

**Volume 1 FREE**

proudly sponsored by

**MAAP Launch**  
**MAAP Screenings**  
**Digital Degrees**  
**Self Made Cinemas**  
**Sick and Dizzy**  
**D'art**  
**Strange Stories**  
**Anemone**  
**Malaysian Video Awards**  
**Missile: PreFab**  
**Missile: Contact**  
**Missile: Double Happiness 2\_nations**  
**APT3 Satellite event: Imagined Spaces**



A COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

RealTime, the national bi-monthly arts publication, is in Brisbane to create, in print and online, 3 special editions responding to MAAP99 and Asia Pacific Triennial exhibitions, performances, screenings, conferences, emerging themes and debates. Local writers will be joined by interstate writers following events online. Our first edition will focus on the major new media festival MAAP99 (launched Friday September 3) the second on both MAAP and APT3 (one of Australia's most highly regarded visual arts events, launching Thursday September 9) and the third mostly on APT3. We hope you enjoy our coverage and if you'd like to comment on our writers' responses email us at [sputnik@hutch.com.au](mailto:sputnik@hutch.com.au)

**Location location location***Virginia Baxter*

MAAP 99 Launch, Upper Stage, Queen Street Mall, Brisbane, September 3;  
 Official Opening *Double Happiness 2\_nations* Global Arts Link, Ipswich, September 4;  
 Artists Club @ The Zoo, Sunday September 5

Driving through the Moorooka Magic Mile of Motors on our way to Global Arts Link at Ipswich for the launch of the *Double Happiness 2\_nations* website, Beth Jackson (Director, Griffith Artworks) is telling us how academic colleagues were surprised to see her in the Queen Street Mall on Thursday night spruiking with Festival Director Kim Machan and Sein Chew (Macromedia Asia-Pacific), throwing T-shirts to the crowd and cracking jokes to officially open MAAP99. What did one science fiction writer say to the other? The future's not what it used to be. Real or virtual, places do things to you.

Just last week in Sydney I saw Komninos at the Poets Festival calling in the hollows of the Balmain Town Hall for some new discussions of place that have nothing to do with the well-turned topic of landscape—places beyond addresses, places of the mind, of

memory, states of being. Komninos calls himself a cyberpoet these days but for the opening of MAAP99, he's back on the street and literally a driven man, his programmed video poetry threatening sometimes to run him down. Images from his family album are montaged, magnified and left open to the brisk Friday night Mall traffic. Intimate word pictures of a childhood in Richmond and his grandmother's undies, cosier online, here die of exposure. More at home is his shout to exorcise the 60s from the collective imagination, "The Beatles is dead! DEAD!"

As Komninos calls up the Richmond streetscape, coloured words duck and weave across the screen—"Cars CAAAAAAAARS." Gail Priest thinks Sesame Street and Maryanne Lynch wonders if he knows that until the 60s a tramline ran through the Queen Street Mall and, indeed, through the very spot on which he's standing. Me, I'm searching for a place in my memory bank for "international virtual pop star" Diki conceived in Japan, now living in Korea. Gail says "Imagine if you could do anything you wanted with technology and your fantasy was that!" A pale, gawky teenage girl in big black bloomers dancing on lolly legs perilously close to the edge of some pier. The clip

# RealTime

---

**MAAP [www.maap.org.au/](http://www.maap.org.au/)**
**Asia Pacific Triennial [www.apt3.net](http://www.apt3.net)**
**RealTime [www.rtimearts.com/~opencity/](http://www.rtimearts.com/~opencity/)**


---

is intercut with vision of the remarkably Diki-like male (?) artist weaving his spell in some late-night media lab. Weird city.

At the Valley Corner Restaurant the new tastes good—shallot pancakes and deep-fried broccoli leaves with shredded sea scallops. On one side of the table a couple of web designers on laptops point with chopsticks at their wares. Artist Richard Grayson's projections have tonight failed to materialise on the walls of the Performing Arts Complex. He whispers to us across the crispy flounder what the building should be saying to drivers crossing the Victoria Bridge. It sounds like "Slowly you are coming closer to the speed of sound".

For now, websites are still launched by a gathering of people in one place. At Global Arts Link in Ipswich for the opening of *Double Happiness 2\_nations* we are doubly welcomed by Aboriginal dancers in body paint playing with fire and pale Chinese dancers in pink pantsuits waving fans. The mayor of Ipswich speaks warmly of technology while the head of the Australia-China Friendship Society gestures in the direction of the IMAC console and declares the site "launched or ...open". Director Louise Denoon shows us through the space opened in May this year for a sneak preview of *The Road to Cherbourg*, a remarkable exhibition of paintings by Queenslander Vincent Serico about mission life and life beyond the mission. Global's vision ("Linking people to place through the visual arts, social history and new technology") maps Global as a kind of future place and again, not the future we expected. The heritage Ipswich Town Hall provides the framework for the multiple spaces within it. This is a comfortable place, its spaces adaptable. Near Vincent Serico's painted didgeridoos, Louise points to a hole in the floor and the space below it to take cabling as required. The ground floor interactives offer individual spoken memories of this place—"Talk the talk, not the technology" says curator Frank Chalmers. Upstairs a substantial space is allocated for children to paint with computers and draw with pencils.

After a weekend of screenings, our bodies spinning with visions, we dive back into the Valley. Sunday night at the Artists Club@The Zoo Ed Kuepper unleashes a mean version of "Fever" and is joined for "The Way I Make You Feel" by Jimmy Little who these days has moved from "Royal Telephone" to "Quasimodo's Dream". For his encore, "Cottonfields", a didgeridoo player springs out of nowhere and plays up a storm.

MAAP99 may be a festival to experience online but there's still a lot to be said for being here on the ground.

## Missile WebSite Launch

Each day through September MAAP is launching a website. Already there are a number of impressive sites to visit although some patience

is required - give yourself ample time to download Shockwave 7.0 to view *Double Happiness*, or to find a non-Mac machine (and download VRML 2.0 Viewer) to get at the intriguing virtual architecture site *PreFab*. RealTime writers from Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide have responded by email to the sites as they've been launched. Go direct to <http://www.maap.org.au/maap99/missile99/missindex.html>

## Missile: CONTACT

Grisha Dolgoplov

*CONTACT Unstable Fields of Power* is a brilliant piece of cross-cultural melange. Four artists from Bandung (Indonesia) and four from Perth collaborated on a project that is both an experimental artists' exchange, conducted online, and an exhibition of new media works. Rick Vermey sets the tone and scares luddite internet users with laptop meltdown as his screen interface goes crazy.

The Indonesian artists are really strong on image, composition and colour in more traditional works adapted for exhibition on the web. Their artworks are bulging with meaning and narrative and are replete with theatrical grotesquerie that is finding explicitly modern forms. Rikrik Kusmara presents four compelling wooden sculptural installations that have a forceful sense of space and colour. Diyato's dramatic works are visually amazing—although they could make better viewing in the canvas. The web hosts these artists' usual projects and biogs, but where are their online works?

Now if you are not a net-fool like me you will get through to the online works straight away rather than thinking that the Indonesians were given a raw deal. When you do, you will find that there are some intriguing experimentations that betray a wicked sense of humour. Diyato's little film is an allegoric transformation by fire. While W. Christiawan gets right into funny animal noises, his "postcards from the edge" and "throwing hopes" are intense evocations of how contemporary Indonesia political life pervades the everyday. These are strong, simple applications of the web to represent personal experiences.

Krisna Murti appropriates and responds to the new social stimuli in a more engaged way. She says that "in the last one decade, Indonesian TV's commercial advertisements have radically pushed a social change, breaking the ethic value." The lack of warning and the pervasiveness of tampons ads on Indonesia TV prompted Murti to respond with a provocative anti-ad where she re-interprets a tampon commercial in order to show how the tampon can be used for other domestic applications. She also presents an interactive with useful instructions for transforming the tampon into a teabag or a cold compress for use by men to cool their brains.

In fact there was a fair bit of humour in this exhibition, particularly from the female artists. This seems to be something of a prevailing trend in Perth. Amanda Alderson presents a remarkably accurate anthropological study in game format of going out on a Saturday night south of the river in Perth with the scuzzy males that inhabit the region. This interactive and associated artwork spill out of the ubiquitous and terrifying symbols of suburbia—the big green Neighborhood Watch rubbish bins.

The adventure starts from the invite on the mobile on Saturday afternoon and goes through all the painful rites of choice from brand of bloke to drinks, pick-up lines, cars, clothes, choice phrases and puke places that can be had on the night. At every point there is a choice but the range of choices is hilariously dispiriting. The selection of guys to go out with is big but believe me, after this night, you will never go out with that type again. It is a cringingly correct representation of the Saturday night party scene with superb sound bytes to accompany the decisions that you make. They capture all the proudly nasal mono-syllabic beauty of the Aussie bloke. I went through the ordeal a couple of times to try my luck with different guys. This is potentially precise contemporary anthropology (she must be an insider) sprinkled with colourful linguistic and cultural particularities of Perthlings. It's a classic! I was wondering what the Indonesians made of this piece.

The exhibition is a powerful venture into new territory. It would have been good to see even more cross-cultural experimentation along the lines of Christiawan and Kathy Barber's collaboration. We can only hope that this program continues and develops in the future. Exciting stuff.

The artists are: Krisna Murti, Rikrik Kusmara and W. Christiawan of Bandung, Indonesia and Kathy Barber, Matthew Hunt, Amanda Alderson and Rick Vermey of Perth.

[www.curtin.edu.au/curtin/dept/art/ITBX/](http://www.curtin.edu.au/curtin/dept/art/ITBX/)

## Twists of Fate

Linda Carroli

*Strange Stories*

Queensland Art Gallery Theatre  
September 5, MAAP

In this program of video works screened under the title *Strange Stories*, curator Kim Machan presented 7 works which twisted and turned through narrative style and form. As lapses in linear storytelling, these events had their own momentum.

Young-hae Chang's anecdotal piece *The Samsung Project* relays her story as black text on a red background. A busy soundtrack provides

a rapid pace. After learning that the name of a domestic appliance manufacturer, Samsung, means 'to come', the narrator proceeds to understand 'how to come with Samsung'. Her search for sexual satisfaction and orgasm culminates while she's washing the dishes. She finally learns 'to come with Samsung' in an ecstatic and comic coupling with technology.

In the second part, *Samsung on the Stock Market*, a naked man stands side on to a clock. As time ticks away, his penis vacillates between erect and flaccid. Perhaps the performance anxiety is causing uncertain fluctuations in the market: it's not quite bullish!

In a search of a different (yet similar) kind, Julainne Summich is looking for happiness. Where does one begin? Julainne Summich's *Happiness* is a hectic montage of images and sound which are difficult to read. The flashing of 3D rendering, media footage and sound and bacteria colonies seem like chaotic visions, charting a fragmented technological/corporeal territory. Is happiness to be found within these scenes, reordered through some kind of revelation?

Joyce Campbell's *Bloom* and Margaret Dodd's *Alien Eye* series take us into the everyday, perhaps to glimpse it anew as virtual vista. Through time-lapse photography, Campbell traces the growth of bacterial culture. These documentary pieces silently and gradually unfurl as unlikely and delicate flora. Apparently, the artist suggested the works be used as 'punctuation' in screening programs. It has already been shown in TV commercial breaks. These studies of rural South Australia focus on sites such as a jetty and a gorge. From aerial views, the camera moves into each site, exposing details, layering and transforming each scene.

In the 3D animated environment of Peter Hennessey's *Cable - Intravenous*, a nanotechnology drifts through the body, methodically and ambivalently laying cables. This work seems to be an extracted movement from what might well be an endless task. In this corporeal space which pulses red perhaps the 'wetware' is being prepared for connectivity; perhaps the lines are open for communication.

Q3 is Feng Mengbo's second digital video artwork and is based on the recently released *Quake III*, heralded as the most popular and most violent 3D video game in the world. The video tracks the game's flickering rapid-fire and realistic action. There's something about these games and the constant forward motion. With every gunblast and spray of blood in this battle between hEAVEN and hELL, my heart beats a little harder. In an online news broadcast, Mengbo is war correspondent interviewing a killing machine. The fight is for freedom and hEAVEN and hELL are excuses.

The final work screened was David Cox's 'cultish' sci-fi short *Other Zone*, featuring another battle between the forces of resistance and domination. In a plan to destroy the satellite network encircling the earth, restricting information and communication, a woman uses the 'other zone', a virtual third dimension, to entreat her daughter to realise the plan after her death. Once again 'information wants to be free'.

Indeed these are *Strange Stories* and through them I detected a subset of ideas addressing the twitching circuit of flows between ourselves, technology, information and power. As departures from cinematic narrative convention, these works invite us into their internal logic and encourage us to experience and read them as images or objects of visual culture.

## Continental drift

Peter Anderson

*Imagined Spaces*, Surendran Nair and Rekha Rodwittiya; *Mu Consciousness Raising Exercises*, Luke Roberts  
September 4 - October 10  
Noosa Regional Gallery, Sunshine Coast  
APT3 Satellite Event

During the 1996 Asia Pacific Triennial, I found myself constantly drawn to the installation by Brisbane-based artist Luke Roberts. Of all the artists exhibiting at that APT, he was the most familiar to me, the least exotic. Yet his work seemed to present one of the most potent challenges to a simple reading of the Asia-Pacific region, and to any notion that art might provide a route to a simple cultural truth. In a way, in presenting the foyer of the consulate of the lost continent of Mu, Robert's installation—where even the most authentic object would be unable to be given a straight reading—was pushing the exotic to its ultimate boundaries.

I was reminded of this earlier work, and its role in raising questions concerning the politics of 'the exotic'—or rather, the 'politics of exotification'—on seeing the juxtaposition of a new exhibition by Roberts, and *Imagined Spaces*, by visiting Indian artists Surendran Nair and Rekha Rodwittiya at the Noosa Regional Gallery. As Queensland Art Gallery curator Tim Morell pointed out in his opening remarks, here we have a pair of exhibitions each representing a great continent, each with a long history of culture. The connection for me is that the exotica of Robert's *Mu Consciousness Raising Exercises 020999-120999: Sun Worship/Blinded by the Light* is there for the plundering. In fact, to fail to use the word 'exotic' in relation to his latest exhibition (even ironically) is to somehow miss the point.

In contrast, to use the word "exotic" in relation to the work of either Surendran Nair or Rekha Rodwittiya opens up the possibility of a fall into difficult and politically fraught territory.

And yet, there are moments when just such a term might well be appropriate. I'm thinking here of a number of the works by Surendran Nair that present us with strangely combined figures: a man who seems to be attached to the tail of a shark places his hand in a wound in the shark's side; a man grows out of the back of a horse. One could describe these as exotic combinations, but there is also the possibility that underlying each image is a more simple reading.

Clearly, it is not possible to explore this work without some reference to its cultural origins, and yet to read it simply in those terms runs the risk of missing the point. As Noosa Regional Gallery director Kevin Wilson, points out in his introductory catalogue essay, on one level both artists "critically mine the traditions of Indian painting and Indian history, and on another level they explore wider issues of gender politics and the politics of representation." For me, these wider concerns seemed to emerge more clearly in work of Rekha Rodwittiya whose focus is on matters of gender and identity, with obvious stylistic points of departure in the Indian miniature tradition.

Interestingly, both exhibitions were the result of Noosa's ongoing artist in residency program, and given this context I found myself looking for signs of the local—for moments when three months working in the Noosa environment might have left its mark. While I thought I could detect some "Noosaish" moments in Luke Robert's exhibition (the result of a 6 week residency), for some reason I did not think I could find them in the work of either Rekha Rodwittiya or Surendran Nair. That left me wondering—particularly in light of the way so many recent Australian projects have seemed to revolve around a 'response' to 'Asian encounters.'

## Missile: PreFab

Alex Hutchinson

The Pitch: *PreFab* proposes to "compare, and possibly contrast, the digital architectural practices currently being developed by Australian artists and architects with those of their Asian peers [with a number of both parties referencing modernist greats or traditional temples .Ed]...*PreFab* explores the pleasures and potentialities of the 'digital suburbs' burgeoning in the photon-stream. *PreFab* invites you to explore the heterogeneous VRML homes of artists, architects and multimedia designers."

Exterior: Overhead/Blind links. Hideous, flat, green hot-link infested housing commission backdrop with distressing emphasis on Mt Waverley. Mini-2D representations of buildings/homes/installations/environments. Designed to imitate a road map of sorts, it looks more like a pie-floater.

Interior/First Floor: Close-up zoom of hideous, green backdrop. Various architectural features

rising up out of the soup. A text overlay tracks your cursor's movement around the screen, presenting name of artist/feature.

Dress Code: VRML 2.0 Viewer (downloadable from site).

Second Floor/Rooms 1-x: Several dozen individual sites from a variety of perspectives. Houses, apartment buildings, galleries and unnamed structures are all presented in small 3D environments which you can navigate with VRML 2.0. The viewer is able to conduct a virtual 'fly-by' of the site, moving inside and outside of the structure. Several have 'go-to' buttons which make the whole process a little smoother, and some have ambient sound/music or backgrounds.

The 3D work finds a manageable line between detail and functionality. The sites are solid and well rendered, even if (most) lack complex texturing or lighting/shading. They are successful because even if the actual models are a touch basic, they do recreate the sense of space which the structures are attempting. Some are huge, open plans, others are confined, vertical spaces. Best of all they don't take an age to download. In fact, you can jump from one site to another quite painlessly and exploring each is enough to allow you to successfully follow the site's proposed brief of comparing the work of different Australian/Asian artists/architects.

Foundation: A great little site with a functional facade and compelling, varied interiors. Understandably the user doesn't want to be clicking through a thousand windows or avoiding an ocean of custom Java script, but surely SOMETHING could have been done to that gateway. Even a black background would have been preferable (and perhaps more appropriate) for exhibiting the sites. Or maybe just a less virulent green.

Still under construction, *PreFab* seems destined to be an invaluable primary resource for architects/artists of the appropriate bent (and fascinating even for the casual visitor). If you're sick of the bland, brand name virtual tours on the net then a few quick clicks of your mouse will uncover some truly fascinating virtual spaces to explore.

There'll be another response to *PreFab* in a future RealTime/MAAP/APT3 edition. *Prefab: Invisible Cities and Photon Palaces*, Shiralee Saul and Helen Stuckey.

[alphalink.com.au/~spamsite/prefab](http://alphalink.com.au/~spamsite/prefab)

## Gritty, itchy and touchable

Grisha Dolgoplov

*Anemone*

Art Gallery Lecture Theatre,  
September 5, MAAP

*Anemone* is a collection of 14 short digital

video and animation works recently produced by Australian artists, curated by Imago and originally screened at FTI. These are no *TropFest* gag flicks but an interconnected series of experimental works that seek to explore the possibilities of a variety of mediums under digital transformation. The digital diversion is combined with traditional methods of video art, 3D animation, music clips and AV-essayism. The alterations enhance the originals while preserving their mutation. The works are rendered by a pervasive texture of pulsing chiaroscuro, fragmentation, fast darkness and decay. This texturedness is the most striking element common to all the works. Unlike much recent digital art that can alienate with its sweeping surfaces and impossibly lush wall-papering, these works are gritty, itchy and touchable.

This is the "second wave" of digital image making that has tilled the surface and re-sown the loam. Video becomes a claggy scrapbook of memories. A glimpse of ideas, bits, bytes and hints. Recycled carbon from the photocopy bin. The flattened dynamic range, while annoying with some dull soundscapes, allows for a collation of consciousness and a stream of materiality in the visual text. Hence the title, *Anemone*—the windflower of the sea gathers sustenance from the currents that ebb over its domain. The curators, Cam Merton and Rick Mason, compare the anemone with modern image-makers who are inundated with a sea of information, but who pick and choose from this galaxy of possibilities in an attempt to produce something new before relaunching it back into the miasma. These works distinguish themselves by virulent combinations of the trauma of things past. Difference is transmuted into convergence. But unlike other new media shows with their radiant future gleam, the *Anemone* works are generally bleak and mystical, driven by fragmentation and a palpable sense of decay.

Vikki Wilson's darkly mesmeric *March-Riever* draws on *Beowulf* to forage into the shadows of monsters on the boundaries of time. She rebuilds the narrative through shreds and scurrying repetitions. Likewise Kim McGlynn's *Eulogy*, Justine Cooper's *Rapt* and Vicky Smith's *Rash* are in different modes corporeal shards and spirals that interrogate the body's memory and offer distorted, subjective and painful reconstructions. From the disturbed pixilation of white noise come recognisable images and personalised ghosts. In Dominic Redfern's *Please Wait Here* we disappear into the private pixels of daytime TV. The ascent into the void of drifting colours is so laconic, so opposed to video's temporal thrust that the screen transforms into a cosy fireplace before tilting back into the beguiling pulse of daytime channel surfing. As the image speed increases, movement decreases to patchwork quiescence in the alluring *Rhythmus 99*, Sam Landels' cityscape animation essay. While in Marcus Canning's

*Sumpbapschism* movement flows and washes through the surveillance static. Paul Caporn's *Digital Decay* degrades through feedback reprocessing the once recognisable body in a box. The junkyard appropriations of the remote surveillance probe draw on the clutter of private eye traces in the uncanny animation world of Peter Circuitt's *Post*. Drome toys with genetic transmogrification in the witty *LUMPCD: Museum of Failures*. While George Stajic in *Weary Sons of Freud* conjures a sequence of sexually charged images hiding within the fur of teddies and bears. The sharp *Cheap Blonde* by Janet Mereweather is a cascading word rearrangement of a famous filmmaker's twelve poignant words, 'cinema is the history of men filming women' against a disquietingly lurid Norsca-blond foreground. Against this video grain slithers Andree Greenwell's sumptuous *Medusahead Confessions of a Decapitated Soprano*, a beautiful opera clip with striking 3D animation and a potent sound text.

*Anemone* is a challenging experience. It is a vigorous appropriation of past images fertilised by the prevailing winds.

[www.imago.com.au/anemone](http://www.imago.com.au/anemone)

## Son et lumière numérique

Richard Wilding

D.art 99, Queensland State Library,  
September 4, MAAP;  
*The Malaysian Video Awards*  
Queensland Art Gallery,  
September 5, MAAP  
<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~sinsite>  
<http://www.mva.com.my>

D.art 99 was presented by Sydney-based dLux media arts as "Australia's premier annual showcase of inter/national experimental digital film, digital video, computer animation and CD-ROM art." Increasingly much video and film work is digitally processed in some form whether it be the addition of visual effects non-linear editing. Digital video technologies are very much part of the mainstream industry and form a large part of our everyday media diet. Given such ubiquity of digital technologies the challenge to be experimental perhaps means something different now, than at the beginning of the decade when the technologies themselves seemed wondrous strange.

The D.art program did not include the CD-ROM component of the original Sydney exhibition and consisted mostly of Australian video artists with entries from the USA, Canada and Brazil. Many of the works were montages of manipulated and animated images with repetitive visual and sonic rhythms. Peter Callas is a veteran of this style and his work *Lost in Translation* benefited from two decades of experience in video and computer animation coupled with access to high-end graphics workstations. By sampling and animating historical cartographic drawings and illustrations Callas

sought to reinvent the imagery of colonial South America. Callas' polished style was instantly accessible without appearing too technically clichéd and for me was one of the high points of the screening.

The technique of visual sampling used by Callas was fundamental to many of the works. Tina Gonsalves in *Swelling* used mirrored anatomical photographs to create an evolving montage of shapes giving rise to unsettling insect-like Rorschach patterns and incorporated bodily noises as a soundtrack. *Infinitude* by Mic Gruchy built patterns from the spatial repetition of televisual elements overlaid with acid-style filters and famous textual excerpts from writings on paradoxes by Zeno and Gödel. Michaela French's *Flux* blended film and Photoshopped engineering diagrams in a style that owed much to Peter Greenaway, and in *Theatres of Anatomy* James McGrath mapped 18th century anatomical lithographs onto 3D animations.

Representational works often used more traditional filmic techniques such as compositing, seen in the fading and transforming landscapes of *Si jamais la mer* by Isabelle Hayeur. The prize for the most simple and quirky work must go to Aleksei Wrobel Abib whose split screen technique in *Wonder Brazil* managed to inject some humour into an otherwise very serious program.

Unfortunately, the more non-representational works tended to lack images that were remarkable or engaging for the viewer. *Elements in Transformation #2* by Ying Tan sounded good in the program notes but seemed too much of a New Age pacifier to make an impact. Similarly, Richard Sandoval's *the residual artefacts of communication* failed to communicate visually (though perhaps this was the point) and I found I was drawn more to the tantalisingly fleeting elements of voice and broadcast artefacts in the sound design rather than the amorphous clouds on screen. Is this part of a general problem of engagement with abstract digital art, perhaps because so much of it can be read as just technical exercise? It was certainly difficult to see much enthusiasm in the small audience at the State Library. A pity since it is precisely the non-representational possibilities afforded by digital technologies that seem to promise so much.

Some of the D.art works sought to elicit emotional responses from the audience. In the case of French's personal narrative of grief after a lover's death in a car crash it was pathos. In the case of Emil Novaks' *Flutter* it was rather cheap shock tactics with simulated scenes of self-mutilation and close-ups of taxidermy work. Even so, Novaks' images continued to resonate after the screening and formed the basis for some debate. In both these works it wasn't the digital technology but the choice of content and visual narrative that seemed to matter.

Sound design was an important (but perhaps undervalued) element given the abstract nature of many works. Audio sampling and repetition seemed to emphasise similar visual techniques. Music from techno to classical was prevalent and much of the mood and rhythm of works relied heavily on the choice of soundtrack. I saw many of the pieces as evocative collaborations between video and sound artists both working in the digital domain in order to engage the senses but there was little emphasis on this in the program notes provided by dLux.

Perhaps the strength of the D.art 99 showcase was the juxtaposition of different perspectives on, and uses of, digital processes. For some the technology is a subject and method in itself while for others it becomes another way of constructing narrative or anti-narrative. Peter Callas' work remains for me the most satisfying of the selection because he manages to mix form and content in ways that enrich both.

Sunday's screening of the Malaysian Video Awards offered many comparisons with and contrasts to the D.art session. Like D.art all were presented as "experimental" works but varied markedly in production values. Categories included Best Experimental Video (Amateur and Professional) and Best Experimental Animation (Amateur).

*Dark Monologues* by A. Abraham was a lo-fi moody piece of existential teen angst edited in camera. Though obviously produced on a pocket money budget its strengths were the use of camera angles and ambient urban noise/music to heighten mood. At the other end of the production scale was a 3D animation piece *Live Concert* by Juhaidah which was a clever pastiche of American pop video techniques starring a butterfly and cockroach karaoke duo miming to a Mariah Carey/Whitney Houston hit.

Works carrying social messages or commentary included Kamil Fazrin's *No Fishing* addressing the problem of smoking among young people, and *Life is Just Like Living in One Big Box*, Leo Choe Yin and Shafina Bt Ahmad's comment on living in urban containment. Fazrin's work, though classed as "amateur", showed the strong influence of TV commercial techniques, perhaps more so than the two professional works which closed the session. An animated work, *IRC* by Ng Jin Chong, was concerned with the problems of identity on the internet, and the final professional piece; *Ecstasy* was a 30 second commercial by Alex Tan and Lam Waai Cheong on the dangers of the drug.

The session was short—around 25 minutes. I felt most of the pieces were effective but offered only tantalising glimpses into their respective subjects. I was left wanting a little more development of themes. I suspect the strong com-

mercial media influence on many of the works tended to encourage a sound-byte style of delivery.

This raises the question of whether much work in experimental video in Malaysia is actually produced independently of the mainstream commercial industry or whether most artists necessarily work in and around it for economic reasons. In contrast, D.art 99 seemed to consist mainly of artists working in academic institutions or in receipt of government grants. Of course, many innovative video artists in Australia and the USA also work in the commercial sector. Perhaps we perceive "experimental" as something rarified and/or institutional, a technical excursus into the unknown and, ultimately, unmarketable? Or do we perceive 'innovation' as something more instinctual, accessible and profitable? Personally, I would welcome more work that managed to cross the institutional/commercial divide. But perhaps singing cockroaches might look out of place on the next grant application.

## Missile: Double Happiness

Jason Sweeney

A document, a site, proof of a youth cultural exchange between Xi'an (China)/Ipswich (Australia). Date source: April - July 99. Produced by Global Arts Link (an Ipswich City Council initiative) and Arterial(.org.au). Based on workshops and net exchanges between students at the Xi'an Translators College in China's Shaanxi province and a group of young people from Ipswich. *Double Happiness* welcomes you with a tapping (documented) looped chat room conversation, like getting to know characters in a film, the strange familiarity derived by online names...and from here things begin to open up. This is website as workspace. A collection and an archive. Source material: real time chat, images, cu-seeme pics, emails...culminating in a (Shockwave/Flash full) site facilitated and designed by artists and teachers (most of whom coordinated the workshops and exchanges of the project). Source material: Ipswich young people, actively working in web environments (many having designed their own pages—no links to them unfortunately) and in the promotion of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. Personality profiles available. Source material: Xi'an students, who undertook a 12 week workshop in all areas of technology and the internet. Aged 16-22. Group shot available. The constant chatter of chat. A (taken-for-granted) technology of exchange. Transglobal interactions, positive. Friends made. Results. And then the design. The playful part. A colour code/map. Six options. Green: 'opens up' (via a game technique) the statements of young people from the project. Nice one. Purple: a 'complete the Chinglish' (more games) exercise, does some crazy *Sale of the Century* bleeps and buzzes when you decipher a 'yes or no/tick or cross' answer to a 'fill

in the blank' curiously named 'Chinglish' puzzle. Better to see that one for yourself. Yellow: an odd 'OK Mouths Farts Symphony' which is a pretty funny random click and score a musical fart sequence (!) to simultaneously reveal more statements taken from chat and emails. Red: or "What do you want?" which floats some bubbles, inside a cascade of planes, computers, handshakes, symbols to reckon with. Click harder. Forward. Orange: a scrabble board of possibilities, possible questions, global issues, flash-up statements, it's political (signalling issues like the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia, remembering Tiannamen Square...), it's of language, fear, a culture in the dark, hiding and confronting an uncertain future...click on spurting hearts and pulsating brains, hear the incessant drum pounding statements onto your screen. It's there. Blue: a well of tears, in descent, sadness, thought bubbles, a more solemn game called 'Let it all out.' Go back, home.htm. Still the chatter of chat. The thing about *Double Happiness* is that it doesn't let up. Totally evokes the commitment to this great project. It's also a functional, friendly site which is kinda refreshing in an overly gimmick-laden world of web. Made me happy. Spent an hour there. Got to the source. Went and checked my email. Nothing there.

[www.happy.arterial.org.au](http://www.happy.arterial.org.au)

## Framing memory

Maryanne Lynch

*Sick and Dizzy*  
State Library Theatre  
September 4, MAAP

Is memory playing me false? I have been trying to recall a line from a film and it has become linked to a summertime scene where I am watching myself writing the very same line in a small leather-covered book. But perhaps it's not that line I am writing. For it to be the line fits nicely with my reconstruction of myself as more knowing than I was at the age when I wrote in such a book (the film being seriously esoteric) and links events that took place possibly months, even years, apart.

This struggle to remember brings to mind two quotations that meant a lot to me as a younger self, and that I may also, and more probably, have inscribed in my book. One is about the past being another country. The other, from a hard-boiled East German work I think, refuses this possibility and emphatically states that the past isn't even gone. We just pretend that it has.

I want to recall where I first read these lines, and why they touched my younger self as they did, and yet I can't do more than embellish the memory. This worries me because the two observations are quite different in orientation, and I think who is saying what is important. After all, if memory serves me correctly, one of the speakers turned out to be a spy and the

other's sympathies shouldn't be ignored either. It seems to me that to know which is which is crucial to determining my own past. These writers are asking a question. In turn I ask male or female; East or West; mythmaker or liar? These categories are too simple, I know, but why can I not retrieve a chronology of my self? Or, what am I forgetting?

*Sick and Dizzy* asks this question too, with a wider interrogative scope. A program of film and video art from the collections of Griffith Artworks, Brisbane, and Videotage, Hong Kong, co-curated by Beth Jackson and Fion Ng, *Sick and Dizzy* is a study of memory. Cultural memory. Historical memory. Collective memory. More accurately, amnesia.

This project—remembering our forgetting—is most evident in Peter Callas' *Night's High Noon: An Anti-Terrain* (1988) and Rita Hui Nga Shu's *Invisible City (Wall)* (1998), which engage with the post colonial sensibilities of, respectively, Australia and Hong Kong. These works are formally sophisticated, and it is in this use of digital and video techniques—the layered mutating 'Australiana' imagery of Callas and the multiple narrative devices of Shu—that the artists' critical intention is shown.

Shu, for instance, scripts a Cantonese-Mandarin conversation in which two men in voiceover are trying to agree on a 'shared' memory as we stare at an image of a brick wall without end. Overlaid on this wall are what seems, at first glance, to be casually domestic scenes in mini frames. Yet, as the conversation continues, these scenes turn violent, or repeat themselves, or dribble away into irresolution. Finally the conversation itself peters out: the speakers are undecided. What is forgotten and recalled, what is and isn't important, and what the point was in the first place. The wall is the only thing that remains impermeable.

While I seem to remember that failing empires frame the question I am struggling to locate, these colonies on the make are, Callas and Shu suggest, not asking anything. Instead, forgetting is a social act prettied up with cultural artefacts or bricked over by the state.

This position is ironically restated by Hung Keung's *I Love My Country's Sky* (1997). Set to the repeated melody of a cheerily patriotic folksong, an array of individuals kiss thin air. And again, and again. As audience, we are trapped in what becomes the incongruity of this simple sequence. Choreographed intimacy grapples with forced gaiety. The fake emotion of the endless kisses finds a rhythm that fits with the tune and, in so doing, eventually interrupts it.

The meditative *air and water I*, a 1993 John Tonkin animation, moves us into a different space but prompts a similar discomfort. ● Tonkin intervenes by refusing an interven-

tion. The swell of the computer-rendered ocean presents an unchanging yet ever shifting landscape. There's no sure footing here; not a skerrick of dry land. We watch the waves, become transfixed, mesmerised...and find ourselves unable to act. What once was? Does it matter? What's the point anyway?

*Sick and Dizzy* suggests there is a point. As an historical document, it stakes a claim for remembering. Some memories become obsolete, it's true, as Ellen Pau's *Recycling Cinema* (1999) reminds us. Here she presents an unwavering gaze at the constant passage of ghostly vehicles across a landscape split between nature and culture. Yet, if we translate the artist's final, sentimental, paeon to love as a call for love in its broadest sense, then we read this ephemeral condition as reminding us of the value of what is most important—whether or not we can hold on to it, and contrary to what is privileged. Between the road and the sea lies what was and what will be; outside of the history books. So, Pau's work escapes pessimism—as does the program as a whole.

The 20 works making up *Sick and Dizzy*, despite their differences, collectively attempt to recoup the past even when showing the erasure of history. At the same time, these predominantly video works remind us of the different ways in which we make memories, and record ourselves, and how each form of remembering carries its own amnesia. This point is reinforced by the scheduling of the highly digital *D.art99* programme immediately after: another form of remembering and forgetting.

And lest we forget: In a way the *Sick and Dizzy* works are written down in their own small leather-covered books...written down as a reconstruction, always and inevitably after the facts. (Of this I'm certain, though not of the facts themselves.)

## Missile: Shanghai N.2

Jason Sweeney

A horrifying account of a city. Disturbing(ly), beautiful. Irony: it radiates from my screen. User: outside/r. Sights seen: commerce, religion, prayer, culture/social life, sex/sleaze, citizen, politik, food, poverty. Framed against Shanghai skyline. 1-68.htm images. My choice of image. A tour at my 'disgression.' Like a touch screen (almost). To go here. And next. There. Each image, some broken links, a kind of prayer or chant. To walk through, (un)knowing. And how did I acquire this privilege of choice? To enter this simple, elegant image-album of a city. And (reading) language, defined, drawn upon and against the images. French, Chinese, English. Subtitles, translations, parodies of speech and the written word. Many altars, trade, coloured and overloaded. With meaning. Or the extraction of (its) history. To trust the document. To bear witness to an investigation. A circular reference, the recur-

ring picture, assemblage and juxtaposition. Against a glowing (white) background. Empty fallen landscapes, villages, houses in ruin. "Three generations of architecture" (52.htm). A silent photo-file. Statements, too, of possible beginnings, endings, a hope (even lovers walk here), maybe faith, signs of friendship, icons in isolation, little devils appear, unmovable objects, they pose for the camera (what are the symbols? which way to go? do I go on?). Scene: street market, the people of a city, there is life, daylight, a morning, immersed in it. Beyond, go further, in detail. Out of a dust-storm. A city in destruction, layers of a new structure, a blanket over the past. Villages of poverty slammed against some kind of fragmented future. "This whole city is a workshop" (28.htm). Again, a document. Where to next? This is easy/hard to look at. The neon of Shanghai, yes, everywhere, in photo form (remember) and people, dark nights, crowds glued into a commodified system of progress. Not unfamiliar. Could tell you things. And questions: who tore this all apart and who are the new builders? The reds, the lights, the ancient to the plastic reality of pop culture. Trade offs. "Fashion of evening life" (41.htm). What prayer? Earth and heaven, in denial. Body to the ground. Concrete. The spectators gather, no room to breathe. It's about filling space. Moving between gaps. Taking a snapshot. Ghosts and cries, remains of a former city. Here, now: bulldozers, construction sites, forbidden (policed) zones of the next stage...Forthcoming city divisions and 'self-colonised' sectors, the seepages occur: "...a continuous influx of transcultural influence" (45.htm). Franchised worlds. This investigation circles the city and reports back fear. Loss, deletion, awaiting the upset, upheaval, transgression. Replacement and renewal, removal. 68 essays, clouded by grey dust, stirred foundations and missing persons. Returns to the start. Shanghai N.2 makes no claims yet screams the loudest. The photographer (seemingly) unidentified [Chen Zhen .Ed] but like a guide clock, (ac)counts (for) each step.

<http://www.shanghart.com/chenzhen/1.htm>

## Missile: Shanghai N.2

Alex Hutchinson

1. A presentation of the work of Chen Zhen, a contemporary photographer working in Shanghai, linked through ShangHART: The First Gallery for Contemporary Chinese Art in Shanghai.
2. A series of 68 pages, accessible via a numbered list running down the left margin or simply by clicking NEXT 67 times and seeing them all in (presumably) their intended order.
3. Each page is a photo or a collection of photos arranged in squares. There is no text on the site at all, except for any text which is in (or on) the image itself.
4. A visual exploration of the changing face of Shanghai. Comparisons of the old Shanghai

with the new is ever-present. Scenes of wreckage running alongside rebuilding, running through scenes of modern Shanghai replete with Western convenience stores.

5. The title image and photo no.1: the city at a crossroads, image of several highways meeting set up the themes which then bounce between urban decay and urban renewal, between the elderly and infirm and dancers in clubs.
6. Scarily, photos 7 and 8 are dead links.
7. Occasionally effective contrasts, such as no. 25: a series of images based around red: icons, such as stalls selling fire crackers and McDonalds, all running under the slogan "From 'Red Book' to 'Red City'."
8. A seeming increase in photo density as the links progress, with more images being crammed into the same screen-size. Clumps, of themed images, with a group of early morning market scenes, religious sections and more.
9. Basic layout. *Shanghai N.2* will win no awards for web design, but it does effectively present the artist's work who (it must be remembered) is a photographer not an HTML programmer and who probably had no control over the site. It is interesting as a visual representation of a tumultuous period in the life of a city. It is also an effective presentation of a Chinese artist's work and an interpretation of a city as home. The photos are varied and thematically linked. There is a lot here worth perusing.
10. But: Why is this an Internet site? What use of the technology does it make? We are given linear links to flat photos with no interaction possible and no attempt made to exploit the strengths of the medium in which it is presented. An interesting photographic essay (if you knew what it was before you arrived: the MAAP link is blind) which, sadly, would probably be better presented on the printed page. However, if you want to look inside the mind of a contemporary Chinese photographer, this is the place to start.

<http://www.shanghart.com/chenzhen/1.htm>

## Commence-Level 1

Gail Priest

Digital Degrees

Student Film and Video Screenings,

State Library Theatre

September 4, MAAP

I left high school in 1987 firm in the knowledge that it was too late for me to learn computers, I would have to settle to be part of the generation that had missed out on being let in on the binary secrets. A decade or so later I am ubillically connected to my G3 laptop and feel digitally competent; however I find myself sitting in the State Library Theatre watching a super slick 3D animation, developing that same sinking sensation—again I having missed the next technological door.

3D animation blows my mind. No, not just my mind, it seems to seep into my body, as if

my cells are expanding. I respond to the rendering of the achingly perfect surfaces, the super smooth, ultra new plastic; there are no rough edges in these 3D worlds, nothing furry or fluffy. Perhaps it's the exaggerated gradients and moody shadows that heighten the perspective, or the manipulation of my point of view, whirling through a dizzying 360, taking in all sides of an object simultaneously.

One work that explored/exploited this was *Ithaca* by Peter Agas (RMIT 1998). In his flying saucer journey through an imagined landscape, Agas revels in the technology, every surface rendered in minute detail. Gliding over a craggy mountain, the rock surfaces are reflected and distorted on the underside of the UFOs. The ships fly directly towards us and disappear, as if passing through us. The surfaces gleam with hyper reality, I am disappointed when I look down at my own flesh—it is too dull, it lacks luminosity.

Recovering from my brief moment of spiritual fervour, I began to notice the storytelling trends emerging from the different schools. The majority of the RMIT works opted for linear narratives with a "baboom" gag ending. This was particularly strong in the hand-drawn works such as *The Washing Machine* an impressive work by Sophie Ramond (RMIT 1997)—a unicorn leaps out of a washing machine, stained by the leaking dye of red clothes and berates Santa for washing his suit in her jacuzzi.

The work from Singapore also had a strong comic narrative focus. The untitled animation by Ivan Chua of the Tempasek Polytechnic in Singapore was in the style of Tim Burton, portraying a lonely skeleton finding a best pal in a stray dog. The most beguiling was *Awakening* by Peck Lee Ann from the Ngee Ann Polytechnic in which a very dedicated alarm clock tries to wake its master. After repeated attempts, the owner throws the clock out the window and it comes back with its big alarm clock brothers to blast the sleeper away, only to be beaten by the insignificant beeps of a pager. The combination of 3D work and video removes the need to suspend disbelief—we honestly believe in the alarm clock's reality.

Although the comic narrative seemed to dominate, there were some other strong non-narrative works. *Age 2* by Scott James Smith (UTS, Sydney 1999) for instance was an accomplished design work involving images of a 2 year old boy, segmented and manipulated in time to an electronica soundtrack, giving the effect of design as choreography.

Conceptual narrative work featured strongly in the work from the University of Auckland. *Rotten* by Craig Gladding (1998) was a Monty Pythonesque, or as the notes suggest Artaud-inspired stop animation collage featuring a series of vaudevillian acts meeting untimely ends. *Geo-graphiti* by Alexander Sutherland

(1998) was a formal investigation using Premier and Media 100, blending video footage and architectural sketches to tease out the texture and essence of place. The final work from Alexandra Monteith titled *art for dummies* was stylish stop motion animation to play with explanations of art, using the premise of join the dots and clever text manipulation along with a rather harried raw chicken.

famous  
 . .  
 painting  
 print  
 design  
 sculpture  
 installation  
 photograph  
 pottery  
 . .  
 . symbolism  
 . dial 0800 663777  
 . eightee  
 .  
 .  
 .  
 the scream  
 .  
 .  
 a chicken  
 was here

(excerpt text from *art for dummies*  
 Alexandra Monteith 1998)

The strength of this piece lay in the perfect marriage between the work's chosen medium, low-end typewriting, and its conceptual depth.

I must admit that by the end of the student works, I felt a bit like Monteith's raw chicken. I had been pushed and prodded. I had been taken on 26 journeys, 26 different ways and shown not only the many options in media, but the process of finding the media to best express particular stylistic and needs. My panic at being left behind with my parchment and quill had dulled to a low level hum. Patiently I now await my entry to the next level.

## Hong Kong—rebuilding on disappearance

Grsiha Dolgoplov

*Self-Made Cinemas*

curator Jo Law

State Library Theatre

September 4, MAAP

Hong Kong has not disappeared. It has rebuilt. It has rebuilt on disappearance. It has replaced utility with images. Images are now the utility. Images in frames and covered in layers that disappear in a layer of images compressed in frames.

*Self-Made Cinemas* is a one of these layers. It is a program of ten independent screen works from Hong-Kong curated by Jo Law and currently touring Australia. These dynamic and diverse videos are united by a common city rhythm and a fascination with HK's multiple layers of

change. In her curator's notes, Law says that the actual experience of a Hong Kong no longer recognised by its inhabitants is disappearing. She claims that "visual images have lost their ability to represent. They have become mere mis-connected signs pointing to a mirage."

Perhaps this is why these independent video makers try to capture the images of their city to stop its disappearance. But these images are not archives, or documents. They are highly personalised video essays that present the vagaries of remembrance in different forms. In these *Self-Made* works, HK is not a mirage or a ghost but a colourful, pulsing, busy shawl woven of different threads that are connected by their disconnectedness to stasis.

These videos were made either before or after the 'hand over'. In some ways, this theme is pervasive, if not in the films then in the way in which we will watch and make sense of them. The granite gray skies of that wet July day in 1997 may have replaced the enduring images of exotic hybrids, British imperial jewels and martial art films, but it is images that shuffle off and disappear, not cities. These works reveal HK transforming through the rainbow of memory and the exigency of speed and need. They are ephemeral, personal paintings in time with little attempt to capture the whole.

*Mr Salmon* is a dazzling animated symphony of salmon swimming up river and across sushi bars. It is vibrantly textural and colourful. It could be an urban metaphor for swimming against the flow of history as a vital death impulse only to become an appetizing visual delight for video voyeurs.

The ingredients of Hong Kong's cultural hybridity are far more potent than just Western modernism or traditional Chinese narratives. The vitality of HK is the piquancy of innumerable cultural influences. Fuelled by hyper internationalism, it resists homogenisation in the drive for new taste experiences.

Exquisite video techniques are common to all these works. This manifests the "survival myth" of Hong Kong: life springs from hybrid fusion. Dave Hung's *Love* entrances with modern primitivist images set to the incredible driving rhythm of the Balinese ketjak chant. Traditional grotesque hybrids flicker in a ceaseless dance of erotic transformation in this sublime appropriation of the trance chant.

Urban repulsion is combined with morbid fascination with the city. This makes for an uncanny contemplation in the video format. There is an obsession with motion and different forms of communication and transportation along roads, footpaths, depoliticised landscapes, internet sites and city sights. The new flaneur in HK experiences detached contemplation at high speed.

"The road is the same every day. But could I still recognize it tomorrow?"

The drive time of Makin Fung's *Hong Kong Road Movie* was exhilarating—my personal

favourite. It combined a roaming road video with a memorial to the personalised passage of time in HK, global internet and email interfaces and non-stop textuality. This delicate diary with endless road signs and screen directions about movement, roads, politics and change was incredibly inventive. A virtuoso display of the potential of the screen—split and layered in amazing configurations with a ceaseless polyphony of motion. Any stillness was surprising. The personal became vital. The work was rhythmic and tactile. This was total screen art and a tiger's leap into the future.

In Frederic Lichstein's *One Minute Project* an agitated eye peers through its veiny membrane at us. A disturbing offer. A different way of looking—both for the eye looking out and for us looking in on the eye. The challenge for us is to look at this eye with disinterest. To look at HK and not see a reflection of our cities in its myriad mirrored skyscrapers. To see something new and as yet unnamed.

All of the *Self-Made* films are startling in their originality of vision and readiness to use the video medium in fresh and unpredictable ways. They explode the potential for re-viewing screen space and the texture of editing. The excess of speed, information and image flows did not create a sense of clutter. These works present a completely different cognition of space and pictorial organisations of the moving image. It must be the rhythm of moving freely in small ever-changing spaces. Discordant frames within frames, layers across frames in perpetual motion create an unpredictable harmony of vision. Their highly personalised essayism reveals new ways of seeing that will not disappear in the future rebuilding.

### Next edition will appear Saturday September 11.

Editors: Virginia Baxter,  
 Keith Gallasch, Gail Priest

Layout: Gail Priest

Online editor: Kirsten Krauth

Thanks to Maryanne Lynch and  
 Linda Carroli

RealTime  
 Metro Arts 07 3221 1527  
 sputnik@hutch.com.au

RealTime  
 PO Box A2246 Sydney South NSW 1235  
 02 9283 2723 opencity@rttimearts.com

apt3

apt3



QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY

**!Metro Arts**  
 arts presentation development and research



RealTime is assisted by the  
 Australia Council, the federal  
 government's arts advisory body.