

Volume 2 **FREE**

APT3 Opening

APT3 Screen Culture Launch

APT3 Artists Talks: Tisna Sanjaya, Han Hyung-Ok

Amanda Heng

APT Michel Tuffery and Patrice Kaikilekofe

Elision's *Sonorous Bodies & Transmisi*

MAAP Artists: Young-Hae Chang

MAAP net.works/Artists on the Web

MAAP Events:

***Artificial Thought* (MAAP99)**

Screen_Imag(in)ings: Towards a Digital Aesthetic

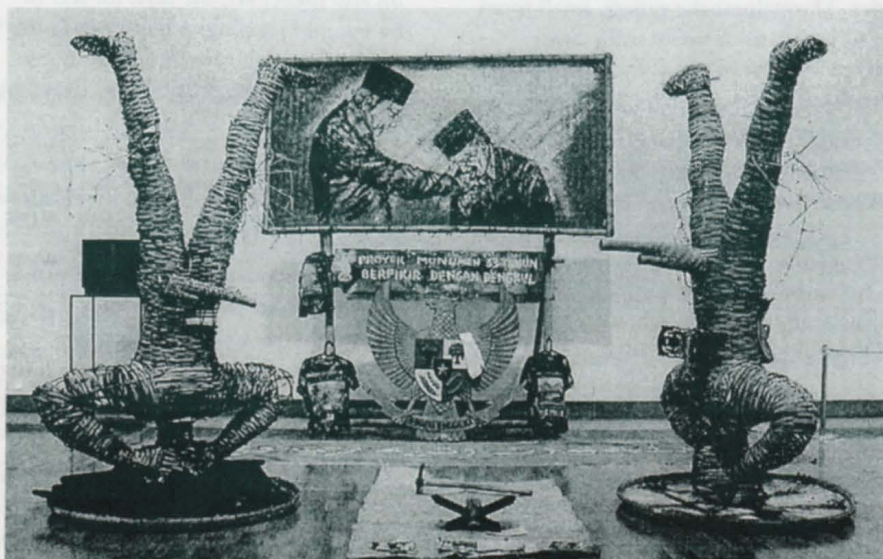
Sci-Art 99

APT3/MAAP99 Missile: Neon Urlaub

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Tisna Sanjaya, Indonesia, *Thinking with the knee* 1998-98, installation, collection the artist

*I will move around the city
come and go around, here and there
bring a carcass, a dead body
stinky no body can bear, want to
vomit
it creeps
fishy
messy
horrible
shit
my nation
has been
shameless*

*Dragging the epiphyte plant
carrying
the load of history
that decayed
disgracing...
my self...
where should I throw away
bury it down
...this stinky load
cannot be
vanished...*

Welcome to the second of 3 editions of RealTime @ MAAP and the Asia Pacific Triennial (APT3). The first edition focussed largely on MAAP, the second surveys both events as APT3 gets underway, and the third will concentrate on APT3 exhibitions and the MAAP and APT3 conferences.

The Indonesian government and military betrayal of the East Timorese vote for independence has made the focus of MAAP and APT3 on Australian-Asian relations more timely and more overtly political than anticipated. As we go to press, large scale protest across Australia on the streets, via fax and email and across the world, steadily mounts. Despite US hesitation, first signs of a breakthrough and the possibility of landing peace-keeping forces are emerging. We hope this happens urgently and that the protest driven by sympathy, anger and incredible frustration is maintained to see justice done in East Timor.

PROJECT: *The Decaying of*
IPOLEKSUSBUDHANKAM
Thinking with the Knee

MAAP www.maap.org.au/
Asia Pacific Triennial www.ap3.net
RealTime www.rtimearts.com/~opencity/

RealTime

Small worlds

Virginia Baxter

Opening event, Asia Pacific Triennial

Artists Talks: Tisna Sanjaya,

Han Myung-Ok

A one night stand, Michel Tuffery and Patrice Kaikilekoko, September 10, APT3

APT3 opened on Thursday night with an estimated throng of 3000 at the QAG variously engaging with the art. The cushions that form part of Kim Soo-Ja's subtle statement are moved to make way for speeches. Before Shi Yong's satirical instructions for international communication, the crowd performs its own rituals, circling, murmuring gossip, kissing cheeks and licking lips. Ceremonial alcohol is offered and food—alas of the bland 'Asian-style' served from a barrage of baimaries rather than anything like the authentic tastes of the region.

Welcomed by Indigenous dancers stamping on concrete (ouch!), cleansed by ceremonial smoke, we make the pilgrimage to the Victoria Bridge and just miss seeing Cai Guo Qiang's 99 small fiery boats sink beneath the weight of expectations at 9 pm on the 9th day of the 9th month 1999. Such is the nature of crowds that we had to wait for email next day to hear that Robyn Archer had broken into a spontaneous yodel to dispel any bad omens.

Which is just as well since APT3 is much loved here by the locals and everyone else involved in the arts in Australia who all

seem to be here. The entire gallery (save the Australian collection) is given over to the exhibition. Minister for the Arts, Matt Foley sees APT as providing an intimate place to say things that can't be said outside it. Some acts performed here are impossible in their countries of origin. To quote a colleague on the strength of the APT, "regions can do things that centres can't."

For the huge number of artists involved and the estimated 200,000 visitors APT attracts, it offers another kind of geography. On Friday morning after the launch, kids trooping through the gallery in uniformed groups are diverted by the chance to wind strips of cane into wild geometries. Throughout the gallery, small room-sized installations invite entry. Seats placed in front of many encourage loitering. Each day we stumble on something we're sure wasn't there yesterday. Meanwhile, the works make their own connections. Gordon Bennett's powerful totems glance sidelong at Jun-Jieh Wang's pink *Neon Urlaub*. Within the sites of Katsushige Nakahashi's crashed fighter plane made of 10,000 photographs, Xu Bing's silkworms slowly spin.

Then again, we never leave the real world here—so much of the work speaks of trouble in paradise. At his artist's talk on Friday, installation-performance artist, Tisna Sanjaya from Bandung stands on his head to demonstrate what is meant by the "thinking with the knee" so pervasive in his country—initially exhilarating but

held too long affecting the brain's function. On the lawns outside, Dadang Christanto burns one of his 47 gold papered effigies in a meditative act of anti-militarism. We watch as the flames lay waste, leaving a bodiless head. Tonight he will burn all 46 of them and Lee Wen (*Journey of the Yellow Man*) will protest by painting himself black.

At the other end of the gallery, Han Myung-Ok has created a set of fragile islands from a single ball of white silk thread. The work is the result of a week spent in this room, a time when she felt that outside it was a good deal of anxiety and stress. Since 1986 Myung-Ok has lived in Paris. She has 24 hours a day to fill and makes art, she says, for fear of boredom. Listening to her speak in the quiet calm of this room, I hold in my head this morning's frightened faces from BBC World.

The extraordinary *one night stand* performance by Michel Tuffery and Patrice Kaikilekoko and company on Friday evening reminds me of a quote from Michael Eather in his catalogue essay on Vincent Serico's *Road to Cherbourg* (Global Arts Link, Ipswich), "Artists like Vincent Serico work on the principle that if the dreaming has been interrupted (in the process of coexistence) the 'interruptions' become part of the dreaming."

Who knows what order of interruption to the lives of these Pacific Island communities (Polynesia and French Polynesia) gave rise to this wild contemporary ritual but it sure helped to shake some of the week's fearful demons.

We hang around for the sort of time that makes you wonder whether you should go or stay. As we wait, small fires are lit in tin cans around the cyclone fenced rectangular perimeter of the QAG plaza. Suddenly there's an explosion from a line of small metal bulls inside the fence where a row of men hold blowtorches to the backsides of the bulls and bangs belch from their mouths. Eventually the big bulls arrive, 3 of them, a metre tall, pushed along on wheels by teams of handsome young Polynesians. They enter the arena to the rattle of a rocking tin can band. The company divides into camps, at one end young men in sarongs and singlets, at the other, a mixed group in rapper gear (trakkies and runners), their red sarongs tied casually round their waists. What follows is like some mad battle of the bands. Tuffery in the middle in jeans



Michel Tuffery & Patrice Kaikilekoko *Povi tau vaga (The Challenge)* 1999, performance

and tattooed to the waist controls the action with a whistle and a set of gestures. At his signal the bulls, now flaming red and breathing smoke from the fires in their bellies, are pushed towards one another followed by groups of male and female dancers in outbursts of energetic movement. Meanwhile the mini bulls keep up their belching explosions from the sidelines. Two pale and watchful QAG workers hover with fire extinguishers. The performance proceeds with variations on this theme until some kind of resolution appears to be reached. Then it winds its way down with more conciliatory dances and a lot of bowing and back slapping. Inside this stark enclosure we've witnessed a fabulous hybrid that's managed, for now, to scramble ancient rituals of war into one joyous mess of meanings.

Notes and imprints

Julainne Sumich

Some notes from a participating filmmaker on MAAP Screenings *Self-Made Cinema*, *Sick and Dizzy* and *D.art99*

State Library Theatre
September 4

Anemone and *Strange Stories*

Queensland Art Gallery Lecture Theatre
September 5

Sick and Dizzy. "I love my country's sky"—bleached by overexposure, *Love* a video by Dave Keung Hung, at first practices facetious facials of 'give us a kiss'. Through pure persistence he breaks down spectator resistance and breaks you up through the jingoistic fervor of the soundtrack's loop. Faces out of whack dissolve to others equally engaged in this 'little bit we know about love.'

Self-Made Cinema: Mark Chan's *Happy Valley* recalls the multiple screens and extradiegetic voice of Godard's TV and questions of love and identity in Resnais and Duras *Hiroshima mon Amour*. It's a bittersweet critique of 'real estate' life in the city through the affectionate perspective of Calvino's *Invisible Cities*.

In *Differences do Matter* Anson Mak pans her singing voice from her speaking voice through separate channels. Via technology she re-presents herself in the metaphors of linguistic differences and their concomitant constructs of identity.

Hong Kong Road Movie by Makin Fung is a series of shifting terrains to the throb of a slow flute on soundtrack—landscape

whitens on the road going back/going to. The past tense 'does anyone remember...' folds over the present tense 'it's my birthday...' over the future tense 'next week?' The tension of these troubled times is wrapped up in signs of prohibition and electronic mail two.system@one.country

dLux media arts' collection *D.art* projects heterotopias of multimedia practice. In Isabelle Hayeur's *Si jamais la mer* digital fx take on biblical proportions in the parting of the sea. A bird's-eye-view tracks receding shorelines in this time of global warming. 'If ever the sea' floods the memory with wasted lands—a memento mori for a global warning on a world at war with itself. As if a scriptural omen on 'the fire next time', Hayeur's work fits with the crackle of *D.art*'s logo flickering between the works.

The *Anemone* collection from Imago ripples its interstices with reflective light. The closing days of the 20th century are marked by an acuteness of vision, melancholic humour, and dark beauty. This 'post' age of the circuitry of the 'client' meets its match in Peter Circuit's *Post*, an animated assemblage of cheap photocopied identities and remaindered yet feisty robots who get in each other's way. It's the old private eye routine but this entropic parody has the worldweariness you get from being trapped in the shutters where film noir's shades clank like worn out projectors.

Rapt is a wrap-up of body bits in virtual space (like 'Eve', the homeless woman whose body's been digitally spliced in service of USA scientific data). Both rapturous and fraught with anonymity Justine Cooper's imaging scans oscillate with a magnetic resonance between a heaven's gate spirituality and the black hole of the Despot.

The *Anemone* collection has many moments of persuasive beauty—from Kim McGlynn's full-bloom 'through-the-flower' sensibility in *Eulogy* (post debts to Judy Chicago /Georgia O'Keeffe) to Dominic Redfern's *Please Wait Here* his wandering camera eye searching for something exquisite at the margins of TV's dross chirpiness "I know how tiring it can be". Vikki Wilson's work *March-Riever* recalls Kristeva's notion of 'thetis'—the traversal of borders, and the abject (examined by Barbara Creed in *Screen* on 'The Monstrous Feminine' via Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*). Moods of negativity are privileged in dark-stained poetic abstractions

of image and readings from *Beowulf* and Lautreamont transcending time and space. Such a 'flick' renders the legitimacy of film problematic, tracing the defacing mark, scratching the surface of the symbolic's material real.

In *Strange Stories* curated by Kim Machan David Cox's *Other Zone* and Feng Mengbo's *Q3* sit edgily alongside my own film *Happiness* where the belly of the artist's gut instinct hangs out in virtual space waiting for alternative developments in the contaminated architecture of screen culture; a waiting room evocatively entered by Joyce Campbell's *Bloom*.

Q3 by Feng Mengbo (China) opens with plainsong of Gregorian chant and afterfx simulating B&W scratch film that sets a mood of artificiality and plaintive beauty, a beauty abruptly terminated as *Q3* launches into the speed-of-light *Sim Life* whose POV is down a gunbarrel playing merry hell through the heavenly boys' own world of GI Joes and Bombay Bandits. Cox's *Other Zone* counteracts such wishful Neuromancers with his Molly-type heroine who passes through red silk interfaces to commune with Mother Moon—in the process getting waylaid by the prosthetic Master Stelarc a wannabe Gary Oldman lost in space. From Korea, Young-Hae Chang's *The Samsung Project* (Samsung means to come) succeeds simply through text to convey the erotic and comic moments in mother-in-law's kitchen to a soundtrack that's jazz!

D.art99 and *Anemone* screening September 18 and 25 respectively at QAG. Love screens September 28 - 29

Beyond Amusement

Maryanne Lynch

net.works/ artists talks

Metro Arts Theatre

September 6, MAAP

There's a game that's been around in amusement parlours for 6 or so months now where two people take off their shoes and dance on an electronic dancefloor to score points. It's mostly played by Asian-Australians (acknowledging here the vagueness of this term), especially girls. Not exclusively but you can see the trend. Several times I've stopped on my way past one of these joints to have a gawk at these young women, wearing solemn looks as they hop and jump and leap in their socks. I love it, but also experience a small collision of cultural sensibilities, around

the 'cute' factor of the game/girls. Like the one some Asian people I know feel about the Australian passion for retro.

In the heat around MAAP and the APT there's more talk of dialogue than culture clash. Uneasy differences aren't really acknowledged. Even less so the fact that as a 'nation' we are still tied very much to European values. This thought arose again as I sat in the morning session of *net.works/*, the MAAP forum in which the 4 artists from the Asia Pacific including 2 from Australia, who are working in a year long online artist exchange presented themselves and their work.

The two artists I heard were Feng Mengbo from Beijing and Tina Gonsalves from Melbourne. The other two were Young-Hae Chang from Seoul (see Julainne Sumich's profile on page. 4) and Ric Vermey from Perth. I'd already seen a work by Gonsalves in the *D.art 99* program, and was about to see Mengbo's 'video game' *Q3* in a screening that night. I found both artists fascinating, especially in terms of their respective relationships to the electronic medium and how this reflects, in part, their cultural influences.

Mengbo, an internationally shown artist, showed us a CDROM to die for. Using a multitude of techniques and software he's created a huge 'document'. Crammed together are visual styles, (pop) cultural referents and mini narratives. One moment we're leafing through the pages of the family album and oohing and aaahing at the pretty pictures; next minute we're meeting Mengbo himself as a 'Right-oh, what do we have here, old chap?' intrepid postcolonial explorer in safari suit and helmet; and then we're running for our lives as a fighter who looks something like a Red Guard tries to blast us into oblivion.

This last feature is a snippet from the 'interactive game' Mengbo has recently created, the one I saw on the big screen and which has been jarring, I think, the sensibilities of some of the art crowd. On one level it's a shootathon with sensurround sound, based on *Quake III Arena* ('the most popular and most violent 3D video game in the world'). The pace and the audio is unrelenting, and a lot of virtual blood splatters the screen. The artist was inspired to make his own game in part by his fandom; he'd played *Quake III* for more than 100 hours, and before that *Quake I* and *II* as well as the *Doom* series.

Some of the screen audience got a little uncomfortable (walked out) with *Q3*, yet if you watch the whole thing Mengbo is asking questions—especially in the existential dialogue with one of the game's warriors and the work's blurred *heAVEN/hELL* metaphor. At the same time he's getting into the violence, and at the *net.works/* talk Mengbo briefly showed us a justification for this fascination he's placed on his CDROM.

I didn't get the chance to ask Mengbo why he felt motivated to compose such a statement. Instead I swung between interest in the game and repulsion with its bloody environments. Especially with their labour-heavy creation ('Why?'). I felt culturally alienated despite knowing that *Doom* and *Quake* have a huge following in Australia. The difference however is this art video didn't have the sort of quotation marks I'm used to, ie, would a male Australian artist take up the project in quite the same way? I hasten to say that Mengbo has his own quotation marks; I just couldn't read them (all) because I don't have the cultural vocabulary.

Gonsalves was up to the podium next, bringing with her a more familiar set of starting points. Familiar to me, that is. Feminism European-style was the easier to pick but even her aesthetic rhythm, in contrast to the war-like irregularity of *Q3*, was comfortable: sequences and shapes in a smooth tempo borrowing from European melody. Someone in the audience commented on the mandala effect coming across in several of the pieces of digital animation Gonsalves showed us; for me this read more like the application of modernist principles.

The artist showed a curious ambivalence toward the digital medium, expressing the desire to 'warm it up'. Much of her work involves using body parts, often but not always female, and this corporeality is constantly emphasised over and above any special effects. Almost all the soundscapes I heard were created by actual instruments, adding to this visceral intention. Gonsalves also works in video, and again here we saw the 'warming' principle.

It's naive to ascribe differences between Mengbo and Gonsalves simply to cultural influences. Gender, belief system and biography are just some of the other elements to throw in the mix. And anyway, Mengbo's CDROM was for me a much warmer experience than Gonsalves' ani-

mations. However, I'm still intrigued by what felt like a world of difference in the artists' engagement with the medium—and the glimpses I got of cultural blindspots—including my own. I look forward to their 'dialogue, exchange, and collaboration' over the next year.

Where is there?

Julainne Sumich talks to Young-Hae Chang, one of the *network/* artists about her work. MAAP

Technologies are responsible for many of the ways we lead our lives. They define our public as well as our most intimate and private spaces.

"Rethinking Technologies" ed.
Verena Andermatt Conley. Univ of
Minnesota Press 1993 p.x

Currently in Brisbane to exhibit in the MAAP festival, Young-Hae Chang, a video and installation artist, is an agent provocateur in her challenges to "the way we live our lives." Recurrent features in earlier work were a preoccupation with the appearance of military camouflage patterns fabricated through the use of masking tape—the processes of mummification in *Bad Dreamland* 1997-8 (Total Museum, Chang Heung, Korea), and a perversion of cultural standards—*A Franco-Korean Love Affair* 1998 (French Cultural Centre, Seoul, Korea) where in a variety of positions, a papier-mâché tiger mounts the bemused Michelin Man—much to the dismay of the cultural attaché. Such mischief-making and direct subterfuge, along with allusions to secrecy and surveillance, constitute Young-Hae's *tekhné*, or informed know-how, in responding to the world of signs. Not surprisingly she is no stranger to threats of litigation.

During a recent artist's residency funded by Ssamzie, a Korean fashion foundation company, Young-Hae produced a series of video works on the pervasive symbol of Samsung Industries. In the video shown at the MAAP Festival, *Samsung*, constructed from low-tech computer word-processing, she critically and comically reinterprets the public text of the multinational SAMSUNG to arrive at "our most intimate and private spaces."

The electronic sign for SAMSUNG is a virtual hypericon—virginal in its blue and white aura—and points to an international force whose prestige and influence extends from highrise building construc-

tion and auto production into the high-tech domestic whiteware dream of the everyday housewife.

In SAMSUNG's sign and *Samsung* the meaning is "to come." From this Young-Hae scripts a sit-com text in the upper case to suit her own desire. Foregoing the ubiquity of the visual image she instead images through text the pace and phrasing of the sit-com format to provide an erotic revision on the narrative of desire's frayed edges—"get out in that kitchen and rattle those pots and pans!" But Young-Hae's choice of soundtrack is not mundane. The liberated rhythms of Art Blakey's jazz embody the video's overall critical edge. Keep it light, keep it naughty. *Samsung* lifts the taboo on talking sex in the domestic matriarchal space and talking back to the technological corporate body—the hand that feeds her economy.

This sort of behaviour pays off for Young-Hae, one of the 4 artists selected for MAAP's key project this year; *net.works/* online artists' residency working out of Seoul, Perth, Melbourne, Beijing. Now facilitated by flash technology her automatist writing writes herself online:

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

No.45 730 944:

THE PERFECT ARTISTIC WEBSITE

- a musing on the www -

'OR IS IT REALLY EVEN
THERE?
AND IF IT IS,
WHERE IS
"THERE"?

The recurring disaster

Keith Armstrong
Screen Culture launch
Dendy Cinema
September 6, APT3/MAAP

The APT directs some of us to attempt, once again, to deal with our future with each other; Asia and Australasia, uncertain neighbours sitting uneasily together, working it through with art as our social lubricant.

It's a chance we might want to be thankful for, knowing how desperately we need to focus on communication in the region. In the face of blinding human to human violence there are few places to look that are comforting tonight. Whilst Australia is currently on trial internationally for



Feng Mengbo's Q3

human rights abuses against Aboriginal people, across the Straits East Timor is literally in flames. As the show at the Dendy Cinema is being introduced by poet-cum politician Matt Foley, the creeping mould that forms behind him on the screen, (Joyce Cambell's *Bloom*) is a perfect contextual accompaniment. Tonight's program is not billed as escapist, and Foley appropriately asks us to remember East Timor as we consume.

Certainly before ANAT's *resistant-media e-list* (www.anat.org.au/resistant-media) and Perspecta foregrounded political discourse again, I had often wondered (particularly at openings) about the apparent impotence and/or disinterest of arts practitioners to contribute ideas while the 'analogue regions' boiled madly out of control.

Looking then to the APT for a pro-active curatorial premise to suit the times I immediately found some potency in Feng Mengbo's *Q3*, which foregrounded both media (CNN style) and medieval behaviour (*Quake* style) using the first person slaughter-fest "game" *Quake III*. In our age of remotely controlled devices that detonate anonymously in video space *Q3*'s medieval castle scapes of stone archways and pillars were curiously replete with humanesque, soldierly bodies running willy nilly, all disorganised and vulnerable. Feng tries to take us from the delivering to the receiving end of a lopsided bargain, challenging us to tough it out, through the visual and aural assault which seems to never end. The result, predictably, numbs us into an uncaring torpor as we

unceremoniously, under remote control, mow everything down.

Patience isn't always a virtue in today's crushed media space. It's notoriously difficult to elongate an idea and hold attention when audiences are capable of previously unimaginable degrees of speed-reading. Hence the general opinion among my peers was that Tracey Moffatt's *Heaven* was far too long and far too shakeycam. She promised glorification in "the female gaze and objectification of men", in the form of surfers with a range of tight jocks, g-strings and shorts. While musing about the absolute unacceptability of a male version of this female gazefest (minefield), or the giggles that resonated around the cinema each time we saw a salty foreskin, a bottom or some pubes, this wasn't the day for it. I checked my watch at least twice.

Whilst others chose to read it as 80's SGI virtual landscape froth, I found Yoichiro Kawaguchi's *Flora* and *Artificial Life Metropolis: Cell* captivating as his forms morphingly replicated, expanded and smothered each other. Indeed it was a perfect metaphor for endless cyclical destruction through an excess lifeform that apparently characterises us.

Delf by James Cunningham involved some glorious 3D character animation of fast moving, antennaed spermatozoa, careering through red tunnels, their com-fortingly human eyes not pre-empting their inevitable collision and the subsequent problematic of dealing with nastily warped x, y and z perspectives.

However, a better finished symphony, and my possibly unfashionable pick of the night, was *Playing Possum* by Peter Salmon with its two brightly coloured Flintstone-like characters racing against each other to place a stuffed/dead creature in the tracks of an ever-oncoming Morris Minor. This was quirky, well shot, the right length, and with occasional useful CG graphics, and it had a deceptively simple yet ambiguous narrative that gave me space to think. While happily I still don't quite "get it", I responded strongly to the idea of placing one's already dead image, time and time again, in the path of the same disaster.

It seemed so indicative of where we may well be stumbling at this time, and left me wondering if events like these could somehow empower us enough to weave lofty catalogue promises into our collective life.

Editor's note: APT3's Screen Culture program also features works covered in our first issue including *Digital Degrees*, the graduating students program from Australia, New Zealand and Singapore; *D.art99* presented by dLux media/arts, Sydney; *Self-Made Cinemas* and the *One Minute Video Festival*, independent screen works from Hong Kong; *Sick and Dizzy* curated by Fiona Ng (Videotage, Hong Kong and Beth Jackson, Griffith Artworks); *Anemone*, Australian digital video and animation works; *Strange Stories* curated by Kim Machan (MAAP99); and the Malaysian Video Awards. As well there's a Renzo Kinoshita Retrospective; *Out of the Shadows*, a documentary featuring a number of artists and curators from APT3; *Like Rubies in the King's Crown* by Esther Szabo, examining the history of the Yarrabah Aboriginal Mission near Cairns; *Animated: a history of Australian animation*; Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira*; *Cyberpunk* a film examining concepts central to the movement; *Making out in Japan* and *Cheap Blonde* by Janet Merewether; *Love me Tender* by I-Lan Yee, Malaysia; *Hyper Girls* by Ari O'Neill and Lisa Reihana, New Zealand; *Love* by Hung Keung; *Kaidohryoku Real* by Katsushi Boda and *The Karaoke* by Terr Urbahn, New Zealand. Screening Friday September 3 - 30 at the Queensland Art Gallery. Entry is free.

Undressing the imbalance

Heaven (1997), director Tracey Moffatt
Screen Culture, APT3

Observations of a roving pornithologist
A bit of buttock goes a long way. A lot of buttocks, well, sooner or later become just a lot of buttocks.

Tracey Moffatt (or her proxy) peeps from behind her curtain watching the male species whip off their wetsuits, shake the sand off their schlongs and tug on their undies in varied colours and states of cleanliness. We witness the bizarre ritual of the towel wrap and wriggle behind the car door. We see the shy boys with their furtive looks before they drop 'em. We see the brash boys...all of them.

The film turns when the watched begin to take control of their watcher, when buffed and waxed surfer boys try to seduce the camera, perform penile tricks, play hide and seek. For a moment it becomes edgy, aggressive, he is taking over the game. The camera operator takes back control by using a similar aggression, voraciously going in for what she wants. The camera hones in on interesting tattoos, and literally dives down the soggy dick stickers to see just what it is that makes them so proud.

This is fun, it's titillating in its boldness. We are not giggling with shy embarrassment, we are laughing at them, at the exhibitionistic urge, at the cockiness and preening, at the fact that these boys feel it is their divine right to drop their daks in the middle of the promenade. Maybe it is. Maybe it is my right too.

It is unfortunate, but we have not yet reached the time when all is balanced, when the inversion of the situation means the same thing. So let us not throw in the old "but this would be unacceptable if a male did the same thing" doozy. Moffatt succeeds in "glorifying the female gaze and objectifying the male", it is just that after 28 minutes of bits and pieces the 'objects' of her gaze become well...silly. Perhaps, just perhaps, this is the reason why pornography for chicks has never quite taken off.

The speed of zen

Gail Priest

Artificial Thought Andrew Kettle
part of *The Turing Test*
The Zoo, September 7, MAAP

I have always had a problem with appropriated 'zen' performance (my facetious term for performance where not much happens over quite a long period of time). I have no problem with the concept, just with the practice. "When...when will something happen?" I constantly ask myself. I like children's cartoons, I like things fast and loud. *Artificial Thought* showed me a new 'zen'—the fast, loud variety.

Artificial Thought is sound installation consisting of 8 individually tuned electric organs placed at the points of the compass: the Towers (N, S, E, W); and the Stations (NW, SW, SE, NE). The performance begins as Andrew Kettle places a weight on one of the organ keys. He then proceeds, at a brisk walk, in a counter-clockwise direction, placing a weight on the first key of each organ. As he completes a cycle he moves the weights one by one up the keyboards creating an ever changing ascending chord.

It is the power of that escalating chord that astounds me. Kettle states that drones "cleanse the area and purify the suspended audience in preparation to spiritual ascendance." I found it was the physical manifestation of my question "when...?" As he runs around the space, a video documenter in tow, another video documenter filming the documenter filming the performer, a wave of potential builds and builds, creating the sensation of an event always almost about to happen.

It is a work that requires the audience to actively engage with it. From afar, the visual impact of so many different electronic organs was very powerful, however the instruments were even more beautiful when viewed individually, especially the organ which had its intricate web of circuitry exposed offering us a glimpse of its electrical secrets. There was a scattering of people around the Zoo, drinking and playing pool, and I couldn't help thinking that their experience of it must have been quite impoverished. The work literally vibrates and you have to move around within the oscillating area. I found circling in the opposite direction to the performer to be most beneficial. Parts of the room were louder, the dominance of particular notes and timbres constantly shifting, no part of listening experience repeatable.

Time is my enemy, I move fast to beat it. It is only when I slow down that I notice it passing. *Artificial Thought* not only kept me moving, it kept me ascending...which is as close to 'zen' as I may ever get.

Never such a thing as silence

Stephen Armstrong

Sonorous Bodies, Elision Ensemble,
Judith Wright (video installation)
and Liza Lim (composer),
Satsuki Odamura (koto)
Brisbane City Hall, September 8-14,
APT3

Step into the passage of darkness and adjust. Outstretched hands ahead—the blackened world still pitches without horizon.

Deep in a chamber in this burrow, Satsuki Odamura caresses, plucks, scours and attacks the 14 pieces for koto by Liza Lim. Turn corners and count 8 floating video screens then settle in a place where 4, and Odamura, are all visible at varying distance in the passageways—like bright planets whose orbits are not travelling but whose surfaces are never still.

The silence between and after Odamura's playing is no absence at all. Just as the screens appear to spawn rather than spurn the surrounding darkness, Liza Lim's temperamental string songs arrange themselves out of silence. Her music is a summons and the performance is a bewitching drama of player, instrument and invisible antagonists. The fingers of the player and the strings of the koto are ears as well as tongues.

Listen to the koto and remember the falsely deaf moment which precedes a scratch at the door, the quickening inside a shell, the gasp beneath a bolted lid, and realise there was never any such thing as silence.

Judith Wright's projections are vivid with arousal. Submerged flesh, silk flesh, fruit flesh, exhaling flesh, connecting flesh and conspiring, fleshless shadow. Bamboo, stone, flame, water, air, grease and suds graft in the eye's fingers like touch memories.

The effect travels further than the erotic but it's not unlike feeling the heartbeat of a lover's note, attuning to the race of nib-scratch with the eye, and tasting sex salt at the first word of touch.

I want to believe

Linda Carroli

Sci-Art

Curated by Paul Brown
Queensland Science Centre
September 8 - 19, MAAP

Strange and interesting things seem to happen when art and science meet: when artists explore scientific or technological processes, theories and principles or when scientific work has artistic outcomes. Curated by Paul Brown as part of his one year residency at the Queensland Science Centre, *Sci-Art* presents 18 works in

which the disciplinary boundaries of science and art are crossed. As the Centre's Director, Graeme Potter, explained in his opening address, these disciplines are both similar and different, "science and art are views of the world from different windows."

And what vistas, perhaps even insights, result. David Malin's *Astronomical Photos* were developed using a complex photochemical process. Shot at the Australian Observatory telescope at Siding Spring Mountain, these images provide rare and dramatic forays into the cosmos and glimpses of extraterrestrial phenomena.

More intimate views can be found in the works of Isabelle Delmotte and Justine Cooper. Delmotte's *Epileptograph: the internal journey* is a visual study of epileptic seizure. The aim of these 3D animation stills is to provide a description of the return to consciousness following a seizure. In these works lie the subjective traces of trauma and shock emerging through the in-between experiences of a body recalled at a recuperative moment. For Cooper's video *Rapt* and accompanying sculptural work, images of the artist's body have been produced in axial slices using medical imaging technology which maps the body's water content. *Rapt* composes a virtual body from these scans which then dissolves. In the 3D, scans of the head are placed on sheets of glass, arranged as a transparent bust.

In a scientific context, these images are read for the specific data they contain or as achievements of technology. And certainly medical technology does not seek to glean subjective experiences such as Delmotte's. As artworks, our readings might be different as they impart critical perspectives from which we can reflect on our corporeality, through the extremes of interiority and exteriority, pleasure and pain, and shifting states of consciousness and meaning.

We are reminded again of acts of seeing in Adam Donovan's *R.O.Y.G.B.I.V.* These frail eye pieces hook around the head as a prosthetic. The works are both delicate and clumsy, past and future with their frantic wiring, bulky lenses and graceful curves. In seemingly intentional and ironic curating, Donovan's optical equipment is situated next to Malin's majestic photographs, suggesting the primacy of sight and the capacity of vision technologies to transport things closer to us.

Sci-Art also featured a diverse range of interactive works including installations and CD-ROM. Through such works science and technology become user-friendly and the viewer becomes integral to the work. With Troy Innocent's *Interactive Soundform* users manipulated and composed sound by clicking and dragging icons around the screen. Tracey Benson's ongoing project *Big Banana Time Inc.* addresses aspects of tourist culture in a postcolonial framework. In *Frames and Borders*, located in the kids corner of the Science Centre, you can relax in the video lounge and take a virtual tour through Paradise and perhaps acquire a taste for the 'big things' Queensland has to offer.

UK artist Simon Biggs visited Brisbane earlier this year and spoke about his interactive CD *The Great Wall of China*, a limited edition commercial release artwork. Biggs has programmed "interactive generative grammars" which rearrange the text of the Kafka story to create a dynamic and responsive interface comprising changing text, sound and images. This work is highly tactile with images of hands and the Great Wall's surfaces: the user has a sense of feeling their way along its length. An online version of this and other of Biggs' works can be found at www.easynet.co.uk/simonbiggs.

Roy Stringer takes us on a journey through inexplicable paranormal phenomena in the interactive multimedia CD *Of Monsters and Miracles* produced to accompany an exhibition of the same name. Examples include crop circles and the spoon-bending mind power of Uri Geller. In a segment about Circle Makers, we meet people who make 'fake' crop circles in order to attract the 'real' paranormal circle makers. It is in this 'weird phenomenon' that we might experience some of the limits of science, as a mode of comprehension.

It's perhaps a relief that so much remains unexplained and open to conjecture. However, scientists tend to take the skeptic's route in the absence of 'objective' findings, although claims to 'new science' seem less restrained. Both art and science are 'partial knowledges' which deal in abstracts and as disciplines they mediate the world through specific methodologies. *Sci-Art* demonstrates that art and science, as cultural discourses, can create moments of exchange, negotiation and invention.

It's the fridge calling

Greg Hooper

Sci-Art 99

Queensland Science Centre

September 8 - 19, MAAP

Spiraling down the search tree we go Asia Pacific Triennial (APT3), Multimedia Art Asia Pacific 99 (MAAP99) then *Sci-Art 99*, "an exhibition of work by artists who are using scientific ideas or methodologies and by scientists who are creating visual artefacts as a part of their work." *Sci-Art 99* is curated by Paul Brown, the only person I've met with a domain name: paul-brown.com. Of course soon everything will have a domain name. Then the fridge can tell us there's a rotten tomato stuck in the frost at the back. A future of inescapable home truths. The phone will ring "Who is it?" "It's the fridge."

Sci-Art 99 has both static and dynamic works, works to engage with, works to look at and works that you'd love to play with but can't. In this last category are Adam Donovan's refugee prostheses from a Jules Verne novel, an update and improvement of experiments in perception that invert the visual field using prisms. Donovan's work improves on this by extending perception rather than just changing it. Can our brain cope with being able to see forwards and backwards at the same time? We can't use the pieces to find out, but I wish we could.

Justine Cooper has bartered her skills to gain access to MRI medical imaging equipment. Her meditative video animates various transverse slices through her body, as in the Visible Human project (www.nlm.nih.gov/research/visible/visible_human.html). Another work shows a set of horizontal sections through the head imprinted onto a stack of glass plates. We can see that the inside of the head is represented, but we can't get to the representations. There's an element of frustration here that medical imaging was designed to relieve.

Rodney Berry and Troy Innocent both produced Artificial-life pieces, works that simulate evolutionary processes. In Berry's work, cubes containing pitch sequences wander above a grid, eat rhythms and occasionally have sex. Recombinations occur, progeny develop, but significant structure does not emerge. The piece is fairly joyless, and I'd give this life a C-minus rather than an A, but simulated lifeforms/environments have a lot of

potential and this is early days. Troy Innocent's work is simpler, game-like and more fun. The A-lives have a bit of personality, they're cute little biomorphs that make sounds when you put them on stage. They have funky sex lives. In our evolution we have developed to recognise, remember, and attach emotions to certain types of appearances. By making the constituent units of his simulation recognisable and cute, Innocent exploits our evolutionary history to show us his.

Here's a question. The answer reveals your personality and will be used against you by any marketing company I can sell it to. What's better, standing up listening to music on headphones in a gallery, or listening to music at home? If you answered "headphones at the gallery" then the CDROMs are for you. I can't get into terminal-based work in a gallery setting. Some of the work was glitchy, some was interesting, some was like a multimedia encyclopedia of weird facts and bad philosophy.

Of the other works I found David Malik's astronomical photographs quite beautiful. They can only exist within a history of science, one endpoint to the labour of thousands of people over hundreds of years. In other static images we get a rare insider's view from Isabelle Delmotte's stills from a program exploring her experiences returning to consciousness after epileptic seizures.

Butterflies form the centre of two works, a display from the Mount Glorious Biological Centre and a video by Alex Gillespie and Kathryn Brazier. This work is akin to D'Arcy Thompson's *On Growth and Form* published earlier this century.

Mary Lou Pavlovic creates her own space with a piece I'd like to see in a commercial photocopying centre or library. Mari Velonaki's piece is voyeuristic but not completely successful for me, a sense of intimacy (shame/intrigue?) is not easy to create in a gallery. Tracy Benson puts you into the space of her work courtesy of chroma-keying. Unfortunately the piece was not working so no trip to the country for me.

Most of the work in *Sci-Art 99* could only be produced at this end of history. Works like the astronomical photographs, the medical images, the A-life programs, and the perceptual extensions require a history of science to exist. Many of the works are suited to a more personal setting or use

than the gallery can offer. CDROMs in the home, streaming video etc. And for me, I'd love to see Donovan's devices for perceptual extension in plastic and sold over the net.

Life beyond Capture

Barbara Bolt

Screen_Imag(in)ings:

Towards a Digital Aesthetic Conference

A Screen_Image Event

(http://artweb.imago.com.au/screen_image)

University of the Sunshine Coast

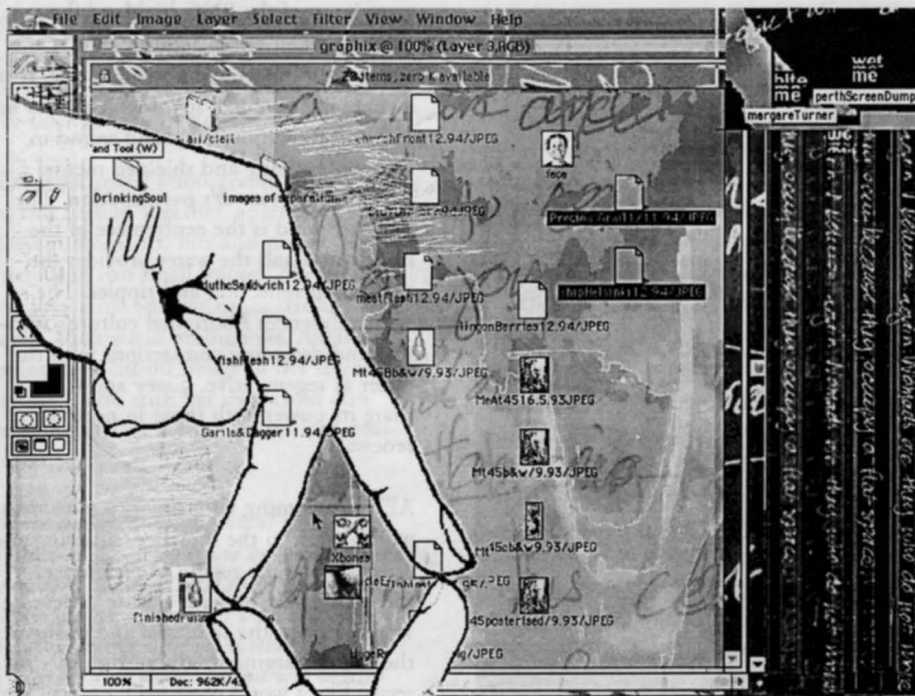
September 8, MAAP

Screen_Image, an exhibition currently on show at the University of the Sunshine Coast (till October 10), was developed around the idea of the screen dump or screen capture. At its simplest, the screen dump 'captures' everything on the interface and saves it as a file. Using this feature of the computer, the artists have created a series of complex images that work with and manipulate the potential of the 'screen dump'.

On the screen, the image is 'alive', still open to endless possibilities for manipulation. The print-out of a screen dump, on the other hand, bears resemblance to a 'film still,' one frame, frozen in time, taken and presented as a work away from the context of the film. Both the film still and the screen dump have a life beyond the frame/capture we are viewing.

However, even in the printed form, there is a key difference between the film still and the screen dump. Whereas the film still betrays no trace of its source, the screen dump does. In the 'capture' all the traces of the interface—the cursor, the desktop—are maintained and become part of the work. These features 'frame' the work and become integral to a reading of it. Thus Margaret Turner's *fingers* is built around and works with the structure of her computer's interface—the multiple files through which she cycled, the tool bars and layers of Photoshop. Her inclusion of the imported Yellow Pages slogan 'let your fingers do the walking', refers back to the most erotic tool of the Photoshop repertoire, the smudge tool.

But what of life beyond the capture? The exhibition suggested a momentary closure, but as Margaret Turner points out, "the undo command can suspend forever the closure of a work. No decision need ever be final." What we saw on the walls of the gallery was a moment, a snapshot if you



Margaret Turner's *fingers*

like. Nevertheless, in selecting a particular 'screen dump', decisions and judgements were made. Why this moment and not that? How can we talk about this 'stuff'? On what basis do we give value to it? How is our collective experience of aesthetics and space restructured by the communicational architecture of screen-based imagery? My sense in looking at the work in the exhibition is that many of the artists hadn't thought these question through. It appeared that many were using the same criteria they would use if they were exhibiting a drawing, a painting, a print or a photograph. It just happened to be framed by the interface. It raised the question: is there a distinctly digital aesthetic, and if so how do we begin to define it and work with it?

In her paper "Distinctly Digital" Turner suggested that digital aesthetics are not just about artwork, but about the place of the digital in all areas of our lives. She argued "the digital is a place where individuals are seeking to create new structures with which to navigate the whirlpools of change."

The new structures or 'syntax' (undo, redo, zoom, resolution, link, node and distributed structure) Turner identified in her paper have been borrowed directly from the digital realm and are put to use in a pragmatic and enabling way. Thus taking the analogy of the undo and redo commands, she suggests that as humans we should recognize that "we keep revisiting the stage of our own dramas, repeat-

ing our mistakes, and... (that we) should learn to reuse or redo, rather than flee or panic." While at the global level we may be "an insignificant pixel in a huge, moving, uncoordinated and undirected, interactive movie...there is also the zoom tool." She suggests "at the level of the detail of our lives, that is also where the action is." This emphasis on a micro-politics is further supported by her discussion on connectivity and the network as a distributed system. Turner claims:

Our lives, like digital stories on the web, appear to drift or meander between nodes of attraction. The meaning is not given to us but is ours to collect and construct following a path of our own making. It is mercurial and evanescent, a playful space akin to an improvisatory performance involving the whole world. And we all end up in different places.

In the tradition of aesthetics, value has been accorded in terms of 'taste.' For Turner aesthetics can no longer be framed in terms of taste, but rather in terms of its resonance with the conditions of living and vice versa. In this rethinking, questions of connectivity and affinity become central to the value of a work, as do questions of forgiveness. While the consequences of action in real life may be unforgiving, in the virtual world there is always the possibility of "reprieve in the form of the undo command." Would that life could be so forgiving?

Screen_Image was initiated by the techno-

reading group *Terminus* and was first exhibited at PICA in Perth in February 1999. Thanks to Margaret Turner for allowing me access to the text of "Distinctly Digital."

Stop! Reflect...

Linda Carroli

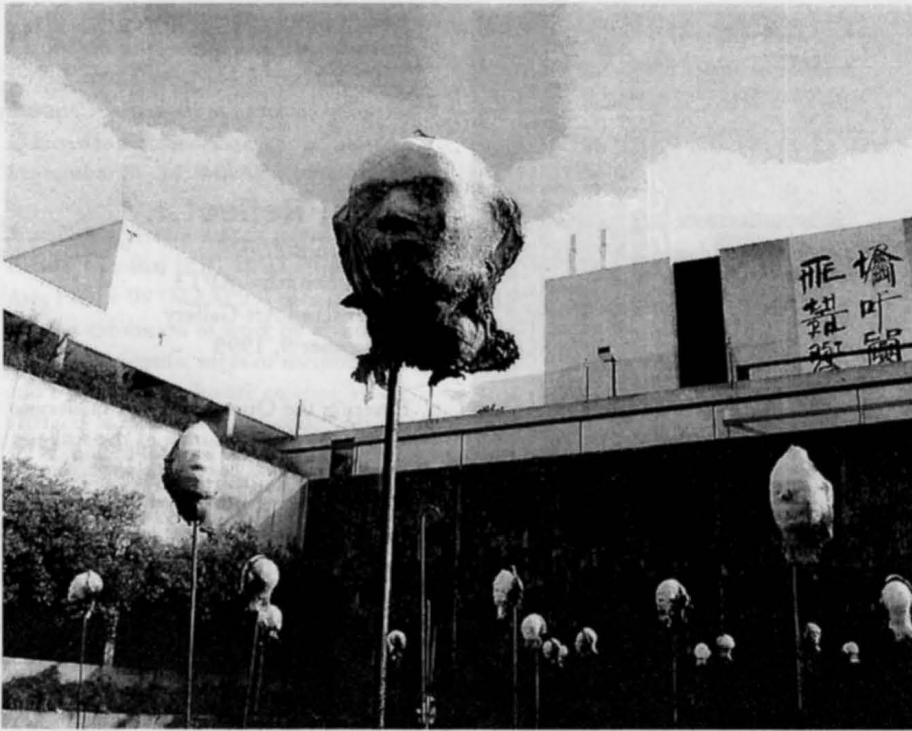
Media Launch—APT3
Queensland Art Gallery
September 9, 1999

Entering the Queensland Art Gallery to attend the media launch of the Asia-Pacific Triennial has an air of occasion about it. Two gigantic red inflatable pillars, *Hao Bau*, a Chinese totem by Sang Ye and Geramie Barmé frame the entrance and a bamboo bridge arches over the watermall. *Crossing the Bridge* by Cai Guo Qiang provides gentle passage which connects across time, culture and place.

Members of the press are herded into an outside courtyard, to listen to welcoming addresses from QAG Director, Doug Hall, Chair of the Board of Trustees, Wayne Goss, and Minister for the Arts, Matt Foley. Scattered throughout the courtyard are Michel Tuffery and Patrice Kaikilekofe's 'povi' (bulls) made of corned beef cans. Virginia Baxter remarks that she feels like she's part of a muster, caught up in this tight crowd.

Expressions of Asia-Pacific regionalism ensue: building bridges, creating links, diversity, dialogue, exploration, analysis...East Timor. The occurrences in East Timor haunt this event and each speaker ensures its tragedy is profoundly felt. Concluding his speech, Foley calls for "hope, life and peace in East Timor."

Hovering in the background during the speeches was a ghostly figure wearing the chicken skin costume from Mella Jaarsma's *Hi Inlander*. These works, coupled with performances involving cooking and eating, stem from the artist's concerns about colonisation, cultural difference and conflict in Indonesia. Like veils, the skins cover the body and head with an opening for the eyes. Despite the preliminary media coverage which should have prepared me, they take me by surprise, and I have to look twice to comprehend. This comprehension takes the form of both curiosity and repulsion. Abject encounters with the costumes—a manifestation of radical strangeness—are prompting questions about what it means to walk around in someone else's skin and what inhibits



Dadang Christanto, *Api di bulan Mei 1998* (Fire in May 1998) 1998-99, installation

or prohibits cross-cultural congress.

This is the third and perhaps final APT and its theme is "Beyond the Future." Perhaps it's an indication that the intercultural and multicultural is the way of the future. It's not so much about time but about the options and changes which might be encountered or the thresholds which might be crossed. However, as I took my first sweep around the gallery, I observed that much of this work was addressing very current issues and concerns: perhaps grounded in a sense that change was imminent, that the implications of change (and change itself) are ongoing.

Interestingly, in a number of works—I found 4—artists had constructed intimate spaces of solitude, peace and healing. Bathed in red light, Rummana Hussain's installation, *A space for healing*, provides a moment for reflection. A murmuring soundtrack—perhaps prayer—rolls around the room while various rusty old hand tools are arranged on its walls suggesting the flow and fall of Arabic script. Brocade hospital stretchers and equipment are on the floor. The artist draws on her experience of illness and Sufism, of marginalisation and secular violence in India to construct this healing space, both medical and spiritual, both hospital and shrine. It seems to establish a very personal site of restoration—despite the ravages of both sickness and fundamentalism—for the reconnection of spirit and body.

Surasi Kusolwong wishes us *Have a nice day* (Brisbane). Interviewed by the QAG's Rhana Devenport, the artist explains he has recreated a comfortable terrace respite, complete with fish pond, cushions and mats. He invites us to stop and enjoy the serenity of this private space. Are you really in such a hurry? Children are invited to draw pictures of the fish. The outside-in structure is a welcoming and ambient interruption to the smooth interior of the gallery, confounding notions of public and private space and protocol. Sit. Think. Meet. Talk. Draw. Enjoy.

Or you could participate in Lee Mingwei's *Letter Writing Project*. The artist has provided three letter writing stations made of wood and translucent glass and invites us to take our place (standing, sitting or kneeling) at desks and write those letters we always intended to. The letters remain in the booths and the audience are invited to read and share the poignant contents of those which are unsealed. Writing is from the heart. Writing is like weeping, an outpouring and cleansing of personal pain and loss. It's an opportunity to clear your conscience of regret for past mistakes, expiate grief or make a plea for a troubled world, like the one envelope addressed to "all of us" and the single imploring word "peace" carefully written on the page inside.

Six at a time, we are invited to experience Karen Casey's *Dream Chamber*. Produced with Tim Cole, this work provides a 6 minute meditation featuring an ephemeral

symphony of the PNG highland flute, a rippling water pond, lighting effects and images reminiscent of a rock surface. It is a changing cave-like space which relies on soft and slow movement and sound to form an enticing and shielded mental space for the viewer's participation. The pebbled pond is the centrepiece of the installation and the water provides the surface for reflection and ripples. The work references Aboriginal culture's spiritual and dreaming connections with the water as regenerative. Casey and Cole share its power with those in need of renewal.

APT3 is teeming with urgency as so many works speak to the injustice, suffering and repression in the region. As references to the theme "Beyond the Future", these works disrupt the temporal and change the tempo, urging us all to Stop! In what seems like a world gone mad, compelling us to act constantly, it's easy to forget that we also need stillness, that we need to pause. Many of these works remind us, drawing us into tranquil and safe havens so that we might act again with renewed compassion and conviction, hope and vigour.

To touch memory

Maryanne Lynch interviews Amanda Heng

APT Performances/Talks

Queensland Art Gallery, September 9

In 1993 the Singapore Government passed a law forbidding the practice of performance art without a licence. This licence cost \$10,000, far beyond most artists' reach, so new terms of self-description were found to avoid the cost.

Amanda Heng is describing to me one aspect of the culture in which she practises her work as we stand in front of *Narrating bodies*, her installation of photographs, mirrors and manipulated objects. Later I will see her standing in various stages of undress and at different points in relation to the work; for one long period with a pair of red synthetic women's underpants on her head, covering her face, glasses neatly placed over them, staring blindly at a mirror.

My project is to understand who I am. I reconstruct memories, and re-present them. As a Singaporean of Chinese descent, I'm marked by two cultures, East and West, and am struggling to reconcile myself. People say we're not affected by colonial rule, but after

150 years of it how can we not be? On the other hand there is much that is Chinese. Including, perhaps, this official response to the same struggle in a broader context.

There are many photographs of her mother and herself: together, apart, past lives, present moments, bits and pieces. Including two small frames, one containing grey curls and the other strong black locks, their status ambiguous. Amanda points to a cut-off image of her seated mother's arm with her own child arm pressing against it from an upright position.

Touch has been an important part of my search. In Chinese culture body contact is very rare. We don't talk about it either. There are no words for 'I love you.' When I began working with my mother in 1995, one of the first things we did was to strip naked and embrace each other. I want to find these unsaid/undone things.

Amanda has worked as a performance artist for several years, and before that as a printmaker. In recent years she has pursued a photographic study of her relationship with her mother, which began when her mother asked her to organise her funeral portrait. (In Chinese culture such a portrait is displayed at the funeral of the deceased and, like the purchasing of graves in Australia, people prepare themselves for their death well before the event.) From this beginning Amanda and her mother have discovered new dimensions to their relationship and, for the artist, new responses to who she is.

Part of my questioning has been to go back to my mother. 'Mother' is a fundamental beginning. To go back to her is reconciling myself. But it involves her receiving me, my touch. At first she couldn't. She was brought up in China and has different ways. But now we make work without me needing to discuss or explain its rationale. She trusts what I'm doing. In turn I've discovered my assumptions about my mother and about me as a daughter, and about each of us as a person.

This emphasis on touch is extended into the body as a whole. As with some traditions of performance art (and traces of influences are evident), the body is a site of interrogation for Amanda Heng. She seems to hold two views.

The body, whether you're Eastern or Western, is there. (And...) I want to focus on the body as a site for cultural markings—

how changes in the cultural context are reflected in the body.

The obvious cultural markers, such as the cheongsam glimpsed in several of the images, is not where I see this latter intention. Instead it's in the assemblage of fragmented images, and their installation in the style of a formal portrait gallery where the prepared passage of the eye creates surprising resonances between images. A girl's schooldress becomes a mother's print apron; permed hair vs bob; two pairs of feet. Inheritance becomes concrete but the symmetries only show up the questions I begin to ask myself about what forms each of us, and what we share as well as what distinguishes us.

The beautiful part is discovering these questions. I don't think answers are so important.

Postscript: After talking to Amanda Heng, I wandered up to a talk by Katsushige Nakahashi in front of his crashed kamikaze installation. Again here was an artist asking questions about the past, and about his relationship with a parent, in order to understand the present. People listened quietly and respectfully; several older Anglo-Australian women nodding their heads in agreement as Katsushige spoke of the ambivalent legacy of war. Then he described his father as a young man, innocently marvelling at the beautiful pinks and purples and blues of the sky as he watched the bomb drop on Nagasaki.

Missile: Neon Urlaub Grisha Dolgoplov

Increasingly the dividing line between online commerce and satire is falling apart. It would seem that high bidding on unborn babies and fresh kidney scams on eBay, along with being jeffed.com are the future of online art. It is becoming more difficult than ever to discern the difference between the real and the hyper-reallyfunny. *Neon Urlaub* is a multimedia conceptual installation artwork that takes the piss but does so in a wonderfully subtle way.

"Welcome to *Neon Urlaub*, the world's largest, best chain travel agency. Coming soon: the newest war zones, the most exotic places, the most brutal and exciting adventures!" If I surfed in looking for a holiday package I would be hooked.

You have a choice of 4 luxury destinations: a tour of the Balkan Peninsula War Zone Package or an Expedition to the War Front in the Taiwan Strait or 6 star holiday package on a newly discovered island or a possibility to catch up with an Historic Event and go Back to Hong Kong 1997!

The concept is more than a little like the theme park recreations of historic events but with a savage twist: Sovereign Hill meets skirmish and packaged by the degenerate utopia of Disneyland. This is a cut and paste of atrocity, commerce and morbid fascination (can there be any other?) that transforms horror into being there 'live.' There are holidays to be had watching "the Chinese Communist Suchoi Su-27s play cat-and-mouse with US F-18s" over the Taiwan Strait. Or using state-of-the-art technology to travel back to Hong Kong 1997 to "experience once again or for the first time the unfathomable historic focus of mixed feelings. To be able to boast that 'I too was there'." Clearly, the difference between the fake and the copy, between the real and the hyperreal, between the solemn and the spectacular is degenerating into the simple urgency of buying up tickets to experience these events.

The ad-copy for these extreme tours is without extreme hyperbole and this makes it all the more effective. "*Neon Urlaub* will bring you to the front to experience the thrill of being under a hail of bullets and will stimulate your will to live."

My favourite was the Balkan Tour. To the questions "were you ever baffled by the confused state of war in the Balkans? Have you ever felt depressed because of the lack of excitement in an indifferent cold society?" I could only chant back, "Yes! Yes" as I pulled out my credit card. It was only afterwards that I read the disclaimer: "*Neon Urlaub's* contents are wholly fabricated and have no commercial purposes. During the implementation of the project and exhibition, should its contents create any association with commercial gain in the minds of the public or consumers, it shall be their own responsibility."

I only wish that all the stuff I paid for online was not my responsibility but a joke. Check this site out. Very tragic-funny.

www.icf.de/neonurlaub

The visual-aural mix

Richard Wilding

transmisi, Elision

Tennyson Power Station

September 10, APT3

A Friday night with the promise of rain and the Tennyson Power Station loomed against the night sky like an imposing backdrop from some Fritz Lang film. I wasn't quite prepared for the sheer scale of the building. It's one of those brown brick art deco remnants which dot the landscape of Brisbane but its position on a seldom visited stretch of the river keeps it generally out of sight. The stage for *transmisi*, performed by the Elision new music ensemble, was the old Boiler Room. The huge boilers and any attendant machinery had been removed leaving a cavernous post-industrial space of stressed concrete and steel girders. The creative team of Australian composer Richard Barrett, Indonesian video and installation artist Heri Dono, with the musicians of Elision and puppeteers Lynne Kent and Marc Richards, had worked for two weeks beforehand to create a work that both inhabited and interacted with the dimensions and acoustics of this imposing space.

"Transmisi" is a colonial Indonesian transformation of the Dutch word for 'transmission'. Within the manifesto of the performance project it means "the transmission of information, ideas, traditions (between cultures, but also within them); also the adaptations, distortions, misinterpretations which accompany it—imagined not as obstacles but as the work itself." In the mix of visual and aural streams neither form took precedence nor could one be seen as accompanying the other. Rather elements could be in relative conflict or harmony as are the various transmissions and discourses of (cross-)cultural production. Ultimately *transmisi* was not about any one thing—it was entirely up to each member of the audience to interpret the various elements according to their own experience.

Entering the Boiler Room I found myself on a balcony looking over the performance space, crisscrossed with shallow channels of water flanked by burning tea candles. More tea candles accompanied a matrix of small tubs of water arranged around the concrete floor of the room.

The musicians and the electronic centre of the performance were grouped together while three screens—two for shadow puppets and one for computer video projection—were placed at the other end of the room facing the audience. Around the screens were large grotesque Indonesian-style puppets with toothy grimaces. Perhaps my only criticism of the event is that many of the visual elements, though large, were distant and often obstructed by the room's central supporting pillars, but then the place wasn't built with an audience in mind.

The music consisted mainly of atonal sound-textures created as the performers interacted and improvised with each other, mixed with live and pre-recorded electronic elements. The range of sound sources was diverse including clarinets, saxophones, bamboo and metal percussion, sampled sounds and electric guitar. Manipulations of guitar sounds formed the core of the piece with the performer, Daryl Buckley, often using pitch shift and electronic bow effects to create ear-splitting howls that set the entire place resonating. Added to this were transformations of guitar sounds by composer Richard Barrett who often used granular synthesis to achieve textures which ranged from the subsonic through to high sandpapery pitches. The electronic elements leapt from wall to wall diffused throughout the space by sound designer and engineer Michael Hewes via an array of speakers around the room. Hewes ability to 'play the room' by moving elements around, taking advantage of the cavernous resonances while managing to keep them clearly defined, helped create a dynamic and immersive environment. The music seemed to benefit greatly from time spent exploiting the acoustic properties of the site.

Heri Dono's intriguing visual design included video, puppetry and fire/water installations. All the elements seemed to be drawn from Indonesian cultural sources. The video offered animated cycles of traditional symbols often layered over footage of political figures perhaps as a comment on the current climate in the country. The puppets and Wayang-style shadow play seemed to divide into provocative male and female figures identifiable through genital representation. While I was unable to interpret any particular narrative thread in

their movements, the rhythms of the different visual elements were often paralysed by changes in the music. Certainly the visual and sonic streams intersected at the end of the piece when the puppeteers moved throughout the room activating small tin boats with flame from the tea candles and setting them afloat. These tin boats are manufactured in only one village on the island of Java. Their tiny guns produce a clacking sound when stimulated by the heat of a flame. As the visuals and music reached their end the room was filled with the susurrant of these little boats—a perfect finish to an extremely engaging performance.

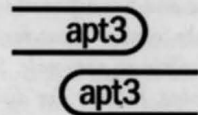
It seems a shame that these performances are open only to APT3 conference delegates as I think this work could have attracted a wider audience. So many of the elements of *transmisi* worked together to engage the spectator and ignite that important spark of excitement. Audience limitations of the venue aside, Elision have once again demonstrated that new music and art are exciting—hopefully APT3 will continue to give us more of the same.

Next edition will appear Thursday September 16.

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@timearts.com



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Australia Council, the federal
government's arts funding and
advisory body.