of course I couldn't. Their view of their region is infinitely more valuable than mine. A million times more valuable, more valid and informed, deeper and richer ... I was just kind of postcards and totally visual and being very western, and taking things and pushing them around like plastic. That's been a great thing, to put all that aside and just be quiet, look and learn, listen and try to understand. Then to use my formal skills to try to communicate using Anangu words and images. There's been really interesting stuff, like I've been fascinated by concepts of abstraction. What are the sorts of things that can be abstracted and can't be abstracted? It's like having to go back to the basics of thinking as an artist. I've been constantly forced to go back and examine my artistic language.

Jim Denley is a musician and member of the Machine for Making Sense.

Rock art

Julia Postle previews Brisbane's LIVID Festival

Over the past nine years, the LIVID festival, synonymous with the meeting of rock, pop, performance and stinking heat, has become a Brisbane institution. In 1994, LIVID was sold-out, with thirteen thousand enthusiasts massing at the West End's Davies Park for a self-contained 12-hour sensory experience. Entering LIVID, the punter is confronted by roving performance, installations, markets, food and booze stalls and four stages in concurrent and constant operation. All of these aspects merge and blur in the festival, and throughout the day traditional dichotomies (mainstream/alternative; conventional/experimental; art/popular culture; young/old) are transgressed through a layering of experiences.

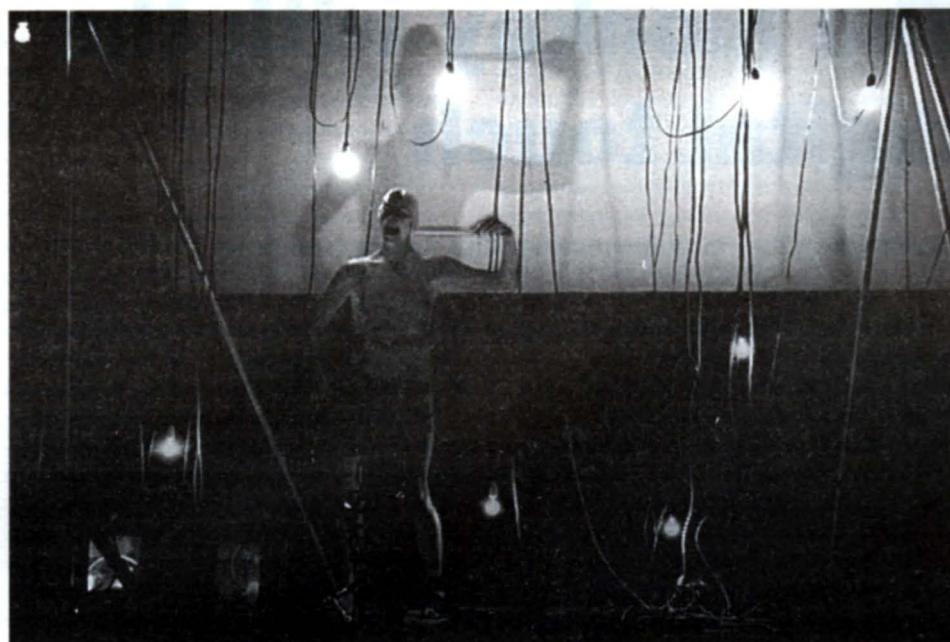
The site itself enacts an integration of youth culture and sporting culture. For the most part, Davies Park is a training ground for Queensland footballers. However, on the day of LIVID, the area is briefly transformed. "Besser block change rooms which for 364 days of the year reek of sweat and Dencorub, for one day smell of Nick Cave's Marlboro cigarettes," co-ordinator Paul Campbell remarks. Moreover, both Campbell and colleague Therese Brown recollect the sharing of the site on the day before the event as the footballers train amidst the raising of tents. "We often ask them to come back the next day and train during the day itself, just for the spectacle of it."

And Paul and Therese do not view last year's success as reason to rest comfortably in the knowledge of the event's seeming security. "If we're in a position now where we can afford to bring international performance artists in, then we look at not just what it does for LIVID, but how we can expand the festival and give back to the community which supports us," Paul reflects. This spirit of growth is certainly evident in the program for 1995.

For November 25, Henry Rollins, Morphine, Babes in Toyland, The Cruel Sea, and You Am I are headlining from the music industry. Despite the fact that LIVID showcases these more prominent artists, the event ultimately departs from the dimensions of the familiar rock concert. "We don't want any one thing at the event to be bigger than the festival," Paul comments. And it is this notion of the festival superseding its various elements which contributes to the event's success and longevity.

At least 12 works, commissioned specifically for LIVID, will share the site with the music events. The artists creating and performing are faced with a rare occurrence—large audiences. Therese recalls Fractal Theatre's performance last year: "The work was programmed for when people were coming out of the main stage. There were more people there than Fractal had ever performed to in their career." LIVID provides a forum for connecting experimental art with new audiences. Paul says, "If it encourages people's future habits, or whether they just enjoy it on the day, then that has to be some success in terms of broadening awareness of the arts."

LIVID has also fostered the development of certain artists. Craig



Michael Cook at Livid '93

Kathleen Williamson

Walsh's work has featured in consecutive festivals, and his mythical heads have become motifs for LIVID; evolving and surfacing in different manifestations each year. For 1995, Walsh's *Talking Heads* will incorporate projection in an improvisational, interactive context. Much of the art presented at LIVID is created in an interactive environment (and if not, it may simply become interactive through the dynamic presence of the audience). Fellow visual artist Elise Goodrich developed her installation *Ice Heart* for last year's LIVID. As the day progressed, and the heat made its inevitable impression on the ice, the work not only began to dissolve but was also appropriated by the crowd. In this way, *Ice Heart* existed as the

realisation of two of the sub-texts of LIVID, transience and consumption.

LIVID 1995 will also include work by Omniscient, A.C.R.O.B.A.T., Debackle, Divine Brawn, Kino Ruin, Sidetrack Contemporary Performance Company, Jeremy Hynes and Geoffrey Schmidt. The festival will also present new works by younger Brisbane groups CONTACT Youth Theatre and the Hereford Sisters. So while international artists are sought, local artists and their role in the community are recognised, allowing knowledges and practices to be shared.

A full report on LIVID '95 by Nicholas Gebhardt will be presented in RT10. LIVID '95, November 25. 07 217 5850.

Sound beyond music

Andy Arthurs talks with Keith Gallasch about music, dance and sonology in Brisbane and at Griffith University

Andy Arthurs is a musician. He started out in George Martin's studio in Britain in 1973 and did a tonemaster's degree, the first university one on offer. Not wanting "the life sentence" of being a record producer, he wrote songs and later produced punk groups "which was really liberating given that despite what the public was telling them the record companies were serving up the same old diet. Sounds familiar".

AA I discovered dance on a choreographer and composer's course with Merce Cunningham and John Cage. My life was transformed in those two weeks. And in '83 I was just getting interested in sampling. All the synthesiser music then looked so visually uninteresting. So I thought why not start a dance group, which we did in 1984 called La Bouche. The dancers sang and we used samples of what they did. The two musicians, Phil Chambon—my collaborator for 18 years—and myself, performed and mixed the music on stage. La Bouche means the mouth and we called ourselves that because all the sounds we used were based around the voice. We used the sounds percussively and with handclaps creating a human drumkit mixed with other sounds. It was an exciting time for experimentation and sampling still fires me.

La Bouche lasted until 1989 and I moved to Brisbane with one of the dancers—who was Australian—to lecture at the Conservatorium at Griffith University in music technology, now broader and called sonology. I work there while doing other things. I'm still composing music for dance. I'd worked with Graham Watson in the UK, the second choreographer to work with La Bouche. The first was also Australian, Lloyd Newsom.

Right now I'm doing a 40 minute work for Natalie Weir who I think an exciting choreographer. She's never worked with a composer before. I've also been working with Jean Tally. *Ritual* was the last thing I did with her and Sarah Jay, singer and percussionist, and the group Makonda with Jalberto—a great percussionist.

KG How do you work with choreographers?

AA It's a bit like how do you produce a record. It depends on the project. With Jean I wrote something she choreographed, but then she went way ahead of me so I ended up videoing what she was doing and then composing, almost like doing film music. I try to compose chronologically, as most choreographers do. Though Natalie is different, she has cells of stuff—she's "not quite sure where they'll go yet". With Natalie I am currently writing after the event but that's a practical matter. She's in WA and by the time she gets back she'll choreograph the final two segments to music I've composed in her absence. So it works both ways.

KG How do you encourage your students' work?

AA We have a festival of sound and music at Griffith each year—called the Wildest Front Ear in 1995. It started out as a concert when I got here but it has developed. It's very indicative that there's very little rock music in the show and yet these students are the people you'd traditionally think would be going that way. The final year students worked on a piece with techno influences using

interactive visual material one of them had programmed on Macromedia Director. They also used live interactive stuff with a camera off-stage talking to a sampler on stage. It was experimental but not in an esoteric way. The response to Wildest Front Ear was fantastic. Those performing are already planning for next year and we only finished two weeks ago. Each year is trying to outdo the previous one, which is a good thing.

KG Who are Trojan Theatre?

AA They're all graduates from this course before I came to it and they performed here recently. They're technologically based but it's not a techno performance—they have car hubcaps and flowerpots triggering things so it's moving away from the straight down the line techno group and into a performance mode. They did six extended pieces that flowed and grew and became massive and noise came in and out...it's using the current tech in a different way.

KG Does the university engage with the new technologies?

AA We're just starting a new course across the university, the first one, I believe, in the country, a multimedia degree. You can't believe the enormous response we've had. It's not a bullshit degree. We're not trying to make people jacks of all trades. They will specialise in one area but know about the others—it's a Bachelor of Multimedia degree and starts in January 1996. A bunch of enthusiasts from six different faculties got together to make it work. After the first year, which is a common course, students can either work in sound or graphics or animation or move into programming. Every year there'll be projects where those majors will get together and make works. That's right. We're hoping some of these people working as teams will stay together after they graduate. We'll see.

KG Who are some of the artists in the contemporary music scene in Brisbane?

AA Rodolphe Blois used to work with tape manipulation but works more now with ProTools as a sound artist. Panos Couros is important in getting things happening in this city especially with sound art. Christine Johnson has performed at the Crab Room singing in operatic style—the night I saw her she 'sang the audience's haircuts'—fantastic extended vocal stuff.

There's Linsey Pollack's cross cultural group Slivanje. I co-produced the CD. It was done on a small budget with BEMAC (Brisbane Ethnic Music Arts Centre). Linsey's a major force in the cross cultural music scene in Brisbane. Then there's the LIVID festival. The fact that it happens in Brisbane is great.

The singer BeXta is doing well with a record played on JJJ. She's one of the only females in the techno world, a fantastic programmer and a good songwriter. Matt Ross is a student in that cross area of music and technology—he does interactive Director programming but he's also a drummer and has a marching band he busks with. There's a good group called Taxi led by Sheamus Kirkpatrick who pushes the barriers in a rock'n'roll way. He's a bass guitarist. Sound beyond music appeals to him and Taxi are pretty free but great players. And of course there's more I don't know about. But the crossovers of music and technology and performance are really happening.

Classical reproduction of music, of the same old thing, is very similar to reproduction in rock, but in both areas there are exciting things happening. It's in the joining of them where all the fun is happening. It doesn't get much attention. But history will say, ah yes that's where it was all happening.

Andy Arthurs is a musician and Senior Lecturer in Sonology at the Conservatorium of Griffith University.

Jazzwatch

Ashley Russell previews an international wealth of performances for October-November

For the fans of jazz and improvised music the "festival" season from October to February holds the best opportunity to catch some of the year's best music, as festival organisers, promoters and various cultural bodies tour important overseas artists who otherwise would be cost prohibitive to bring all the way to Australia.

In previous years we have been fortunate to see and hear such diverse performers as The World Saxophone Quartet, Steve Lacy, John Scofield and Sam Rivers. This year's should prove to be one of the most satisfying as well as challenging seasons with at least eight international groups and artists touring the festivals and clubs.

The sensational Italian pianist and composer Giorgio Gaslini will be appearing at the Manly, Melbourne and York festivals. Gaslini is mainly known in this country for his astonishing Monk and Ayler interpretations on CD. However his fame in Europe extends to soundtracks for the films

of Antonioni as well as operas at La Scala. He has played with the likes of Max Roach, Anthony Braxton and is not to be missed. Gaslini is being toured by the Italian Institute of Culture.

Another important European artist to tour is master drummer Hans Bennink, playing as part of The Clusone Trio. Bennink has drummed for a diverse group of players from Eric Dolphy to Hank Mobly and is well known for his powerful style.

The other members of the Trio Clusone, cellist Ernst Reijseger and reed player Michael Moore, are also highly regarded. Since 1988 the Trio has impressed audiences with their highly individual style, being one of the few groups in the world that can successfully navigate Hermeto Pascoal, Frank Douglas, Herbie Nichols and end up with girl talk! Their whacky CD of Irving Berlin's songs was acclaimed by many critics as one of the most refreshing albums of '94.

Pianist Horace Tapscott hails from the alternative West-Coast scene in the USA. Tapscott and his trio in the 1980s released one of the most influential recordings of the last 20 years *The Dark Tree*. Tapscott's extensive tour should bring this important artist to a much wider and appreciative audience.

Trilok Gurtu's performances with John McLaughlin are still remembered by all drummers and percussionists as some of the most sensational and dynamic seen in

this country. Trilok's ability to adapt to diverse musical settings has seen him perform with Pat Metheny, Jan Garbarek and Oregon. In Australia from October to November he will be playing with Synergy, Dale Barlow and Mike Nock. He will also be giving a series of drum clinics and workshops.

Star of last year's Barossa Music Festival, Swiss saxophonist Daniel Schnyder, returns this year with his group Nucleus. This quintet comprises some of New York's most in-demand players, Victor Lewis, Michael Formanek, Michael Mossman and Kenny Drew Jr. Any one of these players alone would fill most of our jazz clubs for a week or two; to have them here all at the same time will be a major event.

Other artists to tour include the famous singer from Lambert, Hendriks and Ross: Annie Ross, most recently seen to great effect in Altman's *Short Cuts*. Guitar virtuoso Martin Taylor tours again and the Perko Pysalo Ensemble from Finland discover the meaning of hot weather as they crisscross the country from Kalgoorlie to Canberra.

Those lucky enough to be in Sydney will also have to check their diaries to make sure that they can attend the current round of SIMA gigs with Perth vibes player Garry Lee, The Mike Nock Trio and the most devastating lineup yet of Mark Simmonds Freeboppers. All playing in October.

Tour dates

The Perko-Pysalo Ensemble from Finland: Kuranda, Lismore, Byron Bay, Manly Jazz Festival, Canberra, Hobart, Melbourne (Mietta's & Bennetts Lane) Adelaide, Kalgoorlie, Perth. Sept. 26 - Oct 11

Daniel Schnyder's Nucleus (USA/ Switzerland): The Basement, Sydney Oct 4 & 5 for SIMA; The Barossa International Music Festival Sept 30-Oct 15; Manly Jazz Festival Sept 29- Oct 2.

Giorgio Gaslini: Manly Jazz Fest, Oct 1 & 2, Oct 4 & 5 Melbourne; York Jazz Festival (WA) Oct 7 & 8

Guitarist Martin Taylor: The Bass Note Brisbane Oct. 3-5 ; Neil's Brasserie, Sydney Oct 6; the Basement Oct 10-11; Jazz Lane, Melbourne Oct 13- 15

Percussionist Trilok Gurtu with Synergy and guests Dale Barlow & Mike Nock: Enmore Theatre, Sydney Sunday Oct 29 6.30 pm. Workshops/concerts, Basement Oct 30 & 31; Brisbane Nov. 1 ; Melb Nov. 2 & 3; Adelaide Nov 4; Perth Nov 5.

Annie Ross: Sydney Oct 29-31; Jazz Lane, Melb October 2-4; Sydney Oct 5-7; The Bass Note, Brisbane.

The Horace Tapscott Trio: Armidale Oct 28; Perth Oct 30; Brisbane Oct 31; Melbourne (Mietta's) Nov 2 & 3 (with Australian Art Orchestra); Wangaratta Sat 4 & 5; Basement, Sydney Nov 8 & 9 .

Holland's Trio Clusone for SIMA at the Basement Nov 2; Wangaratta Nov 4 & 5.

CD reviews

Hector Zazou

Songs From The Cold Seas

1995 Sony Music ACML 477585-2

These seductive refrains move from far northern land mass to land mass, excavating the songs that populated the seas around the polar cap; insinuating sweet melodies carried along by undulating synthetic beats; light and texture and the expanse of the horizon fold across a series of melodic events, ideas, voices...a litany of voices—Finnish vocal group Annukka Suaren Neito, Björk, Suzanne Vega and John Cale, Jane Siberry, Tokiko Kato, and on and on. Songs are crests and crevices on the ocean floor, unsettled, dangerous territories cracked open, awkward mixtures, combinations, that shape the constant demand for a song. Sometimes travelling along the edge of ambience, sometimes verging on the globally trite, it is the conceptual strength of Zazou's productions that reconfigure and transform this delicate field of multiple musical forms as they collect and pile up, one inside the other, moving in from the outside, in from the sea. NG

John Williams

From Australia: Sculthorpe and Westlake

Australian Chamber Orchestra/Richard Hickox and London Symphony Orchestra/Paul Daniel, 1995, Sony Music, SK 53 361

Of the post-Serial generation of Australian composers, Peter Sculthorpe has always managed to maintain a consistently expressive modality that grafts the desire for a modern antipodean sensibility onto the late-romantic obsession with complex orchestral textures. On this recent world premier recording, William's fluid playing accentuates the lushness and dance-like qualities of the orchestration on both Sculthorpe's *Nourlangie*, for solo guitar, strings and percussion and on Westlake's Suite for Guitar and Orchestra, *Antarctica*. Both works seem constrained by their overt chromaticism and as such appear dependent on the organisational structures of the 19th century orchestral machine without entering into any fundamental transformation of that machine. On Sculthorpe's two tightly controlled short pieces *From Kakadu* and *Into the Dreaming*, Williams dissects the infinite moment between each note, creating an event, a microcosmic world of resonance that extracts itself, successively, from the delicate architecture of Sculthorpe's melodic line. NG

Henryk Mikolaj Górecki

Kleines Requiem Für Eine Polka

London Sinfonietta conducted by David Zinman, 1995, Nonesuch, 7559-79362-2

A much more angular and sustained work than the chart-busting *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*, Górecki still draws on the lyrical and dramatic qualities that have marked both his and Arvo Pärt's work at the forefront of European minimalism. The *Requiem*'s sharp transitions between a smooth melodic line in the first section, to the impulsion of vertical shafts of rhythm that break the softness of the textures, and on to the wry pastoral of the final movement, is underscored by that brooding insistence of the bells that imbue the *Requiem* with a political force. In a sense, Górecki's music acts on the expectations of a transcendent new world order, marking out a distended temporal order that at once vibrates across and intones amongst the dissolution of a recovered territory. NG

Philip Glass

La Belle et la Bête

Based on the film By Jean Cocteau, 1995, Nonesuch, 7559-79347-2 (2 CDs)

The genesis of *La Belle et la Bête*, following from Glass' other projects based on Cocteau's *Orpheus* and *Les Enfants Terribles*, lies in a specific conception of the artist and what Glass identifies as "the entire creative process". Melding his familiar and almost obsessive tonality with a carnivalesque rhythmic structure that undermines the exactness of the melodic momentum, Glass manages to sustain a strange unsettling. At times his propensity towards vintage "Glassisms" as the entirety of the compositional process leaves you wishing for the combinations of colour complexes that marked out *Einstein On The Beach* or *Satyagraha* as works that transformed the very grounds from which a mixed media production took up the questions of the operatic within art music. The vocal writing rides easily, lightly, across the irrepressible blocks of harmonic movement, carving out an operatic imperative that tends towards a reconstitution of the operatic spirit as the essence of an audiovisual expressive form. Without the benefit of the staging and, in particular, the film as it is synched to the music, it is difficult to encompass *La Belle et la Bête*'s performative aspect. There is a sense, however, that the flow of the orchestration is continually held hostage by the expectation or anticipation of Cocteau's film. This inevitable separation underlines the difficulty of its conception as a live audiovisual opera, a separation that ultimately fails to extract a consistent musicality from the obvious cinematic tendencies that shape its internal structure. NG

Brian Eno and Jah Wobble

Spinner

1995 All Saints, ASC23

The late twentieth century melange which we might warily (and wearily) call world music finds an inspired shape in this collaboration between Eno and Wobble. All the cross-movement, cross-over, cross-cuts that have made rhythm pre-eminent in defining difference within the musical event are combined here, multiplied, and pushed to infinity. It is not the infinity of indeterminacy, however, but something more incidental, even formal...sometimes drifting, sometimes inhabiting the desire for song, sometimes playing with the forces of cliché and banality. Melodic impulse and harmonic structure are subsumed into the groove, a groove which lopes and loops along a line of separation that refuses the seductive folds of a dreamy soundscape. No ambient delusions here. Instead, what we get is an unravelling or deframing of sound's spatial condition, a pulling away from ambient music's dependence on the hollowing out of space as the essence of musical experience. Like Bill Laswell's work with Material, the songs on *Spinner* re-collect all sorts of pulses, images, and words from the nooks and crannies of a massive sound archive, moving from crackle to blip to echo, then breaking apart into nodes and peaks of combined sonic figures that dissipate the expectations of a pop disposability. The strength of the songs is their refusal of the kind of ad hoc grafting of 'ethnic' sound and musical textures that characterises much of so-called world music, that self-conscious display as an effect of production rather than composition, of a range of musical and sonic influences. *Spinner* moves through a rigorous interplay between the rhythmic impulsion of the songs and the spinning, shifting ground of the electronic processing, the

sampled and synthetic shapes, producing a resonant sensation of driftability, of rhythmic durability, that makes its machinic or electronic tendencies dance. NG

Lambarena, *Bach To Africa*

Sony Classical SK 64542

Lambarena is a homage to famous mission doctor Albert Schweitzer, fusing his passion for Bach with the music of his adopted homeland Gabon. The realisation of this musical tribute involves ten ensembles from Gabon, Argentinian jazz and tango musicians, plus Western classical musicians. The resulting synthesis is intended to meld the European polyphony of Bach with the traditional melodies and polyrhythms of Gabon. The lavish cover notes include the pronouncement that here rhythm rediscovers rule and vice-versa, and that Schweitzer effected, through music, the meeting of Africa and Europe. This musical experiment will be of interest to many; its claim of musical common ground between the two continents will be readily accepted by those saturated with world music theology. But its implications need to be carefully considered. Schweitzer saw Bach as a religious mystic whose music emanated cosmic power: it is the rule and majesty of Bach which is intended here to govern the rhythmic energy of Gabon. This cosmic vision of a universal music could be given another name: good old cultural imperialism, Fitzcarraldo-style.

What's more, the idea of music as a universal language is nonsensical, as music is everywhere, but everywhere different. It makes as much sense to say that language is a universal language. Bringing together two musical systems is most often an act of violence, not a blissful union. A hand-clapped rhythm from a Gabon ritual ceremony, yoked together on *Lambarena* with a section of the St John Passion, sounds more like an unholy misfit than an affirmation of universality. This album works best when the richness of Gabon's vocal chants and rhythms are given relatively free rein, before Papa Bach steps in to organise them. JP

Roger Woodward

Images Of Debussy

ABC Classics ABC 446 740-2

78 minutes of Debussy by Woodward is a major treat for lovers of piano, Debussy or Woodward. This CD, released at the opening of the 1995 Sydney Spring Festival of New Music, includes the works which Woodward has made his own in recent performances: *Images Books I and II*, *Estampes*, and *Children's Corner*. Other lesser known pieces punctuate these familiar works.

The vibrancy and energy of Woodward's performances will take any new listeners by surprise. This is no effete and careful rendition, but a robust and active interpretation. The dynamic range achieved in some of these pieces amounts almost to a re-invention. There is full-bodied rapid attack on key phrases, but there is also delicacy and fluency. Debussy's rippling and lilting sonorities are rendered here by a performer not afraid to throw himself into the music. JP

Robert Lloyd

Nullarbor

Move MD 3171

Three works for dance that transfer exceptionally well to CD. Lloyd's compositions are founded on interlocking rhythms that chime and pulse within a shifting matrix. The instrumentation on this CD consists of percussion, metallophones and keyboards; lines of various lengths

jostle and bristle and come together unexpectedly. Reference points include the gamelan and American minimalism, but such comparisons aren't really necessary. Lloyd's music doesn't sound like that of the famous American masters of repetition; his work is both more exuberant and more rigorously grounded in polyrhythmic complexity. This is no recycled Glass or second Reich. *Nullarbor* instead presents sustained rhythmic invention. Melodic motifs emerge from the flux and stay in your head. There is a mellifluous flow to this music that is infectious. JP

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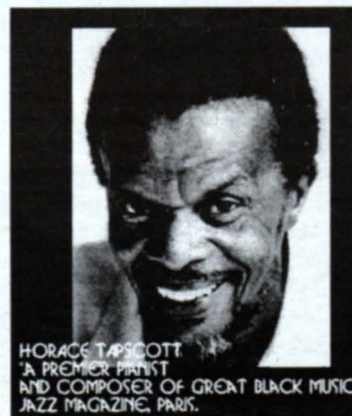
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Borrowed landscape

Sarah Miller on the ground at The Pinnacles Project in Australia



Stephen Smith

In 1991 Japanese artist, Mutsuharu Takahashi created *The Line to the Pyramid*, an earth art work which laid down a white line from the middle of the desert to the base of the Second Pyramid at Giza. In 1993, he visited The Pinnacles desert in Western Australia. This tiny, self contained and utterly bizarre landscape formed the inspiration for *The Pinnacles Project in Australia*.

Amid the sand dunes at the edge of Western Australia is a large scattering of

unusual rocks from small to huge. These silent pinnacles of exposed rock sit in meditative stillness amid the patterns of sand that mark the flow of time. The light is an invitation to wander and look around this desolate region where the shadows seem to pay poetic homage to an untouched and serene wilderness. A world that is as pristine as the day it was born. Here is a place of dreams in which light and shade have been chasing each other for many years.

Setsugai Omori-Rinzo

The Pinnacles were formed 80,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age. However, due to the shifting sand dunes it is only in the last 100 years that the dunes have weathered to expose more than 150,000

limestone pillars, some nearly four metres high, some no bigger than a finger. For Takahashi, this dry landscape—the graveyard of an ancient eucalyptus ecosystem—reveals a cosmic concept of life and death and is a 'road sign' to many environmental issues.

Takahashi sees The Pinnacles as a natural *kare sansui* (dry landscape garden) similar to the Japanese temple gardens created from rocks and gravel. This work was not, however, the simple recreation of a Japanese garden on a grand scale but an attempt to "symbolically represent the space of the cosmos, in which life and death are contained within

a single frame as well as the existence and change that flows through the universe". To that end, Takahashi and his team of eleven assistants utilised a technique known as *shakkei* or borrowed landscape where the near and distant landscape of the garden are incorporated within the final design to integrate the rocks, sands and skies.

Using *kumade* (wooden rakes) the sands were raked in an anti-clockwise direction into concentric and interlocking circles and lines. At night the site was illuminated to

reflect the night skies, particularly the constellation of the Southern Cross. *Suikinkutsu*, the sound of water dripping onto ceramic sounding pots, was played. "The sound that accompanied the end of [the Ice] Age was of freed water. With such a sound, life was able to recommence." The paradoxical relationship between the sound and image of rippling water and the patterns of dry sand was critical to this work.

On a pristine Sunday in late winter, we travelled to The Pinnacles to see the *kare sansui* created by Takahashi and his team. We stayed throughout the afternoon watching as the outlandish rocks and the ochre sands with their raked patterns turned to gold in the afternoon sunlight. As darkness fell, the patterns were illuminated, the Pinnacles casting gigantic shadows distorting the perspective of the surrounding sand dunes. We followed a single raked line due north and heard the faint sound of dripping water. The only glitches in this extraordinary immensity of space, rocks, sand and stars were the hum of the generator (unnecessary) and, unfortunately, at close range, the stink of diesel. It was, to quote Lou Reed, such a perfect day.

Within days, the marks made by the artist and his crew had disappeared, swallowed back into the shifting sands. Photographic and audio traces from the project may, however, be experienced at PICA from November 8 to December 10 in an exhibition entitled: *The Pinnacles Project in Australia—Mutsuharu Takahashi—Drawing a Line upon Earth*.

Working drawings: Mutsuharu Takahashi. Aug 12 - 14, 1995, Cervantes, WA. Nov 8 - Dec 10, PICA. In co-operation with the Department for Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and PICA, WA.

Add water and stir

Jane Sutton surveys developments in art gallery magazine publishing

Seldom do arts magazines talk about themselves and it is even rarer for a critical eye to be cast over that once fusty old niche of cultural publishing, the art gallery magazine. A recent seminar organised by the National Gallery Australia with guest speaker, Tim Marlow, the editor of the new *Tate the Art Magazine* brought some of the issues surrounding art institutional magazines into focus.

Indeed it is surprising that art galleries and museums, institutions concerned with the analysis of particularities of genre and cultural production, should be so lacking in their analysis of how a magazine is made and read. Perhaps this is merely a symptom of the fact that art gallery magazines are often torn between the need to satisfy the gallery society membership and the desire to interpret collections and exhibitions.

Often there seems to be a strange glitch in the conceptualisation of these well-intentioned publications. The recognition of a promotional purpose for the art gallery magazine seems to be translated into a magazine that looks and reads like a bulky corporate brochure.

Many gallery magazines function as helpful guides for the institution. *Gallery*, the monthly magazine of the National

Gallery Society of Victoria, as its name suggests, is very much a gallery society magazine. A large central section is devoted to a members' program which leaves room for two short informative features by curators on current exhibitions.

The descriptions of the members' activities have all the quaintness of lily of the valley talc. My favourite is the Kennerton Green Expedition, where one can admire, "a superb garden room in the manner of a medieval manor, a birch wood and dell, as well as a walled rose garden and many magnificent trees planted by Sir John and Lady Pagan".

A recent 1995 issue of *Gallery* carried an article about a Women's Association fundraising exhibition. It embodies hard work, dedication and an extra special brand of self-righteousness. The writer tells us how successful the National Gallery Women's Association has been in raising money for the NGV's acquisitions fund and concludes with the parting bon mot, "Sir Christopher Wren's epitaph could be paraphrased to apply to us. If you want to see the results of our hard work for the past 38 years: 'Reader ... Look Around'".

Look, the Art Gallery Society of NSW magazine, is a monthly what's on guide. It includes features of new acquisitions and current exhibitions. Like *Gallery* magazine it is more a concise, handy collection of information and short articles than a magazine with a strong editorial vision and a critical intention.

The new *Tate* magazine departs from this model of the art institutional magazine. The magazine is published by a private company, Wordsearch, who gave us that Mercedes convertible of design magazines, *Eye*, which is available in Australia for the price of a new release hardback at about \$30.

Tate the Art Magazine is published only

three times a year and offers 80 pages of deftly edited and designed magazine product. *Tate* gets around the problem of giving information about special events to members by providing a nifty tear-out members' section at the front. Half the print-run of *Tate* is bought by the gallery and sent to members while the rest is sold at the Tate and through bookshops.

Tate's Summer 1995 cover features Louise Bourgeois and a cover line "the Discreet Charm of Louise Bourgeois". The article itself is a reprint of a catalogue essay for a retrospective of the artist at the Tate. "Stealing Souls" is an article about the myths surrounding photography as a snatcher of souls in which novelist and critic Marina Warner provides light and accessible reading with a smattering of non-threatening theory. Also for your delectation, an interview with American video artist Mathew Barney, and an unexpected seam of gold in a short quirky article on the influence of alchemy on artists like William Blake.

Tate is not a publication to shun art world hype. Its news section, "Agitate", provides edible packaged bites of art world razzamatazz. Here the art world is an absolutely fabulous place full of glamorous art celebrities doing sex. Just to keep you up to date—after the Pierre et Gilles opening at Roslyn Oxley9, "The boys were fêted up and down Oxford Street, and were last seen snapping ubiquitous muscle boys, dykes on bikes and totally intransigent transients for a future show". Meanwhile, artist David Inshaw who is having a show in London, tells of his first sexual encounter which was curtailed by a rocket on Guy Fawkes night and Maria Kozic is described as doing it solo as "Sydney's solo gorilla girl".

Artonview, the National Gallery of Australia's new glossy, is into its second promising issue. While this quarterly magazine has a slight corporate brochure feel it does provide some fascinating reading and luscious reproductions. The magazine is free to members and is also sold for \$7.95 at the gallery shop. The Winter '95 issue features a thoughtful interview with Pierre et Gilles by Lucina Ward and Ted Gott interspersed with helpful background and critical information on the artists' work.

Call me strange but I found the brief article in Spring 95 *Artonview* on best-selling postcards fascinating. Did you know that the British Museum's best seller is the Rosetta Stone followed at a close second by The British Museum by Day while *Blue Poles* simply walks out the door at the NGA, followed by Monet's *Waterlilies* and *Haystacks*.

Rumour has it that other international art institutions, such as MOMA, are interested in the *Tate* magazine concept, and may be considering using it with the addition of local content for their own magazines (the just add water and stir approach to art gallery publishing).

Seductive and sexy though it may be, if the likes of *Tate* were to take on a media baron approach to the world of art gallery publishing it would be a great loss to the art world. A *Tate* takeover would leave little room for the idiosyncratic approach that many art galleries provide through their magazines.

Jane Sutton is a writer and editor living in Canberra.

Slippery, deformed, transformed

Daniel Thomas discovers some talking points between anthropology and art in Adelaide

The South Australian Museum, at the heavy, cultural-heritage end of North Terrace, is hosting a joint venture with the Experimental Art Foundation.

It's a conversation between the museum and the livelier art-making end of Adelaide's uniquely concentrated culture strip—along which art talks to academia, the new to the old, poetry and drama to science and to painting. In a pub just off North Terrace, the director of the museum, an anthropologist, was talking last year to the director of the EAF, a performance artist recently reinvented as a painter of unwittingly poetic text fragments enlarged onto lush canvases. It was agreed that the painter, Richard Grayson, would curate a conversation between artists' new works and objects in the museum.

The curator chose two artists. Simryn Gill who had lived for a few years in Adelaide, had made (with Fiona Hall) a culture-and-politics-of-botany piece called *Biodata* for last year's Adelaide Biennial but is now based in her hometown Singapore. Robert MacPherson lives in Brisbane, had never visited Adelaide, but had made a great many *Frog Poem* installations using Linnaean taxonomy incantations.

The two artists were assigned the concept of *Litteraria*: the leftovers after completing the Linnaean duty of scientific classification by name, species and use. *Litteraria* are praised by Foucault as "the languages deposited upon things by time ... a sort of supplement in which discourse is allowed to recount itself and record discoveries, traditions, beliefs and poetical figures".

Neither Gill nor MacPherson chose natural-science objects, with their

Linnaean naming, but MacPherson filled a wall with the Linnaean names of the plants and animals once eaten by Dieri Aborigines at the Lutheran mission of Bethesda on Cooper's Creek. This biologist's dog-Latin spoke across a small white room to two vitrines containing Toas (direction-markers) made in the 1890s by the Dieri hunter-gatherers for their German-Christian audience.

Gill, whose *Models of Virtue* were still in progress at the time of writing, decided to make casts—or models—of Malayan 'ethnographic' objects left stranded in Adelaide since the 1887 Jubilee Exhibition to which they had been sent by the Sultan of Johore. A fellow British colony had displayed its tropical products to South Australia on a high occasion. It's time, says Gill, to acknowledge again the axe head, the coconut, the wooden spoon, the spearhead which once travelled from her country as tokens of useful trade and cultural exchange between two British colonies.

The casts/models will be moulded in several strange materials, not replicated in their own substance, not in conventional plaster or metal but in soft jelly or latex or cow dung. Imperfect mimicry, confusing residues, these suggest that there are no fixed, fundamentalist meanings in any museum objects. Shifts from Malaya to Adelaide and from 1887 to 1995 will always alter the object and its meanings. Things become slippery, deformed, transformed. Herein lies the wonder. There are no absolute certainties. Teasing slipperiness is all there is. Lie back and enjoy it.

MacPherson's selection of Toas was based solely on what he perceives as their supreme aesthetic, formalist excellence,

than on an arbitrary choice of those known to signify particular places of water. He decided to make a wordpiece, a naming of the foodstuffs to be found at those waterholes. A non-verbal but clear Dieri discourse of intimacy with a desert place and its bodily nourishments confronts a consciously international Latin discourse of intellectual classification.

Yet the local and the cultural will always hybridise the universal. The Latin is localised. A favourite rodent for eating by the Dieri of the Bethesda mission was classified as *Pseudomys hermannsburgensis*; the rat was named in honour of Bethesda's first name, or of the mission's home base in Germany, but the branch mission to the Aranda people has now become the best-known of the various Hermannsburgs. MacPherson simply intended to start up a process. He wanted his Queensland paintcraftsman's and signwriter's voice and the Dieri signmakers' voices to acknowledge each other and then to start the museum audience on a loose-leashed continuation of the process.

Thus the museum visitor, not the artist, establishes connections between the transitory Dieri Hermannsburg once inhabited by the marvellous Toa artists and the still flourishing Aranda Hermannsburg of Namatjira's watercolour artists.

These museum objects are not trapped within systems. Their systemic proliferation—the 26 on display were chosen from about 400 Toas—itsself engenders nicely structured associations in the viewer's mind.

MacPherson chose to be a late starter as a publicly exhibiting painter—aged 37 in 1974—and has been perceived for the past

20 years as one of our best artists, a sneaky, witty, generous-spirited, Marxist-minded craftsman formalist. Gill is 36 in 1995, an Indian married to a Chinese-Australian, and of a world that contemplates post-colonialism more than Marxism.

But the differing philosophies of different generations cannot suppress culturally free, timeless, placeless playfulness. Both artists delight in surprising themselves in the systemic process of making art. They generate psychic energy in ideas, forms and materials.

And with this modest project of \$20,000 (from the Visual Arts/Craft Board of the Australia Council) and a few weeks in September-October the South Australian Museum has permitted an exemplary transformation of its collections. Inert technological artefacts, cultural and natural specimens, have been given, by artists, independent aesthetic force. No longer specimens, illustrations of something else, these museum objects have become interesting in their own right.

Daniel Thomas retired in 1990, having worked since the 1950s in art museums in Sydney, Canberra and Adelaide, and writes occasionally.

Panos Couros – graphic designer for Peggy Wallach's temporal series in RealTime

Panos is a multi-skilled artist working in sound, visual digital media and experimental performance. He has recently exhibited at Artspace; the Museum of Contemporary Art (Sound in Space – with Wayne Stamp) and currently at the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane. He is also an arts manager, currently working in community cultural development programs around Brisbane. Panos is the Chair of the Brisbane Festival Fringe Association, as well as advisor and peer to the Queensland Government on issues of cultural and linguistic diversity in the arts.

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Jyanni Steffensen

Short Sharp Shock

Experimental Art Foundation,
27 July to 27 August

For a moment in its contemporary art history, the EAF is deterritorialized by its emergent offspring. This recently graduated art gang easily inhabit desubjectivized space, operating as One and one(s) simultaneously. Lacking anxiety and toxic jouissance they appear, nevertheless, to operate without (rigidly bounded) Selves. Teri Hoskin, one of the fifteen artists represented in the three exhibitions that comprise *Short Sharp Shock*, sums it up thus: "to insist on speaking as one is fine as long as one does not take precedence over many". This working philosophy possibly encapsulates, more than any one thing, the complexities of their relation(s) to each other; to the art community; and, as artist/subject(s), to their libidinalized art object(s). This nomadology might pose dilemmas or delights for the spectator. A well-oiled desiring machine, these youthful artists are articulate, theoretically literate, professional, entrepreneurial and emergent. The question is: emerging from what?

EAF Director Richard Grayson calls it the "white modernist block". He writes that: "when an organisation gets the white modernist block in conjunction with a rather restricted cash flow with which to make things happen, there can be a tendency for a particular bias towards the known to set in. There is nothing wrong with this. It's called programming. However, this approach is not the whole story. Relationships between spaces and artists can be otherwise articulated. *Short Sharp Shock* was conceived to interfere with the partial determinism that lurks within the model. *Short Sharp Shock* is where time, space and resources can be provided for the artists and the organisation to show works in progress, punts, and new productions by new producers, thus facilitating a diversity of representation, and shifting the relationships between the space and the works. This time, the distancing from the directives of an 'organization' has been extended further. A discrete and larger part of the articulations of time and the artists in *Short Sharp Shock* have been made by two artists themselves: Dean Farrow and Michael Grimm."

The installations are coherent, elegant, and resonant within each show and temporally across shows. Each artist appears to have achieved the requisite critical distance for transforming passionate (and sometimes private) concerns into well-crafted and precisely positioned objects. Many of the artists involved display a propensity for working tightly at the interstices of the gallery walls and floor. Sonia Porcaro's text, inscribed in talcum powder, is placed here: "...preferring electric comes after brief and bruised consideration". It is flanked at one end by a mass of upturned thumb-tacks resembling, from a distance, gold and silver sequins.

Hoskin's origami balloons ('remains'), with their deliberately indecipherable text, reappear in Sarah Haselton's white paper cubes assemblage, 'City Squares'. In folded, fluted, linear form, white paper also appears, origami-like (placed with immaculate precision on the wall-floor join), in Lisa Beilby's 'anti-clowning art'. On the other hand, Hoskin's fetishised kitchen implements—copper mesh scouring pads—collapsed the temporal distance between her objects and Geoffrey Parslow's sink-strainer plug with mink tails from the preceding Sharp segment. Fetishism and addiction (it may linger), libidinally and critically distanced in the translation, are held in insouciant suspense by Hoskin. These shows constitute an 'authorless' collection of passionately disinvested but highly desirable objects. Their subject may be unknown, but not, I suspect, for much longer.



Look/Don't Look

Gavin Malone

Look/Don't Look Cnr. North Terrace and Kintore Ave

On the corner of Kintore Avenue and North Terrace—considered by some as the geographical matrix of Adelaide's cultural and intellectual life—Gavin Malone's installation-in-a-public-place *Look/Don't Look* stood for an obscenely short time. As a signifying system which might be

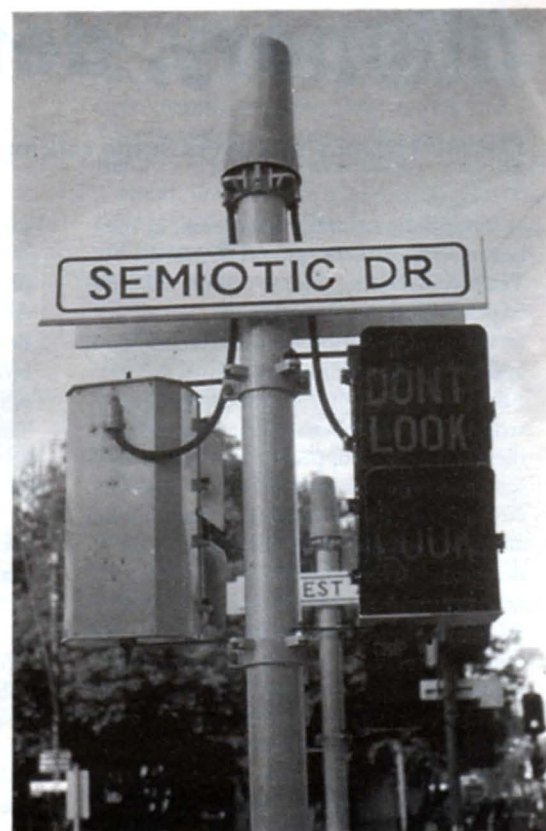
read from a perspective analogous to the subject's contradictory enculturation through proliferating, and often contradictory, discursive structures, this installation works quite literally in unison with the pedestrian (traffic) signs (Walk/Don't Walk) which alternate rhythmically at this, and many other, intersections. Malone's four alternative poles, each with its own dual sets of street signage and flashing propositions constructs another discourse within the framework of an all too often privileged one of aggressive (but often unacknowledged as such) domination in which rape is 'naturalized' and the environment sacrificed to economic progress.

We are inserted into a signifying system where we learn to understand the signifiers red and green as meaningful imperatives which we ignore at our peril, and mingle our bodies with vehicular traffic on its (dominant) terms. Malone has appropriated the terms of this framework and turned it to (other) political, social and cultural advantage. The pole designated Axiom Ave flashes Think (green)/Don't Think (red). The reverse side (approaching from the other direction) reads Semiotic Drive (Look/Don't Look). Crossing Wilderness Way reads Save (green)/Don't Save (red). On Forest Ave one is instructed Don't Chip (green)/Chip (red). Reclamation Drive

warns Rape (red) and Don't Rape (green).

Installed in conjunction with the Adelaide City Council, this work was disassembled prematurely, and ironically, for the Victory in the Pacific Day ceremony at the War Memorial adjacent to Malone's site. During its brief sojourn, Ignorance Ave (Act/Don't Act), which was paired with Greenpeace Way, became Chirac's Way, spelling out Heed(green)/Don't Heed (red).

Jyanni Steffensen is an artist, writer and PhD candidate at the University of Adelaide.



Look/Don't Look

Gavin Malone

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I have been given the name Tania

Barbara Campbell reports on her Perth abductions

In 1995, the Easton affair threatened to topple a Federal Minister. Carmen Lawrence, backed by Prime Minister Paul Keating, stood her ground. [actuality: argument in the House of Representatives] In Bosnia, NATO bombed Serbian strongholds. And gasps of astonishment as prize-winning author Helen Demidenko revealed her true identity as Helen "We're Poms" Darville. [actuality: gasps. Change of music]

And on the 30th August, a Channel 7 television crew recorded an event outside a contemporary arts centre in Perth. The black-bereted figure looked familiar. She was Barbara Louise Campbell, the Sydney performance artist who had turned up in Perth five weeks before.

(With apologies to *Great Crimes and Trials of the 20th Century*).

Since 1948 the Polaroid company has been manufacturing instant imaging cameras. In 1974 the Symbionese Liberation Army were grateful for this innovative technology. It meant they could photograph their celebrity hostage Patty Hearst—given the code name Tania—without risking their security or wasting time at the local photolab.

According to Patty's account, her first Polaroid shoot was akin to an art-directed publicity session for a forthcoming B-grade movie (Patricia Campbell Hearst with Alvin

Moscow, *Patty Hearst: Her Own Story*, Avon books, a division of the Hearst Corporation, 1982). The beret and fatigues were supplied by wardrobe (presumably not the same wardrobe they'd kept Patty in); the carbine and mismatched rifle scope came from props/arsenal; the seven-headed cobra flag came from sets (the girls had sewn it in their spare time) and everyone joined in with directions—"Look really mean." "Bend your legs more." "Get into a shooting stance." "Crouch". This highly contrived image was meant to prove Patty's sincerity, that she had indeed joined the SLA, she'd crossed over, and no, she hadn't been brainwashed.

Armed with little more than a Polaroid camera and a fax machine to make contact with the outside world (i.e. the media), I set about making as much of a public event as possible from the so-called outpost of Perth. Patty Hearst and the SLA had already laid the foundations. Just how much more capital could be realised 20 years on was what I wanted to explore.

I bought my Polaroid camera just around the corner from the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts for \$70. I also bought \$646 worth of stock—each shot was worth \$1.90. The SLA had already directed how the image would look. All I needed was a supply of celebrities with which to lure the media. An invitation,

nicely worded, nicely laid-out on the Mac, printed on PICA letterhead and signed by influential PICA Director, Sarah Miller was promptly dispatched to 70 Perth-based politicians, sporting, arts, media and religious identities and prominent business people.

18 of these accepted and at the appointed time each was asked to insert their head and hands through holes cut from a life-size bromide image of me posing as Patty posing as Tania, mounted onto a large painted board outside the front of PICA. Participants were given a choice of props/weapons to hold—from a cut-out version of the latest M16K machine gun to soft options such as a saxophone, bar heater or tennis racquet. They were also asked if they had a message for the people, at which point one of my banditti held up prompt cards with Patty statements such as "The people should not have to live in fear", "Try to understand the changes I have gone through" and the obligatory disclaimer "I have never been brainwashed".

The celebrity line-up included two state politicians (Dr Lawrence had other things on her mind), one West Coast Eagles star who is also something of a gay icon in Perth, one nun and two Tibetan monks, several authors and artists, one actress, one composer, one touring rock star, a social columnist and two television presenters. Ironically it was ABC TV News presenter



ABCTV news presenter captured outside PICA by Barbara Campbell

Michelle Milton

Peter Holland who generated the most media attention. He became part of the Channel 7 coverage; his photo was reproduced in *The West Australian* newspaper and he did a live interview with me via mobile phone during his afternoon radio program on ABC 6WF.

In between VIP sessions, passers-by were also invited to become Polaroid revolutionaries. Everyone got to keep their Polaroid, a give-away gesture echoing the SLA's original ransom demand that Patty's father give \$70 worth of food to every Californian living on social security. "The people should not have to pay for their Polaroids!" we advanced.

There are now over 250 images of Tania gracing fridge doors and corkboards. The SLA is alive and well and living in Perth.

I have been given the name Tania, an event for Polaroid Camera by Barbara Campbell. Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, August 29 - September 1, 1995



Ruby Davies

Still 1

Outside the gallery at night we blink and Ruby Davies' evocative golden streetscape imprints its memory. Inside, her photographs remind us of the monuments that tourists photograph usually only once. But Ruby Davies is a traveller captured by the history of place and the role of political events in our lives, so she returns to sites like the Berlin Wall, Lenin's statue to photograph them at other times. The monument that was damp stone is now covered in gold light. Lenin is blue and shaking. Later her large colour images will be enhanced visually by a process of regeneration from transparency to negative. The psychological power of colour is integral to the effect of the photograph. And it is effect that she's after. "The world is a theatre" says the catalogue, "... often a theatre of war represented by icons and historic symbols of the megalopolis, once powerful figures." The source of the images is documentary; the realisation theatrical. Just to prove how effective Ruby Davies' photographs can be, in the corner of the room there are three red dots next to a familiarly grainy pastel New York skyline. The caption reads *Curtain, Newtown Cafe*. VB

Still 2

The invite for the opening of Steven Lojewski's exhibition is a picture of a man's suit. We follow the suit to the gallery. Ease our way through the crowd and into his *Steel Cities*. Some of the pictures are those bleak black and whites that you would speed past in a larger room but here in this small place, everything demands attention. And so our eyes move around the image as we search for something that we don't know. Other pictures provoke another kind of familiarity that slows our breathing and reminds us of the way that ordinary people and things sometimes fall into extraordinary harmony. Drama is not so important to Steven Lojewski. Intimacy is, and the evocation of his own mood. He portrays people going about their daily activities as dispassionately as his buildings, streets and industrial sites. VB



Steven Lojewski *Steel Cities*

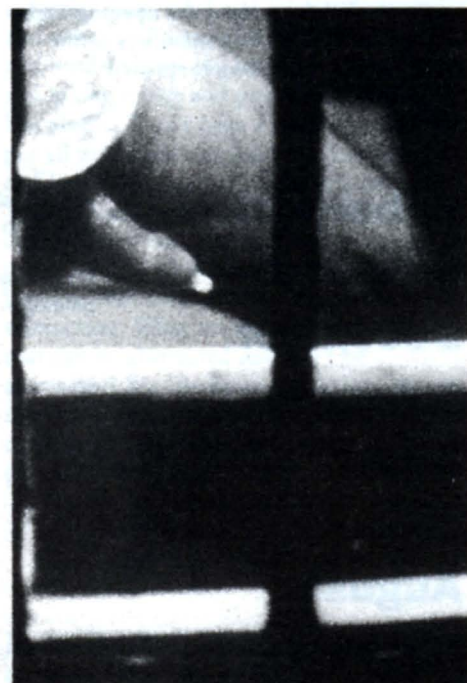
Still 2 Gallery, Sydney: Ruby Davies, Photographs 1987-1995 Aug 16 - Sept 16. Steven Lojewski, *Steel Cities*, Sept 20 - Oct 21.

Rear window

The experience of Merry Alpern's voyeuristic *Rear Window* series, furtive shots of sexual, drug and money exchanges through the neatly framing window of a Wall Street strip club toilet, is curiously but intriguingly distant. Perhaps that's not surprising. Shot at night with a telephoto lens, the inevitable graininess not only mutes the verité sense of incident but suggests a soft focus artfulness—these shots could have been staged. However the selection of images taken over many months juxtaposes moments that are banal (man peeing, handful of cash, a handbag) or odd (what is that woman doing? what is that huge mark on her back?) or romantic (a kiss that could be straight from a movie, moments of unlikely intimacy) and any combination of these—a condomed penis in curious repose becomes aesthetically neat. The strange thing is to try to work out the scale and dimension of the room and the relation of its temporary inhabitants to it. Alpern visited the club and was surprised at how small the room was, "no bigger really than a closet". The series has attracted a lot of interest in the ongoing debates about pornography and privacy in the U.S. Alpern was recommended for a fellowship by the NEA Peer committee, but it was vetoed by the National Endowment for the Arts proper. Worth a visit, but you'd have to be really flush to afford the several thousand dollars per print. KG



Merry Alpern *Window Series #14*



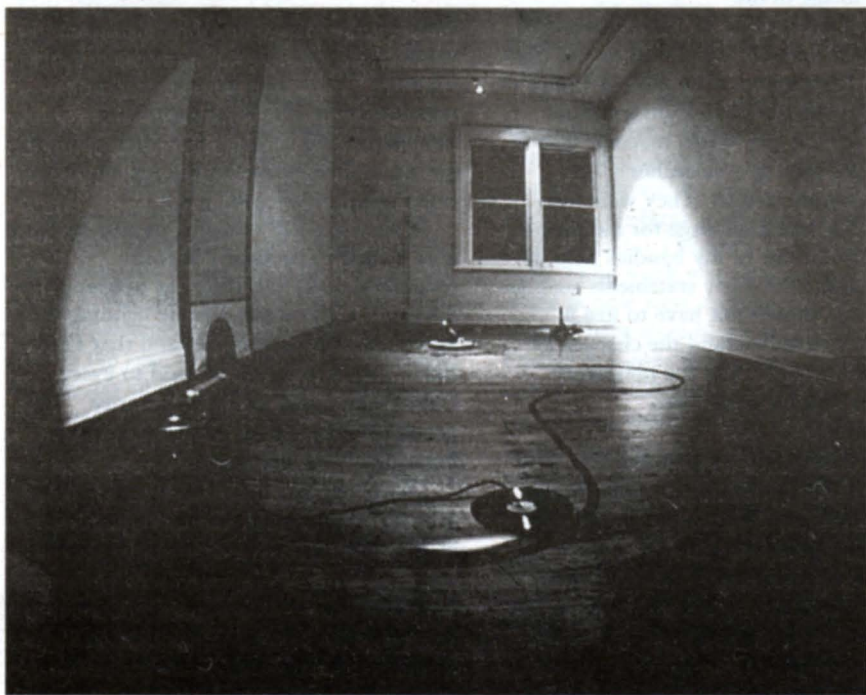
Merry Alpern *Window Series #15*

Merry Alpern, *Rear Window*, Michael Nagy Fine Art, Potts Point, NSW. 02 368 1152.

Dust/Tap

Jacqueline Millner sights installation & soundworks by Julaine Stephenson & Emil Goh

Dusst ... Tap! The onomatopoeic title sounded a curiously accurate prelude to this exhibition, with Stephenson's *Dust* sinuous and unmanageable, and Goh's *Tap* rigorous and contained. While the works share a sound component, the contrast in approach is striking, and was advisedly, and to good effect, harnessed by the artists who are familiar with each other's work as fellow students.



Julaine Stephenson *Dust*

Undoubtedly, *Dust* is the more inviting, with its redolence of childhood and 50s style domesticity. A toy train chugs along a track intersecting the gallery's first room and corridor by means of a tiny tunnel. The train journeys through a landscape marked by hybrid sound-making machines. One phonograph emerges from the collision of a blue aluminium plant pot, a lazy susan and barbecue tool, another from a gramophone soundbox, sharpened fork and old saucepan. But the phonographs are concerned not with playing the grand strains of musical composition, rather with amplifying the sounds of the underheard and underfoot. As I turn the lazy susan, the harebrained stylus scratches the dirt and grime in the grooves of the gallery floor so that I may hear dust. Rising, my foot intercepts another of Stephenson's amiable mongrel creations, a blue feather duster spinning away of its own accord, creating patterns on the floor and subverting its cleaning role by spreading dust and sand around the room.

This interactive element to Stephenson's work was heightened on the opening night of the exhibition, when members of the audience brought along their own

domestic paraphernalia ready to amplify this ode to aural banality. Particularly successful was a battery-operated toy truck which while whizzing round and round an old 78 produced broken phrases of the original recording. *Dust* was a celebration of the inchoate and the disobedient, of things that work and don't quite work—as is the nature of so much kinetic art,—of irritating noise and subtle sounds we rarely hear. The anarchy and abandon of this experience could not have been further removed from the reverential atmosphere of the adjacent room.

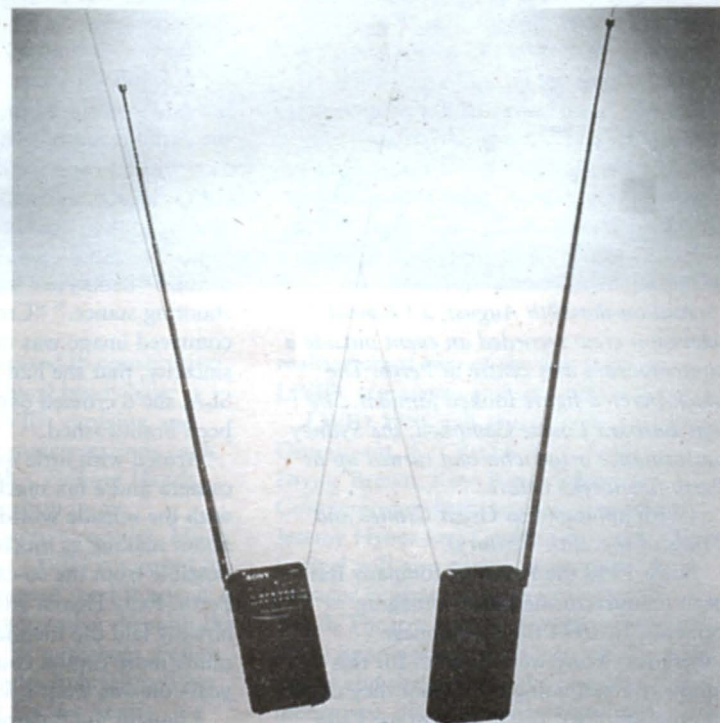
As always, Goh had designed a slick and elegant installation, with meticulous attention to line and lighting. Two pocket-sized radios were suspended facing each other at head height, as if in conversation.

was no possibility of a communal experience. Once in position, the viewer was pinned to the spot in order to hear, standing alone, stock still and silent, head bowed in concentration reminiscent of a religious ritual.

The prescription of the listening experience was irritating, but entirely consonant with the work's concern: the daily construction of individual identities by electronic data-banks. For what one heard was in effect the *voice* of mundane electronic transactions as they transform individuals into numerals and numerals into binary code in a relentless exchange of information. (This process of giving voice to financial dealings has a curious resonance in the etymology of 'auditing' accounts: in medieval England, checking even written accounts was done aurally, by having them read aloud, by 'hearing' account books which today would only be examined by sight).

Technology's diminution of human complexity is not exactly a novel theme, but there was something in the rendering here which made the installation particularly chilling. In incarnating the machinations of the virtual exchange of cold hard cash, the one male and one female voice exuded privilege and mastery. The patrician quality of the voices Goh recorded to "personify" these transactions, together with the subtle manipulation of the viewer's body, powerfully evoked the insidious concentration of power which electronic technologies can facilitate.

Goh's piece worked infinitely better as installation than as broadcast sound. Goh admits that he does not locate his work within the discourse of sound art, rather choosing his medium according to its fit with the concept he hopes to explore. Stephenson also would prefer not to be bound by the expectations of a particular discourse, but her background in dance and performance is evident in her work's fluidity and immediacy. Indeed, her gramophone sculpture held its own amid the sound and



Emil Goh *Tap* detail

performance of *An Earfull*, standing out as one of the highlights of the evening.

The Performance Space Gallery, August 1995. ABC Ultimo Centre event night An Earfull / ABC RN The Listening Room, 21 August 1995.



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25 Oct Jean Duruz
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LITTERARIA

Artists working with the Museum
Robert MacPherson and Simryn Gill on exhibition from October. Talks by the artists about their work: MacPherson 3.30pm 2 October and Gill 6pm 3 October at the Museum, North Terrace, Adelaide

ART ON TAP

4 Oct Graham Harwood talk on multimedia
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Big New Sites

The Performance Space goes to the flicks

In an innovation for conventional cinema advertising, The Performance Space has commissioned work from 12 Australian contemporary artists to be presented on mainstream cinema screens across Australia for 12 months from August 31, 1995.

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BIG NEW SITES is an adventurous idea conceived by artist Lynette Wallworth to present the work of some of Australia's finest contemporary artists in a non-alienating environment where audiences are sitting back, comfortable and relaxed.

BIG NEW SITES is part of The Performance Space's off-site program which is committed to building audiences for contemporary art and performance by opening up new areas for the presentation of these artforms. This project is produced by The Performance Space in conjunction with The Australian Film Commission and Pearl and Dean, with assistance from Visions of Australia, The Visual Arts and Crafts Board of The Australia Council, ABC Radio through *The Listening Room* and ANAT (Australian Network for Art & Technology).

Each artist's work will be displayed for a month. The twelve artists involved in order of appearance are Rea, Hewson/Walker/

Schmidt-Sisternans, Pat HOFFIE, Simon Hunt, Stephen Cummins & Brad Miller, Brenda Croft, VNS Matrix, Robert Cole, Ted Colless, Mathew Jones, Paula Dawson, Linda Sproul and a twelfth artist to be confirmed. The first four artists are:

Rea: *If One Green Bottle Should Accidentally Fall ...*

A member of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative Rea is a photographer/computer artist originally from Kamilaroi Country in NSW. She is currently working on her first solo exhibition at The Performance Space in September as well as producing work for the touring exhibition *Blakness*. She recently completed work for the Gay & Lesbian Anti-Violence Project *Imaging Racism & Homophobia* and has shown at Yiribana, The Art Gallery of NSW, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Gallery, *Don't Leave Me This Way: Art In The Age of AIDS* at the NGA and *Localities of Desire* at the MCA.

For Rea the BIG NEW SITES project has given her the chance "to go beyond the gallery walls into the cinema and out into the community. It has given artists from different cultural backgrounds, who work in a range of mediums, a new space to create exciting visual imagery and sound."

Paul Hewson, Linda Marie Walker and Johannes Schmidt-Sisternans: *A Slow Journey Back*

Hewson and Walker have been working together since 1986, under the name Hewson/Walker. Their collaboration is based on difference. Two voices represented and negotiated. They are not interested in homogeneity but a harmony of difference.



Hewson/Walker/Schmidt-Sisternans a slow journey back

Their work crosses the fields of photography, computer graphics and writing. Currently they are working as editors/curators of the Parallel Internet Gallery and journal. In 1994 they presented *Reflected Images* at the NGA and their work was included in the Art Gallery of SA's *Third Biennial of Australian Art*.

For BIG NEW SITES Hewson/Walker have been working in collaboration with German sound artist Johannes Schmidt-Sisternann. Walker says that the long distance working relationship has been an interesting and rewarding experience. The title of their work, *A Slow Journey Back* comes from a novel written by Walker and links with their previous work which deals with abstracted cinematic images.

Pat HOFFIE: *Who are Pearl and Dean?*

Pat is a site specific painter/installation artist who has spent much time in South-East Asia. She is influenced by the

advertising and film images which dominate the city-scape of major cities in Asia and her work reflects the comic and colourful nature of this imagery.

She is interested in the fact that Pearl and Dean's advertising relates to a home-grown market. To what is around the corner. The place where we can have our car fixed, the local restaurant or local laundry and the juxtaposition of this imagery is frequently set against the presentation of the glamorous international feature film. BIG NEW SITES allows her to take up an intriguing position between the two.

Her previous exhibitions include in 1993 *Halo halo* at the Bagoio Arts Centre and *Gimme Fiction* at The Australia Centre both in the Philippines and *Cocons Taches* at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. Her work has also been part of *Art to Hanoi* in Vietnam and *Crossovers* in Launceston, Tasmania in 1994. Earlier this year her work was part of *Kunsthaus and Misinterpreted Myths* at the Kong-Ju Literary Centre, Korea.

Simon Hunt, Stephen Cummins and Brad Miller

Hunt and Cummins have collaborated extensively on film projects until Cummins' untimely death in August of last year. They are perhaps best known for their work on *Resonance*, voted Best Short Film at the Sydney Film Festival in 1991. Cummins worked in the fields of photography, video and film while Hunt works as a sound designer, screenwriter, curator and film critic.

The work for BIG NEW SITES will examine difficulties associated with both access to HIV/AIDS drugs and representation of HIV positivity, utilising photographs and script ideas by Cummins. This will be presented in the guise of a game show, with reference to the context of public advertising. Anyone can enter! Who will win?

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In the room of memory

Renato Cuocolo and Robert Meldrum talk about Melbourne's IRAA Theatre with Richard Murphet

In 1990, Renato Cuocolo and Cira La Goia began the Australian phase of the theatre company that had been running in Italy for 12 years, the Institute for Research into the Art of the Actor (IRAA). They opened with an original piece about migration, *Far From Where*, and since then Cuocolo has directed strongly image-based and minimalist versions of *Medea*, *The Trojan Women*, *Agamemnon*, *The Bacchae* and *Othello*. In its Off-Off-Arts City, unpretentious space in suburban Alphington, IRAA has developed a loyal following interested in their highly physically disciplined, rhythmically spacious explorations of "the room of memory". The following interviews with Cuocolo and with actor Robert Meldrum, who joined the company for *Bacchae* and *Othello*, took place on separate occasions. Their interspersed work of the interviewer (Richard Murphet as RT).

RT When IRAA began, what was it about theatre that you wished to explore?

RC That was in 1978 in Rome and I was studying at University of Rome. The influences were Grotowski, Brook and Asian Theatre, Japanese Theatre in particular. The talking point was the difference between drama and performance, whether it is possible to do a theatre that is not necessarily based on text but on ideas. This is what we did for the first 12 years. We never used texts. That was the starting point, creation that was based on image and work on the body. The theatre for me is essentially the sculpting of space and time. And in a sense whether there is or isn't a text, is not so important.

RT Why did you start to use text, particularly classical text, in your work?

RC I thought that people have a sort of background in these texts. There is something that belongs to these texts in our unconscious. By choosing classical texts there is a possibility to make people understand what I have chosen and what I have discharged of the original one. Also to start with the text gives you the opportunity to put another layer on the work of the body and of the image, to explore how you create meanings. An element that remains always central to my work is that of memory. There is always someone who tries to remember something, just as the audience and I try to remember the classic. For example, in *Othello-Othello* I started to work in rehearsal without reading the original. What of that original text am I forced to remember? It's something to do with me, with my unconscious relation with that text.

RT So you are actually working in a sense as a playwright.

RC Someone called me a theatrical composer and I like that. I never write, I design. I do a lot of sketches. Theatre is like music. I design the score.

RM Renato brings a worked out score to the rehearsal. What you are confronted with straight away as an actor is a picture that you are to embody. From the beginning you are having to deal with the whole thing, so that you are being challenged to let go of the notion of working from self and individual concerns like motivation.

RT What's the connection for you between the training of the actor and the work in rehearsal and performance?

RC There are three layers. One, to have a common training as a common language.

The training is the quality of attention that each actor can bring to each moment of the work. Two, the creation of the storyboard. That is my personal vision of that play. Three, the moment the storyboard starts to interact with the actor it will change according to the influence of the actor.

RM You just get the whole thing out on the floor. For the first two weeks you are in total confusion. You have to trust and follow the route he gives you. Any effort to get him to articulate that route seems contrary to the work. The only way is just to keep going back in and doing it again. After a while in *The Bacchae*, I started to develop my own memory of those experiences, an awareness of things that had accumulated for me—the feeling of my body in relation to the desk I'm sitting at; the cold of the metal on my skin; the feeling

20 years in the future, now in Rome, now elsewhere. We are all the time in the same space because we are in the space of memory. That is exactly what is happening in theatre. We have to use theatre to show not how we see things but how we know things. When we act in theatre, we act in the room of memory.

RM I've always had difficulty with narrative theatre. I've always resisted adhering to a linear progression, because one of the things I strive for as a performer is to be absolutely in the present. So it suits me fine to be finding moments of memory rather than telling a story. This doesn't mean to say that I don't eventually have my own internal narrative of sorts, but I don't have any trouble with the disconnectedness of it at the beginning. It becomes difficult when you have to start negotiating things

between each other as a cast and you discover you haven't got a language with which you can talk about them. It's at those points that all our differences and our problems about what Renato's attempting come to the fore. The common language is in the training but it bypasses words.

RT What do you wish to provide for an audience?

RC Essentially a kind of performance that leaves a lot of space open for the audience. Each one derives their different stories from the same performance. The space in the trilogy was very minimal because that was the space we were researching. It won't

necessarily be that extreme in my next play, *The Blue Hour*. It will be more dynamic, comic, instead of the humour-free zone of *The Bacchae*. I feel ready to play with a very grotesque kind of image, tragic farce, an element that comes from an Italian childhood, like Fellini. But the way of communicating with the spectator will be the same. It will be the spectator's job to put together the story, working in a dynamic collaboration with the action. It happens there in the space and in the mind of the audience.

RM With *Othello-Othello*, Renato started to make a shift. *The Bacchae* was his most accomplished work. In a sense, it was too immaculate, a very polished surface, yet it felt like it was thin ice and could easily crack. It was the most effortless experience Renato had had, which always made me highly suspicious of it when we worked on it. It's significant that *Othello-Othello* was terribly difficult and was more open-ended than anything he had ever done before. He came to the rehearsal with fewer offers in terms of setting it up on the floor. But by the final few performances we were making connections with the work that were very different from anything IRAA had previously done.

RT Are you interested in cross artform

work, in new opera or in the use of electronic media?

RC Essentially, my interest is theatre in its pure form. What we see all the time is not theatre, but literature. I see theatre in one sense as a prostitute to other forms. We have very few occasions to see theatre which is pure theatre.

RM Always Renato's theatre is about very simple but very profound statements and sometimes, like *Othello-Othello*, they are just like a single, deeply connected gesture. *Othello-Othello* was to do with the space between desire and fulfilment, the gulf that can exist between a man and a woman and having a very "feeling" rather than intellectual experience of that. We as actors had to discover that space.

RC Theatre is hybrid in form. Music is part of the creation of space and time and part of the theatre and in that sense it interests me to use other media to create theatre. I will be doing an opera, *The Garden Of Joy And Sorrow*, for The Melbourne Festival and also an opera next year in Italy with an Italian composer.

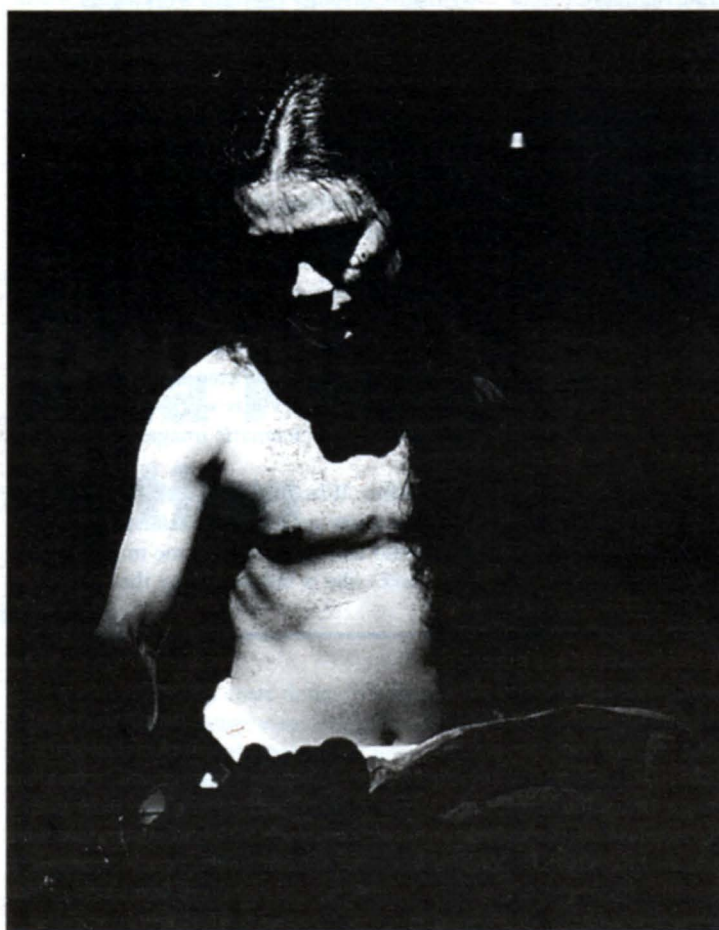
RT Is there much hope for the future of what you call pure theatre? Is it an endangered species?

RC If we do theatre with a passion for cinema, then theatre will disappear. If theatre is not to be an endangered species, we must do something you can see only in theatre. It's the same process as happened in painting when they discovered photography. It freed painting from doing portraits and landscapes. Theatre can use the same space of freedom that cinema makes possible.

RM The challenge in Renato's kind of theatre is to find the words to talk about it. When we got to Sydney with *The Bacchae* and we got into the space, it wasn't working. He couldn't help us. We had to come in early and just work with the piece and refine it for ourselves. That night something did happen and then he had something to talk about. The same with *Othello-Othello*. The first two weeks of performance he gave almost no notes. We were furious with him. He couldn't help us because it wasn't what he needed to see. But the form was there. He had provided that and we hadn't found it yet and slowly, through the repetition of it, we started to find it, so that he could talk about it. There were people who came a second time later in the run, who commented on the deeper level on which it was operating. You don't recognise that inner form till it's there and when you do it confirms everything you've aspired to.

RT How long can a company like IRAA expect to continue before its life span is over, or before it needs a radical change of direction?

RC At IRAA, in a sense, we have done very well. 20 years is a long time. I don't feel there is any problem with audiences. The audience may be small but sometimes the marginalisation is important because a big institution with a large audience can never do a performance like that. There is space for this audience as for art film and performance art. We are not talking about an enormous audience but an important one. In Australia we have only been going since May 1990, but in one sense *The Blue Hour* is a change of direction for us. However, it is possible to open up another direction and yet to reuse things that we have done before. For instance, *The Blue Hour* will explore the subject of migration which is so central to Australia and which is a combination of the elements of memory and repetition, memory of "home" and repetition of a pattern that is a condition of the contemporary world, the condition of displacement.



Bacchae—Burning by Water

Lyn Pool

of my feet in the water; the quality of the silence at a moment. All these external things become the things you would normally work with internally and after a while you internalise them. That can only happen through repetition. Once you get a hold on it, you start to get a little bolder about allowing the journey you are going on to take on a little bit more of your own quality, so you start making offers and he's then ready to receive them.

RC We talk about the work on the body but that is not the real creativity of the actor. Rather, it is the kind of energy used, because in reality the same action can be altered by which energy you use. The right energy is found through repetition. Often after one week of rehearsal we have all the performance and then we rehearse and rehearse it and open up another kind of spontaneity in the actor.

RT Could you elaborate on your distinction between acting and performing?

RC There is all the time a tension in acting between the moment when someone becomes a character and the other moment when the actor is him/herself. This is to do with the elements of time and space and is the reality of theatre. It is also the connection between memory and theatre. In memory, we can be now 20 years ago, now

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Manipulating desire

Kirsten Dunlop in conversation with Annette Downs, director of Hobart's Terrapin Theatre

Annette Downs is about to commence rehearsals for a project that has been in the making for two years. The show is called *Desires*. It is the first major adult production by a company that has traditionally toured schools and created works for children and Downs is committed to the idea of continuing a regular program of adult works. She is determined to change preconceptions of puppetry as child's play.

Desires is a commissioned work consisting of four discrete pieces by four female writers. It is bound together by a design team known as *In Cahoots* (Greg Methé and Ruth Hadlow) and directed by Downs. Each piece is a non-verbal narrative accompanied by a soundscape. *The Source* by Peta Murray depicts a woman who leaks, physically and spiritually. She is a large-scale body puppet in an oversized, soft-sculpture kitchen, serving the needs of an off-stage invalid. Belinda Bradley's *Mary May* also uses body puppets, this time to represent the world of a man, confined to his bedsit, whose suppressed sexuality sees women as either mothers or whores. Andrea Lemon has written a black theatre narrative (one in which the performers are invisible) called *Undertow* which explores the inner life of a woman hanging on a clothesline, and Lian Tanner's *Corpus Nullius* is the story of a ballet dancer who chooses to live life without her shadow but finds its elimination unexpectedly difficult. This piece is performed by miniature *bunraku*—small jointed puppets operated with hand contact.



Puppeteer Philip Mitchell with the ballerina puppet from *Corpus Nullius* by Lian Tanner. Noeline Robinson

Despite their diversity, the four narratives of *Desires* have a common thread. Downs explains, "They're all about the whole self—trying to deny the black self or the other self or the spiritual self—and the fact that ultimately the whole package is there...you can drag it behind or push it in front of you but it's part of you". It seems appropriate that puppetry should be the medium for narratives about split selves. The puppet belongs with the doppelgänger and the golem as a figure for an animated other.

Downs agrees. As an ex-dancer she is particularly interested in the role of the performer in puppetry and the merging worlds of body puppets, puppets and actors. The audience also participates in the confusion of worlds. Puppets demand a complicity in the act of animation which is

often a recognition or a substitution of self. *Desires* is designed to educate adult audiences about the possibilities of puppetry. I find it significant that in each of its narratives that process of recognition is central. Perhaps the subject of the work is puppetry itself; its ability to present metaphors of theatre and of life, in which the self and an other are in constant play.

Certainly Downs is insistent about the role of metaphor in this work and in puppetry generally. The writers of *Desires* have had to make a transition from what she describes as "the brilliance of language to express a mood, an emotion...to step across to an image that's going to tell the same thing, to find a language of metaphor". The show is described as 'visual theatre'—a slightly disconcerting term if you've always thought of theatre as visual. The label seems to be aimed at adult audiences, alerting them to the presence of allegory and abstraction, the need to read images as if they were words. Downs speaks of a "universal language" of puppetry in which "the tedium of the literal is released". I am less convinced about universal language than I am about the richness of idea and experience that is offered in a work like *Desires* in which meaning is as subject to the fantasy of the viewers as it is to that of the writers and designers.

If conceptual metaphor is important in the work, physical design is equally so. The production is distinguished by a remarkable variety of puppetry styles and techniques, as well as innovative design about which Downs is extremely cagey, in deference to dramatic effect. She is enthusiastic and glowing about her design and performance team who have been involved from the outset. *Desires* is the result of freely conceived concepts on the part of the writers realised in eclectic and imaginative styles by Methé and Hadlow, which have, in turn, modified the pieces. The pragmatics of puppet design, particularly for a show which is to tour internationally, play an important role in the visualisation of the narratives. Downs refers to the process as "a dialogue about negotiation and flexibility that isn't there in straight theatre work".

Desires is an ambitious project. As it goes into rehearsal, its performers (Philip Mitchell, Kirsty Grierson, Melina Henderson and Ruth Pieloor) will have to master an unusual range of techniques for a single show and, as Downs points out, manipulation and animation are art forms in themselves. Her rationale for diversity is far-sighted. The opportunity to write short pieces enables writers inexperienced in the language of puppetry to experiment and learn, while Downs is able to build a repertoire and plan future commissions. She hopes *Desires* will become a showpiece for the company, one which emphasises that a regional base is a matter of geography not quality. She is concerned that Terrapin be known for risk taking, versatility and, above all, the excitement of unpredictability.

Desires: Terrapin Puppet Theatre, Peacock Theatre, Hobart, October 26 - November 4, 1995. Touring to Budapest for three weeks in 1996.

Kirsten Dunlop is completing a PhD in the English Department at the University of Tasmania at Hobart and is Associate Editor of *Siglo*.



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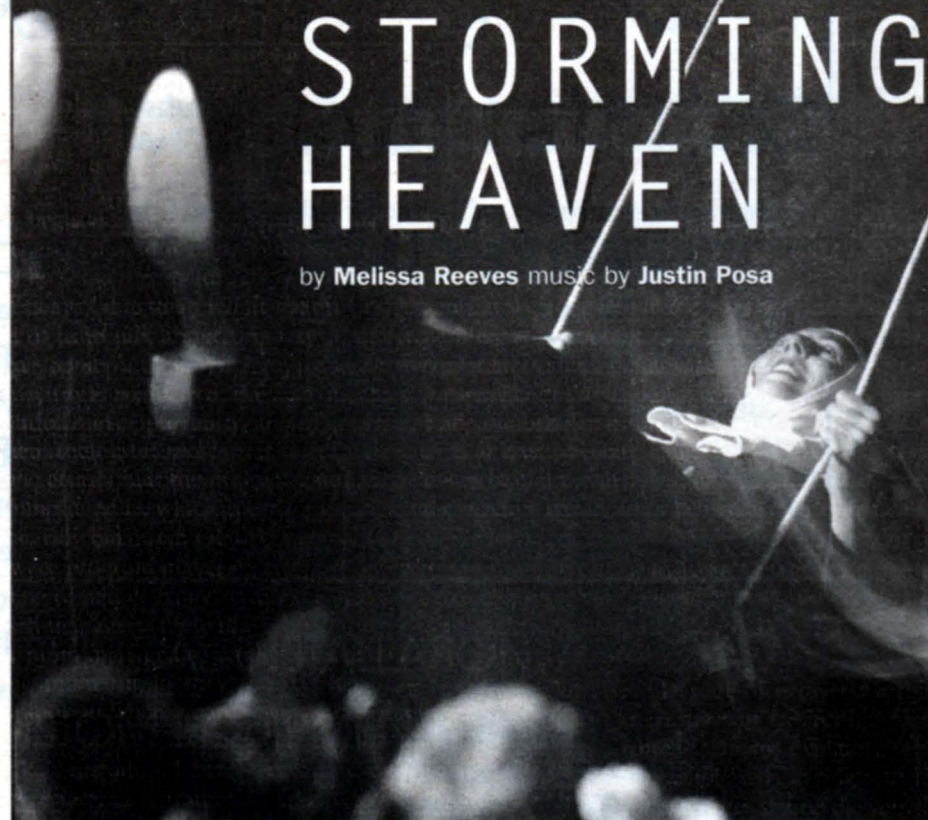
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RED SHED THEATRE COMPANY (r)

Dirty ruralism

Maryanne Lynch enjoys *Country Style Livers*

The distinction between urban and rural myths is a curious one. Urban myths fascinate us but don't quite hold up—perhaps because, for many of us, their proximity makes them outlandish. Rural myths, on the other hand, no matter how grandiose or bizarre, seem to resonate with 'truths' about individual and national identity. No doubt this distinction is aided and abetted in Australia by a history of white occupation, but is there more to it?

Rural mythology was the subject of a recent Brisbane show produced as part of Metro Arts' Experimento program. *Country Style Livers*, the brainchild of the Corbett Brothers (Geoff and Ben), seized upon archetypes of 'the Outback' and blew them up to an impossible size. Aiding this feat was the rural Queensland setting, traditionally seen as redneck territory and here described in redder than redneck terms.

Using a mixture of theatre, dirty country music, performance art, video and pub cabaret, the Corbetts twanged a tale of an embittered paraplegic alcoholic, his sister, the innocent hooker, and the smack addict pimp with evil intentions. Gross caricatures of 'clean country living' but true-to-type in terms of the familial, social and historical ties that can over-determine life in a country town.

The setting was Perseverance: a place in which the meatworks is the main source of revenue, and perseverance is all you have. Perseverance: a word connoting fortitude, stoicism, endurance. Is this the 'essence' of Australia? With matching ill-fitting suits and Rollins-style exaggeration, the Corbetts yowled their response: 'We wallow in the mud of the piggery/age or smack or mindless drudgery—to get/Out of Perseverance/Away from Perseverance.'

'Essence' was transmuted into 'escape', and the question became: is getting out possible, and from where and for whom?

What's at stake are past and present definitions of Australian identity. That is, there's no getting out—or, at least, not by way of denial. Not out of the clichés, nor the myths and the lies, nor out of the deluded sense of ourselves as 'one people with one vision'. By inflating rural myths, the Corbetts and company stuck the knife into much more. At a comfortable distance we can laugh at a town built on dead meat (or peanuts), but what if we are implicated in its construction as a symbol of the 'Australian character'?

Savagely, if somewhat clumsily, *Country Style Livers* shredded cosy notions of individual, social and national identity, and then jeered at the pain. At the same time, the Corbetts created an uneasy sympathy for racist, sexist and other-ist sentiments even as we watched the stock characters end up in the bottom of a VB can.

Where these issues really came to life for me was not in the 'play' proper, nor in the acting. It was the double Corbett act, the musical ambience, a wonderful moment of meatworks balletics and the physical energy of the work that caught me up and shoved my face in the 'river of piss' called Australia.

Raw, yes; cynical, yes; promising, yes—and from out of Queensland. 'Up yours!' (the Corbett Brothers).

Country Style Livers, A 'Meat and Three Veg' Performance. Written, directed and designed by Geoff and Ben Corbett. Original score by Dan Baebler. Metro Arts Theatre, Brisbane Aug 10-12, 16-19.

Reconciled to grieving

Julia Postle at Kooemba Jdarra's *Seven Stages of Grieving*

It begins with a weeping which swells into choked sobs; a mournful wail rising above her crying, now and again. A block of ice is suspended above a dirt mound and its dripping punctuates brief moments of silence between sobs. She holds her arms to her contracted chest. And the scene ends. In *The Seven Stages of Grieving* Deborah Mailman draws her audience in and out of emotions. We accompany this Indigenous 'Everywoman' on a journey through her grief: a grief for those "taken from us", for the arrogant defilement of this land, for a loss of culture and family and for contemporary injury. Storytelling, dance,

song and image coalesce in Mailman's evocation of this suffering. Any initial barriers of tension between the artist and the audience are dissolved by Mailman's cheeky grin and endearing giggle. Sometimes this is so disarming that, as the emotion of the piece spills over into our experience, the traditional distance between performer and spectator is negated and transformed. And while the telling and recognition of grief is central to the work, *The Seven Stages of Grieving* expands beyond this agenda, interlacing a series of stories through the work that map some of

• continued page 39

Intrigued and anxious

Katie Lavers at PICA's *Putting On An Act '95*

Perth Institute for Contemporary Arts' open program, *Putting on an Act '95*, is becoming a vital part of the arts scene, creating an opportunity for Perth artists from a range of disciplines to see the breadth of work taking place. This year there were some 30 performances, ranging from the exhilarating to the truly excruciating.

Captain Australia: Dances with Hoovermatic, the work of Marcus Canning and Sohan Hayes, functioned by provocation. Marcus Canning (Captain Australia) pulled a

mannequin (a pubescent altar boy/girl?) from a fridge and proceeded to commit various unmentionable acts including mounting

it and partially dismembering it. In a kind of mindless sexual frenzy, he attempted to couple with a Hoovermatic and a television set. Scoffing cans of beer which he shook onanistically until they exploded over him and the mannequin; shouting and jeering at the footie on the TV; and finally losing his battle with the washing machine (it consumed him), his parody of the Aussie male successfully raised audience temperatures until by the end, people were shouting and jeering back at him.

Alone in a spotlight, David Fussell in *Pumping and Pulsing* explored the anxieties and apprehensions of a performer facing an audience. He spoke very little, relying on his body language and facial expressions, occasionally clearing his throat as though about to say something but then changing his mind. This extended into an improvised exploration of the constantly shifting dynamic between the audience and the performer. Here, Fussell developed a rare rapport with the audience, switching, in a matter of seconds, from one persona to another, from a teacher giving disapproving and controlling looks at laughing audience members, to a child squirming in front of a group of adults. Fussell displayed a rare gift for keeping an audience absolutely focused on the slightest nuance or change in facial expression. He was also very funny.

Retarded Eye is a group of four artists working collaboratively in Perth (Vikki

Wilson, Cam Merton, Sam Landels and Rick Mason). Their performance consisted of three large video projections, two of which were continuously changing; the other in the middle remained a constantly shimmering, shifting image of light on water. The video images were accompanied by a live performance of electronic music. Although in its less



Spare Parts Puppet Theatre *The Secret Life of Objects* from *Putting on an Act '95* Stephen Smith

focused moments it veered towards a kind of moving paisley, at its most concentrated the performance became an intriguing meditation on the seductive power of surface.

Katzenjammer, the performance by Enargia (Malcolm Riddich and Jeremy Hicks), shared an aesthetic with *Retarded Eye* utilising a single, large video projection accompanied by live electronic music, but differed in retaining referential content. The video footage ranged from someone playing with a dog, to a close-up of a cat's face, to a girl turning her head and laughing, to a series of staged crashes with planes bursting into flames followed by a close-up of the cloth dummies inside turning and bending with the impact of the crash.

The issue of content became the overriding concern for me with this work. The repetitive use of image felt rather like a night at home with the telly; the repeated plane crashes were suggestive of recurring news bulletins and the peculiar mixture of the crash-spectacle of atrocity and the domestic home front footage reinforced this. It became increasingly disturbing and intriguing as the plane crashes were repeated over and over again with the movement of the dummies inside the plane suggesting a strange ritualised dance. It was a bizarre and thought-provoking work which gradually evolved into a kind of metacritique on the nature and form of television.

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Beyond the door

Curtis Weiss talks to Linda Marie Walker about Mad Love's new space in Adelaide and Velasquez's *Las Meninas*

LMW Tell me about Mad Love's new building.

CW It's a shoebox, 22 x 9 metres, over two floors. It's the first time we've had a permanent home and it incorporates a gallery, a writing ensemble, and a place of new music. It anticipates largely funding itself, not being at the behest of government departments. We follow guidelines though because Mad Love is run by a board and has a constitution. The building paves the way for links with Sarah (Miller) at PICA, Angharad (Wynne-Jones) at The Performance Space, and Michael (Snelling) at IMA. Having recently been to New York, I'm interested in Tim Burns and Lindzee Smith, Australian artists there, doing their own and collaborative work with Mad Love.

LMW Will you use both floors for performances?

CW I've always used space that way. I want to create a touring show to fit any space so I'm using video and computer graphics.

LMW Technology allows you to do things simultaneously ...

CW I'm trying to do that within narrativity. I'm using some of Robbe-Grillet's ideas from *Project for a Revolution in New York*, how he pulls away from a scene into a subway poster until you're somewhere else. That's how I'll use virtual and live space, to make transpositions, create gaps for the spectator, a concentration on supplement, as entity, which breaks down people's desire for centre, a concentration on levels, fragments, the body in bits and pieces.

LMW That relates to having a building that houses other forms.

CW Absolutely. There's spillage, excess. We'll co-habit, spatially, conceptually. I'm working with electronic media, so is the writing ensemble, the gallery is installation and time based and sound is important to Mad Love's work. Artists will be seen as multi-skilled.

LMW It seems crucial now to work in associative ways.

CW You become more articulate. I suppose that will wreak havoc on the bureaucracies, and, I suppose, it's the responsibility of an artist, more than ever, to speak of their work, psychoanalytically, anthropologically, whatever.

LMW This leads to the idea of Mad Love working like a laboratory.

CW Yes, by having a home base. Every Mad Love project has been like re-inventing the wheel. The first two works were joint ventures with the Experimental Art Foundation. Then we branched out on our own, and because the work didn't fit into performing arts or visual arts we were lumped in the middle, and short of funds. With the Hybrid Arts Committee of the Performing Arts Board we've come into our own and can get on with the work. Each production is mise en scène based, ephemeral. The laboratory is a continuation.

LMW What sort of theoretical texts influence your work?

CW *Alphaville*, for example, was inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*—the breakdown of space, the oedipal surveillance of space, the

Foucauldian panopticon. This new work is inspired by some of Ulmer's writing, Kristeva's on light, Robbe-Grillet's, Derrida's on painting. Ulmer combines expert, popular and autobiographical knowledges. He talks about 'mystory'; there's a three dimensionality to his texts.

LMW How will you use *Las Meninas*?

CW I'm looking at the psychoanalytic idea of image-implant. The analyst gives the patient an image on which to free-associate, and the analyst does the same in making a reading. And looking at catholicism, its presentation of image, image as god, and protestantism which works through writing and speech. Catholicism works with the eye, protestantism with the ear. Catholic imagery of the virgin is about beauty, as is de Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, as is the Infanta in *Las Meninas*. Secularization of religious iconography is transferred and yet retains the relationship between beauty and truth. The Catholic regime uses one book, the Bible, and the iconography around that. We don't have anything in the secularized world that works as directly, but with mass media our influences are iconic. I've dealt with the western, the detective, and horror genres. Here I'll work with post-religious iconography, looking at why values of high art still work. I've made the pilgrimage myself.

LMW What happened to you in front of *Las Meninas*?

CW Up close I was struck with the light, because Velasquez uses all that glazing and thousands of brush strokes. Away from it the characters come into play, the eyes. Further away the eyes aren't so visible. Further still it's the doorman. You're aware that Velasquez walked backwards and forwards, you're addressed all the time. It's an open narrative, there are many readings like *The Birthday of the Infanta* by Oscar Wilde. Versions of the picture were sent to different kings in Germany, all fascinated with her eligibility. There's unbridled sexuality...I had to listen, could I hear a pin drop? Could I hear voices? Like a radio play, shifts between eye and ear.

LMW How do you envisage the production of *Las Meninas*?

CW It will work with the frame, off-screen spaces, narrative parallels and constants for the audience to identify with. A film maker in New York is shooting footage for me, there'll be audio work, the figurative and playing out of fantasies and relationships. Robbe-Grillet uses New York as a setting for lure, transgression, taboo. I was aware of being shot or beaten there and learning, as I acclimatised, to deal with that. I'll use Ulmer's sense of autobiography...and in Spain the Velasquez image is turned into papier-mâché toys.

LMW How many people will work on the production?

CW I'd like a team of three or four artists, a couple of artist/writers, some film makers, but with the reality of funding it's about getting as close to that ideal as possible. The work Mad Love does relates to a broad audience. The last production drew people from all walks of life, all ages. Mad Love is a place where artists can think and work.

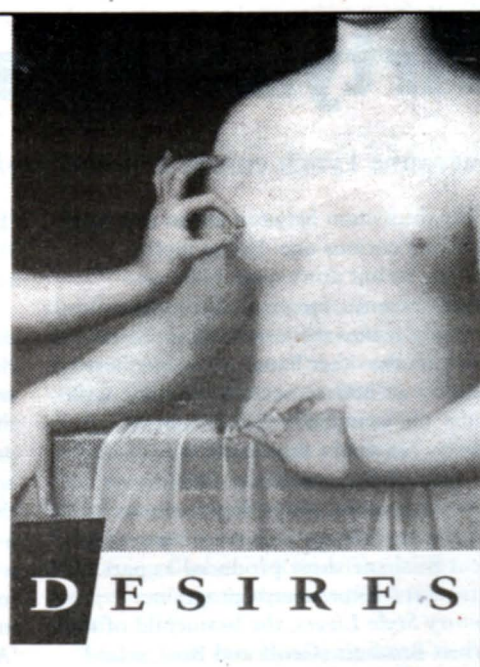
Curtis Weiss is the founder-director of the performance company Mad Love, whose new space, the Graham Wilson Building, is in Synagogue Place, off the east end of Rundle Street, Adelaide. Mad Love's new production is scheduled for October.

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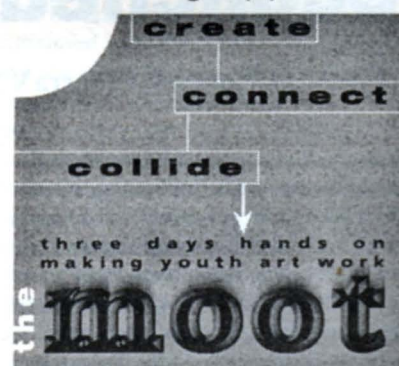
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Subtle spectacle

Patrick Troy and David Branson speculate on ideas and forms for Splinters' *Utopia/Distopia*

PT We'll set up an environment and performances that the audience can view as either utopian or dystopian. For instance if we use violence to solve a problem, we might see that as utopian and the audience might see it as dystopian. We're quite happy for those dialogues to take place and hopefully they'll reflect on society. The audience catch ferries to the island and move around three installations.

KG Does each have a theatrical scenario?

PT Yes. If it ends up being an hour and a half there'll be roughly half an hour for each scene apart from the prologue and epilogue of people coming and going.

KG What happens when the audience arrives on the island?

PT What we're trying to work out at the moment is whether it's better to have the audience freely following the action so they might be anywhere on the island when one of these transitions between the scenes happens. Then all the performers start to move towards another area and the audience follows them around *en masse*. On the other hand we might use a tour guide scenario and have three different audience groups following their own tour guide and all the guides tell a

different story. That's something that will come out of workshop and rehearsal.

DB In *The Ramayana*, Rama tells his brother to go forth and talk about the interaction between human beings. So even though you might be talking to someone who has committed all sorts of atrocities, you still show them respect. It's these kinds of sociological interactions that we'd like to evoke in this idea of utopias. The audience will see people treating one another in a way which is not necessarily the way we treat one another in society.

KG So you're putting the audience in a lateral position all the time?

DB I hope so.

KG Why the island?

PT It's there. It's really there.

KG Where?

PT It's right in the middle of the lake perfectly situated for everything that you've ever wanted to do because it's in the middle of town and you haven't got any noise restrictions but it's visible from Parliament House and from all the major viewing areas

on the mountains around Canberra. All the roads circle the lake so you're always going around it.

KG What will you do with this visibility?

PT We've got some very large structures going up including some industrial strength equipment. We're looking at lasers. Lots of light and sound. When David and I were young we saw *Alice in Wonderland* produced in promenade on that island and that was certainly formative in my performance experience. Ever since we started doing shows we've always said, "One day we'll get out to the island". So this is it. And, of course, Thomas M31ore's *Utopia* was obviously an island plus the fact that it's a struggle to get there. You can't just climb a fence.

DB We're also having projections on sails. Hugh McSpedding's coming from Melbourne with an enormously powerful projector. They're visual images on a grid that rotates. They'll relate to the three worlds that we're talking about and also to the temple space to which everyone is making their way. It's more like the technical homebase than a temple. If we look at the island as a circuit board it's the motherboard. There'll be a symmetry in what we bring to this natural place but at the same time we're asking how does the human being with all of its various functions fit into this mechanical world?

KG How are the scenarios theatrical? Do they have their own narratives?

PT We talked and talked and there were so many ideas about the way we might construct the performance. When you say *Utopia* some people think of Paradise, the land of milk and honey where no-one dies and the champagne flows. For us, *Utopia* is a political construct. It's a social form where someone's still got to clean the sewers. People still die. There are still criminals. How do you deal with the criminals? So we'll try and elaborate some ideas on these visions of *Utopia*. How do people deal with a public

meeting in *Utopia* in performance form? We've already started playing with some very beautiful notions such as you're not allowed to speak loudly. Subtlety is of a premium.

KG Are you improvising these into shape or is there someone writing for you or are you working from collected texts?

PT We always have a lot of performers and some are not as experienced as others. I thought it would be better if we looked at ways of minimising the amount of text and perhaps have the tour guides give the narrative—we're still looking at a narrative. Still thinking that in the midst of this *Utopian* setting there might be some conflict or some love story or what have you. There'll be an epiphany of some sort. People will come away with this sense of a fantastic ending but we don't have any text as such. We've started talking to writers about things that small groups of performers might be saying. They might be whispering something to each other or having a small conversation but I'm starting to think it might be better if there was a kind of poesy in that, more lyrical, a healing element. So when people speak to each other the aim is not so much to gain something but to allay people's fears.

KG So the audience will see behaviours that will surprise them?

PT We are really hoping that the audience will get involved in the final scene. Speaking of text, we've got Matthew Fargher coming down on the weekends before the show to work with us on some songs that we can divide up between the three major groups/political factions on the island that will also culminate in one major song. We have a choreographer to work with people as well. We're hoping that as the three audience groups move around that maybe they'll become aligned with the groups of performers and learn the song and the dance of the group. It'll be very simple. Then during this epiphanous finale they'll feel that in some small way they're moving towards *Utopia* themselves.

KG In terms of *Splinters*' engagement with spectacle and space where does this one push you?

PT This might be the last of this kind of show. To my mind, the nature of spectacle is like fireworks. The audience goes through a range of emotions but it's not a real intellectual engagement. You're pulling at the big chords of emotion.

KG So you're yearning for something more intimate?

PT Certainly, where we can explore more delicate ...

KG But you'll take some of the sense of what you've done with you?

PT I think so. Some of the tricks and what have you. There is a sense that this is the culmination of a body of work.

DB I often feel the problem with a lot of work you see is that you think where do I actually fit into this? I suppose that the accusations of indulgence have been thrown at *Splinters* as much as any experimental group, but our primary target has always been to give the audience something which is not just watching the inexplicable but watching something that they can think about and be involved in, a combination of excitement and thought. Nietzsche suggested that we need structure but also the engagement. Great art occurs in the combination of the two.

Utopia/Distopia, Splinters, Springbank Island, Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Nov 15-25 Splinters are also doing the closing night party for the National Theatre Festival "in the breezeways of the Theatre Centre in the cabaret space and on the steps of the Canberra Theatre."

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Book reviews

Towards a Third Theatre—Eugenio Barba And The Odin Theatre
by Ian Watson

Routledge, 1993. Revised 1995.

Eugenio Barba admits his debt to Jerzy Grotowski but his reputation has unfairly laboured under the yoke of connection—his work seen by many commentators as an imitation of Grotowski. Barba did indeed witness Grotowski's work for three years—over 30 years ago! Since then, in a continuous career with the Odin Teatret in Denmark, he has carefully developed his own philosophies, aesthetics, training processes and ways of making performance. It is true, however, that the dedicated laboratory nature of Odin's work is similar to Grotowski's. Grotowski, of course, has long since left the field of theatre performance. Barba survives after 34 years (during which time, it seems, Odin has created but 11 shows).

Indeed, with the recent first world interest in the intercultural, he thrives. Long a magpie of third world theatre techniques, Barba is the old man of interculturalism.

Ian Watson's book is a readable introduction to the man and his work. He examines thoroughly such aspects as theory, training, rehearsal and dramaturgy, and the productions. What is sacrificed in this approach is any real sense of the ways in which these areas may interact in the rough and tumble development of a new production. The chapter on the productions is unfortunately the weakest and any reader who gains the impression that the Barba's theory outweighs his practice might do well to read Johannes Birringer's extended and eloquent praise of Odin's *Brecht's Ashes in Theatre, Theory and Postmodernism*.

Richard Murphet

An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre
Elaine Aston

Routledge 1995

Feminist approaches to theatre have been dominated by the writings of American academics and critics, in particular Jill Dolan, Sue-Ellen Case, Peggy Phelan and Lynda Hart.

So it is refreshing to read Elaine Aston's account of feminist theatre activity from a British perspective, even though she too, acknowledges the impact of US developments.

This book covers similar ground to Case's *Feminism and Theatre* (1988) but places greater emphasis on the intersections between gender, class and race in theatrical production. It charts feminist work from the first phase of deconstructing the canon; to the celebration and inclusion of women's work as writers, directors, dramaturgs, designers of the stage; to the contesting of language through the re-theorisation of voice, subject, body and structure, under the influence of French feminist theory; to the more recent reconsiderations of gender as performance.

The first half of the book summarises these different approaches and makes useful sense of many complex debates in each field. For instance, it teases out the problems of a feminist aesthetics or the colonising of black bodies. The subsequent more detailed case studies explain the significance of connections between feminism and theatre studies and theatrical practice. The second section focuses on specific projects and writers, including Deborah Levy's *Heresies* and Nell Dunn's *Steaming* (both well

known in Australia) as well as the Caribbean Grace Nichols' *i is a long-memoried woman* and the critical silencing of American writer, Susan Glaspell. The careful negotiation of this fascinating material suggests comparisons with local feminist work.

The chapter *Performing Gender: A Materialist Practice* signals one of the newer areas of feminist performance research. Aston describes the contribution of workshops and rehearsal processes to the critique, or reinforcement, of gender in the alternatives of over-display, under-display or cross-gendered display. By turning away from the centrality of the text and authorship, women theatre practitioners have increasingly employed the playfulness of the theatrical repertoire when exploring ideas.

An up-to-date introduction to feminist engagement with the theatre, this book is perceptive and lively. For the more experienced reader, it has an excellent bibliography and its discussion of particular projects and related theoretical ideas is still informative. The necessity for more publishing in a similarly lucid form about feminist work in Australia, however, remains.

Rachel Fensham



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Truly fringe, just like the internet

Keith Gallasch 'phones three fringe festival directors in Adelaide, Melbourne and Canberra

Barbara Allen, Adelaide Fringe,
23 February to 17 March 1996,
08 231 7760

KG What encouraged you to go in this direction, from NAVA (National Association of Visual Arts) back into something visibly dominated by the performing arts?

BA I wouldn't say that. The fringe has a wide range of interests and perhaps my appointment reflects that, it's broader than the comedy-cabaret core.

KG What is the core?

BA The visual arts program developed enormously in 1994.

There's lots of potential for multimedia and writing programs and a significant Aboriginal

and Islander component. It is broad-based.

KG And you'll be in new fringe venues and offices in the east end of Adelaide. Why the shift?

BA The Lion Arts Centre now has a huge university being built next to it. The open space has become a building site. We'll still use the theatres and they'll continue to be managed by the Fringe but our base will be in the East End.

KG How do you define yourself in terms of the Adelaide Festival?

BA Festivals, particularly in Australia, have a big budget and an artistic director, and hopefully they select some fantastic stuff for people to see. My role as director in the fringe is quite different from that, because the Fringe is an open access festival, in which people basically become

shareholders. What the fringe does is produce a momentum, and a marketing profile for artists, and it brings an additional audience to Adelaide.

KG So you're not a programmer?

BA We're about access, but we do have some entrepreneurial activity like the Star Club venue, which I think was a feature of the '94 Fringe. It's going to be repeated and expanded to a 700 seat venue. It will be in the heart of the East End, and it will hopefully attract the best of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and other world class acts, as well as substantial comedy cabaret from Australia. It's a whole series of relationships between the fringe and a number of producers from overseas and here, so quite a complicated little thing which is set up because we don't have the money to just go out and buy things. If audiences and arts people want to see what's going on in Europe or what's just been the hit for the Edinburgh Festival then it will be available to them.

KG So it's not the kind of stuff then that the Adelaide Festival would bring out?

BA No. The festivals have their own market audience demands which limit their aesthetic diversity. It's like doing subscription theatre. I think the fringe is like the internet because it makes so much accessible that you don't actually have to profile it to a particular audience. The audience will seek out what they want. We will be trying to keep a focus going in the sense of offering audiences different trajectories through the East End. It is the coffee belt of Adelaide and we're spread around the East End. People can go from venue to venue, criss-crossing the area and encountering indoor and outdoor events—we'll be using the nearby parkland with its two natural amphitheatres. I'm also trying to pick up that Mardi Gras party idea where things are precisely programmed but no one knows when they're going to happen.

Peter Chelleu, Melbourne Fringe Festival,
October 1-22 1995, 03 9543 0722

PC This is my first festival. My last position was at the University of Melbourne as Activities Coordinator for some years. We're an open access program with 178 events. Last year it was 118, so we've grown. We produce 40 events ourselves with a focus on access, for example, visual arts exhibitions like Fringe Salon at the George Hotel Ballroom in St Kilda and at Stop 22 at St Kilda Railway Station. 170 works will be shown at these venues. A lot of established artists are coming back to the fringe to exhibit next to emerging artists. 40 exhibitions shows how seriously the Fringe takes the visual arts and it's a response to the fact that artists are getting better at promoting themselves and that there are a large number of artist run spaces, a strength that's come out of the recession. Gallery spaces include First Floor, The Basement, Temple.

KG Do you rate film and video an important part of your program?

PC The central program is of new short works from Australian artists and, from America, *Into the Underground* which is only coming into Australia for this festival with some ten classic works like *Mod Fuck Explosion*.

KG Are people attracted to film and video in a fringe festival when the tradition is of live performance?

PC These screenings sell out—there's such a strong queer culture theme and also they're truly fringe underground film. The big performing arts program includes Sam Sejavka performing his *All Flesh is Glass* directed by Lynn Ellis—it's opened and is already getting a great response—and *This World of Dew* by the Do-zan Dance Theatre in their debut. The work looks back to traditional Asian dance in a contemporary context and is supported in performance by Jill Orr, one of Australia's leading performance artists.

KG How does the Fringe connect with popular culture?

PC One of our outdoor productions, *The Fringe Shut Down* on October 21 on St Kilda Beach and broadcast by JJJ, is an arts rave to celebrate the Melbourne-based techno music industry that is doing so well around the world. Snog are mega-stars in Germany but are not recognised as part of a significant export market here! We'll also have oral story telling with Mighty Mouths, writers and others from contemporary and indigenous cultures. We've got Cyber Corroboree where our Koori arts collective coordinators have

scheduled traditional koori dance to meet techno on the sands. And there'll be Drag (Queen) Racing—Sydney Fringe are coming down to run that for us.

KG Fringes around Australia appear to be responding more quickly to the new technologies than their Festival counterparts.

PC Cyberfringe is our internet program. It features information on fringe events, booking information, art works, reviews, hourly updated arts news, online forums and seminars. There are sessions on how to write html—the hypertext mark up language used on the Internet—in order to empower writers. It's a simple language and you can get your work out there. The primary focus of our writing program is ZEEN Fringe, as in fanzine. We have a committee of fanzine makers creating Australia's first fanzine directory MegaZEEN. 'Zine makers are outside of the mainstream but we'd like to help them get to know about each other. Fanzines are a very effective form of communication and expression especially amongst young people—that's where they write and their distribution is really effective. We have an exhibition of fanzines going into the State Library of Victoria—non-institutional small arts and music publications going into an institution legitimising the work of these young people. The MegaZEEN Directory can be found at <http://www.vicnet.au/vicnet/fringe/fringe.html>.

KG What is your own contribution to the Fringe?

PC Continuity and a focus on cultural things, about festivity, about popular culture and contemporary music—supporting techno music and emerging koori music artists, the next generation.

Mark Ferguson, Festival of Contemporary Arts, Canberra, October 4-14, 1995.
06 249 7377

MF This is the first time there's been a formal fringe that is more than a series of events and that's because we have a centre and a focus, a multi-artform venue—Canberra's contemporary arts centre, Gorman House, of which I'm the director.

KG Why did you feel the need for a fringe given the relatively 'alternative' nature of Robyn Archer's version of the National Festival of Australian Theatre?

MF It's an attempt to provide something more accessible to the art community here in the ACT and to challenge them. We're not in opposition to the National Festival, in fact we add to it with visual arts, youth arts and music. Robyn's National Festival is explicitly theatrical though not at all narrowly conceived.

KG Is there a role for the new technologies?

MF Definitely. There's Multi-Media Salon which is supported by Apple amongst others. That can be joined in the flesh or online at moot@netinfo.com.au. It's a two hour workshop on how to create multi-media and is part of a larger program for young people called MOOT with voice and movement workshops, forums and the 2 til 5 Youth Company from Newcastle doing their show *Rubber, Steel and Confidence* about HIV prevention for teenagers.

KG I see there's a participation element that extends to film and video.

MF The AFC is supporting Screenings, a collection of short films. *Fugitive Visions* is a collection of contemporary films and video presented by Sydney Intermedia Network and the Canberra Contemporary Art Space with a one day workshop where you can produce a 'video postcard' which will travel to other galleries in New South Wales and Victoria.

KG Performing arts events dominate the program.

MF There's P. Harness with *How Things Work*, Paige Gordon & Performance Group in *Party! Party! Party!*, Defunct Ballerinas in *The Fortress*, Stephen Howard's *We'll Let You Know*, and a lot of smaller works in *Second Stage*. But the visual arts are pretty prevalent too with site specific installations in the grounds of Gorman House. From diverse cultural backgrounds we have the *Man Animal Man* group exhibition—John Johnno Johnson, Gordon Hookey, Boza Jim Williams, Les Peterson, Stephen Harrison and Neville O'Neill at Studio D—and Ruth Walker and Tess Horwitz are exhibiting new work at the Canberra Contemporary Art Space. It's an intimate festival, focused mostly in one venue and with an astonishing array of forms and ideas.

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Full hand

Erin Hefferon & Stephen Smith preview Perth's *Artrage*

Fringe festivals are a bit like a long game of poker. Beginning the game, you don't know what kind of hand you'll be dealt. As the deck diminishes, it becomes apparent what good hands have come and gone and what the remaining possibilities might be. Perth's *Artrage Festival* is no exception. The punters at least get to choose from the program. They get an indication of what they might expect in terms of the royal flush, the full house or conversely, the bum deal but it never works as well as word-of-mouth (remembering of course, that one person's royal flush may be another's bum deal). This being a preview, we have only the pre-pre-program notes, an assortment of press-releases (helpful or otherwise) and a working lunch with Director Peter Grant, not to mention local gossip, knowledge and quaint superstition to go by.

Where better to start than from the information gleaned from the 'horse's mouth', Peter Grant, who makes it clear that *Artrage* can no longer be described strictly as a 'fringe' festival. The term 'fringe', Grant says, "is unnecessarily apologetic", positioning local arts as marginal to the products imported from Europe and the U.S.A. and presented at international festivals, such as the Festival of Perth. By the same token, however, Grant is not entirely eager to altogether drop the term. 'Fringe' he concedes, can also mean 'fresh and exciting', bringing to mind an 'edginess', and the sheer joy of the unpredictable, when the artistic direction of the festival is still dictated essentially by the participating artists.

Dipping into the pot, *big* things are offered in performance. Red Desert Productions presents *The Curve*, which promises "a psychic fairytale offering a series of glimpses into life in the 90s" performed by 15 women and four men from The Academy Theatre Workshop. In *Forbidden Passion*, Fire From Heaven Productions features 22 performers—acting, singing, dancing and making music. Described as multimedia theatre, "the work is both spoken and sung, sacred and profane, and arcane yet worldly"; a production in which even God makes an appearance. Sydney Tartuffe's *Little Fish Big Fish*, deals out beat poetry, technology, and theatre. Timothy John Brain re-creates the *War of the Worlds* for theatre—"an experience for all the senses". Steven Quinn, a.k.a. Art Craven, performs *A Night In Judgement*, "combining ideas of character and narrative with the theories of performance art".

Direct from The Grahams Town Fringe comes Hearts and Eyes Theatre Collective with their one man show, *Get Hard*, a humorous piece about being a white gay male in contemporary South Africa. For those who like it hot, Moira Finucane returns with her 1995 Sydney Mardi Gras CLUB BENT hit, *Feathers on the Floor at Club Boa*, "a night of high camp, high glamour, high heels". Melbourne's comedy trio The Third Ear do something Brechtian with a synchronised swimming team in *The Generation X-Files*. Snuff Puppets give us *Scarey*, a mix of the "Grand Guignol, Poe and Buster Keaton...in a festive celebration of fear". Big Wigs offer "an all singing, all

dancing gender deconstruction" in *Artificial Insemination* and Theatre Kimberley presents *Baamba*, a night of story-telling and songs performed by Stephen Baamba Albert. Physical Architecture Is Dancing does its version of *Alice* whilst Homeland Performance Group presents *The Funeral*, a blend of western classical ballet, traditional Chinese Opera techniques, Japanese Butoh and Balinese dance. Baratha Kala Bavanam do *Varnamalikai* and Halex Vargus's *Out There* takes to the streets. The Sleepers perform a cappella on the metro trains. The Perth Independent Film Makers invite anyone to open *Pandora's Box* and Disk Readings do time in *A decade of live sentences*.

In the visual arts, Paul Bennett's *Picture Show* takes visual art out of the gallery and onto the streets. Marcus Canning wheels his installation piece into Forrest Place in

Site 111; Gotham Studio Co-op gets the *Seven Year Itch* and Artist Son, Mechanic Dad, deconstruct a car supermarket style, "black & gold", and re-install it inside PICA (Dad says "it will work"). Jo Law explores food in *Open Wide*, Bilyana Vujcich gets dirty in *Ink Junkie* whilst Stephanie Choo and Jeff Chand get personal in *A Secret Conversation With An 84 Year Old Man From Penang* and *The Secrets To The Individual Point Of Entry* respectively.

Artrage is on e-mail, with updates daily—artrage@highway1.com.au.

Erin Hefferon is a performer currently studying Communications at Murdoch University. Stephen Smith is a photographer.

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Performance

Second Stage—Poetry, Performance Art, Political Satire, Experimental Theatre. "Party, Party, Party"—new work from Canberra dancer-choreographer, **Paige Gordon**. "Barefoot" by **Poppy Wenham**—Installation using lighting and sound to explore the world of streetkids. **P. Harness**. "Fortress Cabaret" by **Dyfunct Ballerinas**.

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Opposing Forces

Eleanor Brickhill interviews dancer Lucy Guerin

EB *What was special about working in New York?*

LG I think the most significant thing was the dance community which is really strong and very supportive. Starting to choreograph there was easier for me than here. Somehow, you're not so on view. There's so much happening, you're just one more person doing some little showing somewhere. Here, I always felt so exposed. People are responsive, I think, because it's so hard to keep making work. It's a matter of course that people have jobs and dance in their spare time, even really successful, established people. In ten year's time I can see myself showing work at the Joyce or at Bam or City Centre, doing quite well, but still waiting tables.

EB *Sometimes working on other people's material is like doing your own work, because there's something that feels so right about what they do. Was there anyone in particular like that?*

LG Terry O'Connor's work was most like that for me. He wasn't interested in spending hours getting the right this and the right that. It would just come out in this kind of gush. It was about a different thing, not the movement. Mostly, the way people are in civilisation, the way they interact with each other, how they're isolated. There's not that many things that preoccupy us. There's love, there's probably power, there's god knows what else. The point for me is basically a stylistic thing.

EB *So how do you decide what material to use? What's the basis for these decisions?*

LG It's just instinctive, really—I use what

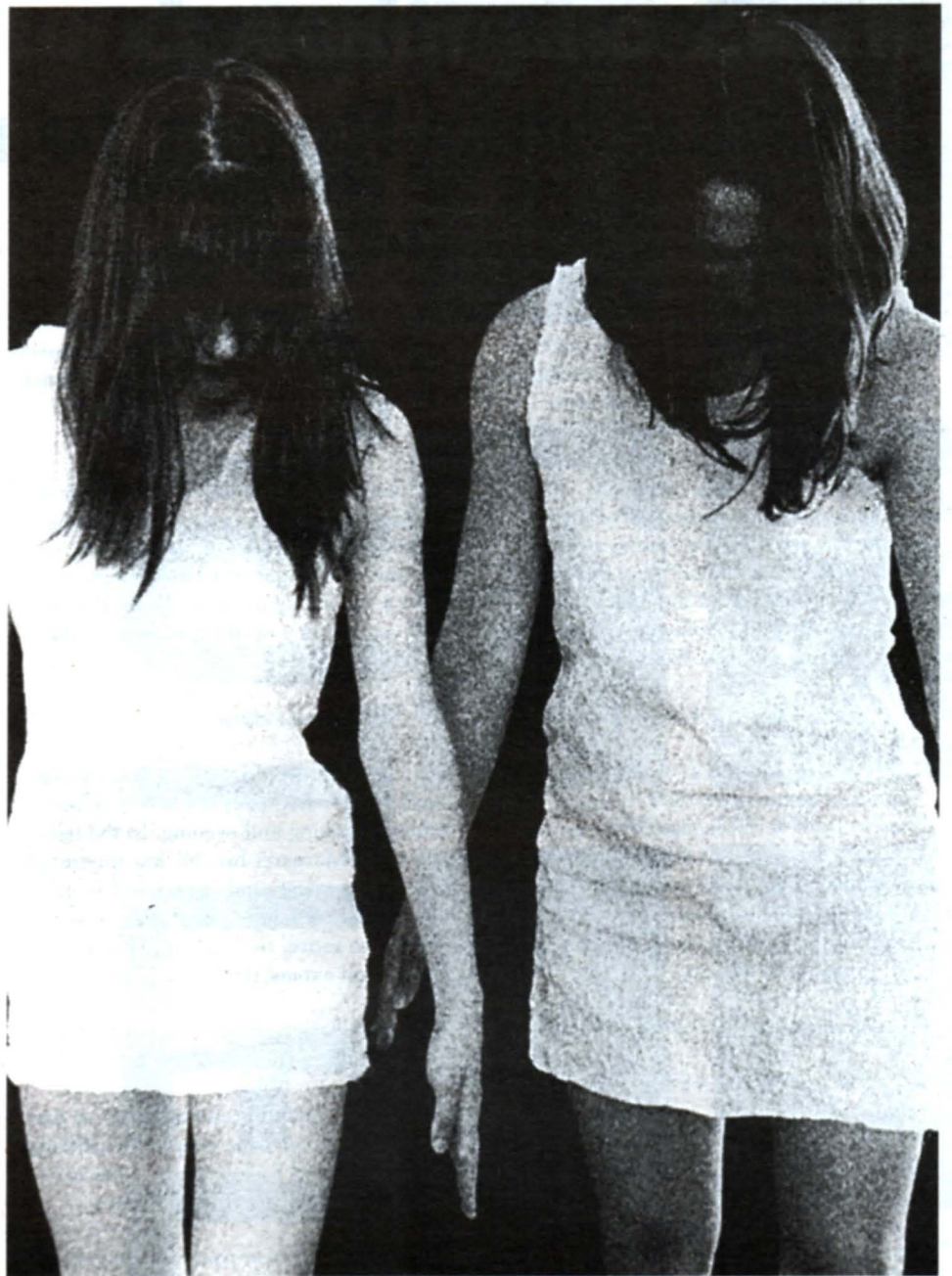
pleases me. I like things with a conceptual base, and because of the way they work in the space, rather than through any emotive content. I don't think of dancers as people who are trying to express themselves. In the beginning, they're more like abstract concepts.

EB *What about physicality? What does dancing feel like for you these days?*

LG I still love the visceral sense of really pure movement. But since I started choreographing, I got bored with movement for its own sake, so I tend not to look at that fine detail. I want it to mean something more. I don't think I'm naturally that sensual or luscious. I like moving fast, using hard, classical lines in my choreography—overindulging. You know ballerinas who distort movement just through their own intensity and verve? Sometimes, I'll set something up and then subvert it, undermine it somehow, in opposition all the time to itself. I like my movement to be affected by more emotional elements. Not love, or hate or anything like that, but by a sort of tone that's beyond just moving.

EB *Do you have anything in mind when you say that?*

LG Well, the last piece I made, called *Incarnadine*, which means "blood red". I had a 25-minute unison duet with Becky Hilton juxtaposing very large movement and very small movement, quite rigorous and relentless. Pretty much all my pieces deal with duality or extremes. Then I had a trio coming in after about ten minutes, all in pinks and reds, very interdependent, and mutually supportive all the time. They held on to each other a lot, used the whole



Lucy Guerin and Rebecca Hilton in *Incarnadine*

Anja Hitzberger

stage. It was a lot more lush. An initial idea for that little one was that very small movements have huge consequences. You're standing on a cliff, and you just take the tiniest of steps, and it results in death. (Demonstrating) I had to move to this place, not really knowing...what it was. Testing out positions, not really being fully committed to them.

EB *I made a piece once where I just fidgeted—trying to get into the right position for a photo. That's all. Finding the quality, the tone: trying to fit in, find the right place, being uncertain about what 'right' was. But in a forthright sort of way.*

LG Yes. That's what I mean by tone. It doesn't happen that often that you find something really special in your body where the movement has its own life. You spend a lot of time in the studio, trying to come up with something that's not rehashing, just a bit of this or a bit of that part of your history.

EB *In Ion Pearce's Practice at The Performance Space, you used old material and some new stuff.*

LG Yes, the first two bits were from that duet in *Incarnadine*. The one that went to the floor a lot and that little one. The third more dancey one was specially for the piece. Solo material for myself always tends to look dancey. Because it's from the perspective of being a dancer, it lacks that directorial edge. That's what I mean about having a conceptual base to start from. Then I can really push the material, be much more disciplined with how I make it. I won't just make nice movement.

EB *How do you decide what your pieces are about?*

LG I can't make pieces about someone's life, or political issues. I can't ever get interested in that kind of connection to reality. It has to remain abstract, which is why it sounds like I'm waffling all over the

place. Usually my pieces are about how I make sense of human existence. Which sounds extremely grandiose. The thing is, it doesn't usually get more specific than that, and ends up being a bit unwieldy.

EB *Yes, the ideas are so all encompassing, how do you ever say, "That's not part of this dance"?*

LG Often I have to get down to questioning the basis of existence for a while. That's really tedious. I have a difficult time by myself in studios. I start off thinking in a very abstract, almost philosophical way. After two hours I'm crying. It's so far from movement. By myself it's always really confronting, but I've come to see that as the important step: to have these two opposing forces, a dialogue. *Incarnadine*, with that static duet and the flowing, expressive trio, was about different approaches to how you deal with your life. Do you just go with the flow, and allow yourself to fall apart, and then come back together? Or are you very rigorous and resist and try and be really strong all the time and hold your ground? Both things seem really beautiful. I love those people who are really strong, but they have limitations. And people who can be manipulated really easily, they're more like water, finding their own level. That's the dialogue, looking at choices. That's the movement. But then people who work just purely with movement would argue that it's really the same thing.

EB *Perhaps they're really working with a whole lot of other things, and just haven't noticed. It's just not a credible place to be anymore.*

LG No, everyone yawns. There are obviously a lot of other things going on so why not just admit it.

Sydney-based, independent dance artist Eleanor Brickhill has performed and choreographed with a number of major dance companies in Australia and London.

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Studio practices 1

Extensions: Room to move

In the first of a series on dance studios, Rachel Fensham talks to Shelley and Wendy Lasica in Melbourne

Extensions studio, Carlton was opened in 1980 by Margaret Lasica, a leading modern dance figure in Melbourne. Initially established as a space for her company, the Modern Dance Ensemble (MDE), it has over the years been a focal point for a diversity of dance activity, including classes, rehearsals, performance, lectures, seasons of new work and workshops offered by visiting artists, including Simone Forti and Mary Fulkerson. Several generations of Melbourne dancers have been exposed to modern and postmodern dance by doing classes at Extensions.

RF Can you describe Extensions?

SL It is a double space, one larger without columns, a lower space with columns. Two different floor surfaces, upstairs a sprung floor with a permanent dance surface, and downstairs a composite cork. Mirrors on one side upstairs. Downstairs a couple of smaller mirrors. The upstairs space is very light. It's close to the city.

WL It feels somehow connected to the sky.

RF How did Margaret's use of the space change?

WL Her teaching was constant and initially she was very active with the MDE. As people left she shifted her involvement from choreography to facilitation.

SL She started the *Image* seasons which involved artists from all over Australia and overseas showing work and giving talks.

They began in 1984 and ended in 1990 and were some of the first forums for discussing and seeing a range of approaches to dance.

RF Who uses the space now?

SL Individuals and small groups use it for specific projects and on an ongoing basis. There seems to be a real desire on the part of this generation of artists to have a regular space to work in. Perhaps they realise they need time alone in the studio.

RF What about classes?

SL There is Aikido training and various Melbourne-based people teach at different times—morning and evening. In the last few years Margaret became less interested in teaching vocational classes and more interested in teaching people who just wanted to move, to find out about their bodies and extend their functional use.

RF That has always been a big part of the modern dance tradition, hasn't it?

SL I have tried to keep that going so that in a class you can have people with different motivations and backgrounds; some you know well, some are completely new.

RF Is that different from teaching in an educational institution?

SL In a studio there is always time before and after class, or ideas that are being

thought out during the class.

WL When the assessment element is taken out, the teaching is based on the acquiring of knowledge about the body, about space, about the repertoire of movements. There seems to be more room for experimentation, even within class it doesn't matter if you fall on your face.

RF What is your typical beginning to a dance session?

SL Cleaning the floor (laughs). It took many years to get used to being able to work by myself. I still find it difficult although I have more understanding of when it is a waste of time. Or when it is okay to look out the window, listen to some music or play games with myself.

RF Tell me how your visiting artists project started?

WL We knew Stephen Petronio was coming to Australia and invited him to teach in Melbourne. We were awestruck by the response—people came in carloads from Sydney.

After that success, we decided to set up a program inviting dancers and choreographers, interstate and overseas, to teach in different parts of Australia and in different situations; sometimes in studios, sometimes in institutions and sometimes in companies. At the same time we're encouraging them to look around at Australian dance, to foster some kind of interaction between what they bring and what they see. Last year we brought David Dorfman, Bebe Miller and Lance Gries. And they all taught interstate, as well as in Melbourne.

SL Now people know we are keen to use Extensions for teaching, they are approaching us. We have also had Gregory Nash, who was in Australia for an Australian Opera Production, Russell Maliphant, Lloyd Newson, Lucy Guerin.

WL With a broad objective of trying to show different processes for working with ideas in dance. We'd also like to extend this into performance and if they don't do solo pieces, they might make a work. Or dancers

might attend workshops here and then work with the same choreographers overseas on a project. Sowing the seeds and setting up opportunities for other things to develop.

RF How do dancers you invite vary?

WL Stephen Petronio and Lloyd Newson have different politics, different aesthetics, different ways of working.

SL When Stephen was working here in 1993 the discussions were about taking the Alexander Technique into dancing. Whereas Bebe was curious about composition and the conversations after class were about ways of generating and structuring work.

RF Do you find overseas artists want to come here?

SL Many local artists have worked in Britain, Europe and America so generally, international choreographers are keen to know more about the context for Australian dance.

WL When they come for a major festival, they are just asked to perform and even though audiences are interested, local dancers don't always learn about the artists' backgrounds or approaches. In some cases, we are connecting festivals with teaching situations.

RF Is there an international dance language developing?

SL Dialogue is certainly possible although there are some conditions specific to Australia. In the studio, the differences are usually not to do with geography but to do with particular interests in dance. I might have a really hard time talking with someone based in Melbourne, but a wonderful time working with someone in Denmark.

RF How has the function of the studio changed now there are so many graduates in dance?

SL The establishment of vocational courses clearly changed the focus of the studio. When Margaret began teaching there were none in Australia but their expansion seems to have bypassed studio practices. Most graduates see the dance profession in relation to companies and funding, and there is a lack of understanding of other histories of dance.

WL Studio culture has always changed in response to changing conditions. And with our current projects, Extensions is still leading in providing movement opportunities for dancers.

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Laterally at The Crab Room

Julia Postle looks over a new dance venue in Brisbane

The recent evolution of The Crab Room in Brisbane is an indication of the developing strength of the community of independent dance artists away from the putative nucleus of the south. Pioneered by Clare Dyson, Rachael Jennings, Brian Lucas and Avril Huddy, The Crab Room exists as an alternative performance and installation venue for artists, and also runs contemporary dance classes and workshops.

In May this year, the new space was officially opened with a season of solo

works entitled, *tripping on the left foot of belief*. The unprecedented support of Brisbane audiences for this season was an explicit endorsement of The Crab Room project. The democratic, collaborative ethos of the collective encourages the showing of new work, and the second season at the space, *raw*, was the materialisation of this spirit of acceptance and openness. *raw* presented a series of four minute encounters with several genres, including movement, visual art, circus performance, music, photography and song. The works were united only in their duration, and this promoted a diversity of experiences for the audience.

Various artists from *raw* released helium balloons which suspended delicate wooden cages in Rachael Jennings' *maybe even until i'm seventy*. "Yes, it's my heart. Somebody left the window open," was the adage as the balloons drifted across the ceiling and over the heads of two sweepers who brushed away words in sand. The work was both symbolic and ethereal, as the images moved with a languid charm through the space, with music from *Raise*

Absence and yet presence

Eleanor Brickhill visits Dance Exchange at Artspace

Over the years, Russell Dumas has developed unique material, stuff of classic lineage. ... *and yet* has phrases I've been seeing since 1978, rendered in qualities and contexts which always seem to defy repetition. But there they are again, and with Dumas' seemingly infinite aesthetic will, always appear in ways that make you wonder why you didn't think of them yourself.

... *and yet* seems at first to be spread thinly. There's a lot of old material, some *Envelope* phrases, to name some, shared between a potentially unwieldy assortment of performers, a lot of new dancers, several older ones, and a diverse bunch of visual artists, all trying to assimilate in their own ways this core work. I was glad I saw both the first and third weeks' performances, quite different in effect, because each threw clear light on the other. What was missing in the first was there later on, so that the sense of the whole work came over time, not all at once.

... *and yet* might be described as an exhibition of various qualities of absence and presence, which might sound like a mouthful. But, no, it really was. Ostensibly, there's movement and there's video. But really what you get are different qualities of presence, a terrain shaped by Margie Medlin's lights, playing in her special way, in a sculptured and mobile space.

In this particular manifestation of the material, a few serendipitous logistical problems highlighted what I think could have been the core of the work. At first, the opening week's performance seemed no more than charming but, I hasten to add, that probably wasn't Dumas' intention. It almost seemed that he was trying to turn the presence of the dancers into a kind of absence, wishing them away by throwing the focus, like a ventriloquist's voice, in another direction.

It might be simply an artefact of Dumas' style which leaves an impression that you've just called the dancers to the door in the middle of the night, from a deep sleep, T-shirts rumpled and hair sticking up like cat's fur. Their motion is so intensely and carefully wrought, as if the impulses to move are coming from somewhere very deeply buried in their bodies. When you watch someone with real expertise you feel that's the only valid place for it to come from. There are no tricks, but a passionate sensitivity and will for precision, and an almost plant-like heliotropic moving and growing together. In experienced bodies it's

pristine. In the students' less cultivated bodies, it occasionally gets silly.

I imagine the first problem was how to actually use these inexperienced bodies so they became a part of the environment rather than a feature of it. One possibility was to shift the focus so there seemed to be a landscape of presences in the space with a capacity to appear and then dissolve into it in various ways. The vertical pillars, the length of distance from one far wall to another, the long horizontal shadows, the low receding roof, became architectural features: an environment, not a performance. As I stood in the semi-darkness, I became aware that people I saw standing quietly, or inching hesitantly through the space could equally be members of the audience or performers; the action sometimes resembled a distant game, too far off to hear the sounds of calling out. The side-lines were anybody's territory, dancers in a camouflage of track pants and T-shirts looking remarkably like part of the crowd, as they stood, also waiting and watching.

I remember various scatterings and clumps of gaunt figures, a long way off, shifting slightly; dancers, alone or in twos and threes, clinging, sliding and rebounding from a far wall, amongst shadows. Their relationship to what they were doing was not playful, but could have come from that. It wasn't grounded in physical accomplishment, though it might have come from that too. Mostly they were dwarfed and overtaken by their own looming shadows, much more the real presences in the space, able to extend further and move faster than flesh could, at times a teeming, flighty crowd.

In the back of my mind was an awkward idea that there was a video loop going on somewhere in the space and I was meant to appreciate it somehow as part of the same venture: 21 three-minute contributions by visual artists, who cut and manipulated footage of Russell's work with other material of their own, to their own tastes. And there it was, flickering away ineffectually to the side, a lot of probably fabulous material, stuffed into a tiny box with the volume off.

Boundaries for this work are typically ambiguous. The architecture and the presences of people and shadows, the light, the time, space, shape, medium, personnel, are all fluid and shifting. Who can tell where the work might begin or end? This ambivalence of focus, the 'other-sidedness' is to me what is important in ... *and yet*.

After such spacious and lofty design, the last performance began for me with the feeling that there were just too many people, and an awareness of the awkward indecisiveness of the audience's herd-like behaviour. Shall we go there, or there, or maybe there? Um ... gee, I don't know. So everyone stood milling around foolishly in the middle of the space, trying to keep out of the way while still maintaining a degree of dignity and a decent vantage.

Personally, I enjoyed the whole upending of the previous situation. I remembered the recent *Next Steps* program, in which various attributes of the space became a central focus for the work. In that case almost everyone, performers included, seemed to be at the mercy of the environment. In this case it was just the audience. There was nowhere for them to be, or to go. People jockeyed for position, competing for space with the dancers they had come to see. The dancers were unfazed and made sure they were not the ones to lose possession, relentlessly manoeuvring their way through the herd, handling with authority what had obviously become their own territory over the past weeks.

This unexpected authority was the really good part, an interesting flip-side to the first week's apparent quiescence: a firmly established practice, the richness and density of the material, the solidity and weight of the light. You suddenly realised what had been missing: physical expertise, the sense that the material was more complete, better rehearsed, and the relaxed luxuriant appearance of some interstate dancers, Judy Oliver, Reyes de Lara and Sally Gardner, whose contributions lent a pleasant acerbity. Sally's opening solo seemed to bind the dissipated focus of the crowd to her, as she moved with the limpid clarity of a dancer whose dance is simply and importantly the play of her own body.

While the quiet distance and architectural spaciousness of the first week had been dismantled by the presence of so many seemingly uninvited guests, there was a welcome clamour now, a sense of work and purposefulness, and a kind of comfort in the warm human presence of dancers and audience in close proximity.

... and yet, *Dance Exchange*. Artistic Director: Russell Dumas. Artspace, Sydney, August - September 1995.

the *Red Lantern* augmenting the visual.

The *soup waltz*, quirky creation of Lisa O'Neill and Christina Koch, departed quite radically from the serenity of Jennings' work. The two artists experimented with the weight of their bodies: in one section they leaned heavily against each other, legs splayed out from their connected heads and shoulders, as they both attempted an awkward and affected motion—without success. The comic characterisation Lisa adopted in her previous work, *sweet yety*, surfaced again in the incongruous stoicism of the *soup waltz*.

A more familiar approach to movement was apparent in John Utans' piece. *Loaded—a search for meaning* was just that; slide projections containing text and images provided a fragmented narrative for Utans' choreography. Visual statements such as "You are reading this" and "You are reading into this" made explicit the interaction between performer and audience, and the multiple readings/meanings engendered through performance. *Loaded* embraced theatrical

elements of performance, but did so in a witty, self-referential fashion.

Choreographer Jean Tally created *dance essay 3: dis'passion* which, despite its political content, read more as a personal journey than a manifesto. Tally reintroduced voice in this piece; an aspect of performance which she has not explored since her time as co-artistic director of Still Moves in Perth. Tally's repeated, frantic jumping onto and falling from a stool in a corner of the space gave an increasingly breathless quality to her song. Her adamant voicing of "NO!" to female victimisation was supplanted at the end of the piece by the spoken and danced question, "How can I re-embrace yes?" The travelling, seemingly celebratory movement language Tally utilised in the final moments lifted the work out of the aggressiveness of the opening section.

The politicisation of the body which Tally investigated contrasted with the pure movement of Jan Russell's piece, *Can you see me?*, an exploration of the body in space, and particularly the moments of connection between the moving body and light. With an approach to movement

which is informed by the essence of eurhythmy, Russell traversed the performance space and the spotlight in the centre. She moved with a highly-developed awareness of her joints and limbs; with an articulation of arm and hand movements which was both refined and sensitive.

Brian Lucas continued to clarify his idiosyncratic, satirical mode of dance theatre in *frightening livestock*, performed two weeks after *raw*. This was a more personal exploration for Brian; an examination of the sexual self which traced a trajectory of identity, marginalisation, and affirmation. His fusion of movement and text resists definition, in that the relationship between the two elements is neither solely disconnected, in juxtaposition, nor symbiotic. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to refer to the movement and text as co-existing in this artist's work.

Brian also radiates a very open attitude to his aesthetic: "I'll grab anything from anywhere if I feel that it actually suits the purpose; any style, or just an everyday movement, or a caricature of an everyday movement," he says. Popular culture

Sport

TOOTH AND CLAW

with Jack Rufus, on location in Montreal

Immersed here in the Canadian wilds, a man's thoughts turn to things that once defined a man. Outdoor skills. Hunting. Fishing. Man against moose. Grizzly bear ...

But what to do? Everywhere you turn, blocked. Protected species. Anti-fur lobby. Iron John, reclaim your masculinity? No thank you. Not for this Jack.

Technology is the only hope. Here, a man can still be a man. A man can shoot, a man can smoke, a man can sit around the camp-fire and say nothing. Cyberspace, that's the place. Virtual hunting. The call of the wily.

TEE OFF

with Vivienne Inch

The Black Hole

Teeing off this week with Hilary McPhee on the 17th at the Old Course at St Andrews I couldn't help noticing some worrying ties have crept into her game since we last played. The Road Hole is famous. It begins with a blind tee shot over a railroad shed emblazoned with the words 'Old Course Hotel' that juts at an angle in front of the tee. The hole bothers some—(Peter Jacobsen is reported as saying he loves the hole and is "honoured to have been eaten alive by it"). The hole has never worried me but I noticed on approach that Hilary had stopped replacing divots and started pulling out tufts of hair. I was encouraging. "A good drive, right side of the fairway will leave you with about a 6 or 7 iron onto the green." "Iron lung ... iron lung" she muttered. I urged her on. "Hey, according to Larry Dorman, the Sports Writer for the New York Times, Nick Faldo aims his tee shot over the 'o' in the word 'course' and he's home. Try that." "It's a graveyard", she spits, hacking away, "461 yards of sheer misery". "Never forget, McPhee", I yell, "this is the Creative Nation, potentially the finest Par 4 in the World. Once you're on the green, you could hit a triple bogey. Go for it". But she stormed off out of earshot. "I think they could make it tougher" she said.

occupies a significant position in his practice. With his ironically sincere quotation of Lionel Ritchie—"Hello, is it me you're looking for?"—and his appropriation of the *Grease* soundtrack, in *frightening livestock* Lucas constructs a complex map of references and associations. With training in both drama and dance, he asserts that he "never really fitted into either category".

Early October, The Crab Room hosts *Done like a dinner*; the logical extension of *raw*. This season will present four longer performances from some of the artists involved in the original *raw*. Rachael Jennings will follow with an installation performance work later that month. Despite the jammed schedule, The Crab Room's fate remains uncertain. The four independent artists who are currently managing the space do so without funding. It's an ambitious enterprise existing outside the conventional hierarchical company structure—as Dancehouse and Dancebase have proven—but The Crab Room may just succeed against the odds. Brisbane needs it to!

Hybrid or not

Jacqueline Millner on the dance-video conjunctions of Dance Exchange and SBS' *Interventions*

Given the galaxy of stars and heavyweight institutional support, ... *and yet* promised far more than it delivered. It may be unfair to criticise a project for its ambition, but perhaps a more modest approach, in terms of the number of participating "directors" and the length of the video "interventions", may have made for a project more befitting the talent of its contributors. 21 artists and theorists were given short black and white video footage of two dancers, Josephine McKendry and Nick Sabel, performing excerpts from Russell Dumas' *A B C D E F G*, together with artistic carte blanche and access to an editing suite. A great idea, but the overwhelming impression of the resulting video pieces, which were screened back to back on two monitors, one at each end of the otherwise empty Artspace, was of unfulfilled potential.

The less than innovative use of video as a medium and frequent disregard for the sound dimension of the work were particularly striking in light of the project's avowed "hybrid" nature. I suspect this testifies not to the inherent limits of the medium, nor to a lack of imaginative ideas, but rather to a shortage of time and technical support for those participants not familiar with the creative manipulation of

video. For my money, I would prefer to read an essay by Meaghan Morris, in all its length, nuance and complexity, rather than listen to a standard voice over of some snippets on action cinema overlaid on a fairly straight piece of video. Another theorist, Rosalyn Diprose, used exactly the same technique, with only the text and the voice differing. I would argue that the poetry of Nietzsche's *Dancing Machine* is better evoked without a literal contextualisation in footage of contemporary dance.

Lack of technical support should be no excuse however for seasoned video practitioners. Perhaps the circumscription of the subject matter was the villain instead. Both Stephen Jones' 70s rock clip psychedelia, initially enticing in a rare use of colour and distortion, and Reva Childs' juxtaposition of cosmetic surgery digital dreaming with the dance ultimately lacked impact. Similarly, the narrowness of the raw material made for rather forced subject conjunctions in the works by Helen Grace, Laleen Jayamanne and Solrun Haas. Here, the dance figured as extraneous rather than integral to the conceptual project.

While this apparent incommensurability is an interesting feature in itself, with its suggestion of the inevitable essentialism of dance, the argument was not developed. It is as if the video makers never resolved their original discomfort with the brief. Susan Norrie for example addressed this dilemma through minimal use of the dance footage, momentarily overlaying just two almost still shots of the prone dancers on mesmerising slow motion scenes of a rippling, treacherous sea. Seductive surfaces and origins mythology made for an appealing if

somewhat familiar work.

That this discomfort with the nature of the project prevails in so many of the works is all the more apparent when one sees Joan Brassil's piece, which alone handles the dance with great assurance. This is not a token use of solarisation and juxtaposition, but a considered choice of video effects to heighten the ephemeral energy and textural complexity of the dance. Brassil's sound component is also successful, a deep insistent aspiration that struggles to anchor



Joan Brassil *Without or Within*

the fleeting nature of the images.

Also assured is Debbie Lee's *Sound Folly* 3. The screen is broken into six jagged parts, the images appearing and disappearing as if cut and whipped into place by the beat of a session of martial arts or torture. Lee's choice of image from the dance footage—close-ups of jumping feet—her video manipulations and dramatic soundtrack work seamlessly together to create a violence both palpable and transfixing, the violence of a body going through its paces.

Effective soundtracks also rendered Andrée Greenwell's and Ion Pearce's contributions interesting. Greenwell's jazz impro in rehearsal mode, complete with

"Once from the beginning!" and impromptu laughter, and Pearce's intercutting of his cello-machine with its random but melodious sound and aesthetically balanced design, both made some sense of the dance. Sandy Edwards' soundtrack, the C & W ballad *Beautiful Lie*, worked surprisingly well as accompaniment for the dance, although the intersection of a photo narrative of Edwards' evocative black and white work with the dance footage was not successfully resolved.

The project could claim hybrid status merely on the breadth of its participants: artists working with sound, video, installation, painting, photography and music; writers on film and cultural theory; responding to the videotaped work of two dancers and a choreographer; in the context of a live dance performance. Judging by the catalogue testimonials, many of the participating "directors" personally experienced a certain hybridising of their practice—some coming to video for the first time, some realising their longtime desire to collaborate with Dumas. While this process is undoubtedly important, the project must also be judged on its exhibited finished works, and here, I would argue, the potential for crossover was not fully realised. Rather than reading as a hybrid work, ... *and yet*'s components remained separate entities, a contemporary dance, and a set of video pieces, the majority of which did not come close to stretching or bending the medium beyond well-tried expectation.

... and yet—*new work by Russell Dumas. Interventions video dance installation: various artists and SBS. 21 August-10 September 1995. Artspace, Sydney.*

Dancing lives

Jim Hughes talks about Fieldworks' atypical new venture in Perth

Jim Hughes is preparing for a new Fieldworks' production working with three very significant figures in Australian dance—Lucette Aldous (world renowned ballerina and currently Senior Ballet Lecturer at Western Australia's Academy of Performing Arts), Elizabeth Cameron Dalman (founder of South Australia's Australian Dance Theatre and creator of some thirty works for that company) and Cheryl Stock (performer and choreographer and, for ten years, Artistic Director of Dance North, Queensland).

JH Lucette hasn't performed professionally for about ten years, well maybe even longer. She had no notion of wanting to perform, and how I cajoled her into doing that, I'm not quite sure, but she's doing it.

RT Her experience is in classical ballet, isn't it?

JH What a lot of people don't realise is that my early training was in classical, and I knew Lucette in London when I was training. See, I was a rebel in that area, and she was the purist. And my feeling is that she's got a bit of a rebel in her, and somehow there's been some recognition of the work I've done and the desire on her part to work with me.

RT It connects you with your past too?

JH Did you see *Solo* when it toured early this year to the Sydney Festival? That connected me with my classical past and my whole life.

RT Will you be working with the dancers individually, or as a team?

JH Individually because of the short period of rehearsal, the problem of getting these three together because of their busy schedules. I'm trying to do as much work as I can before rehearsal, so Cheryl has just sent me a lot of notes.

Now, Cheryl happens to be a very good writer. And her material is very, very interesting, including the extent that she wants to go with her autobiography which includes a car crash. Lucette wanted to feel confident about doing the show so we've started rehearsing bits and pieces. I also knew what her expectations would be, for me to choreograph in a more 'legitimate' way than the way I usually work with Fieldworks. It's been an absolute joy to work with her but it hasn't been that easy for me personally to get the material together. It's working out.

RT Will her performance be oriented towards classical ballet?

JH I think she sees it as sort of contemporary classical or modern ballet, and that's interesting because of a choreographer who's had an enormous influence on contemporary thinking—Anthony Tudor. We both have a great love for Tudor. And my feeling is, if she can go as far as Tudor in terms of contemporary thinking, because he went right over, and actually has had an influence on postmodern dance, that will be very good.

RT So what length work would you expect to yield from a fairly short rehearsal time?

JH Well, what I'm actually looking at is something like 20 minutes from each.

RT That's quite substantial.

JH It is substantial, but my feeling is with the contemporary dancers that being able to improvise and create quickly, it's not a problem.

RT So this will be a new work from Elizabeth Dalman?

JH She doesn't want her piece to be autobiographical, unlike the others. I've got strong visual ideas about how I'd like to work with her, using silhouette

RT Where will the works be performed?

JH In the theatre at the West Australian Academy for the Performing Arts, not the kind of space I'm used to. I'm a gypsy, so are Liz and Cheryl. And I'm bringing in a designer—Kristin Anderson who's done some great work with the Deckchair Theatre Company. Usually I do the design myself, but I need the security of a designer while I'm working with these three artists. I'm working with three stars and I never work with stars.

Funnily enough it's the kind of show that could give Fieldworks a reputation it couldn't otherwise achieve and spill over into the other work we do. But I'm not doing it for commercial reasons. It's something I want to do. It's something these dancers want to do.

Dancing Lives December 7 - 21, Academy of Performing Arts, 2 Bradford Street, Mt Lawley.

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Reconciled to grieving

• from page 29

the chief struggles of Australia's first people. "Don't tell me we don't fight most of our lives", says Mailman. The fight is compounded in comical stories and staring neighbours, suspicious salespeople and misplaced car keys, and in the deeper tragedy of Daniel Yock's story—oscillating between anger and the anaesthetised "Nothing. Nothing. I feel nothing" that comes with grieving.

The text for the original songs created by Roxanne McDonald is drawn from the Kamilaroi language, spoken by tribes in the Darling River region; and Duncan King-Smith's environmental recordings are integrated throughout *The Seven Stages*, expanding the aural experience for the audience. Leah King-Smith's slides form the counterpoint for Mailman's performance: old photographs of Murri families and friends, smiling and serious faces staring out from another place and time; majestic trees viewed from below; unspoiled bush habitats. The relationship between the land and family is continuously and intricately explored here and set against a larger framework of memory and history. "Everything has its time," Mailman avows throughout her performance.

Earth is central to many of the fragments of the work. In one section, Deborah Mailman leads her audience through a special family tree, using soil to symbolise the land, culture and family. "Are you with me?" she asks intermittently throughout the lengthy (and rather involved) explanation. The scene becomes laughable as we flounder for clarity, until she repeals her own baffled characterisation, drawing our attention to the absence of children (abducted) from the metaphorical circles of dirt. She fashions smaller piles of earth on the margins of the performance space; lonely mounds which serve as references to an imposed deterioration of family.

Ultimately, *The Seven Stages of Grieving* is not solely about grief, but also reconciliation. It seeks to move towards a more genuine and enduring reconciliation between Indigenous and Immigrant Australians that is contingent upon an acknowledgment of the past, not just guilt for white members of the audience, but empathy and a readiness to learn.

The Seven Stages of Grieving, *Kooemba Jdarra at Metro Arts Theatre*, 13-23 September. Performer, *Deborah Mailman*; co-writers, *Deborah Mailman & Wesley Enoch*; director, *Wesley Enoch*; visual artist, *Leah King-Smith*; composer, *Roxanne Macdonald*; dramaturg, *Hilary Beaton*.

Shorts

Kingston's Big Lobster and Robertson's Big Potato are to be joined by **Jeff Koons' Big Puppy** at Sydney's **MCA** in January. Publicity superlingo promises "four storeys 60 tonnes of soil and more than 50,000 blossoming plants by one of the decade's most innovative and most provocative artists ... ambitious project ... world significance etc" and more modestly that it will be "the talking point of the Sydney Festival" which it might just be. The Puppy is demountable and will be installed at various venues around the world before returning to Sydney in 2000 for the Olympic Games.

Official histories have expanded recently to include oral traditions and autobiography, alternative positions and personal narrative. Now see **Seven Histories of Australia** curated by Clare Williamson at Melbourne's **Australian Centre for Contemporary Art** Works by seven artists (Bennett, Berkowitz, Gertsakis, Graham, MacDonald, Wolseley, Wedge) explore public and private versions of Australia's past. Until October 29.

A new **Shock of the New at La Boite** aims to create an opportunity for the presentation promotion and development of new performance based work in Brisbane. The festival which premiered successfully last year will this year host over 30 innovative drama, dance, music, technology, visual art and performance projects. October 16-21.

Canberra's artist-run initiative, **Spiral Arm Gallery** is seeking proposals for 1996 closing October 16. The gallery at 71 Leichhardt Street Kingston exhibits contemporary, innovative and diverse art forms and provides artists with the opportunity for self promotion and development. Call 06-295.9438.

What are the current concerns in your work? How do they or might they relate to the wider context of the times in which we live? says the fax from Performance Research, a new international performance journal to be published by Routledge London for ARC in conjunction with DeMontfort University, Leicester, the Centre for Performance Research, Cardiff, Dartington College of Arts, the Arts Council of England. General Editor is Richard Gough with Ric Alsopp and Claire Macdonald. Issue 1, Spring 1996 is entitled **The Temper of the Times**. Info. David Williams c/o Performance Studies, VUT Footscray 03-9688.4386. Fax 03-9688.4891.

Brisbane's **Women in Voice** have a new show, a new line up and a new venue. Directed and produced by Annie Deller and featuring the voices of Alison St Ledger, Siobhan Lawless, Carita Farrer, Maria Kondos, Alison Kerr and Melinda Pearson. **Women in Voice 5** will be staged at **Kelly's** 521 Stanley Street South Brisbane Thursday-Saturday throughout the month from October 5. Info: Ph: 07-3846.7055 Fax: 07-3846.1821. **Women in Voice** also feature at the **West End Street Festival** (Boundary Street October 15) along with L'il Fi and the Delta Rhythm Kings, Dog's Hind Leg, Combined Union Choir, Canto Choir, One Straw, Marmalade Swing and the 3-girl group The Mint Patties.

Performers at this year's **Bellingen Global Carnival** October 6-8, Bellingen (northern NSW) include Arramaieda (female a cappella), Ashok Roy and Dya Singh, Riley Lee, Sounds of the Pacific (dance, drum and song) Kavisha Mazella (passionate Italian songs) and Kev Carmody as well as Robin Huw Bowen (Welsh triple harp player) and Abdoulaye Epizo Bangoura (West African traditional song and dance) Info: Ph: 066-55.8641

"I am interested in familiarity rather than exotica, even if there are still exotic diseases" **Jacqueline Riva**. "Creation cannot exist without destruction" **Karen Trist**. Two exhibitions, *Familiar* and *Ambrosia in Aspic* along with *Projecting Space*, a series of specially constructed projection concepts that transform the rear gallery and loading dock areas by **Ian de Gruchy**. At the **Centre for Contemporary Photography**. October 5-November 4. Info: 03.9417.1549

9th Annual Cleveland Performance Art Festival 1996 is calling for entries from performance artists from all disciplines but you'll have to be quick. Closing date October 8! This is an in-depth festival-style special event serving as a major annual showcase for regional, national and international performance art works. Call Festival Director Thomas Mulready at 216.221.6017. While you're there ask about **P-Form** "the only performance art magazine in the US". Send \$10 US for four issues to P-Form, 756 N. Milwaukee, Chicago, 11 60622.

Just as Sydney has its Contemporary Performance Week, some of Adelaide's performance makers are getting the itch and scratching at the surface for an evening of contemporary performance in **Slips off(t) the Tongue** a project of SA performance group Safe Chamber. Featuring **Fiona Sprott** (Sing me another

love song but this time with a little dedication), **Anne Outlaw** (Hissterical doggrowl and other oral o missions) and **Jason Sweeney** (His Body Is Mine). Promising no premeditated humour or uncanny bouts of sobbing and possibly even a seat to counteract any references to ordeal The Chapel (Theatre 62) 145 Burbridge Road Hilton 6-8 October.

The final graduation play for 1995 at **Theatre Nepean** is **Anger's Love**, a new work from **Stephen Sewell** in which the dance of love and annihilation is played out on a stage that stretches its fingers into every corner of the world and every recess of the mind. Gee. Directed by Bogdan Koca. October 27-November 18 at St George's Hall, Newtown. Info: 02-678.5777.

NIDA Graduation Play is another premiere **Ghetto** by Joshua Sobol (This is a play about a theatre that did as the slogan testifies, what theatres always do: defy reality, affront conventional taste, challenge hypocrisy") Directed by Ros Horin. Parade Theatre October 14-22. Info:02-697.7600.

The Oedipus Project—buckets of blood and no seats to speak of at **PACT Theatre** when **Chris Ryan** (ex-Sydney Front) directs eight earthy performers between 18 and 25 to see what happens when **Oedipus Rex**, **Oedipus at Colonus**, **Antigone** and **Berkoff's Greek** get together. Fertile stage designer **Samuel James** will be bringing in more than 25 tonnes of soil. October 18 - 29 at Sydney Street Theatre Space, Erskineville, NSW 02 550 2744

Photography, Video Production and **Dance** for fun or professional development. Possibly both. Spring Program in the Visual and Performing Arts at **Sydney Institute of Technology**. Develop your creative skills at the Eora Centre for Aboriginal Studies and Visual and Performing Arts, 333 Abercrombie Street, Chippendale, NSW 2008. Info from Short Course Coordinator 02-217 4170

Community Arts & Environmental Design — Free for unemployed artists at **Footscray Community Arts Centre** and they'll believe you, CES registration not necessary. Learn elements of art and design, landscaping, horticulture, small business management and community arts. Funded by the Adult Community and Further Education Board. Details 03-9689 5677 Lynne Bell.

The Invisible City is an installation project from Oct 5 - 22 on the first floor space of Charlicks Building, East End Rundle Street, Adelaide. A pre-festival look at Adelaide the city—is it a fragile enclosed environment for the cultivation of ambition and talent to be transplanted elsewhere? Five Adelaide artists—**Mehmet Adil**, **Richard Grayson**, **Simone Hockley**, the **Hewson/Walker** and **George Popperwell** partnership—and four Adelaide writers—**Robert Wallace**, **Peter Bishop**, **John Howard** and **Linda Marie Walker**—address this and other questions, curated by someone who definitely was born there, **Alan Cruickshank** 08-362 1884

Home Made in Hobart if you're quick you might catch the end of this exhibition at the Tasmanian School of Art. Staff at the school have been producing work relating to the home. Some have collaborated with industry to produce lighting and carpets. Others have come up with artistic, enigmatic and witty objects which address themselves to the nature of suburban living. **Home Made** coincided with the annual conference of the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools, which focused on the interface between art and design in industry and education. **Home Made** the exhibition runs to Oct 13, open noon - 5 daily.

Food for Thought at **Linden Gallery** with recent work by **Emil Goh** and **Charles Russell**. Russell's **Rediscovered** is a play on words and meanings focussing on the tension between subject and object and involving some red, hardcover books holding themselves up in a door frame. Goh's **Anonymous** reinterprets the nourishment-container relationship in Russell's piece with cans of food—200 unlabelled cans on the gallery floor. **Anonymous/Rediscovered** to Oct 15. Linden Gallery, St Kilda Arts Centre, 26 Acland St Kilda, Vic. 03-9534 2396.

Leonid Verzub directs **Slingshot** by fellow Russian playwright **Nikolai Kolyada** as part of the Melbourne Fringe. A love triangle between three lonely Muscovites: the desperate and self-serving woman (**Elly Varrenti**), the brazen and confused young man (**Grisha Dolgoplov**) and the passionate and bitter invalid (**Greg Ulfan**) at La Mama, The Napier Street Theatre, 199 Napier Street, South Melbourne, from Oct 4 - 22.

Worried about declining enrolments in the Orders? Adelaide's **Red Shed Theatre Co** to the rescue between Nov 25 and Dec 9 with **Storming Heaven** by **Melissa Reeves**, a musical comedy about Mary MacKillop setting up the Order of St Joseph (see advertisement this issue). Also at Red Shed **Linda**

Schofield exhibits painting, soft sculpture, mixed media and writing inspired by Flaubert. **The Lover, The Plaits and Madam Bovary's Shoes** runs from Oct 6 - Oct 27 Red Shed Theatre and Gallery, 255 Angus St, Adelaide 08-232 2057.

Sunday arvo movies are back at the Dumaesq Street Cinema, Campbelltown, NSW. **Film West** will screen Hal Hartley's **Amateur** on Sunday Oct 29 at 4pm, together with a new Australian short.

Hanging out for a really good experimental lesbian film? Could it be amongst this lot? **Diverse Dykes: New British Lesbian Work** curated by **Colleen Cruise** and **Fanny Jacobson**. All films circa 1994, experimental with a Jewish lean. WA: **FTI, Adelaide St, Fremantle Oct 31 and Nov 1, 8pm** 09-335 1055 Vic: **7.30pm Nov 8 at the Erwin Rado Theatre**, 211 Johnston St, Fitzroy, Modern Image Makers Association 03-9525 5025. Fannycruise productions' homepage at <http://cti.com.au/zen/fannyhp.htm>.

Westlake gets down in Sydney with **Elektra** at the Harbourside Brasserie Oct 15, 5pm and the Goethe Institut Oct 21, 8pm. **Nigel Westlake** plays bass clarinet and sax. Some of his own compositions and one by Romano Crivici, a world premiere. Jazz-based, ambient new age funk music. But isn't Elektra a string quartet?

Multimedia and the Law research papers available at last from the conference held in August 1994 by the Arts Law Centre of Australia and Gilbert & Tobin. Topics include moral rights, defamation, sex and violence and the impact of Trade Practices Act on MM. Cost \$10 + \$3 postage. Contact Arts Law at The Gunnery, 43 Cowper Wharf Road, Woolloomooloo, NSW 2011 or phone 02-356 2566.

Provocation is promised at **Splice**, a set of four new dance works by Josie daw, Tracie Mitchell, Sally Smith and Helen Tunnoch at St Martin's Theatre, South Yarra.

Bill Seaman's multi-media installation **Passage Sets, One Pulls Pivots At The Tip Of The Tongue** poetically reflects on "a potential future realm of sensual communication and exchange" and is available for you to navigate Sydney panoramas and poetic linguistic space on three big screens at the Art Gallery of New South Wales until October 15.

Terry Crawford's new play **Autumn**, directed by Richard Buckham, opens in Sydney at the Stables for the Griffin and the New England Theatre Companies on October 24. **Autumn** is even darker than Crawford's first play, the sometimes hilarious *Pushin' Up Daisies*. **Autumn** promises 'biting comedy' between a wealthy neurosurgeon, his ex-actress socialite wife and an 'unhung painter ...teetering on the edge of sanity' as he is 'faced with the rigours of the 1990s'. What's wrong with the other two? Two much wealth, too many cuts, not enough roles, too much *socialiting*? See for yourself!

Howlings in the Slaughterhouse is a live performance extension on 3RRR's *Howling in the Head* program which features spoken word, thought streams, sound cut-ups and collages, and original and found music. **Howlings** is on at Budinski's Theatre of Exile, October 16 only at 8.30pm featuring Kerry Watson, Richard Watts, Eric Dando, Lisa Greenaway, Jim Buck, Tom Ball, Awombda and Edward burger as the **Attack Poets** "pitting their words against each other in a battle of wits and wisdoms". Plus music and lyrics from Rob Craw and Phil Wales. Bring your head.

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