

Volume 3 **FREE**

APT3 Exhibition & issues

Richard Grayson

Catriona Moore & Jo Holder

Peter Anderson

Masato Nakamura

Lee Wen

Tatsuo Miyajima

Li Yangbin

Sang Ye & Geremie Barmé

Kim Young-Jin

Kids' APT3

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A COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

MAAP

adapted:

sound event

Collapsing

Geographies

MISSILE:

Amechan

Rick Vermey &

Feng Mengbo

MISSILE:

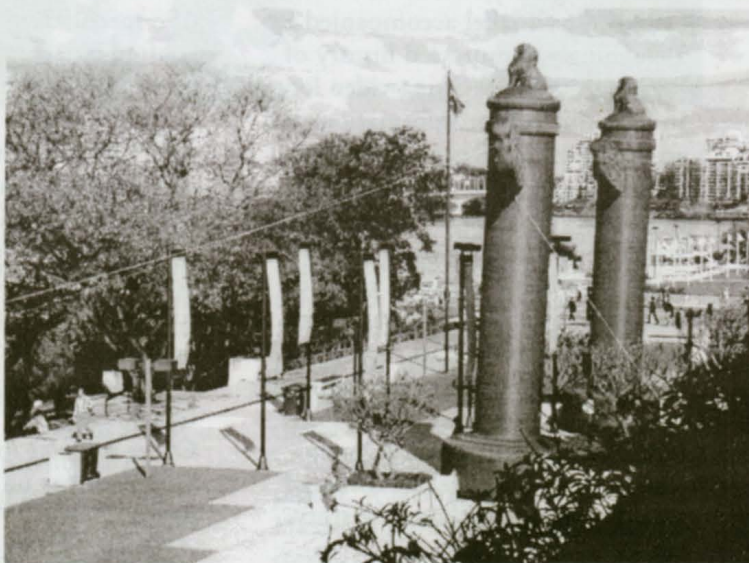
Failure of

Duchamp...

MISSILE:

bitBang

Launch Sites



Sang Ye and Geremie Barmé *Hua Biao, A Chinese Totem*

Welcome to the last of three editions of RealTime @ MAAP and the Asia Pacific Triennial (APT3). This edition provides overviews of the APT3 exhibition, responses to specific works and more on MAAP events and websites. Both events have proven rich experiences, offering great gallery experiences—visual, aural and tactile—and online adventures, workshops, performances, forums and conferences. The number of artists attending from the Asia Pacific region has been considerable, the sense of occasion palpable and the opportunities for cross cultural interaction many, though not always as open as desired or as time or language permits. Some of our writers and not a few artists have declared the APT3 conference a frustrating affair (more of that in our bi-monthly *RealTime*) but also as indicative of the

challenges deeply inherent in APT3's ambitions. Both Richard Grayson and Peter Anderson comment on the directions taken in the evolution of APT across the decade (including this year the breaking down of national representations through the *Crossing the Borders* category and the success of *Kids' APT3*) and the issues likely to emerge in its next manifestation. As one gallery director commented, APT3 and MAAP feel at times like they are beyond criticism because of our collective hope for Asian-Pacific relationships to develop steadily and positively (APT is seen "as much an

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RealTime

MAAP www.maap.org.au/

Asia Pacific Triennial www.ap3.net

RealTime www.rtimearts.com/~opencity/

act of will or imagination as a thing in itself", writes Richard Grayson). We all tread carefully. However, political events in East Timor heightened expectations as to what APT3 could be. As Catriona Moore and Jo Holder phrase it: "...while APT is not APEC, it is an important state agency. This APT is long on artistic creativity, but short on political imagination." The Asia Pacific Triennial has achieved much in its first decade, impressing with its selection of artists and the opportunities to connect. MAAP, in only its second year, is already a significant showcase and meeting point for new media artists, and is beginning to reach a wider public—*RealTime* has a role to play in this through our special print and online editions. Our thanks to the Brisbane writers who joined us to respond to MAAP 99 and APT3, and to everyone who made our visit the pleasure it has been.

Going glocal

Jo Holder and
Catriona Moore
APT 3: Beyond the Future,
Queensland Art Gallery

A zeppelin anchored at the portals of the art gallery is now a ubiquitous art hieroglyph, announcing and summarising the exhibition's theme. These airy creations are provenanced to Kids Kastle, Claes Oldenburg and *King Kong*, with a footnote to the exhortatory plaster tympanums and colonnades of 19th century Universal Exhibitions. The imaginary entry-point of APT3: Beyond the Future is *Hua Biao*, *A Chinese Totem*. This pair of inflatable red pillars is modelled on those guarding the entrance to the Forbidden City, facing Tiananmen Square. Shaped in the form of a dagger-axe, with guard-dogs atop, the originals have witnessed imperial comings and goings over 500 years. Originally direction markers for marching armies, these signs became an architectural fixture to remind the emperor of the responsibilities of state, and later became a symbol of a new secular empire. Today it

remains a debased yet still tradeable statist symbol of plump new China. Other recent artistic inflations like Maria Kozic's bouncy *Blue Boy* aloft for Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art and Choi Jeong Hwa's *Super Flower* for APT2 certainly had more in common with the decorative humanism of these world art events and with QAG's municipal modern architecture.

What makes Sang Ye and Geremie Barmé's *Hua Biao* more rewarding than a clever gag is not only its send-up of pop triumphalism, but its scholarly archival component inside the gallery, which works as an extended wall-label accompanied by a laughingly compressed history of twentieth-century China video loop. In fact, this 'visitor information' and accompanying jolly red behemoth carries much of the APT's intellectual work. *Hua Biao* is the APT's emblem of that curious re-separation of form and content, spectacle and information that characterises many contemporary art events. Without the history we are left with spectacle. As the Warlpiri APT participant Michael Nelson Jagamara has declared of his gelato-coloured painting-signs, "without the story, the work is nothing."

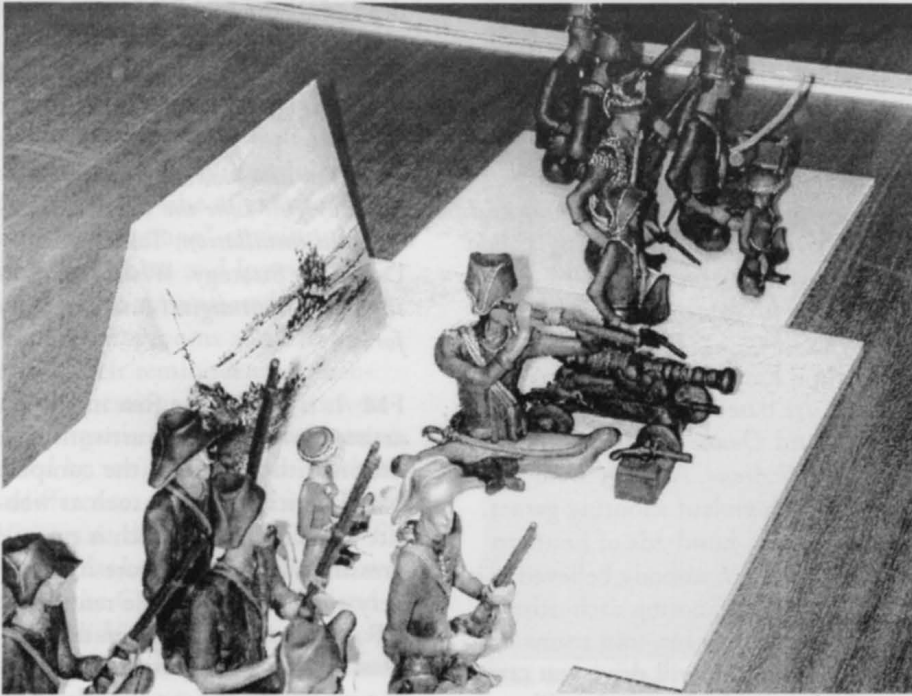
The APT's democratic tenor provides artists with rich critical contrasts and entertaining encounters: Jun-Jieh Wang's global-life travel agency *Neon Urlaub* advertises tours from Hong Kong to Balkan war zones while, in a similar darkly comic vein, Tatsuo Miyajima's *Running Time* collides and re-circulates unseen dodgem cars illuminated with LED count-down numbers. Heisenberg and Einstein are brought together in one small, darkened, battery-powered technology clinic, and theories of time and space are cut to artistic cloth. At the art cornucopia a spectator can move from the macro to the micro in the space of a few metres, for across the court Alfredo and Isabel Aquiliza's *Project Be-longing #2* is a museum installation of everything you never thought you wanted to know about the ethnography of Brisbane's

Philipino community, courtesy of the artists' cousins.

Not all works are equally favoured in this context. Easily overlooked though poor positioning, Tissa de Alwis's *Yellow Set*, *Blue Set*, *Green Set* of plasticine armies, was a marvel of this genre. While colonial museology demanded instructive 'types' representative of caste, class and occupation, these quaint Lilliputians, however, make an intimate connection between the artist's studio and nearby Sri-Lankan battlefields. The history of the Universal Exhibition is ironically repeated, with an assortment of mechanical wonders, scientific speculations, fine art and handcrafted objects assembled under the imaginary crystal palace of art.

APT3 artists show a renewed concern for globalisation and cultural commodification (the aphorism "glocal" was frequently invoked). Some directly address this issue, such as Vong Phaophanit's *Untitled* neon, which renders Laotian script sculptural (to non-Laotian eyes) but remains resistant and untranslated. Other projects maintain built-in 'ceci n'est pas un empty spectacle' devices. *Tulana Mahu* (*Shrine to Abundance*), the cargo container contributed by the Tahiono Arts Collective from Niue, and work performed over several days by Lawrence Purtang and artists from New Ireland province were good examples of art forcing the spectator to see them in their own terms. Curator Michael Mel's great throw-away line when introducing the work, "I've just got a few house-keeping points to make," neatly positioned potent tradition against grey clichés.

That is not to say that artworks should not look spectacular. *Bilong ol Meri* (literally translated as "belonging to the women") is a continuous woven bilum by Ruth Sari and the Aketauka Sori Mama group from the outskirts of Goroka. It was suspended upside-down, halfway up a dark and narrow disabled access ramp. There was no opportunity for close viewing. This collaborative



Tissa de Alwis *Blue set* 1996-99

work needed a spectacular hang to do justice to the complex issues of traditional creativity, women's status in PNG society and culture, and the topical question of cultural/linguistic diversity within national unity which the work seeks to both convey and symbolise. Museum architecture has always privileged Big Things over Big Concepts.

Artists in APT3 are cautiously re-writing the Universal Exhibition's legacy of an idealist (though historically imperialist) space of communication across cultures. Are there many conversations? The established Central Desert and Yogyakarta workshops, Utopia Batik and Brahma Tirta Sari Studio, provided an exemplary instance of regional dialogue based on specialist technical knowledge. More importantly, the resulting exquisite (though again badly-lit) collaborative batiks were enabled because both workshops recognised conceptual parallels. As Anmatyerr artist Gloria Angal explains in the exhibition catalogue, "Their *caps* [copper stamps] have Law, and they have Law, in the same way that Aboriginal people have Law." Both workshops are motivated to continue their longstanding collaboration through a mutual desire to maintain tradition and wider cultural respect.

Rummana Hussain's hospital-mosque room also seeks an ethics of communication across ethnic, cultural and religious divides. *A space for healing*, Hussain's last project before her death, is "a metaphoric healing space that is a 'hospital' for the body and a 'mosque' for the soul," as Gulammohammed Shiekh puts it. A leading artist-activist, Hussain's fight against fundamentalism has inspired many. A convivial yet equally contemplative meeting space is provided by Sonabai, an artist from the Rajwar community of Sarguja, Bihar who generously recreates her everyday cosmology.

Crossing Borders is a new and welcome curatorial category in this APT, a device to break down 'national' presentations. This timely inclusion of artists living and working outside their country of origin opens the field to inclusions such as New York-based Shahzia Sikander, whose sensual, delicately-layered derivations from miniature-painting would not be easily shown in her home country of Pakistan. A more literal crossing is the popular bamboo bridge designed by US-based Chinese artist Cai Guo Qiang. *Bridge Crossing* provides a passage across the gallery watercourse folly and metaphorically bridges anything the participant imagines.

The communication theme has its lighter side in the interactive-intensive Kids' APT section (thronged by all ages). Slow down. Learn New English Calligraphy with Xu Bing. Build your own model bridge. Sketch goldfish in Surasi Kusolwong's studio-lounge redolent of ancient Ayutthaya. Fill out a questionnaire for Durriya Kazi and David Alesworth about your own home *Sweet Medina*. Try Masato Nakamura's translation exercise. Write a letter and lodge it in one of Lee Mingwei's three poste-restante booths. Read others' private mail. Visit the APT3 web-site on the computers. Eat kangaroo meat and frogs' legs from Mella Jaarsma's culturally elegant mobile kitchen. Attend the conference. Sign petitions calling for an immediate UN peace-keeping force in East Timor.

Interactivity is no model for activism, however. The least 'interactive' work in the APT are the Indonesian installations which deal with organised violence and militarism. Indeed, an expressionist aesthetic based on the body *in extremis* has characterised selected Indonesian work through all 3 APTs, as representing a banned, progressive tendency in Indonesian art during the 33 years of Suharto's New Order regime. The legacy continues in Tisna Sanjaya's *Thinking With The Knee*, which assembles the debris of an agit-prop procession in downtown Bandung. Individual elements within the installation worked well, such as the military camouflage T-shirts printed with an Esperanto of paradise gardens: 'Visit Timor.' Against the artists' intentions, however, the installation signified museological commodification not political agency. Despite an accompanying video, this work intensified an unease about works not being in their right place, sometimes a problem of removing objects from their performative context.

More successful was the Darwin-based Dadang Christanto's remembrance of the May 1998 massacre of Chinese Indonesians, titled *Fire in May*, an outdoor installation of 47

lifesize papier-mache figures, painted in suggested gold-leaf and roughly trussed in black plastic hoods. The artist systematically burnt each one on the second day of the exhibition, leaving unburnt heads on poles. This act was given added potency and was perhaps prompted by reports coming in of a massacre in a church in East Timor by the same military.

The exhibition proved far more rewarding and informative than the conference proceedings, which made the latter's prohibitive cost particularly galling. It put attendance beyond the reach of most artists, freelancers and students. More importantly, perhaps, participants could have taken the cue from Christanto's action and called for artists to veil their sculptures and turn their paintings to the wall. Closing the APT down, at least temporarily, would have registered as a proper form of international diplomatic pressure. The general feeling of helplessness regarding East Timor that periodically washed over the exhibition and conference seems in immediate retrospect to be extraordinarily timid. These international art events have traditionally served as political ambassadors, and while the APT is not APEC, it *is* an important state agency. This APT is long on artistic creativity, but short on political imagination. By failing to substantiate the art gallery's claims to be a powerful independent forum, APT3 unintentionally looked more to past inter-colonial display and largesse than "Beyond the Future."

Bang Pop!

Rick Vermey talks to fellow MAAP99 *net.works/* artist Feng Mengbo

RV It has been a truly hectic schedule for us this week, what with both the MAAP activities and workshoping ideas for our net.works/ collaborative site and all...so this seems like a rare, quiet moment. Let's talk!

FM Yeah, sure...you want to ask me question?

RV OK. Your movie Q3 reflects some sophisticated insider knowledge of complex video gaming environments—particularly Quake III. It's sited firmly in the terrain of a violently anarchic virtual community where the common law dictates a "point and kill" culture of killing to "win." Could you expand on your fascination for violent video games.

FM You know, most of my artworks are based on video games—*Doom* and *Quake II*, till the newest *Quake III Arena*. Actually I am big fan of such violent shooting games. After I spent hundreds of hours to play *Quake III*, nobody believed it is only a game. Shooting each other, then chat a little bit, join teams or just kill around, will drive you crazy and can not give it up...just like a drug. My wife she's asking, "You finish your movie one month ago, why you still do this?" Video game is not only a kind of game for kids, but also a great point which I can start to think about my artworks—it is made for fun, action, a strong AV shock, much chaos and what's important is "much ado about nothing"—just like art.

Video game is the source of arts for our generation—very important for the popular art. Like in the USA 30 years ago, pop artists got something for their art from the popular cultures. I trying to get the good feeling of the contemporary culture—rock and techno—into my works. Maybe not very original, but I can still give the people a little bit of the feeling from my heart.

RV What about the violence?

FM Oh yes...I know. *Q3* is not only a most violent game on internet but also a great chance to test everybody in the gamezone. Although there is only nickname in your head, but people still like to make team by country and area...no rules...although there is a question mark up on you to maintain the others don't kill me when I chat, but who cares, will kill me still. They will go back to shoot on your body again, even if you're already

dead...but the real life is ten time violent than a game. Violence is from terror. I try to make this work like a movie.

RV You also make interactive artworks, right? Like the CDROM projects and installation, Taking Mt Doom by Strategy. What is your feeling now about digital interactive art-forms?

FM It is maybe the first media for artist can really create artwork interaction with audience...the computer based digital artworks such as website and CDROMs. Tech is progressing, we will get more medias very soon—3D realtime rendering, VR, interactive more than mouse, glasses instead, monitors...anyway the more tech we can use, the more possibility we have. Everything will be available.

Internet is the great chance for artists. Not only it is the most interactive media today, but also the media which will shock system of arts. I believe the museum/gallery/artist/critic system will exist long time, but it will be a lot of young artists move to internet. There will be questions come with this, such as "what is art?"

RV Good question...

Querying utopias

Ingrid Woodrow

Collapsing Geographies forum
September 11, MAAP

Artists around the globe are engaging with digital technologies, but not without a healthy dose of skepticism towards the supposed "virtual utopia" on offer. This was one of the common threads in a range of papers at the MAAP *Collapsing Geographies* forum. A diverse panel of artists, academics and multimedia experts spoke on topics arranged into three broad groups: Emergent Methodologies, Old Regimes/New Currencies and Screening Culture.

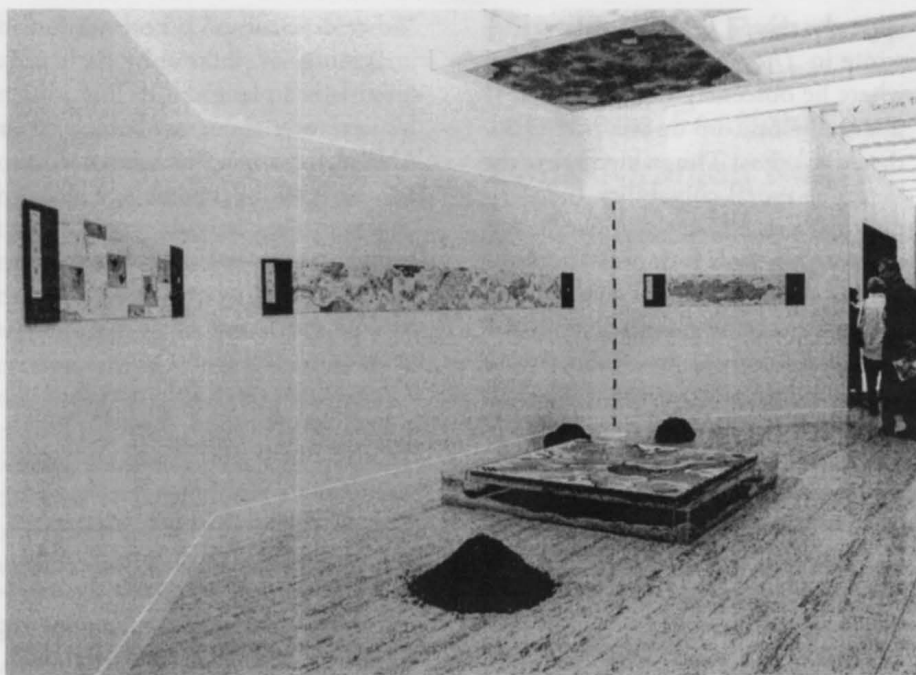
The online collaboration *Double Happiness: Xi'an-Ipswich Online Exchange* was the focus of a joint

paper given by Keith Armstrong and Amy Lee. Currently installed at Global Arts Link (Ipswich) as well as online, the project explores communication strategies for cultural exchange. From April to July 1999, young people (the criteria for classification as “young” remains unclear) in Xi'an, China and Ipswich, Australia communicated via email, forums, chat rooms and live webcasts. Their reminiscences, anecdotes, questions and answers were then organised into a website structured by various “climates” such as indifference, sorrow and intolerance. Visitors to the site are asked to “fill in the blanks” within sentences written in the Chinese/English blend of “Chinglish”, and correct answers trigger a “surprise” Shockwave animation such as a row of children doing “mouth farts.”

Several speakers at the forum expressed reservations about the alliance of artists and new technology. Brenda Croft, curator of Indigenous Art at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, made the point that it is all very well to talk of access to new technologies as empowering, yet “if you are unable to access the facilities or tools, then promised global freedom (virtual or not) becomes a moot point.”

Amanda McDonald Crowley, the director of the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT), discussed the interaction of art, technology and science. She noted that many artists in “techno-aggressive” localities such as Singapore are taking an “anti-technology” position, partly as a response to state control over information and technology systems.

Similarly, Fion Ng Yin Chun, the general manager of Videotage, a Hong Kong media artists collective, gave an overview of the works that Hong Kong artists are creating with technology-based media including virtual reality, video and web/online projects. She says that many artists, however, are “still adopting a traditional way of seeing.” The question of whose interests are being served



Guan Wei, *Feng Shui* 1999

by, and who is gaining access to, so-called liberating technologies was a recurring one at this conference, especially in the context of the political events unfolding in East Timor.

The shifting definition of “screen culture” was another of the topics discussed during the final session. Government funding bodies such as the Australian Film Commission and the Australia Council now recognise new media arts (screen-based digital, multimedia, online and interactive technologies) as valid forms of cultural expression. However, as the definition of artistic practices becomes blurred, the virtual geography of the new system develops its own boundaries and hierarchies.

Opposing views of multimedia technologies such as those expressed at this conference are evidence of a healthy engagement with the politics of artistic endeavour today and in the future. How will digital artworks be archived, collected, stored? What part does copyright play in the future of digitised art? Will corporations such as Macromedia (MAAP's platinum sponsor) and Eastgate Publishing dominate the “virtual” world in the same way that multinationals have in the past? *Collapsing Geographies* provided a

lively and interesting platform from which to explore these ideas and more. And everyone got a free Macromedia demo disk in their conference pack!

Past the mirage

Richard Grayson

APT3, Queensland Art Gallery

There has always been something a little mirage-like, hallucinatory, about the Asia Pacific Triennial, as if it were as much an act of will or imagination as a thing in itself. Should it be seen as a mapping out of actualities? Or of possibilities? Or desires?—And whose actualities, possibilities and desires?—Are Australian cultures of Asia? In Asia? Where is Asia? Is there Asia? For some reason the ‘Pacific’ part of the title was always forgotten and ignored in the everyday dialogue around the event. A sort of Calvinesque spiral of layered fictions and readings has always been generated. In 1999, the third and I think by far the most interesting in this series of cultural events inevitably bangs hard into these questions owing to the opening of the exhibition and of the conference occurring at the same time as the unfolding human and political disaster in East Timor. A disaster that is indubitably non-fictional and non-hallucinatory (despite

what the crazed PP McGuinness wrote in *The Australian* on Saturday where he obscenely suggested that it is a media beat-up on the part of the ABC). East Timor highlights the longtime moral culpability and political redundancy of Australia's relationship with Indonesia. The desires and imperatives which drove the 'understanding' with a corrupt—and corrupting—Indonesia are inextricably intertwined with those that have helped develop and facilitate a project such as the APT over its history. Recognising this fact, however, does not erase or negate many of the intentions and outcomes of the Asia Pacific Triennial.

As it has grown in size and sophistication, the APT has increasingly avoided and denied the thoughtless simplicities that have helped inform governmental attitudes. Increasingly, simplistic constructions of 'otherness' and difference have been denied (and it was able to operate without the shibboleths of trade or the dollar overwhelming any other consideration). At its most banal these shifts have resulted in less bad work being included: previously there was always a suspicion that such quality controls may have been seen by some of the protagonists as being colonial or imperialistic or just inapposite—the same sort of thought process that posits that 'human rights' are a post Enlightenment cultural imposition (and if they are, does that make them redundant?). At other levels it has resulted in increasingly complex and difficult models being generated vis a vis the representations and understandings of the works of a variety of cultures. Slowly essentialisms and easy boundaries are evaporating.

One way in which the exhibition has hoped to do this is through the *Crossing Borders* component of the exhibition which focuses on artists living elsewhere: or rather, "artists who could not be circumscribed within narrow geographical, media or other definitions..." Outside the fact that an artist who doesn't meet

"other definitions" is beyond the imaginings of philosophy (Is it a man? Is it a plane? NO! It's...er...non circumscribable within ANY definition!) this initiative has, on one level, opened things up. Of course in the constant way of these things, it's also served to really confuse the world in general, and the APT in particular. If it's not about geography, is it about race? Essentialism alert! Inherent difference through blood ahoy! Perhaps it's not. But if not, what? and how come Guan Wei (born Beijing China, educated China, living and working in Australia: installation and painting) isn't apparently 'crossing', but Xu Bing (born Chongqing, China, educated China living USA: installation and calligraphy) is, and so is Vong Phaophanit (born Laos, educated France and Germany, lives UK: installation)? But who cares? These are rich and vibrant confusions being generated, ones which demand that you engage and work through this as well. And the work's fine. In Xu Bing's case more than fine. It looks good in the New Museum in New York and, heck, it looks good here too.

There's some really good stuff in the exhibition. Off the top of the head, and missing heaps, I'd think of Michael Parekonhai and his *Ten Guitars*, one of the few works to reference Englebert Humperdinck; Xu Tan, with the small slide projections and scattered objects of *Made in China*; Kim Young-Jin, with the movement-triggered slides of *Walking on a Balance Beam*; Xu Bing, with the writing school of *New English Calligraphy*; Simryn Gill with her half person, half vegetable photographs; Katsushige Nakahashi, making a life size photographic skin of a Zero fighter; Vong Phaophanit with his sinuous neon texts. These I guess are all using, if not 'new media', 'newer' media, but hopefully it's not formal. There's the impressive and dizzying paintings of Michael Nelson Jagamara, the minimalist references of Lee Mingwei, and the delicate, curious room built by Sonabi. And this list is by no means exclusive. Of course there's

work here too which makes you want to leap into your jacket pocket and peek out nervously like a mouse: a minority appears to have the philosophical complexity of the New Seekers, Peter Paul and Mary, or at best, Blue Mink songs ('children are our future' the text to one large wall work informs us) which serves to set off many of one's previous concerns about some of the outcomes of the project—and which in turn, set off tremors that serve to destabilise other productions in the exhibition.

Inevitably, each separate exhibition that is a component part of the APT project is going to puzzle, problematise and cause alarm, but, increasingly, we are forced to look at the project itself, as it changes, develops, talks to itself, expands. For every work that's triter than John Lennon on an off day, there's an increasing majority of works that demand that you question, reposition, think, admire. The APT has established itself as a significant international art event, becoming increasingly broadbased and untethered from parochial concerns. Of course there are ways to go: an (exhibiting) friend said, or relayed another's comment, that surely the debate on Australian positioning won't come of age until say, somebody like Mike Parr or John Nixon is (inevitably) included in the APT, ie that some artists are still seen as more suitable for overseas European jamborees, than for Australian Asia Pacific jamborees. And the implied participation of Anish Kapoor through the placement of one of his works from the Queensland Art Gallery collection in an APT gallery space was, to say the least, bloody weird.

Are you hooked in?

Richard Wilding

adapted part of adapt: sound event
Metro Arts
September 11, MAAP.

Adapted was the culmination of 4 days of masterclasses and sound galleries presented by Australian underground experimental multimedia artists under the aegis of *adapt*—

analogue, digital and physical technologies. As such it was presented as a collaborative sound and video event that functioned both as a showcase of works for the public and as a relaxed wind-down for *adapt's* participants. I say 'underground' because most of the artists and works presented tended to veer away from mainstream dance electronics and were not affiliated with educational institutions. Without apparent commercial market and institutional constraints artists are generally free to produce highly idiosyncratic works.

This last aspect was certainly evident in the first performance by composer and independent radio identity Andrew Kettle. Kettle explored issues of inter-personal connectivity by creating sound poems based on the live manipulation of recorded speech—phrases drawn from various media sources highlighting the theme of connectivity such as, "Will you come play with us?" and "Are you hooked in?" were cut up and manipulated rhythmically over a droning bed of slowly evolving tones.

Other sound artists such as SEO, lowkey+nude, eyespine and PIP were closer to the beat-oriented genre of electronic dance music though often reterritorialising its sonic spaces and transforming the genre's elements into new forms. SEO deftly mixed shortwave radio noise, CD skipping and sequenced elements in a way that exploited the usually devalued sounds of noise and technical breakdown.

Lowkey+nude were new Beats as Clare McGrogan performed fragmentary poetry over shifting ambient-techno palettes. Eyespine, lowkey operations and PIP moved closer to familiar dance music territory with the incorporation of industrial elements and some strange deconstructions of techno-funk.

If there was one common stylistic thread I could trace through the performances it was the technique of

bricolage: the appropriation of available technologies and stylistic elements, and their subsequent exploitation and transformation into new creative works. All seemed to be bricoleurs of some sort using the technologies' inherent noise, internet-sourced elements/software and the recordings of other artists for creative purposes. This process may be economic as much as it is stylistic—the artists on the whole are self-funded and this necessitates creating with what is ready-to-hand. Thus the everyday can potentially become a palette of interesting creative elements which are remixed into new forms.

Bricolage was also evident in the work of visual artists. Mutant Media created a mesmerising video accompaniment to the sound performances often incorporating and manipulating mainstream film and TV footage in layered montages with computer generated patterns. John Aslandis' digital paintings were projected onto a side wall throughout the evening and demonstrated his use of retro-kitsch magazine images floating over vibrantly coloured interference patterns created by the interaction of visual "tones."

Though the works were often quite idiosyncratic, the feeling of the night was of connectivity and collaboration. It seems that artists have built up a rapport which can only have been strengthened by the *adapt* series of workshops. Certainly there seems to be a lot of support from radio with stations such as 4ZZZ and ABC Radio National both actively involved in the *adapt* events. There has been further support from the Brisbane-based electronic music label Transmission Communications who have released a special cassette of participants' sound works. Being hooked into this network means that the electronic multimedia scene in Brisbane may well broaden and flourish. If so, I hope it continues in a vigorously experimental vein.

If you want to hook in for yourself try: *warping.to/adapt*

Missile: The Failure of Marcel Duchamp. Japanese Festish Even Even! Niranjan Rajah Missile: bitBang Gail Priest

Niranjan's work is simple. The progression through the "installation" is linear. You start, an image of a bottle appears, A4 size. A script runs along the bottom. "You know I can't drink any more." You have only one option (my Gemini rising is relieved by this), to click on the bottle, which takes you to what appears to be a red wall. There are no access points it seems. Text runs along the bottom. "Parc de la Vilette, Paris, Spring 1995." I notice I cannot scroll up and down but I can scroll horizontally and moving into the centre of my screen is the back of a man pissing against a wall. I click on him, I get a portal underneath Niagara Falls (ah, now I get it). After the falls there's a book, which I open to reveal a man knocking on a door, a chamber pot beside him. An ominous warning scrolls, "This page contains adult material. If you are underage or live in Malaysia or any other country where this kind of material is prohibited then click the back button now." The adult material consists of the same man, in the open doorway facing a cut and pasted porno shot of a leather strapped, leg spread woman sprouting a penile protruberance. The final link is a pure white bedpan and two quotes. One from Laurence Binyon tells of an ancient Persian poem about the Greeks and Chinese arguing over who were the better artists. Both were given a house to decorate. The Chinese covered their walls with paintings, the Greeks cleaned theirs until the walls shone. The Greeks were declared the winners.

The other quotation is from Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, arguing the beauty and architectural merits of the Japanese toilet, but admitting the difficulty of keeping them clean, resulting in people discarding the

wood and tatami and opting for European style toilets. He asks "What need is there to remind us so forcefully of the issue of our own bodies?"

The content of this site—a series of images and quotations—is subtle and thought provoking. The artist directs us through it, we cannot create our own trajectory. This is the gallery experience on the web. The work becomes more interesting when you learn that the artists could not find a server that would take the site in Malaysia, because of the 'adult content' and so (as you can read in the accompanying essay) had to find an international host. Subsequently the web served as a way for Niranjana to create work that would otherwise be prohibited.

In contrast, *bitBang* is a site that could not exist anywhere but the web. You can either proceed in the designed order, or you can randomly pick and choose by hovering over squares of the grid on the opening screen. The work consists of manipulated video grabs. Some of the footage appears to be of a performance involving dressing and undressing a woman. It's not really important what the footage is about, it's there to provide colour and texture. My favourite section consists of the same footage as a thumbnail, 4 across and 5 down, all starting at different points in the sequence, so that the composition of the collection of squares becomes animated and pulsates in time with the soundtrack—a playful exercise in fragmentation and cohesion. Other screens involve a macro/micro effect, the screen awash with brightly coloured pixels, a tiny square of footage at its centre. The final image is of a broad face in black and white that fills the screen with a benign smile. One of the greatest joys of this site is that it is very fast to download, allowing the viewer to click back and forward and take in the piece as a whole without the lag that often destroys the continuity of the experience.

Viewed together, these two sites

exemplify the vastly different ways the web can be used as a virtual gallery space. While Niranjana's work uses the interface in a very simple way, it is appropriate for the sparse and contemplative nature of the content (also considering the work was created in 1996). *bitBang* goes for the whizz and hum that the latest technology generates without sacrificing artistry and innovation.

The Failure of Duchamp...
www.hgb-leipzig.de/waterfall
bitBANG www.jskw.com/bitBANG

For the daily missile launches go to
www.maap.com.au/maap99/missile99/missindex.html

Web selves

Ingrid Woodrow

Launch Sites exhibition:
 September 11, MAAP

Question: What do you call a country and western singer, a fortune teller, a matchmaker and a feminist academic all rolled into one?

Answer: performer, writer, comedian and visual artist Di Ball. Her latest work is one of three websites featured at the MAAP *Launch Sites* exhibition at Palace Gallery. Ball's site www.krystalball.com parodies autobiographical constructions of self in order to explore notions of identity and role-playing in everyday life. Her website consists of fictitious personalities, all supposedly derived from elements of her own personality, which take on an added dimension when launched into fragmented cyberspace. Various "banner ads" throughout the site lead the visitor to Fleur Ball on her way to Gympie for a country and western gig. Meet Ball introduction agency/chat room (coming soon), and the psychic Krystal Ball. The latter persona, whilst not entirely successful, is the most effective. A so-called interactive start page where visitors can email their own pearls of wisdom (presumably for future addition to the site) returned a "Sender Unknown" message to my inbox. A later page that required the user's name and date of birth for entry resulted in a seemingly ran-

dom assortment of fortune-cookie-style messages that could be accessed by grasping and positioning various crystals. On the "shopping stars" site I discovered that as an Aries I am "an impulse buyer, a complainer and hate queues" and my flatmate was mildly distressed to find that he is a "salesperson's dream, doesn't complain." As Linda Carroli explains in her accompanying essay, the device of the fortune teller pokes fun at the millennial angst that sees many "uncertain selves" turning to horoscopes, fortune tellers and other carnivalesque pursuits in a quest for stability and a sense of identity.

Carroli's own site, *Speak*, features in the same exhibition

(ensemble.va.com.au/speak). Where Ball's site is gaudy, kitsch, dense with Macromedia and slow-loading graphics, Carroli's site is crisp, clean and understated, a subtle yet highly effective hypertext essay. A grey-on-white contents screen is made up of rows of single words—love, scar, risk, break—each linked to an intricate web of meditations and associations: "Curiosity about wounds (how did you get that scar?)" leads Carroli to the conclusion that "The figure of the scar provides another readable surface to explore the cuts and joins that mark stories about cultural belonging, cutting across different worlds." The beauty of a piece such as this, for me, is in its construction—following the links, going back and forth, writing the patterns out on paper to see how the text-web is formed, how the associations connect behind the screen, piecing together the author's conception of the work.

The third work is Tracey Benson's *Carmen's Place* (smopie.thehub.com.au/-traceyb/). Like Di Ball's site, Benson's features shocking, almost unreadable, in some cases, fluorescent colours and gaudy designs (check out the pineapple wallpaper) as a backdrop for her multimedia project, *Big Banana Time Inc*, which offers meditations on the Big Tap and other fascinating Australian cultural artefacts. The latest body of work on this site is centred on

"Carmen Banana", a Carmen Miranda-style character who shares her "recipes for success": Sexy Banana Curry, 'Quick' Banana Tart and Banana Soufflé Quickie. Call me boring, but to my mind the showy colours and graphics of both Ball and Benson's sites served only to highlight the vastly superior textual and schematic content of a less graphics-intensive site such as Carroli's. An exhibition like this serves not only as a barometer of possibilities, but also as a warning to potential converts to the "wonders" of multimedia: get the content right first!

I am curious, yellow

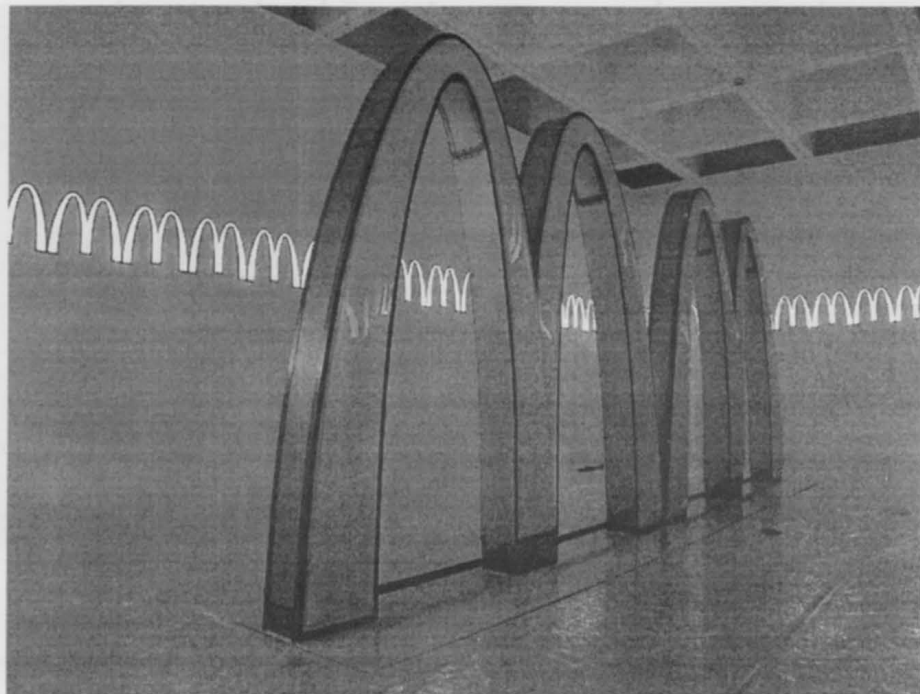
Virginia Baxter

Journey of a yellow man, Lee Wen
mm, Masato Nakamura
APT3, Queensland Art Gallery

I've been wondering what McDonalds might have in mind to follow the "massive McMuffin" and the "extreme jungle meal." They've already got the city covered, the schools...

I may have glimpsed tomorrow in Masato Nakamura's *mm*. You have to bow your head to enter the glowing tabernacle and I swear those 2 big M's crackled as I passed under them. Floors, walls, ceiling all pulse luminous yellow. Around the room baby ones link Ms. M. M. M. Yellow. Yellow. Yellow. I am consumed. Only when I take on the M, closeup, do I see the logical line of blue. Still, I leave the room giddy.

Lee Wen (*Journey of a yellow man*) says that painting himself yellow was only tangentially about Asian-ness. "We're not yellow anyway—nobody is *this* yellow!" he says, to which a woman in the audience says "That's OK, we're not white either." A young Asian woman in the crowd is insistent. She recognises only Asian-ness in the yellow man and wants to know more about what possessed him to stroll passively through the streets of Brisbane carrying an ox heart. Like a lot of the artists at APT3, Lee's connections to his country of origin are complicat-



Masato Nakamura *mm* Courtesy: SCAI the Bathhouse (Shiraishi Contemporary Art Inc.), Japan

ed. He's Chinese but he's never been to China. He deflects her question again and again.

This form of performance art—the silent, semi-naked body bearing offal—is both opaque and familiar. I wonder what kind of response to this city and time is called up in Lee Wen's silent journey through it. The people he passes seem barely to notice him. The gallery displays the video documentation and a giant still which looks like it might make a good calendar shot. Among other things, APT3 functions as a gathering place for artists from the Asia Pacific. I'm more curious about the noisy conversations running between them right now.

Missile: Amechan

TO: amechan@excite.com

Dear Amechan

We don't really know each other, although I remember meeting you a few times at parties and exhibition openings a few years ago in Brisbane—I think I was teaching at Griffith Uni at the time. I found out about your site from Lehan Ramsay when she was back here briefly last month. It is strange how people connect with internet sites—I mean, without that personal contact I might not have found yours.

And of course, I know from all that Lehan has told me about you that we actually have quite a few mutual friends, so I've no doubt that reading your internet journal is going to be quite interesting. I sometimes bump into Ben—you went out with him for a while, didn't you? And I remember we did talk about the fact that both you and Lehan were in the same city now.

Of course, when the opportunity came up to write about your site for this issue of *RealTime*, I was quick to volunteer. I thought that it might give me a chance to talk about the way the internet seems to push at the edges of the public and private in ways that many other mediums don't. That's certainly what you seem to have done in the last few weeks with your site—it must be fairly odd writing a journal that you know other people are going to read. What does your mother think about it? I mean, writing about yourself is one thing, but tracking your family history is quite another. I haven't quite worked out what the "interesting thing" is about, but I did like that first picture of the Eveready bunny factory.

From what Lehan has told me, the whole exercise is partly about negotiating the odd kind of cultural space you have found yourself in—I

mean, when you were here, you always seemed rather Japanese, although of course, being born here in Brisbane, I guess you weren't, even if your mother was. It sounds like going to Japan has forced you to think through all of that —particularly with your mother and grandmother both being there, and your dad still back here in Brisbane.

I think it is interesting that you are formally releasing a new bit of your journal and history each week—I will try to make it a part of my Monday morning log-on routine—I suppose it's a bit like writing a regular letter to someone you know. Obviously, people now write quick little emails. Actually, sending email is more like scribbling a postcard than a letter, but because your site has images, it seems much more composed and considered. Perhaps I'm being a bit voyeuristic, but I have a feeling that reading your site might end up being a little like reading a novel but with the added interest of moments when I actually know the characters and places you're talking about (although I guess not everyone who reads it will).

You might like to let Lehan know that the MAAP people seem to be under the impression that this is her site—probably due to the fact that it's got a part1.org address. I know she's been helping you, but I also know her well enough to realise that this isn't her story...I mean I bumped into her at a New Farm restaurant just two weeks ago—the night she caught the plane back to Japan—she was having dinner with her mum and dad...in fact, that was when she gave me the site address (www.part1.org/amechan)...but I've been so busy I've only just got around to looking today. Lehan said you wanted feed-back, but I think I might wait till a few more weeks are up—perhaps you could add an archive for any email you get about the site (although maybe there would be a problem publishing people's private letters). I must admit that I often feel so bogged down writing critical stuff it's just good to

jot stuff down knowing only one person is going to read it.

Yours sincerely
Peter Anderson

<http://www.part1.org/amechan>

Kids welcome

Hilde Hooper

Kids' APT3

Kids' Art Gallery was the first thing I saw before walking in to the land of Asian Art and kids' imagination. The standard of the displays at the Asia Pacific Triennial is amazing. If you want to find out more about each art work you will find a kids' height plaque which describes the artist's main idea, and kiddy type questions that kids can bug their parents with all the way home. The amount of activities encourages the kids to involve themselves with all types of painting, drawing and sculptures instead of the normal "Can we go to the coffee shop yet?"

Kids can walk across a rickety bamboo bridge (yes, this is an art work), construct small cane bridges themselves, paint pictures of gold fish in a wooden slat temple, and have a go at Japanese calligraphy. The parents can't resist having a go either, so they sit down sheepishly and start building. The Queensland Art Gallery also provides a Kids' APT activity book (for only 2 dollars) which is full of questions about the artists and their work. It feels like having an important job to do, running around locating the art works and finding the answers. But of course this would not be complete without the prize of a lucky dragon footprint! (He's the logo for the Kids' APT).

The Kids' APT also includes workshops during the school holidays and on weekends. These range across Japanese calligraphy, Maori face painting, sculpture made out of bully beef cans, to Pacific weaving. Something I am really looking forward to doing is the Indian hand painting workshop on October 3 with Shannon Garson. The Kids'

APT is a great chance for children (like me) to make art. They will only become more creative if they are given a chance when they are young.

Coming Soon

Louise Hollingworth

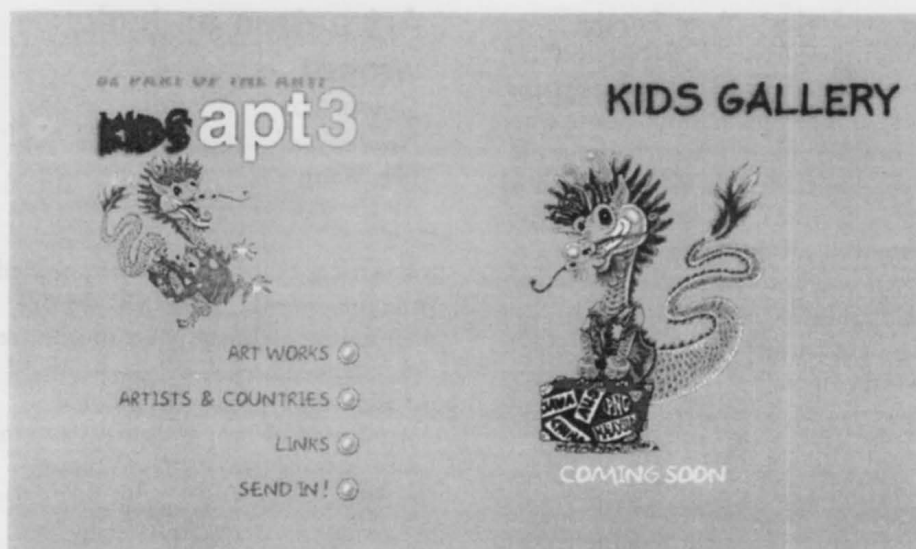
Kids' APT: the virtual experience
inaugural children's component featured within the APT3

My young tour guides are expert navigators and I join with them to explore the 1999 Kids' Asia Pacific Triennial virtual exhibition. They are poised at the gates of a new initiative. These sensation seekers (all under 13 years) are ready for the taste of an art world adventure designed for their palate.

To enter we try <http://www.apt3.net> then select the 'kids apt' header and we arrive. Greeted by the host—a dragon in an Hawaiian shirt—we eagerly await an inroad... 'click on his suitcase—why?—might be packed with clues or it's a survival kit.' The dragon, even with a reputation as a symbol of divine transformation, remains captured in a frozen smile. And, click as we might we are unable to garnish any animation.

So what is the plan, team? Click the 'Kids' Gallery' icon and the action begins. Click. Click. Click. The buttons to venture further are stuck. [The Kids' Gallery is a cumulative site, contributions to be added over the course of APT3. eds.]

Click on Jun-Jieh Wang for the artist pop-up window—the photographic still begins downloading—the text box is visible—the tasty morsel is devoured by she who has just been promoted to chapter books. [Following quote to be read at a slow pace with careful pronunciation]... "Everything exists as a virtual reality and nothing is what it seems; the current crazes for Techno-style and the internet are prime examples. Amid these products of civilisation have people noticed that traditional values are changing? "...hmmm...[insert after-



noon tea break here 'cause the team have got the fidgets and belly rumbles].

I need to think of something—fast. Click (of heels) as we head for the Queensland Art Gallery to feast on the inaugural children's component of APT3. Activity booklets signpost a selection of artworks and projects in an accessible format. This guided tour is tasty and invites the participation of 3 - 12 year olds in the creation and consumption of meaning. An activity area encourages active engagement with the curatorial logic. Wall space is allocated to capture children's perceptions, expectations and visions of the millennial theme "Beyond the Future."

At this stage the information presented in the virtual format is a disappointing translation of the live gallery experience. The potential of new media forms to navigate new territories is yet to be realised ... the appetite is whetted.

Nicely displaced: APT3 and the senses

Keith Gallasch

Tatsuo Miyajima, Sang Ye and Geremie Barmé, Li Yang Bin, Elision, Nasato Nakamura, Kim Young-Jin
APT3

I lean into a large black pit populated with the random traffic of bright

LED numbers, a small buzzing swarm of techno-fireflies. The numbers cut in and out, are mounted on unseen battery-powered cars, thump into walls, sense each other, change course, lock into a neurotic circuit in a corner or traverse the whole space boldly. Patterns emerge, events recur, or seem to: it's Chaos down there and it's a giddy pleasure to survey, a satisfying pointlessness or the potency of possibilities—someone says, you could bet on this. Pick a number. (Tatsuo Miyajima, *Running time*)

It seems already that my first day at APT3 will consistently push and pull at the senses. A ring of video monitors displaying hugely popular western-style ballroom dancing in China envelops me, the sweep of the dancers magnified in the swirl of dresses and the play between two kinds of video. The first, of competition dancing is from television and, location aside, is so saturated with convention it could have been shot almost any time anywhere in the last 40 years. The other seems to have been recorded in a studio, the clothes are street-modern, mobile phones and keyrings on the male hips, sensual fabrics swinging out from the women. We mostly see bodies only from chest to knee, no focus on faces (unlike the locked-in, uneasy ecstasy of the competition dancers), except for occasional cut-aways to an aerial view of all the dancers moving through pools of light in a darkened studio. There is

a stylish everydayness, even erotic charm, to this, amplified by occasional slow motion, a lingering over the pleasure of fabrics and touch.

As well as being absorbed into the movement of cameras and dancers, and being displaced between contemporaneous old ballroom and modern, between formal and casual, there is a cultural question mark tugging at me, wanting answers. Why this Chinese preoccupation? Why my discomfort with the competition dancing, something so archaic, so imported? How long has this been going on, how long tolerated? Why my pleasure with the coolly framed alternative, which could also be anywhere, just as bereft of cultural specifics, so obviously staged but feeling more real, done for pleasure not for prize, comforting, but, a step back, just as strange? The questions break up the rhythm, I look for help, I leave the elevated dance floor to these cultural spirits.

I need a seat, but for my next long encounter one is not to be had. Sang Ye and Geremie Barmé's *Hua Biao, a Chinese Totem* is a more cerebral experience, a cultural studies adventure via video, a strip of printed information on the wall, and three Hau Biao axes (precursors to the Tiananmen Square monuments)—and the huge inflatable versions that frame the gallery entrance. It seems that these 'dagger-axes' were once used as road markers, indicating direction. Later, large scale, sculpted versions were used for the posting of public complaint, the writers free of the possibility of prosecution...until tyrants decided otherwise and the Hua Biao became indicators of a ruler's supreme authority. Aspects of these icons also reminded an emperor of his responsibilities—to look out to the world from his palace and, when away, to be mindful of home. The video is the centrepiece of this educational installation, and it's a dizzyingly potted history of a couple of thousand years of Chinese culture and politics, nicely crafted but too sketchy to be informative, too dry

to be entertaining (despite the variety of footage and the odd irony—Mao's slip-of-the-tongue declaration of "The People's *Democratic* Republic of China"), pumping out the facts, empires, rulers, the megadeaths, the curiosities ("the rich to their frustration found driving not as fast as walking"). Best are the brief approaches to visitors to Tiananmen Square and Mao's burial place, who, like us, have no idea when asked what the Hua Biao are. Finally we are struck by the larger irony of their continued presence. This is one of those works that, if you've got the patience, adds up, stays with you, even if it never escapes its pedagogic impulse.

Li Yangbin's *Face I, Face II, Face III* places me inside three screens onto which are rear-projected the artist's face in distorted permutations. The rhythms of each projection are quite different—in one his face is morphed in alternation with an older woman's at a steady beat, creating a single, orange, sweating, fearful visage of ghostly uncertainty. On another screen, the movement rarely perceptible, the lower part of the artist's face is stable, but from the nose up the blue head swells gigantically with a spot of white light emanating from its core (an effect achieved apparently from reflection of the artist's face in a heated plastic mirror). On the third screen, pulsing furiously, is the artist's face reflected in black calligraphic ink, the face only visible from time to time as its image distorts into a sudden white blooms and bulges like a sheet caught by the wind. This is a haunting trilogy of self-portraits rich in psychological suggestiveness and technical prowess. It drew me in. It drew me back. It reminded me of works seen in recent years where real time video portraiture works a painterly magic and goes beyond.

Elision's *sonorous bodies* (Brisbane City Gallery) is another space to lose myself in, a dark catacomb glowing here and there with Judith Wright's video images of intimate bodies, light, surfaces, and aurally shaped by Liza Lim's calligraphic

score for koto player Satsuki Odamura. On a screen behind the musician, a hand paints ideograms on an open palm. You choose where to place yourself, stretched out on the carpeted floor, taking in two or three screens, fusing with the gentle rhythms of the images and the bending koto notes that reach around catacomb corners. This is a purely sensual experience, liquid and complete.

Curiously, back at the APT3, a silent room in the Queensland Art Gallery offers an uneasy totality. In Masato Nakamura's *mm* the light is an embracing yellow, until you detect a subtle blue and revel in the blend. But a sensual experience is rendered odd by the major light source—two giant McDonald's Ms cast the colours that saturate the room and those who enter it. The work, from Japan is sponsored by, amongst others, McDonalds and the Kirin Brewery, and the Ms come directly from McDonalds. If you can put aside all that, it's a nice space to be in, to analyse the colour, to watch its effects on skin and possessions, to feel the absence of an outside, as if you were in a room in a 2001 space station awaiting transportation...or rebirth...or to be processed.

Of rooms, finally, Kim-Young-Jin's *Walking on a balance beam* is one of the most satisfying, disorienting and interactive of all the installations. It's a bizarre language lesson, a series of rapidly projected facial images and ideograms with matching sounds, all triggered by the movements of viewers. Escalate your moves and the single sounds accumulate and become densely choral and the still images of the speaker aggregate into a stream of facial expressions. I felt like a happily mad conductor eliciting a great performance. APT3 generously offers sensual spaces that take me deep inside myself...and well outside, in a series of benign displacements without ever leaving cultural difference out of the picture, sometimes placing it centre stage, not necessarily as an issue, but as a sound, a look, a touch, a colour.

Art patron as lucky winner

David Cox,
Neon urlaub—Agency version, Jun-
Jieh Wang
APT3

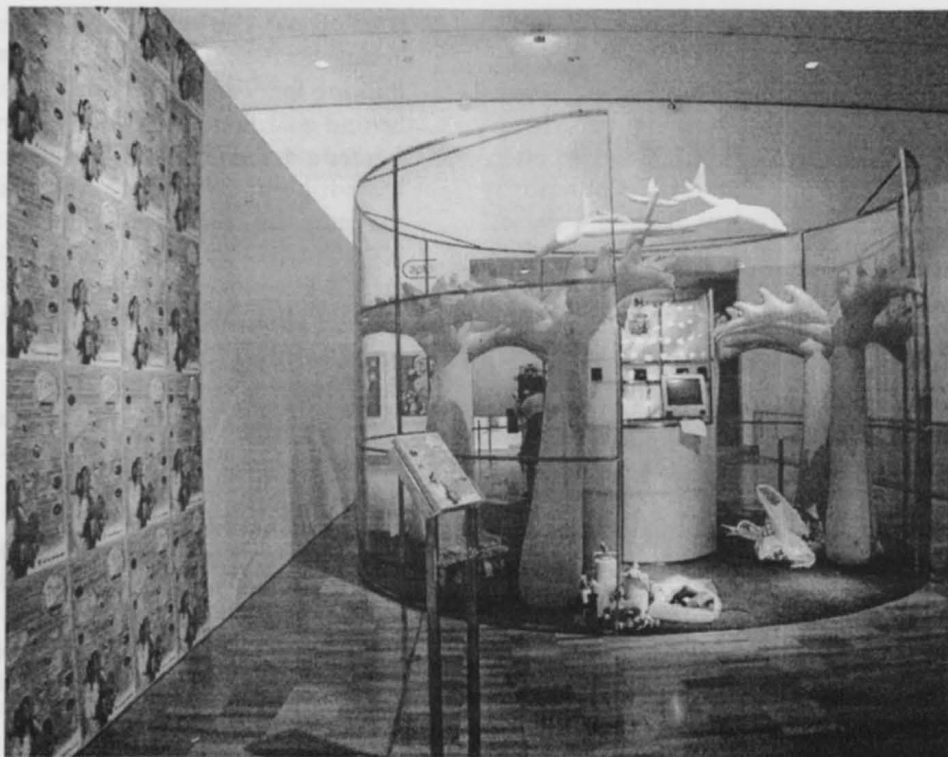
A vertical cylinder booth of polished stainless steel houses a red i-Mac computer. Halogen lights illuminate the scene. The setup evokes immediately the type of promotional stand used in shopping malls and in tourist traps like Surfers Paradise and Noosa.

LCD monitors embedded in its exterior display ads for goods and services like travel and luxury cars in garish colours on tiny screens, each no bigger than a cigarette packet. Surrounding the kiosk installation are 8 foot high bright pink inflatable palm trees and surrounding them yet more promotional mini-architecture—thin display board walls which umbrella-like assemble into a fully surrounding display enclosure.

A picture perfect hostess in shiny metallic silver padded space costume presents handouts, moving in affected slow motion like one of those mime artists in malls who pretend to be (yawn) statues or robots.

Artist Jun-Jieh Wang gets the website up on the i-Mac again (it's been crashing due to the gallery not having its machines wired directly to the net). The irony is you need to be outside the gallery to access the full site. Don't tell me—security, concerns? Or more likely contemporary galleries don't have it together to make sure internet installations are properly connected for artists who use the net. The EFTPOS and Visa connections always seem to work OK in the gallery bookshop and bistro though, I notice. In an exhibit which is so self-consciously about connections, not having adequate technical support is pretty lame...

Anyway, you kids at home surf to:
www.icf.de/neonurlaub
The opening screen reads:



Jun-jieh Wang *Neon Urlaub*—Agency version 1997-99

Welcome to Neon Urlaub, the world's largest, best chain travel agency "Neon Urlaub" this season proudly presents the Neon Holiday Delight Super Combination Series. All tours are fabulous beyond belief. Enjoy a total experience you have never known. If you make reservations now, all the gifts are yours to take home!

Oh, I get it. It's a parody of travel agency culture—a culture jammed tourist kiosk which so resembles its real life counterpart in parts of Queensland that I'm fooled into thinking the place is real, the promotions for free cars are real (the exhibition does have a competition which is real, however.) Only the gallery setting indicates the work's status as knowing 'assimilation' (in the words of the artist) of the mediascape's lust for cute, for day-glo dazzle, and forms to fill in including name, address, credit card number and card expiry date. But looking around the website I notice that the tours advertised here are to war zones. The Balkan Peninsula. The Taiwan Strait. You are expected to fill in the competition forms on the website and the installation, or by not doing so, at least be made aware of what that actually means—to tell strangers

everything about who you are and what you desire.

Herein lies the not so subtle venom of the work—with Taiwan and China most likely about to go to war soon over territorial claims, and with the globe divided to this day into pro and anti market force economics, the language and syntax of the promotional advertising culture of global e-commerce are being used in the *Neon Urlaub* to defamiliarise the glitz and the glamour most associated with it.

As Guy Debord wrote (and put to film) in *Society of the Spectacle*:

Tourism, human circulation considered as consumption, a by-product of the circulation of commodities, is fundamentally nothing more than the leisure of going to see what has become banal. The economic organisation of visits to different places is already in itself the guarantee of their equivalence. The same modernisation that removed time from the voyage also removed from it the reality of space.

The removal of the reality of space and time from global economics, militarism and marketing is what *Neon Urlaub* is all about. It is the

mixing up of all that technology, all that glamour with what really, truly makes it all happen. Guns, police and men in uniform.

The right to autonomy, for Taiwan at least, is the right to reinforce itself as a site of marketing, promotion, manufacturing and global commerce. Its value to the west as well as to itself is through manufacturing, technology, trade and commerce. These are the official monetary values which it is willing to hold proudly like a moral shield when the time comes to confront China with real guns and real artillery.

To treat the world as a site for play and for recreation is for the average tourist seldom linked to the realpolitik which underpins the global economy. Few international tourists in Bali know of that island (or this island of Australia for that matter) as a training site for the Indonesian military who have applied their deadly skills in subordinating East Timor for 25 years. Thus in reality as in fine art, tourism is, even though masked, linked directly to war—"holidays in other people's misery" as the Situationists would say. "Belsen is a Gas," to quote the Sex Pistols.

I'm reminded in *Neon Urlaub* of Melbourne artist Troy Innocent and also the work of Patricia Piccinini. It shares with that Melbourne mid-90s techno school of design art a similarly garish, cartoony iconography appropriating the hyperbole and breathless optimism of advertising. That's Melbourne these days for you.

Like Innocent's work, there is little overt or direct criticism of the society of the spectacle, rather a kind of bitter-sweet postmodern fascination with its modes of operation. The pink inflatable trees of *Neon Urlaub's* installation are Jeff Koons-like—a similar and playful pomo kitsch-writ-large. They say "This is your/our cute commercial world, only by being bigger and more obvious, it is now a subject for informed consideration."

Inflatable art is popular these days. Like television jingles, and the theme songs to 70s sitcoms, inflatable art connotes retail, point of sale, promotional ersatz instantaneousness and the provisional display stand culture of the suburbs. It is a place we all know about if we are from the burbs in Australia because we were probably at the mall when we were not around the suburban dinner table. It is what McKenzie Wark calls "third nature". The media as a real and self-defining space of the imagination and shared, collective identity. It is real, but not really. It's all hot air. It looks like computer graphics and shares with it a provisional kind of geospatial temporariness. If postmodernism were a product, it would be simultaneously virtual, online, inflatable and on the Toys R Us shelf.

This is possibly why two giant inflatable tethered red columns bounce around outside the entrance to the gallery. The stoic classicism of state led institutions has been pumped up good and proper, but you know a good pin prick would make the whole thing flatten out in minutes. Play and politics meet here between these blow-up columns—this is APEC summit held in a bouncy castle.

The politics of PR seldom go questioned in our increasingly global economic society—the sheer amount of data able to be collected from ordinary and usually unwitting people filling in questionnaires, answering phone polls, and otherwise handing over personal details for the purposes of someone else's not so secret trade in market demographics.

Both police and admen need the same type of data to do their jobs. Processing people as machine parts in social organisation is a never-ending task.

The real menace is that the information used by PR and advertising people in global settings where tourism and marketing are con-

trolled and buttressed by the military has a potentially lethal role to play in dubious notions of "national security" and "sovereignty." These vague catch-all phrases are so often the justification for acts of terror and barbarism as has been seen so blatantly this week in the post East Timor ballot orgy of death, a mere two hours north of Darwin. 'Them' knowing who you are suddenly can mean you go from a cheerful competition entrant to a death list entry.

Despite the rarefied and slightly trade showy feel to this year's Asia Pacific Triennial, the *Neon Urlaub* installation/performance/display succeeds in problematising the commercial sheen of the military entertainment complex.

Debord again:

When art becomes independent, depicts its world in dazzling colours, a moment of life has grown old and it cannot be rejuvenated with dazzling colours. It can only be evoked as a memory. The greatness of art begins to appear only at the dusk of life.

A.D.D. at APT

Gail Priest

Kim Young-Jin, Tatsuo Miyajima, Cai Guo Qiang, Xu Bang, APT3

Last night I dreamt I was foxtrotting with Jimmy Little. Then we both sat down at blueberry i-Macs and checked our email. My unconscious, in its infinite wisdom, was writing its own summary to the sensorium that is MAAP/APT3. Or maybe I shouldn't eat chocolate before I go to sleep.

Theory 1: (Archimedes)—a body in water displaces its own volume. There is a bath in my hotel room. I test this theory daily. Theory 2 (Pam Priest): You get out of something what you put into it—in an ideal art world.

I have been at the Queensland Art Gallery for 5 days trying to take in the whole exhibition. I am getting a little panicky now. I only have 2 shopping days left and I know I haven't found everything yet. There

is one South Korean artist, Kim Young-Jin, whose work I have been hunting for. Today I see him duck behind a curtain and follow him in. I enter a darkened room. Maybe it has not been turned on. I move; at the same time the artist leaps over his technical barricade and leaves; faces begin to flash on the screen gasping phonemes. Everything stops. I shift my weight and the faces flutter again. It goes black. I shuffle along the dotted line on the floor, and the faces grimace and bleat. I get it. I control this world. A series of slide projectors hooked up to sensors and a computer are at my command. I feel the urge to do an interpretive dance. But then some other people come in. I stand still so that they can make the same wondrous discovery. They stand still. Nothing happens. I move around in a self-conscious way, hoping they will make the connection. They remain frozen. Then they leave, creating a fabulous cacophony. They will forever live in ignorance. Some people I know enter the space. I wait to see if they discover the secret, but school children enter and the defining moment is blurred. Eventually I point it out and two of us joyfully run back and forth across the "balance beam" making the installation burble and sing and the faces contort, while ideograms flick past in the bottom corner. We perform our little dance to the next curious group. It saddens me that many people will not (a) find a work tucked into a corner, (b) stick around long enough, or have the luxury of isolation in order to discover the secret and (c) feel free to play with it.

I walk into another darkened room. I hear the whirr of tiny battery operated cars. But I can't see them. What I can see is a collection of dig-its between 1 and 9 in red and green LED careering around the sunken floor below me, crashing into each other and thumping into the walls. They randomly circle either counting forwards or backwards, they have rest breaks as their lights go out. They mesmerise me—a mathematician's dreamscape. They express

my desperate need to hang on to order while the world around me whirls out of control.

I have watched people cross Cai Guo Qiang's bamboo bridge for several days now. I have seen school kids squeal with glee as the sensor operated shower is activated and they are rained upon. I have seen well-dressed people with water marks all over their silk blouses, I have seen couples get half-way across, and then (usually) the girl chickens out and turns back, the boy reluctantly tailing behind her, regretfully looking back like a child dragged away from his mud pie. I knew I would not be complete unless I made the treacherous journey. I begin the ascent, uneven bamboo under my chunky soled shoes, embarrassing pratt falls flash through my mind. I waver at the point of the shower. I get wet.

The ultimate live performance for me is Xu Bang's silkworms. Over the last 5 days I have watched them go about their thing, munching on mulberry leaves arranged in a metallic vase. I passed by the other day and the 'keepers' were stripping back the leaves and rationalising the live collection. Today I see there are only a few silkworms left. The rest have spun themselves little cocoons, some pure white, some saffron yellow. Amongst the proliferation of works I like the microcosm of these worms. Do they know they are making art?

I test Archimedes' principle just one more time, with an overly perfumed effervescent bath bomb named after Bonnard. I am exhausted after my effort as an attentive participant in APT3, but I have been rewarded threefold. My bath runneth over.

Border crossings

Peter Anderson

APT3

While it is a very obvious point to make, the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art is inextricably caught within the difficult contours of regional geography. At the most



Simryn Gill, *Vegetation* 1999 (detail) Courtesy: Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Australia

basic level this is the result of the way the APT has to operate within a certain set of limits signalled by its title. This is not necessarily a problem. If anything, this very focus—with all its attendant cultural baggage—may well be understood as one of the important engines of the ideas and debate that make such projects worth doing in the first place.

However, this does not mean that the project as a whole needs to be governed by geography, or even the nation state. It is not simply about selecting artists who live and work in a particular set of places. Certainly, for this, the third APT, some significant changes have been made in the organising frameworks outlined in the catalogue—most importantly in *Crossing Borders*. This said, the APT still has not escaped its geography, and its discussion of artists still tends to be stuck within the nation by nation paradigm established in the first exhibition—although the presentation of works within the gallery certainly does quite a lot to undermine this.

But what is missing, is any clearly articulated attempt to think—or rather, write—across the national (or “international” border crossing) status of each work. In this respect,

it has to be said that the APT remains mostly a collection of individual works from particular countries, rather than an attempt to trace trends or themes within the region, or across regions. Of course, to do so may have involved moments when curatorial thinking might have cut awkwardly across the nuances of a particular work, but as this is often what happens when work is critically examined perhaps it need not be thought of as a problem. But again this lack of a set of thematic (even media specific) threads is not really all that surprising, as the very complex process of selection does seem to be driven by matters of travel in and around particular countries.

For me, the challenge of geography has always been part of the APT—not least because my own life for the last couple of decades has been so firmly rooted here in Brisbane. In light of this, the contrast between a practice based on living quite a fixed life, and a practice that emerges in the course of significant travel or migration, seems to be an important one. With each APT this contrast has struck me as increasingly relevant—and yet it always seems to slide out of the discussion. Of course contemporary art happens in an international context, but not

every artist in the APT engages with that context in quite the same way. For some, the world comes to them (or, perhaps even passes them by); for others, it is in fact the international art circuits—the biennials, triennials and other such exhibitions—that take them (and their work) to the world. This is particularly apparent in the discussions of the APT conference, where the capacity to travel—to have travelled—serves as an interesting measure of accumulated cultural capital.

There also appears to be another set of divisions between the works included in the APT which could be more clearly articulated. This is the division between the selection of works and the selection of artists. Of course, all the artists are selected, but in some cases it seems that artists and completed works are selected, while in other instances artists are selected on the basis of works that will be made in situ. This, I think raises some very interesting issues about the nature of contemporary art—and the role of the museum in facilitating its creation (rather than simply its display or preservation).

Perhaps one of the roles of major events such as the APT is in fact to provide a context not only for the production of art, but also its conceptualisation: to consider the work of art not just as the expression of an artist emerging from a practice rooted in a particular place, but on occasion to consider the work of contemporary art as something specifically created for the space of the art museum (in the context of an international exhibition). In trying to understand what a work means, or how it resonates in this exhibition, one might need to consider it not simply in the context of "Asia" or "the Pacific", but indeed as primarily meaningful in the context of the APT.

In this respect, I would have to say that one of the works that might

well prove both puzzling and strangely compelling for a Brisbane audience (which, when all is said and done, is the main audience for this exhibition) could well be Lee Wen's *Journey of a yellow man* performance piece. This work is very specific, and interestingly, is the only work that includes any overt representation of Brisbane. In essence, it shows Lee Wen—covered in yellow paint—taking a long walk through and around parts of Brisbane (he even crosses the river by ferry), all the while holding in his hands what looks to me like an bullock's heart. In a sense, this is a work that directly addresses the Brisbane audience, and signals this very clearly. It may well be a work that will leave many viewers perplexed, but unlike many of the other works, it will be much harder to attribute this to something lost in the translation from one cultural context to another - although, of course, the work might be about this very issue.

One of the things that the APT does is present a body of contemporary art to a very large audience, as well as providing a context that may produce a more open response to the difficulties of interpretation. For while non-specialist audiences tend to have little patience with contemporary art produced by Australian artists (or even American or European artists), the addition of a significant new set of perceived cultural differences seems to create an environment where viewers actually anticipate moments when their knowledge base might be challenged. In this respect, the APT serves as a bridge to contemporary art in general.

While this APT and the 1996 event have made attempts to launch themselves with relatively spectacular public pieces which have not even-tuated, I don't think these minor hitches are particularly significant. What is far more interesting is the

Kids' APT. This component signals to all viewers that dealing with contemporary art, even contemporary art that crosses cultural borders, is possible. What it requires is a willingness to participate, something which children are particularly open to doing. In a way, it also sends a signal to viewers that the best way to engage with work is, in the first instance, to start with something simple. Perhaps, in the end, what the APT actually shows us is that contemporary art isn't as hard as we sometimes like to think it is.

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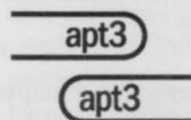
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If you would like to subscribe to RealTime please call

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



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