Tertiary Education: Those who do, teach
Hans K. Lewis: Relay Visual art in the Olympics
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Saatchi culture: Australians and the Arts
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- Death, craziness and value for money
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Working the Screen 2000
the digital impact - a progress report
Cover image

Photograph by Narelle Autio, from The Seventh Wave an exhibition (Stills Gallery, Sydney) and book (Hot Chilli Press, Sydney 2000) by Trent Parke and Narelle Autio.

"From the walls of the gallery, water spews from lips, curls through hair. Arms open to receive it, heads push against its weight, limbs plough through, torsos tumble in it. It becomes a liquid landscape for for glorious and gawky choreographies."

from review, page 33

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ARTISTS
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Politics and vision

Our annual outside edition surveys both issues of the academy in 4 fascinating essays on teaching dance, new media, performance and the visual arts, and the impact of new technologies on the arts in Working the Screen 2000, the only comprehensive survey of digital works online, in galleries, performance spaces and on CD-ROM. By all accounts Working the Screen 1999 had a long life and was certainly one of the most visited sections of our website over the last year. We hope it proves even more valuable for the next 12 months and beyond. The intense and inventive creativity in this area is invigorating.

Throughout RealTime 38 there’s a striking recurrence of political issues. Ben Goldsmith warns that the restructuring of the ACP could result in increasing screen illiteracy. Nadine Clements looks at the narrowing options for consumers and artists as the corporatisation of the web proceeds under the guise of the advantages of convergence. Sarah Miller questions the Australia Council-Satchi Report’s fundamental understanding of the arts in Australia and of the Council itself. Composer Colin Bright and poet Amanda Stewart discuss the challenges of art as politics prior to the release of the CD of their opera, The Stinking of the Rainbow Warrior. Bec Dean queries the political vision of young visual artists in the Hatchet National Graduate Show at PICA and Suzanne Spunner, focusing on ‘The Melbourne Workers’ Theatres’ Front (about the maritime industries dispute last year), notes series of plays in Melbourne with politics at their centre. Barbara Bolt worries at the corporatisation of tertiary teaching, where the teacher’s role becomes increasingly managerial and less and less pedagogical, eliminating the possibilities of creative play.

In recent time, a few notable artists have castigated the arts community for its apparent preoccupation with funding, the Ralph Report and the GST at the expense of artistic vision. A parallel phenomenon has been those commentators who have proposed the reduction of arts funding in order to stimulate artistic vision. (That these thinkers are focusing on theatre, an area with considerable problems to do with vision, and, I might add, a shortage of funding in critical areas, is not surprising.) This view suggests, that there’s a shortage of vision and, two, that survival is not an issue. In recent years as funding has been spread thin and becomes less recurrent for many, I’ve watched mature artists struggle to live and keep a grip on their work.

Because vision is not much discussed in this country (an enduring cultural problem) and because the promotion of the arts within Australia is weak (in a recent trip to Europe I was impressed how well Australian work is promoted overseas) it’s easy to fall into the belief that there isn’t much in the way of vision and not much happening in the arts (a view compounded by little media coverage including the severe limits of the ABC’s Art Show). As Sarah Miller says of Australians and the arts: A report to the Australia Council from Satchi & Satchi Australia (see page 4) “Clearly the huge amount of work undertaken by clients of the Australia Council according to its very own guidelines and priorities—which includes the support of artists from non English speaking backgrounds, the ‘distinctively Australian’ work undertaken by contemporary performance and arts organisations, community and art & working life organisations, Indigenous and multicultural arts organisations—are not even recognised. If the Australia Council is oblivious to the programs, activities and achievements of even the artists and client organisations it funds, then no wonder the arts have an awareness problem in this country!”

Peter Sellars has provoked mixed reactions in his ongoing on of Australian artists, some feeling he believes us short of political will and artistic vision without his promptings. But it is clear from Sellars’ various statements that his emerging program is founded on the belief that the vision is there, that Australia has unique opportunities to right various wrongs, and that in collaborating with his team of associate artistic directors he can facilitate the furthering of that vision.

Vision, arts politics and survival are deeply enwined: they can’t be unravelled by the well-heeled suggesting that will power and funding can will solve anything—that’s not vision, that’s barbwire and fits only too well the economic rationalism that threatens to defeat us so often these days.

Congratulations to two fine artists Rea and Lynald Jones, Ria for being awarded the 2000 Biennial Indigenous Arts Fellowship Award and Lynald Jones for being selected to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale.

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Paul Costantoura's fundamental error lies in confusing perceptions of the arts for the complex reality. In so doing, he does the arts a great disservice. That politicians (government and opposition) are already citing this unwieldy mishmash of misinformation as gospel is more than disturbing.

As for the "BIG A" and the "little a" arts? These? There's some amazing stuff in there. The BIG arts are, you might expect, things like the ballet and the opera and possible architecture. The little arts are something else altogether and believe me, it isn't anything that anyone in the contemporary arts is doing. In fact, the multiplicity of contemporary art practices taking place throughout this country are completely invisible within this report. On the other hand, we learn that Australians would be much happier if they were doing at any given moment was understood as art. So, little arts might include children's painting and rock estedfolds (think junior league athletes), car design, advertising and the aforementioned mentioned telling around the kitchen table; in the latter case, only if you live in the country. Creative, sure, and on the one hand, anything is grist to the artistic mill. On the other, just because most of us learn to read and write at school, that doesn't mean that we're all—ispo-fact—novelists and poets. Impotent in all this is another bizarre contradiction, that whilst professionalism and (god help us) elite standards are essential to effective marketing and communication, art-making itself should be understood in terms of lifestyle and recreation.

The strategy seems clear. Under the imperatives of access and equity, artists and arts workers will be forced to trade-what the consumers want, which is that least likely to disrupt and disturb. No artistic risk. No experimentation. No criticism. If artists aren't willing to participate on those terms, their work will become so invisible as to be rendered meaningless. Australian Culture—now understood as an industry offensive—replaces art.

Arts Gospel according to Saatchi & Saatchi

Sarah Miller

Anyone who picks up a bottle of tomato sauce can be Jackson Pollock

Back hern, ABC TV

All in all of Saatchi & Saatchi's discussion about how Australians view the arts now and how they might view them in the future, a number of fundamental questions present themselves. How should we define the arts? Who should define the arts? Who can be an artist? And most importantly, if we might reconcile the "BIG A" and the "little a" (SOA) arts?

Now, I'd just like to note that this is a "world class" document. It has vision. It has breadth. It's not afraid of change. Furthermore, it demonstrates unparalleled research skills and a knowledge and understanding not just of the arts but of Australian history, geography and contemporary social issues that is simply breathtaking. And I do believe that it is the time that real people—business consultants, sports and business people—people on real salaries and with proper working conditions—get into the business of telling us not only what art is but what it could be. We should be able to see how we can all artists and workers alike—do our jobs so much better. That's what we pay them for.

As for the arts community or "The Sector", I don't know what we've been doing. Classless. We mightn't be able to define art conclusively (only exclusively it seems) but goddamn, we sure know how not to be in touch. We go on and on, elitist and we think that "yarn telling at home" is yarn telling at home. How stupid is that? And for all their Burke to compellingly points out, we've overlooked the "modern Australian cookbook" as a source of inspiration. When was the last time you read a modern Australian cookbook anyway? If you did, you'd know how to draw on the "distinctively Australian mix of national influences not found anywhere else in the world."

Unfortunately the "modern Australian cookbook" doesn't seem to include a chapter on bush tucker. We should, however, embrace multiculturalism while simultaneously draw- in the "quaintessential Australian notion of people who are down to earth, accessible and without any arts and graces." Imagine that! And the idea that they should have control over the content of their work? Sarcasm schmarmarkism! Like those ever popular Jehovah's Witnesses, artists should be knocking on doors and asking what it is that people want in their art—whether they want it or not.

Not only are we out of touch but many of us, it appears, "lack the skills, experience and training that are needed for effective marketing and communication." No! Seem to have realized that most of that has been done as well! Whilst I wouldn't dispute the fact that the level of skills and experience within the so-called "subsidised sector" are unevenly spread, I find it difficult to support Strategic Planner Paul Costantoura's inferred conclusion that the commercial sector is serviced only by people of enormous ability, skill and experience. Working, as many people do, across both private and public spheres, it is clear that the private sector contains many people capable of great competence. They're just not accountable to anyone. Their outcomes are not held up to public scrutiny. When they go bust, it's between them and their shareholders.

The report also states that "people who identify themselves as part of the arts community tend to distinguish between the commun-
Next Wave 2000: the debriefing

Alex Hutchinson

There are several possible ways to read this article. Call it a set of random observations and mini-deconstructions, a single snapshot of Australia's premiere 'youth' cultural event (remembering of course that there was much more that could not be shoe-horned into this piece). Think of it as a taste of something you probably missed (but shouldn't have). Hell, pretend it's a preview of a future Next Wave festival. Or just close your eyes and imagine that you are seated on a large, red, velour couch at the back of a (sub)urban hip hop performance at South Gate beside the Yarra river while a tiny woman in a huge Adidas tracksuit screams into the mike that she's giving 'props' to 'y'all and the 'y'all is you'.

But was it any good? The short answer:
Yes. The longer and more detailed answer, whether or not you choose to visit or visit or watching or viewing or listening to a large chunk of any festival is guaranteed to be a mixed bag. That some pieces will stick out as more impressive than others is unavoidable even though every time you go into a new show you spend 5 minutes beforehand talking yourself into a state of nuptual alertness so that you are hyper-aware of the possibility that this show could be good and that even if a whole it isn't, there are surely several really good bits which you can suck out like marrow and more importantly, if these bits exist, you are going to suck and suck until you find them.

This has to be done even if after reading the blur or the editor's statement you quickly realise that it is flawed or dated or poorly thought out or whatever. This has to be done because unlike an entire festival is a short-cut to intellectual suicide and instant depression re the state of the arts etc etc and it is also almost certainly false and misguided and the result of your own preconceptions about what is 'good' and 'worthwhile' and not really connected to the underlying quality of the work at all. Which brings me topside to the fact that although there were three weeks of events, NW 2000 was often exciting and always different and in the end full of good work by young Australian artists which is exactly what an arts festival is supposed to be, isn't it?

Isn't it?
The really long answer: all the promos (from the program itself to the differentadered posters and flyers) were covered by a kind of open-ended pink and decorated with pictures of little kids playing with (variously) enormous eyeballs, explosives (and here comes the controversial bit) hard drugs. The Herald Sun gave that last one a whole 5 paragraphs of negative commentary along with a predictable quote from Festival Director Campion Decent saying it was all just there to "create a little controversy.'

Also setting nobody (or at least trying to freak everyone out) was the only international at the Toombul hands dance/movement group 6060, and their performance faust II. When I asked the woman on the door what they thought the show would be like, she said it was 'going to be strange but that's good. We like strange...featuring silver body suits, elongated cone heads and an abundance of bicycle lights glued to various body parts, it promised to suit the dionysian character computer animation to expand the performance potential of the body in a festival of light, sound and motion.' And we spent it in the voids and tedium incredibly hard to be new and different and daring and shocking, it only partially succeeded. Tired fractal pattern projections for a background and sloppy stage management broke spell and some of the extreme facial contortions even caught a laugh from the audience—most definitely not the desired result.

Few works were easily categorised and all of them were ferociously creative. It's about the work itself and not about fitting things into manageable, digestible, marketable chunks. It's not only 'young' art, it's good art.

Without even trying it was completely outwitted (and outperformed) by the brilliant No (under)standing anytime from Next Wave alumni Kate Fryer, Photo Minveau, Actonetc. As a social comment, it was always mesmeric. Conversations occurred while sitting upside down at tables. People entered a club by stepping between the spread legs of a bouncer lying on his back with another bouncer standing on the first guy's feet. Clever, funny and sick, the only downside was the occasional confused narratology. When the story and movement clicked it proved that the combination of play and acrobatics could be a winner but when it missed it sometimes seemed stilted, and the final revelation that the whole story is a fantasy dreamed up by one of the performers is too stale to disgrace with flips and spins, however well executed.

Final Fantasies (curator Chad Chatterton) took its name from Squeak's seminal Role Playing Games and built a game style environment for real-sized people. You entered through the same door Marth in Matio to 64 to find a huge tree domiating the room, except it's not a real tree, it's a game tree, meaning it is made up of spliced 2D planes and only simulates 3D. Surrounding it are more style pipes and stars, a smattering of Quake style weaponry and all around the sounds of dogs opening and shutting. Exciting as the idea was, much more could have been done. The area seemed bland and sparsely decorated: where were the commuters and over-the-top software design?

More successful was Christian Thompson's byggy (dream to dream), its theme clear. Garish, confronting scenes colluded with the entire subtext of childhood imagery, all of it painted (generally) on torn up pieces of old beer boxes, the labels and brands still showing through. Dream segue to the e-manga gallery presented as a dream (Marty Gardner and Luke Smiles). Three episodes of animation, new age philosophy and (surprise!) dreams. The central idea of a 'dream database' was picked up by the next in the whole thing bizarrely broadcast on the wall beside the stage (except with the contrast turned up too high so everyone looked bleached and pale), the show caught somewhere between a rap version of open-mike night and community access TV. The big (and oft repeated) point was that they were rechanneling hip hop for Melbourne in 2000 which is great and laudable and everything but doesn't really work if you're also appropriating the clothes, style and speech patterns of America. Great, mildly disturbed stuff too.

And finally, squealed hard up the back end of the festival and feeling a little pale after the cacophony of the writers' weekend. Small attendances were blamed on the cold (and it was bloody freezing) but you get the feeling most people wanted a story to cover. Those who did go caught a series of high energy readings from some great young writers. A highlight was a spirited reading of hard core gay porncaff from Shane McGraw. On a related note: the accompanying special Next Wave issue of Vocienorks (#41 and still on sale) was also of a high standard and came in a compact format far superior to the usual.

Which about wraps it up. Deep breath...let's go. Now for a stripped down and compressed conclusion: probably the best/most enjoyable aspect of the festival was its overall cross-genre, cross-art pollination. Few works were easily categorised and all of them were ferociously creative. It is, however, a little ironic that not about fitting things into manageable, digestible, marketable chunks. It's not only 'young' art, it's good art. It's doing more and more than gets and is certainly 50 times more interesting than the mid-dalted, tired festivals which The Age sponsor every year. Make sure you check it out when it kicks off again.

Next Wave Festival 2000, Artistic Director Campion Decent, Melbourne May 12-28
Just another art show? 

Alex Gawronski

Looking at the Biennale of Sydney 2000 is looking back on a past we all recognise. The show itself is perhaps endemic of a certain kind of retrospective millennial thinking.

However it is impossible not to ask why, at this particular moment in time, are we turned back on a 'History of the Biennale of Sydney'? Surely at this time it would be much more germane to imagine the future or indeed living present of contemporary art and its many manifestations. Within the Biennale there are no exceptional curatorial leaps other than arbitrary ones resulting from the mere juxtaposition of unrelated practices. The exhibition does not attempt to convey diverse ideas in an effort to encapsulate the prevailing Zeitgeist. Previously, the Biennale could promise something of a revelation, an exhibition that could isolate trends or at least provide an opportunity to accomplish this. This year we are confronted with a wealth of work, much of it familiar from reproductions in various international art journals. What would it take to have a particular opportunity to view some of this art close-up, the overall sense is that all the 'right' artists have been chosen. These are artists we have read about, whose works we have seen in books and articles over the past decade or so. What is distinctly absent are the surprises, the shock of new works that might signify a shift in our reading of the exhibition and of art at the turn of the century.

Much of the work varies dramatically in importance as one moves through the gallery. The work of Paul McCarthy's damaged video installation is symphonically housed in an environment that allows its grotesque mock hysterectomy to remain uncharacterised. It is to ArtSpace where the work would have realised, even though it is by no means immediately self-evident, McCarthy's installation details the work's partial destruction due to its mishandling in transit. The exhibited evidence of this unhappy process, rather than detracting from the work, provides an opportunity to consider its super-artist's dimension. Ultimately, despite the work's bad boy posturing, we realise its tremendous entanglement in the intricate lives of ownership but indicate its indexical value and respectable collectability. On the other hand, Dieter Roth's much carefully framed and protected private snapshots of his died cat in a gallery regarded primarily as a site for contemporary installation art. Same goes for the technicolour material fantasies of Franz West. Despite West's questioning of the limits of aesthetic value, in objects that appear equally as junk, the works themselves could be seen as a type of conservative expressionism manifestation, with each object displayed discreetly on its own isolated plinth.

Customs House, recently renovated and handsomely situated at Circular Quay, provides perhaps one of the least sympathetic venues for viewing contemporary art in the city. With its large open atrium and series of glass fronted ramps providing space for installations, the building reads more like an upmarket shopping mall, decked in real rather than faux marble and grained permanence due to its heritage listing. Inside and high above an unrelent- ing exhibition of architectural models, float red and white polka dot inflatables by the Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama. The spirographic, quasi-hallucinatory quality of the artist's work has a palpably present potential for disruption and disturbance. At Customs House however, such qualities are suppressed by the indifference of the building itself. Here they appear as nothing more than giant beach balls, representative of sunny Sydney fun. Rosalie Gascogne's work upstages, still impressive in its restraint and textuality, is drowned by the prevailing muzak engulfing the building from above. All subtext is eroded. Perhaps more successful, though mixed in effect, is the work at the Art Gallery of NSW. Here there are some outstanding pieces, most notably the photographs by Ukrainian artist, Boris Mikhailov. In these we witness evidence of the debasement of common humanity subtly robbed of its previous terms of reference. With the decline of the Soviet system and the resulting economic collapse, more citizens find themselves on the edges of a society that cannot afford them. In the comfortable surroundings of the AGNSW the documentary impact of these images is doubled, disturbing viewers' equilibria. Most of us have become complacent anyway to the barrage of imagery depicting the intense human suffering of many developing communities. Here however, the society depicted does not technically fit this description. As a result, the suffering portrayed, whilst still distant, appears even closer to us. After all these are 'modern' Europeans.

Still forceful are works by Young Bourgeois. Her objects and installations, or 'cells' as she calls them, are dark and ominous. They leave themselves open to numerous dis- tinctly psychological interpretations, and succeed in their apparent grounding in personal experience and the conviction with which the artist pursues private phantasms. Nevertheless, her work is not reducible to simple confessional paradigms. Fiona Hall's objects equally display a mastery of often unconventional materials. They are intricate ruminations on the private pressures of colonist interven- tions and their attendant habits. Her fragile, drilled-out and sieve-like works, utilising plastic plumbing, imitate native flora while simultaneously revealing their conspicuous distance from the 'natural'. Nature is inscribed and encoded at every level. At the same time, convenient platitudes concerning a Nature/Culture split do not hold water.

The hallmark of the Biennale is the work assembled at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Here we find some of the big names of international contemporary art. Gerhard Richter is represented by a series of works that, intentionally or not, attempt to summarise his practice thus far. His works range from the sophisticated postmodern décor of neo-photographic paintings multilayered abstract 'painters' works'. In such works the artist employs a variety of often subliminal techniques, including photography, to reconstruct the apparent casualsities of gestural painting. In fact, the MCA boasts a wealth of photographic and video works alongside paint- ing. These include Jeff Wall's subset menacing images of urban mundane and, of course, works by Australia's Bill Henson. These receive special attention. Upon entering the gallery containing Henson's work, we are informed by an attendant that only 8 people may view the work at any time. Perhaps this is an attempt to preserve the sanctified Eurocentricity and nostalgia of the photos themselves, images that apparently require more space in which to contemplate their dark secrets. How these secrets differ essentially from meanings contained by adjacent works remains uncertain.

Less reverential is Pipilotti Rist's video installation Simply Ocean In which the artist parodies Love and Desire as portrayed in contemporary music videos. While the artist alternately screams and croons kitschy lyrics from the Chris Isaak song Wicked Game, we see items of a vaguely kitsch domesticity sink to the bottom of the ocean. Interpreted as images of the artist herself? Rather than an exercise in narcissism however, Rist appears in grotesque anthropomorphic close-up as a type of female senu- ster. The work itself comes closest perhaps to the spirit of McCarthy at ArtSpace despite numerous dissimilarities. What unites them is an irreverence and lack of 'taste', set in sharp relief to an exhibition dedicated overtly and overtly tasteless in its presentation.

Visiting the Biennale is like shopping. What we are shopping for we find in convenient retrospective bundles. More often we are presented with a group of familiar works by well known and respected contemporary artists. The act of looking then becomes an act of discrimination for each work is of comparable quality and historical importance. What it becomes is an instance of 'I really like the Richters but the Offils?' Certainly this does not make the works any more worthwhile. In other pre-conditions, however, it is a museological experience at odds with expectations of the contemporary, the difficult, the contentious. It is iron- ic that the most original point of conten- tion in the show is Chris Offils' 'infamous' dung paintings. These vital and energetic works are further distanced from us metaphorically courtesy of a message from Australian quarantine. The implication of the standard 'Do not touch' becomes 'Do not touch or you will contract something.'

The Biennale of Sydney 2000, almost despite much of the work it contains, has become just another art show. Admittedly it is large and prestigious yet it lacks the necessary vision to make it an event. It seems remarkable that such an exhibition succeeds in revealing nothing about conditions of contemporary art production. This is the promise that lies at the heart of every Biennale regardless of whether it has proclaimed itself an 'historical survey'. Even so-called 'historical shows' appear problematically under attended and imaginary curatorial direction. It would be a disaster if the continuity of the Biennale were endangered. It is the only survey of art produced in Australia and most likely in Australia. Perhaps this thought larks behind this year's exhibition for it is a show which cannot fail and in consistently not failing, neither do is illuminate or demonstrate possi- bilities for the future.


For an engaging and sometimes provoca- tive collection of reactions to the Biennale, see Critical Mass, 12th Biennale of Sydney 2000, edited by Susan Best, Charles Green and Simon Reynolds and ArtSpace (1999), I very much hope that in the collection is of the Biennale in terms of globalisation, most elaborately and passion- ately (and alarmingly) explored by Green in "What is to be done with the Sydney Biennale?" in which he offers provocative answers to his question—proposes well worth debate. Responding to works in the Biennale, Jacqueline Milherr offers another stimulating proposition—"It is no longer a crime to speak of beauty in contemporary art", but rather an enchanting and challenging strategy. "Chris Chapman and John Comos rank the Biennale's video selection highly, whatever the event's other shortcomings. In fact the pleasure the writers found in many of the works in the Biennale and, conversely, the disappointment, even anger they felt over the event's failure to generate some sense of meaning or reflection of con- temporary art practice, provides the collec- tion with a compelling dynamic. The 12th Biennale is minimally popular and pitifully (but aided along by a free admission policy) and adored for the most part by mainstream art reviewers. Critical Readings puts that success in perspective with this collection of essays, and other writers are: Rex Butler, Blake French, Tord Ross, Susan Best, Jill Bennett, Andrew McNamara and Beth Jackson. KG
The Melbourne Festival: big and little

Virginia Baxter

Jonathan Mills launched his Melbourne International Festival in a series of intimate occasions around the country. In one such event, I joined a group of arts writers around the table for lunch at Chicane, one of Sydney's elegant, 'Melbourne-style' restaurants. Between courses, the director elaborated on the ingredients that comprise his idiosyncratic festival.

Aside from the much publicised Bach component there's a good deal to tempt the contemporary performance audience—an impressive 7 world premieres by Australian companies including Chunky Move in a triple bill choreographed by Gideon Oberananek, Philip Adams and Kim Ish from Japan; Ice Gargantua, a collaboration between the Contemporary Music Events, Dance Works and Six Degrees Architects, Chamber Made Opera in Concert: A Synthetic Life, combining digital media and visual theatre effects, directed by Douglas Horton, composed by Michael Smetanin with text by Alison Croggon. St Martins Youth Arts Centre tackles the continuum between technophobia and technophilia in orb-IT. Among the highlights of the outdoor festival in Ngaluul-The Rainbow Serpent presented by Raymond Blanc's Melbourne Dance Australia in collaboration with France's celebrated street theatre company Plasticiens Volants. Meat Party, a play by Vietnamese-Australian playwright Doang Le Quey, will be directed by Michael Kantor, and Lucy Guerin presents her eagerly anticipated new work, The Ends of Things: Everything is running out. Along with the milk and the last of the toothpaste, time and reason are coming to an end. Behind the unremarkable actions of everyday routine are the deranged inner machinations of a mind about to say goodbye.

Among the international works

Compared to Melbourne's achievements, France presents Le Jardin à l'Infini comprising 100 dance fragments, each a minute in length, inspired by the ideas of Stravinsky. The culture program includes Argentina's El Periferico de Objetos with Maquina Hamlet which weaves Heiner Müller's text with puppetry and projections to reflect on Argentinean politics in Argentina. Jonathan Mills describes it as 'harrowing but unforgettable' and you believe him.

There are several happy returns: Israel's Batsheva Dance Company with their powerful signature work Anapathse seen at the Kosky's 1996 Adelaide Festival, a big hit in Adelaide this year and at Expo 2000 in Hanover, The Theft of Sita tours into Melbourne with its wild mix of serious jazz and Indonesian gamelan orchestra plus 150 shadow puppets. Then there's the solo wonder that is Bobby Baker—last seen a few years ago at the MCA in Sydney, rolling herself up in a canvas pancake painted with the food of her post-natal degeneration. This time she explores 7 virtues as featured on the supermarket shelf in How to Shop. (We notice fresh brans on the shelves still attracts GST.) Geoffrey Rush relives his happy day of school in Neil Armfield's very popular production of The Small Poppies and Company. It Bombay and MTC are conducting a two-handed by Yasmina Reza called The Unexpected Man.

A man and a woman sit opposite each other in the detached intimacy of a train carriage. He is a famous author, she carries a copy of his latest novel in her bag and pondersthe dilemma of reading it in front of him.

At the centre of the visual arts program is ESNBY, a series of international exhibitions and events exploring artist-run and independent galleries throughout the Asia-Pacific region at the Centre for Contemporaneous Photography. Lineage focuses on the work of Daniel Liebskind, an architect known for his multi-disciplinary approach melding music, philosophy and art with architecture. And appropriately, the Instrumental exhibition features the work of Australian stringed instrument makers curated by the director of Cadis Victoria, Kevin Murray. And, of course, it's the music program that resonates in this Melbourne Festival. Jonathan Mills is clearly pleased with his Bach centrepiece: In fact, after all that divinity Melbourne may very well lift up her Victorian skirts and hover aloft.

This may explain the festival's earthing opening event, Seven Deadly Sins—the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra playing works by Kurt Weill and John Adams conducted by Marcus Stenz and featuring American coloratura Laura Aikin. But from then on it's a Bachanal—17 days of cantatas and vocal masterworks staged in honour of the 250th anniversary of the composer's death. This most ambitious of musical celebrations features some of the world's finest interpreters of Bach including Germany's famous vocal ensemble Cantus Köln directed by Iustit Konrad Jungshiel, The Choir of Trinity College Melbourne with the Bytown Ensemble directed by Michael Leighton-Jones and Greg Dikmans. The Australian Bach Ensemble directed by Antony Chesterman, the world renowned boys choir, Windsbacher Knabenchoir with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and conducted by Karl-Friedrich Berenger, Collegium Vocalé Gent directed by Philippe Herreweghe, the acclaimed Bach Collegium from Japan directed by Masaki Suzuki and, for just for the hell of it, the Jacques Lussier Trio.

But if you balk at Bach, there's jazz vocalist Freddy Cole, the 'undisputed voice of Greek Song', Maria Farantouri, a Chamber Music Sunset Series chosen by Mills himself, the Harlem Gospel Choir, Quator Mosaïques, the Australian Chamber Orchestra with violinist Ivy Gollin, a Gilbert and Sullivan show and some eccentricities from Edith Sitwell performed by VCA Opera.

'Great art is often very personal and particular,' says Jonathan Mills. 'Its impact is achieved by extraordinary insight into ordinary events and circumstances. Very personal moments, intimate experiences, simple objects provide the opportunity to discover monumental truths.'

Melbourne International Festival of the Arts, October 19 - November 4 www.melbournefestival.com.au
Teaching new media: aiming at a moving target

Josephine Starrs and Leon Cmielieski

Tertiary institutions everywhere are setting up new media departments, their computer labs bulging with students eager to skill up for the 21st century in which it seems everyone wants to be a web designer.

New media artists tend to be critical of the current fine art institutions. We like to supply a hacker mentality to our approach not only to technology but systems in general, whether they be social systems or the media themselves. Our interest in the area of new technologies is fuelled by a mixture of scepticism (who is excluded from technology and why would anyone want to live there anyway?) as well as enthusiasm for the playful possibilities of digital media. Our own work which includes the User Unfriendly Interface, Pennroid Interface and the Bio-Tek kitchen game patch (www.amat.org.au/resistant-media/Bio-Tek) deconstructs current interface and game paradigms, subverting them to reveal that our experiences are being increasingly mediated by new technologies and that there are dangers inherent in this trend.

At UWS we introduce students to different online and gaming cultures, cyber-feminism, hacktivism and 'Tactical Media', which is rather slippery term used to describe the practices of a loose alliance of international media theorists, artists, designers and activists. We also expose people to the enormous amount of interesting and playful work which is being made around the globe. Often what excites the students excites us and, as play and pleasure have always been an integral part of our work, we encourage people to do the same and sometimes get real results—work which can inspire and entertain us all.

Thanks to Robyn Stacey and Sarah Waterman (School of Design, UWS Nepean) and Brad Miller (College of Fine Arts, UNSW) for their valuable input into this article.

Josephine Starrs and Leon Cmielieski are artists and lecturers in new media at the School of Design, University of Technology Sydney, Nepean. Their latest work Dream Kitchen is an interactive stop motion animation CD-ROM (http://ysys.org/dreamkitchen). See Working the Screen, page 6
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A u s t r a l i a ' s U n i v e r s i t y o f t h e Y e a r . . . . . a g a i n
The knife and the stethoscope: pedagogy in performance

Barry Lating

The word pedagogue was at one time taken to refer to the person who escorted or accompanied a child to and from a place of instruction—a guide—though later, and contemporaneously, to mean the one who instructs. There is something in this image which moves—guided tamed between home and school—reflecting the metaphorical, figurative and practical possibilities for a pedagogy positioned in this liminal space between.

In 2 recent performance work- shops at Dancehouse, Melbourne—Little Tyrranies, Bigger Lies and Descent/Descent and Desire—I attempted to structure the work in such a way as to confront the demands of a skills base (technique), and also engage artistically with the play of appearances in performance—with what might be called imaginative practice. In general, the work was drawn from combinations of theatre and dance strategies, and the performances that ensue may be described as between these forms in varying degrees.

I was concerned to stage a pedagogy that was audacious in its resistance to resolution into one set of formal or aesthetic preoccupations, defying the tendency to harden into its own discursive position. The idea of staging a pedagogy derives from the performa- tive metaphor which conflates any inquiry into pedagogy to performance with the dismantling of the performance/s in pedagogy. The teaching itself was concerned primarily with the work of the performer and questions of presence and absence. The work proceeded under the provocative shadow of an attempt to teach and practice performance-making “while knowing that there is, in the field of knowing, a script of theatricality over our lives.” (Blau, “Ideology and Performance”, Theatre Journal, Vol 33, No 4, 1983).

The character of performance, psychologist James Hillman has said that wherever there is resistance, there is body (Giroux Pando, “The Angel’s Hideout: Between Dance and Theatre”, Performance Research, Vol 5, No 2, 1990). Body, as a good red wine. Body in the sense of the materialisation of images and the imagina- tion. Body which realises the invisible and makes it visible. Such resistance was adopted as a working principle in physical, practical and imaginative strategies engaged by the performers in the workshops. The second major working principle concerned the notion of embracing a kind of vio- lence—not the staging of a representation of the pornography of violence but, rather, participa- tion in a pedagogical or dramatical practice “which would not (necessarily) originate in a good nature and a good will, but which would come from a violence suffered by thought” (Gilles Deleuze & Claire Parnet, Dialogues, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). Antonin Artaud suggested a kind of violence which he informed in the notion of a Theatre of Cruelty. He defined cruelty as first and foremost “cruelty to ourselves” (Artaud, Theatre and Its Double, New York: Grove Press, 1964).

The titles of the workshops suggest these working principles of resistance and violence in a kind of affective, imaginative and metaphorical guise—performative rules that helped focus the work and offer a site for reflection. In the first workshop, the notion that ‘a little tyranny needs a bigger lie’ was tested in practical terms via the working principles above. Tyrranies may be understood as discursive, like the discourse of the Real, of Truth and Emotion in certain kinds of theatre. Metaphorically, the scope is wide: mask/practice, spatial dynam- ics, linear time, political correctness, entrenched dance vocabular- ies, or anxiety. Lies can be con- strued as fictions, illusions, image, artefact—as contrary, for example, to the little tyranny of capital T Truth outlined above. LIES under- stood and practiced as fictional transgressions, pretense, inno- vence, stupidity, laughter and re-presentations (see Barry Lating, “Little Tyrranies, Bigger Lies: A Letter from the Other Side”, Performance Research, Vol 5, No 2, 1990).

In the second workshop, Descent/Descent and Desire, the group worked with and against gravity in all its material and metaphorical rich- ness—literally, with height, the body, resistance and momentum, and metaphorically, with defi- ance, heroism, scandal, insolence and weightlessness. In defying gravity—when gravity is, say, anxiety—is it possible to fall into fiction, resisting gravity and the weight of the world by going with its flow? In this regard, the two workshops were not discrete in focus. There was also a large overlap of participants in the 2 workshops, drawn from many backgrounds—actors, dancers, musicians, sound engineers, librarians and teachers—challenging the terms of pedagogy and keeping the work strong between figures.

A major part of the practical, physical work in both workshops was a long series of layered variations on a body of work called The Knife and the Stethoscope. The preparations for this involved group and individual work with movement, text and music. In the first instance, the performers were introduced to a physical archi- tecture for the body that was called, variously, Mr or Ms New. The architecture is simple, though detailed combination of physical proposi- tions drawn from Feldenkrais, Alexander, mar-

Where pedagogy or teaching is concerned, how might the assumption of, and desire for, the security of knowing (by both teacher and student) be met with an equally powerful and yet passive fall into learning?

Olyssa Angel, Noel Passey-Hollon

Mick Argues, Peter Fraser, Darren Stoffer

Daniel Witten

photos Barry Lating & Kim Cullen

Barry Lating is a freelance performer, director and teacher based in Melbourne. He teaches in Performance Studies at Victoria University, Footscray. He has trained and worked extensively in Australia, the UK and France.
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...the concepts that much of social and political philosophy has embraced... make change impossible insofar as they are static and rigid representational concepts that lack the fluidity that is conducive to conceptualising change.

Dorothy Olkowski, Gilles Deleuze and the ruin of representation, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999

I have been thinking a good deal about the applicability of this statement to visual arts education since receiving the ACUADS (Australian Council of Art and Design Schools) March/April newsletter. This newsletter calls for papers for the ACUADS 2000 conference, which is to be held in Adelaide in September this year. The context for the conference is quite clear.

"Within a rapid and continually changing academic environment there is a need to identify strategies by which art and design schools can develop and exert greater self determination and leadership and increase creative achievement and satisfaction" (ACUADS March/April Newsletter). I would agree. These goals appear appropriate and necessary. The preamble continues "The conference aims to reinforce the role of Level A, B and C lecturers as leaders in the development of visual arts, crafts and design, as well as key contributors to the wider 'professional' arts sector." It was at this point that Olkowski’s caution began to register. What concepts are we embracing? Do these concepts change effect and, if so, are we happy to live with the direction of those changes?

"Bear this caution in mind I would ask, what are the concepts under which which art and design schools have come to operate? I want to return for a moment to the proposed conference and to the way in which it has been framed. In an environment of economic rationalism, we are told, the language ‘we’ use has changed. This change in language is part of a strategy to gain greater recognition for the value of the arts in the community. Artists (we now know) are professionals. We work in an ‘arts industry’ in which outputs can be measured in terms of employment, investment and export potential. Since we are in ‘business’ we need business skills—marketing, promotional and financial management skills. We need to set in place codes of practice to provide the necessary ‘benchmarks’ and ensure ‘reasonable’ compliance to those codes. Our art and design schools need to adopt models of training to bridge the gap between training and professional practice. Further, in our art and design schools and in our profession, we need to ensure ‘best practice’ so that we are able to broker partnerships, engage in resource sharing and utilisation, find external sources of revenue, be flexible and find the best options, solutions and actions. The image created seems familiar. The words roll so easily off the tongue that we barely stop to ponder what we have said. But what if we stop talking for a moment and savour the words. Weigh them up. Draw out the implications of using them.

I want to ask, what is gathered up in a word? What does it mean to engage in "best practice", to adopt a "training model" in art and design schools, to define "codes of practice" or simply reinforce the role of Level A, B and C lecturers? Are these words simply words or do they have a greater power? Is an image just an image? To ask such questions is to evoke the conundrum that haunts art theory and practice during the 20th century. What is the relationship between representation and reality? Does representation reflect or produce ‘reality’? If the former, are we destined to our fate as a subject to the law of miasmatisation? If the latter, do we become complicit in producing the very monster that in turn subjects us to its laws? Representation produces the prototype and this prototype proliferates in copies. Either way, it seems that our representational concepts significantly shape and structure our world. Talk like a manager and that’s what you are or what you will become.

So, what is the language of managerialism doing in art and design schools? Isn’t it a contradiction in terms? Graham Sullivan argues that art schools are going through an "identity crisis." This crisis stems from their incorporation into the "academy" (i.e. the unified system of universities) in the 1980’s at a time when the universities were becoming increasingly subject to the laws and language of economic rationalism (Sullivan G, "An Identity Crisis for Art Education", Arttime Vol 19, No 2, 1999). Like all university departments and faculties, art and design schools took on the language of managerialism in order to "get butts on seats", to be accountable and satisfy the number crunchers. But has this effort led to greater self determination and leadership or to an increase in creative achievement and satisfaction? It seems not. The effect has been to produce a generalised anxiety and pessimism about art and design schools. Art teachers and administrative staff (this panic and pessimism is clearly laid out in Rodney Cracker’s "How the tail now wags the dog", Arttime Vol 19, No 2, 1999). It could be argued that art and design schools are trembling with fearful anxiety about what comes next and how their positions might be reserved. The problem of "fearful anxiety" is that it leads to lack of faith about the future, a pessimism about what is possible and a submission to the order of things.

The ACUADS conference preamble suggests one response to the problem at hand. Get better at being managerial. Become a faithful copilot and join the ranks. Yet this, in my opinion, is a reverent nimming. I think there is need to be less reverential and polite. Perhaps we need to be much more playful and do what we, as artists and designers (as well as lecturers and administrators) know and think altogether differently (here I am referring to Deleuze’s development of difference in his book Difference and Repetition, 1994).

To think altogether differently is to be playful and creative. I want to contrast the "fearful anxiety" that is radiating from art school administrations with the "playful anxiety" that is anticipated of students studying in art and design schools. "Playful anxiety" is productive (the notions of 'fearful anxiety' and "playful anxiety" developed here derive from Kierkegaard’s understanding of anxiety). It is the anxiety one experiences in the face of the indeterminate; not knowing what will happen but nevertheless being prepared to make that leap. Thus art students are expected to be inventive and edgy. They are encouraged to play with new possibilities, get off the grid and out of their comfort zones. They are provoked to leap into the void and break new ground. How then can art and design schools expect this leap of faith from their students if they can’t also keep faith in that possibility? How can a fearful anxious administrator consider a playful anxious arts community?

The forthcoming ACUADS conference is a critical event for evaluating just where art and design schools "think" they are going. It is my hope that the delegates do not accept unquestioningly the agenda that has been set before them, but use the conference as a forum to go back to basics. I believe that what is at stake is far more thanful and that we have been prepared to concede. The concepts that we have come to accept and use unquestioningly are static and rigid representations of concepts. They lack the fluidity that is conducive to conceptualising change. They fix us in position and disable us. They engender fear and trembling.

Perhaps, as Sullivan has argued, we remain far too polite and subservient in our responses. "Enough is enough!" We should begin again to practice what we preach. Art and design schools should be inventive, edgy and break new ground. We should leap into the void and become chameleons for the day. Otherwise, what sort of leadership can art and design schools provide?

How can fearful anxious administrators engender a playful anxious arts community?
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Certainly, doing justice to both the theorising about and making of dance work is difficult. It requires skill in juggling and expertise in very different forms of knowledge.

The dance unfolds

Virginia Baxter

We've been watching Rosalind Crisp for a good while now. As a dancer-choreographer she's made more than her share of moves but always working through-line and across to research and careful development. We have followed her trajectory through many solo and collective projects including a continuing persona in The Lucy Project, the dance theatre works in Dining Room, dance-music collaborations such as Prettymum (with Keiko Takeyos Contemporary Dance Company, Tokyo). We've enjoyed her evolving collaboration with composer Jon Pearce, her dialogue with dancer/writer Eleanor Brickhill. More recently she has concentrated her attention on choreographing for an idiosyncratic company of young female dancers and herself called Stela.

Riclastriction (1-40) showed us a further development of an ongoing work which we last saw at ArtSpace in January this year (The View From Here). In this latest version, as well as the core dancers, Crisp has opened the process to a broader range of bodies. An advertisement was placed for people interested in participating, 30 turned up and most of them appear in one magical sequence in accumulation. They arrive quietly on stage, lend a different weight and texture to the work with their own physical signatures (dancer) bodies, then leave. Watching them work in unison is a strangely moving experience.

Observing the evolution of this dance, you venture a possible direction for the next version. In accumulation, drama lurks at the edges of the observation. The possibilities are vast, the feet are visible in the half light, working the floor. In another space a solo dancer invents a dance she knew before." Ion Pearce's score, this time recorded, seems a little less Zen, more obviously and insistently rhythmic. Richard Manner's lighting is quietly dramatic marking out evocative spaces. You sense it wouldn't take much for the dance to tip-toe into the theatrical without surrendering any of its choreographic seriousness. Some of the performers project identities, even palpable personalities. Being caught by Natalia Watt's intense gaze or watching Eleanor Brickhill's concentrated dance of tiny adjustments and changes of mind, it's hard to see them as purely formal presences. At the same time, this is a work about dancing—it's also constructed in layers, it's mathematical, cumulative. Aid it all is revealed in the penultimate sequence when some of the intricate patterns are unpicked by the dancers in a line-up in which a series of interlocking, accumulative gestures slip and slide out of sync. It ends also as the story of articulating joints. It's dance we could watch for hours. We await its further unfolding.

Roadland Crisp, stella h. and guests, accula-
tion (1-40), the outcome of a Performance Space residency, choreography and direction Richard Manner, composer Stela.

Eleanor Brickhill, dance & treatment of mate-
rial Natalla Watt, Kathy Macdonald, Danielle
Site for Research, Brownfte Riche, Laurie Foster, sound Iom Pearce, lighting Richard Manner. Performance Space, July 13-16.

When can the teacher dance? Shaun McLeod

With access to funding more competitive and scarce than ever, the relationship between universities and dance is one that has emerged as a vital area for many artists and educators. With the trend of emphasizing cost-effectiveness and the restriction of arts education and the reduction of arts funding, the collaboration of university and independent arts space is becoming more crucial than ever. As we move into the new millennium these partnerships are gaining new significance. The academy has been a traditional source of valuable employment for many dancers and choreographers but a new dimension has recently emerged where choreographers are engaging with the research paradigms of universities. Melbourne has seen a number of joint ventures and full-time positions for university students returning to postgraduate studies in dance as a way of deepening their practice and extending their careers. The universities have also become more explicit in their demands that practitioners who are also lecturers/teachers become better qualified academically. This has led dancers to engage with theoretical constructs in ways that did not exist 10 years ago. But what sort of a marriage is it, this meshing of the academy and practice? And how do the artists themselves view the intersection of dance and theory? The relationship is in contention but both the Melbourne choreographers and a performance maker, some interesting themes emerged about this increasingly occasionally uncomfortable relationship.

For choreographer Anna Smith, who teaches technique seasonally and is a research associate at the Victorian College of the Arts, the relationship is so peculiarly political she can do without it. She feels a lot of the support and access to resources the work gives her and is philosophically about the impact the teaching work has on her own practice. She often finds it problematic trying to separate her teaching from her choreographic practice, even though both require a different focus and intent. But the job does have a positive side to it and value for it what it gives me which is the space in the studio and a lot of support—not just financial support but also people walking in. I could go and talk to someone in the lobby and say you could just have a look at this.

This appreciation of the support universities provide was echoed by all the artists I talked to. The job of teaching strict was also often a big attraction. Damien Reid, ex-Dance Works dancer, choreographer and dance-video maker has been teaching technique, composition, and theory at Deakin University's Raulston campus for 4 years now. Teaching for him is an extension of her skills as a performance-maker and an opportunity to try new ways of delivering the material, such as her highly performative lectures—a major hit with first year theory students. She loves the investigative environment of the university but also values her time detached from performance and tailor courses which reflect both her own artistis interests and the needs of the students. She is currently developing a dance-video unit for third year Bachelor of Contemporary Arts students, allowing her to combine teaching requirements with her passion for dance and the camera. The downside of having an ongoing position is the loss of profile. Suddenly Reid has become strictly a dance educator not an artist, something that clearly riles. "You tend to disappear people's eyes when you are at a university."

The sheer workload for full-time teachers also has an impact. Multi-disciplinary artist Margaret Tapp, not strictly a choreographer but whose work is often seen in dance contexts such as Dancehouse) has been teaching full-time for 2 years at Victoria University of Technology in the Performance Studies course. While she loves teaching, the first 18 months of full-time work were challenging. Rocked by the demands of the teaching workload and adminis-
The attractions of Reel Dance

Karen Pearlman

Abracadabra opens Reel Dance and, as with any good password to any good world of wonders, transplantation begins immediately.

Philippe Decoufle's 1998 dance film (France) is an excellent password for this particular dance film festival, which goes right past mundane questions of 'is it really dance?' to the much more intriguing questions of how physical languages and cinematic languages might intersect.

Abracadabra begins at the beginning of this question by linking dance to early cinema. A series of what film theorist Tom Gunning calls "attractions" are displayed. The word attraction partly refers to attraction as in circus act or novelty. Decoufle reveals in this meaning, presenting danced oddities and bizarre displays with great glee. Then there is the attraction people have to the trompe d'oeil or cinematic trick of the eye. The viewer's eyes are tricked overtly and inver- tially through various devices in Abracadabra, such as the use of deep focus creating illusions of distance and differences of scale between foreground and back- ground objects and actions. The final vignette is an acrobatic display in which the dancer is incrusted, the eye that attracts our attention.

This combination of attractions is one of the things that Reel Dance seems to propose defines dance on screen: physicality far enough outside of the norm to present itself as an attraction, combined with the many cinematic conventions that have evolved through and since early cinematic tricks of the eye. It's not exactly a new form, but it's an intriguing combination—making use of the conventions of cinema with dancing rather than acting as a vehicle for conveying conventional stories.

This combination was explored throughout the weekend, with many of the films drawing on particular film genres and infringing them with particular forms of dance. Dancers from the Frankfurt Ballet were involved in an overlong but intriguing dance in the genre of science fiction called The Way of the Weed (Belgium). Wim Vandekeybus contributed The Last Words, a magic realist fantasy film driven by physicality rather than being about it. Nausik (Netherlands), brilliantly directed by Clara van Vool, referenced gritty, naturalist filmmaking, set in a run-down housing develop- ment in the middle of an icy winter. Combining this cinematic style with the tango, a most elegant, precise and aristocratic dance, created a fervish heat and chilling beauty.

Not all films were equally successful in their intersection of the capacities of cinema with physicality although the 2 films that appealed the least shared the prize for Best Screen Choreography at IMC dance screen 99. Margaret Williams' Dust (UK) felt like it depended mainly on the cinematic conventions of advertising with its beautiful but meaning less shots, textures, angles, cutting and sound. Her film Mens iritated with its cute bureaucrat exploiting men over 70 and beautiful landscapes—just like a National Geographic documentary making the extremes of nature into comfortable TV.

On the other hand, La Tristes Concipio (Belgium), a film which exploited the cinematic tradition of verité documentar- y most subtly and poetically, was not an audience favorite. Perhaps people were irritated by the grainy degraded quality of the image and the odd marks and scratches which flashed by on the screen. However, these could be viewed as cinematic expres- sions of the subject matter, the elevation of the everyday, degraded and scratchy as it may be, to the status of image, and the manipulation of the dynamics of those mov- ing images into an art of the ordinary. Verité documentary often has odd flashes of beauty caught more by perseverance than by plan, and this film seemed to make a choreo- graphy of these images of dancers laugh- ing, eating, smoking, arguing and passing the languages of their bodies and lives to each other. The film was itself a dance, made in the editing suite, and, since it is documenting a rehearsal, the editor's marks—the cinemagraph pencil marks for dis- solves and cuts—were left on the image as clues to the working process of making this film dance.

The selections representing Australian work in Dance on Screen, as finalities for the Reel Dance Awards, were surprising and intriguing, the films presented in the histori- cal retrospective session a bit less so. It is certainly tricky to present a whole country's output (since the beginning of its engage- ment with the form) in one session, which perhaps explains why, in a festival that had a very strong curatorial vision throughout, the retrospective session seemed to lack focus and momentum. However, in the Dance Awards screen- ing, a much stronger through line appeared. There were very few well-known dancers or dance companies—almost none of the usual suspects. Instead, maverick filmmakers experimenting with the moving image through the device of moving bodies pre- vailed. There was a strong emphasis on the choreography which takes place in post pro- duction—after the dance has been danced and the film has been shot—through editing and digital effects. The tricks of the eye become trickier, more apparent, less illusory precisely because they couldn't possibly happen in 'real life.' But as manipulations of the moving body they are the definition of choreography. They are the manipulation of the dynamics, rhythms, shapes and causes of movement, even though a real body could never do these 'post produced' moves. They are dance attractions engaging with the new form of cinematic attractions—the digitally generated tricks of the eye.

Finally, there were even magic words uttered at the closing ceremony of Reel Dance. Annette Shun Wah, chair of One Extra, expressed the hope that Reel Dance (a One Extra event) would "inspire", and sent the spectators forth from this world of wonders, saturated with the potency of its images and ideas, to create next year's attractions.

One Extra Dance Company, Reel Dance, curated by Erin Brannigan, Reading Cinema, Sydney, May 19-21

Karen Pearlman's most recent dance films are Rubberman Accepts the Nobel Prize and A Dancer Drops Out Of The Sky. She is co-director, with Richard James Allen, of The Physical TV Company

Winning Films:
In the Heart of the Eye
director Margie Medlin
choreographer Sandra Parker

Traversing Sense
directors Sherridan Green & Leah Grycewicz
& Helke Muller

Interior
directors Jessica Wallace & Michelle Heaven
choreography Michelle Heaven

Potsdamer
director Samuel James
choreographer-performer Martin del Amo

Over the choreographic precipice

Julia Postle

Improvisation in whatever form is about freedom; freedom of expression at the most overt level, throwing off all the restric- tions and codes of artistic creation and replacing them with a spontaneous explo- ration of the very process of creating art. That it is art in process and simultaneously 'in product' is what makes us, as observers, in a new relationship with the performers.

In dance, improvisation as a mode of performance represents fluidity, play and immediate impact in contrast to the often rigid struc- ture and form of choreographed movement. Sally Banes, in her 1993 text Democracy's Body, describes improvisation's extremity best: "If all dance is evanescent, disappearing the moment it has been performed, improvisation emphasizes that evanescence to the point that the identity of the dance is attenuated, leaving few traces in written scores, or even memory."

In May, the Choreographic Centre hosted a workshop of improvisation, featuring the work of 4 groups that have embraced improvisation for the development of their performance. Familiar to Melbourne audien- ces, the groups were in Canberra as part of the third annual Precipice event.

Peter Trotman and Lynne Santos
(Both) Their improvisation starts with heavy movement—and enemies sweeping. Then it floats—the hands flexed. They are giving into their own weight, moving in isolation and yet there are moments of connection in the ran- doness. The pace increases and the move- ment becomes more abrupt, but there is still continued on page 16
The body apart—a new dance film

Jonathan Marshall

The centrality of the abstract yet highly physical concept of the body in contemporary criticism renders our material form as the supreme subject of cultural, psycho-physiological forces. From Signoramy Weaver to genetic engineering. Artistic to dance music, the body has become a mesmerising omnipresent object which is gazed at, deconstructed, theorised, disdained and choreographed. Choreography and criticism replicate a form of social violence which the body must routinely endure.

This insensitivity to the needs of the body as a living body—a critical-choreographic refusal of the soft body—is forcefully rendered in dance-maker Brett Daffy's film Stark White. Daffy formally acted as the archetypal self-emulating, queer 'hardboy' of Gideons Obamam's early choreography and his independent dance procedures from this precedent. With Stark White, Daffy's disconcertingly pliable anatomy is pulled apart and reformulated in horrifying compelling, 'unnatural' ways. This happens both internally—Daffy choreographing Daffy—and externally—women pulling at his limbs, angrily manipulating his joints, and grabbing at his forms, before these bodies too undersate under the influence of an internal, psychophysical aphasia. The dancer moves from the bewildered 'yearn of others' psychosomatic rejection to the primary subject of these forces, awakening to find himself enmeshed in an ethereal landscape of physical and architectural repetition.

Brett Daffy extends this choreographic violence into the cinematic language of Stark White. He and director Sherriian Green reject the tendency of dance film to sew together isolated fragments so as to reconstruct a single, moving body. Image, sound and gesture are fragmented by the very processes of filmic production, and there is little attempt here to bring them back together. Stark White is not a montage of random material, but it does not conceal the brutality of its production. Like the protagonist, the audience is forced to recall its own position as producer of the cinematic experience— as flickering eyes and aural filters—fragmenting the film even as one attempts to draw it into coherence. Daffy, Green and composer Luke Smiles are therefore unconcerned by the body bringing out of shot or gaps in the linearity of sound and image. The film jumps and shudders, creating something akin to a great, fast car backfiring crystalline apopthegm as it bouncy hops down a tilted, scratched suburban road.

Daffy nevertheless prevents his work from becoming consistent with implicitly sadomasochistic, misogynistic or simply oppressively voyeuristic modes prevalent in advertising, painting (especially the nude), dance and ballet. He achieves this by placing himself and not the women at the centre of the literal and metaphorical technologies of the work. The cinematic focus and choreographic violence spirals around his form and disorientation, his alienation and recovery. After seeing him both literally and metaphorically stripped and shaved, our gaze forces his body into the realm of sexual ambivalence and ambiguity. He is transfigured, a queer Christ perhaps. Like Calvin Klein's models, Daffy lies beyond the heterosexual. Unlike advertorial homoeroticism though, this transmutation (this crucifixion?) is achieved through ecstatically painful disembowelment, by castrating bodily parts and gestures such that monsters are born. The finale leaves us with this sexual breast flapping through the axial patterns elaborated in Leonardo's Ecce homo, yet menaced by the possibility of psychological, sexual and physical hybridity that one sees in Hieronymous Bosch. A post-human for our age of monsters.


Over the choreographic precipice

continued from page 15

a seeming softness to their joints.

There are static moments; then they are leaning into and later onto each other, pushing away and falling upon. There is a thrumming of hands. "Heart bearing pulse racing eyes blinking tongue licking," Trotman bluntly says.

There's a story to this performance, but where it ended up I have no idea...

State of Flux

The focus here is more on contact improvisation... physical support, touch, suspension of weight. The duet between the two performers, one in a wheelchair, conveyed the honesty of contact improvisation. There are chance funny moments...he balances on her lap, testifies position his bums is in her face...and intimate moments...wheelchair discarded, rolling on the floor, moving over each other...and some pretty chunky moments too...the unaeasiness and heaviness of it all, bodies not intuitively sensing each other's next movement. Sometimes it seems like the distance between the individuals is expansive; at other times it seems like the group is a single entity.

Five Square Metres

There's a definite fluidity to this group; the 4 performers are expressive and frequently quite silly. The wit and chatter is all a vital part of the improvisation. The use of breath is another clever layer of the performance...sigh, deep inhalations and exhalations, all uttered on top of each other and set against equally staccato movement, such as snuffling in face and bumping into each other. There seems to be more of a narrative than in the other events on the program. The movement is but one element of the performance, and more driven by the group than the individual, almost a kind of expression of community.

Gallymaufry

Andrew Mortish brings out his mike, Madeleine Flynn plucks her violin and Tim Humphrey toots the trumpet. Mortish does most of the talking, absurd little phrases really, amusing as part of the situation. "I've been dreaming after hours." The music is cartoon-like in the way it complements his prattle. He steps away from the microphone, arms reaching, then stretching gently, he steps out into more dynamic movement. Humphrey is yelling, "Open that door and jump!" Is it a command for Mortish or for us? Madeleine goes to the accordion and Mortish is moving again. It's the funny mismatch of music, word and movement that gives the performance its meaning.

In an evening full of humour and more than the usual risk-taking, these groups created new performances and challenged us as observers to do a little risk-taking of our own.

Precipice: on and over the edge, The Choreographic Centre, Canberra, May 26-28

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Stark White

RealTime 38 August - September 2000 16
A reckless missionary: Chris Doyle's way with words

Juanita Kwok

Chris Doyle is everywhere. After winning acclaim in Asia and the attention of Hollywood his signature use of saturated colour, the lighting and scattered camera work has become the international grammar of music videos and advertising. He is crossing the globe on film and commercial shoots. He made time to be at the Sydney Film Festival for the weekend opening of both his debut feature film Away With Words and Rick Farquharson's documentary, Orientations. Chris Doyle: Stirred Not Shaken.

In Orientations, he posed the question, "The problem with being so-called cut edge is that you cut the edge and there's nothing left so where do you go? For someone whose aesthetic is so widely imitated, how does he manage to keep his edge?"

"Why are the best cinematographers and some of the best directors in Hollywood outsiders? They have have and always will be outsiders because you have to look at something from a different perspective... I do that mainly by living in cultures that I'm very familiar with, but I have a certain edge. I don't have to conform to the conventions of that society because everyone knows I'm nuts first of all and secondly they know I'm from outside so that's a great freedom."

Doyle's experience of Hollywood came first hand when cash ran out while directing his first feature film, Away With Words, and he accepted a job as cinematographer on Gas Van Sant's remake of Psycho. Doyle has described working on Psycho as a "20 million dollar art project"—the film is bullish, the point is we tricked Hollywood out of $20 million to do Gas Van Sant PhD in Fine Arts.

Two weeks later, another job, this time on Barry Levinson's Liberty Heights, raised enough cash to complete the film.

How does Hollywood compare with working in Hong Kong?

"In Hollywood the crew spoke of filming as a 'show', there were rules about what you start work, what you finish, how long you have for lunch. That's not what I'm about, that's not what the group I work with is about."

The group that Doyle refers to is director Wong Kar-Wai and art director William Jung. Doyle has worked with them on films such as Chungking Express, Asbes Of Time and Happy Together. He took time out from the team to create his own personal vision in Away With Words.

"The title of the film is a pun, a way with words, a means of using words which is my job as a cinematographer, to translate words on a page into images, translate the appropriate gestures, the verbalisation of an actor into a certain energy. That happens to be what I've been doing for however many number of years and it has become very intuitive and personal for me."

Written, photographed and directed by Chris Doyle, Away With Words was inspired by writer Jorge Luis Borges and Russian psychiatrist Luria's insights into a mimenist, for whom every word is an image arranged along a street in his mind.

There are 2 central motif scenes in Away With Words. One is a sandy road leading to the sea, the childhood memory of Asano (Asano Tadanobu) and the metaphoric path—way of his mimenist's mind. The other is cross-dressing Irish Kevin (Kevin Scehrock) waking up in the Peak Police Station in Hong Kong, wondering where the fuck he is. The 2 characters, Asano (who remembers everything) and Kevin ("You could write a book about what I've forgotten") are brought together when Asano arrives in Hong Kong and sets up home in Kevin's 'Dive Bar'.

Between the 2 is Susie (Mavis Xu), a fashion designer, whose other job is to pick Kevin up after he has had too much too much.

Doyle, like Susie, is somewhere between the two. Just as Asano's memories are filled with the beach of his childhood, Doyle grew up near the beach before leaving Sydney in the 70's on a one-year journey that extended into over 30 years. Like Asano he ended up finding a home in Hong Kong. The characters represent aspects of himself and his experience, "Kevin is not an actor, he is a personal friend of mine."

While the Peak Police Station story is based on a real event, Kevin is not the only one, with a love of beer. Is it he or Doyle who usually ends up in the police station after a night of drinking? "Six of one and half a dozen of the other.

Does free verse visual poetry and a collection of memories and experience have something to say to an audience? "You write your first film because you have something to say, to get out of your system. Ultimately, making a film is about responsibility to yourself and to your own vision and if that connects with an audience that's good."

Away With Words connected with audiences in Japan where it gained a release in 20 cinemas, it has not yet found a distributor in Australia. Doyle describes the real test of a director as the second film, and admires Zhang Yimou for his tenacity in developing his craft and making films every year. Will Doyle direct another? "Yes, but I'd always prefer to be a good cinematographer to an interesting director."

Chris Doyle went back to collaborating with Wong Kar-Wai on In The Mood For Love, which earned him yet another award at Cannes this year. In Orientations, interviews with colleagues and with Doyle on the run between shoots, on the set and making collages in the studio, show his genius at work. Seen together at the Festival with Away With Words, you get a picture of a free spirit possessed of an unceasing energy and exceptional talent.

But Doyle shies adulation. "At the Hawaiian International Film Festival this year where he was awarded the Kodak Eastman Award for Excellence in Cinematography, he interrupted the presentation to complain of hyperbole in describing his merits. In Farquharson's words, all documentary he snaps back at a fan who starts her question "I'm a fan of yours and I'd like to take you out for a drink or twelve..." with "Why don't you go out and make your own fucking movie."

How do you reconcile this attitude with the likeable and humble man on stage at the State Theatre calling himself a 'missionary of cinema'? Maybe it's the fact that his family is in the audience, so he's on best behaviour. It's also part of his message to pursue your own personal vision. "To live rather than to theorise about it, that's my way. If you're gonna do films you should have the energy and the drive and the courage and the recklessness and also the life to say something to people."

Sydney Film Festival: Chris Doyle. Away With Words, Australian premiere; Destiny Opera Quays, June 17. Orientations, Chris Doyle: Stirred Not Shaken, premiere, State Theatre, June 17. will also be screening at the Melbourne and Brisbane Film Festivals. Chris Doyle was brought to Sydney by the Hong Kong Tourism Association and the Sydney Film Festival.

Juanita Kwok is co-director of the Sydney Asia Pacific Film Festival, a new film festival which screened at Reading Cinemas, Sydney, earlier this year.
Death is for the living and not the dead so much

Kirsten Kraulath

Seal's memorable lament, "and we're never going to survive unless we get a little crazy," permeated the Sydney Film Festival this year. Death, idiocy, survival, sanity decay were all very much on the agenda, revealing filmmakers willing to dig into their cultures and unseath rotting corpses: a man who builds electric chairs (Mr Death) and a celebration of the first electrification in an Indian village (Throne of Death); choreographed isolation and menace in northern Africa (Beau Travail) and a melancholy salute to Berlin (Berlin-Cinema) and 70s idealism (Jesu's Son). These films stand out amongst the wispy Eurocentric melange (The Legends of Rita, Une Liaison Pornographique, Sombreman's Action) to question the divisions (doco/feature, larc/tragedy, truth/fiction, image/text) that film tests are often still structured around.

In Errol Morris' coolly realised doco Mr Death, it's a relief to see a director willing to experiment stylistically with a form that has not changed much in 50 years. A soundtrack pulsing with fizzes of electricity courses through the film and introduces us to Fred a Leuchter, Jr, who redesigns electric chairs (and later, lethal injection machines and gallows) with the enthusiasm of a fan. His aim is to make extermination more "humane" and the examples he gives—a man whose head catches on fire (think The Green Mile), a man tortured for half an hour while the chair malfunctions and is fixed—means we are (in theory) sympathetic to his views. It's hard to tell whether Fred is naive or an epimania (and this is a strength of Morris' ambiguous direction) but the film's sudden slick (he's sent by Nazi sympathisers to go to "the epicentre of death" Auschwitz, to take (secret) samples in an attempt to prove that there were no gas chambers) adds a sinister edge to his fascination with death. What's most disturbing is that Fred truly believes he is the only person qualified to do this research (and he doesn't even bother to check his findings against 60 years of historical documentation). As Errol says with characteristic humour, Mr Death is frightening because 'Fred is everyday...when God created the Garden of Eden, he added self deception to the mix: 'things'll be horrible but they'll never notice.'

Throne of Death, Camera D'Or winner at Cannes (1999), takes this issue of American superiority and cultural imperialism to new extremes in its depiction of an Indian village, promoting its greatest new gadget—an electric chair—imported from the States. This exquisitely shot film works on the precipice of tragedy and irony: a poverty stricken man gains martyrdom, and a bronze plaque, when he is the first to be executed in the village; his wife and child get their first good feed for years in a last supper served by attentive waiters the night before his death. The political intricacies of village life are revealed in the well orchestrated celebration of the Chair's arrival—dancing girls, a sea of happy faces, moving speeches—and we (and they) are culpable in the knowledge that theaccused man is innocent.

A Brief History of Errol Morris is a thoughtfull parallel to both these films, offering insight into Morris' techniques and why he chose to focus on the "Human Nightingale of Death Row." Interviews with Werner Herzog and other kindred spirits reveal an obsessive filmmaker who uses his background as a detective to get under the skin of his characters, slowly: he never fills a silence, letting the camera roll. As Errol says, "we see ourselves as protagonists in our own private drama...I try to capture that." Like writer James Ellroy he is obsessed with crime and murder, and the line between life and death. He likes rural America, David Lynch country, where he interviews 'philosopher kings of the swamp' in documentaries like Gates of Heaven (pet cemeteries); and inhabits places like Vernon, Florida, better known as Nub City, because it has the highest case of insurance fraud in the States (people blow their own limbs off, but they can still drive a Cadillac). Morris' Thin Blue Line had the rare acclaim of being a documentary that saved a prisoner from death row. The murder case was resolved, not because of factual evidence brought to light (or a cinema verite style) but because the stylistic deviations from the realist documentary form—re-enactment of events, contradictions, lies, juxtapositions of characters' accounts—created a truth out of the "sea of the false." As one of his interviewees says, "you mean this is the real world? I never thought of that."

(The was for Gayle Lake: how about an Errol Morris retrospective next year?)

Berlin-Cinema also examines this tenuous relationship between documentary and fiction. Win Wenders meditating on the nature of emptiness, the gaps, between lines and words, reading and films, bricks and mortar. He remembers a Berlin before the wall came down, where there was space, between buildings, before the gaps were filled. He argues for the same space in films today, past the tendencies to break story down into formula. He gives an example of footage shot during World War II in Germany, the same scenes filmed by US and Russian troops. The Russians shot in black and white, restaged the events, fictionalised the account by adding characters, while the Americans used colour and filmed in verite style, trying to capture and preserve history as it was. In Berlin-Cinema, Wenders argues that the Russians captured more 'truth' in their evocation of an historical moment, echoing Morris' observation that a made up account can reveal as much or more about an event or person. Ironically Berlin-Cinema is nostalgic about film's 'denise' (and wants to preserve the film/digital boundary) but remains a joy for film buffs, recreating Wenders' memorable imagery from Wings of Desire, using repetition of still shots and theinders and moving objects through frames to evoke a haunting mysterious lingering dream.

Beau Travail continues this deliberate, sensual and唯美 favours of the festival in its reinvention of male soldier rituals into a stylised choreography in the sandy terrain of Djibouti. French legionnaires become feminised under their elegant ironed creases, objects of Claire Denis' knowing gaze, computer game antagonists who size each other up and play out boy's club death wishes, their muted passions and loyalties and jealousies under siege in the harsh blue light and dusty shrub nightclub, where our anti-hero jungle-boogies at the end, letting loose in a parody and (dis)integration of his army moves, amidst the African women glowing under neon. (The Melbourne Film Festival recently featured a retrospective of Claire Denis films."

FH, aka Fuckhead, the central character in Jesu's Son, asks whether death and living are the same things...are we only unhappy because we are cut off from this distinction? Hallucinating after having dropped a few tabs (stolen from the hospital where he works as an orderly), FH is in the 'wilderness' looking for a place to pitch a tent. He comes across a graveyard, the glowing crosses extending for miles, which his buddy can't see. Not because it isn't there, but because it's a drive-in, the white crosses empty poles the speakers used to hang on. It's a great evocation of the end of an era (70s idealism) in a crazy and bleak collection of white trash vignettes directed by NZ filmmaker Alison Maclean. With strong performances by Samantha Morton (as usual, brilliant) and Billy Crudup along with restrained drop-ins by Dennis Hopper and Holly Hunter, its combination of whimsical humour and uneasy romance is reminiscent of Harvey's To and Gallo's Buffalo 66. What sets it apart from recent US indie features is an interesting structure and voiceover: a drug-fucked narrator steers us in the wrong directions, heads off on a tangent, pauses, forgets where he's at, moves in another direction, returns to another story mid-frame. Skewed, out of order, confused and unreliable, it works like memory, better than the usual (yawn) circular narrative that begins at the end and ends at the end, or is that the beginning, a nice neat circle usually involving the view from the frosted window and fluffy clouds...and resolution.

Beau Travail (France), writer/director Claire Denis, writer Jean-Pol Fargeau, based on the work of Herman Mevelli; Jesus' Son (USA), director Alison Maclean, based on Denis Johnson's short stories; Mr Death: the rise and fall of Fred a Leuchter Jr (USA), director Errol Morris; Throne of Death (India), writer/director Murali Nat; Berlin-Cinema (Nure Provisoire), writer/director Samanta Gloor-Fadul; A Brief History of Errol Morris (UK), director Kees Macdonald; Sydney Film Festival, State Theatre & Dendy Opera House, December 1999.

The title of this review is taken from Errol Morris' documentary Gates of Heaven.
Anti-auteur: music video art

Erin Brannigan

At the forum held during the MoVi screenings at the Viallady in Sydney, a debate sprang up about the absence of credits from the screening of music videos. This fact is pivotal in understanding the position held by filmmakers within the broader screen culture. The best of the genre are positioned along the cutting edge of video production and have collaborations with some of the best new and established music artists and occupy the fertile common ground between music and screen.

Consequently their work is supported by the music industry and, in a productive reciprocal relationship, influences the developments and directions within that industry. At this point, between disciplines and their associated techniques, between art and promotion, between production and product, the music video creation exist as enigmas. In a move that has been toyed with by avant-garde filmmakers, the power hierarchies implicit in credits are absent here representing the situation for the music video described above, they result from no forces that the impulse to identify an author is dissipated.

Having recently been presented with the task of watching all the music videos of the moment, I naturally turned to music videos. The history of commercial dance in the late 20th century has been a success of fads developing from this small screen genre. Michael Jackson's 'beat it', Paula Abdul's 'last dance', Michael Jackson's 'one love' and so on are collaboratively danced by and, to differing degrees, still linger on in jazz, hip hop, and dance classes around the country. But identifying Ricky Martin's choreographer (who incidentally in Tina Landon of Janet Jackson fame) is no easy feat; professional dance networks across USA, fan-club websites and finally the LA music video awards website had to be negotiated. The people who help create the 'aura' of our popstars are thus surrounded themselves by mystique due to the scarcity of information relating to them.

With the rise of electronic dance music that has only a party DJ as its 'star' instead of an appearing singer, does show the role for music video directors both in terms of creative freedom and recognition. Combined with the 'myth' mentioned above, directors such as Chris Cunningham and Spike Jonze have acquired cult status and both now move between the music video and feature film studio.

Three clips by Cunningham were screened at MoVi (at the St Kilda Film Festival and elsewhere: Window Licker (Apex Twin), All Is Dust (Farewell to the Waters) and On the Ground). Cunningham's feature film work includes designing the alien for Alien 3 and he is currently directing a film version of Neuromancer. He was also in discussion with Stanley Kubrick about a sci-fi project before the director's death. I'm sounding like a fan because I am one. The 11 minute version of Window Licker is a remarkable short film referencing the boot clips associated with American R&B, Michael Jackson's mini-musicals of the 80s, Spike Lee's cinematic aesthetic, and the choreography of Gene Kelly. It also comments on the portrayal of women in video clips (a close-up of cellulite-laden bikini-clad buttocks gyrating in slow-mo is truly awesome) and the construction of the popular, with the artist's face appearing on everybody. In the Björk clip, the camera fetishistically lingers over 2 Björk robot clones who then start to develop characters who like to ruminate with sentences like "The thing about love/death/fate" etc etc as they stamp around the living room, up and down river banks, in and out of doors.

The latitude allowed these filmmakers was addressed by the forum panel but always in the context of the music video industry which had now disappeared. The genres, the power, the pop culture constructions and the shift away from identities and and towards abstract movement studies brought about by the rise of the DJ as music artist, are the issues that seemed obvious post-screening, but they weren't touched on. The German and Australian filmmakers in the forum considered music video a favourite being the dancing garage doors that perform a tightly choreographed ballet to the electronic score (Star Excavator by Sensomara) and an animated scene as an entrance to a desert landscape with a distant overpass that glitters with passing traffic that throws off UFO like light, exploding every now and then into a pyrotechnic peak when the music demands it (La Fair by Kreidler).

The inclusion of MoVi in the St Kilda Film Festival and the attention granted to music videos at festivals such as Oberhausen is testimo- ny to the innovation and popular development occurring in this field. Although, as one audience member pointed out, David Bowie has been onto this for decades. I'll keep watching Europe on Friday nights to see what happens next.

Movi—international music videos from the Oberhausen Film Festival in Germany; eMovi—finalists from the Akademie electronic music video competition, Acoustic Music Video on film: Viallady, Sydney, June 5-6; George Cinemas, Melbourne May 31-June 4; Electric Shadows, Canberra, June 11; FFI Theatre, Perth, June 23-24; AFI State Cinema, Hobart, July 1-2; Harry's Cinema, Adelaide, July 6-8; State Library of Qld, Brisbane, July 12-15; St Kilda Film Festival May 31-June 4

Value for money at the Sydney Film Festival?

Simon Enticknap

How do you measure a film's worth? In Clouds of May, a lovingly lethargic film from Turkish director Nuri Bilge Ceylan, there is a scene in which a film director shows the same scene again and again, trying to capture a perfect take while adding up the mounting cost of the film (which, presumably, is what it cost to make the film in the first place). The pace is slow. Ultimately, we're the ones who choose to pay and watch this so-called waste of time, and we do so because we expect a payoff in the end, a reward for our patience. Is it not the case that the film director and the film fan must carry an egg in his pocket for 40 days in order to gain a musical watch?

Such questions of value and recompense were particularly relevant to this year's festival where subscribers, who once had access to nearly all the festival films, were asked to pay extra to see about half the program, including the retrospective of Alan Parker and several documentaries. A subscription still bought you access to nearly 40 features and documentaries at the State Theatre—good value, undoubtedly—but a major change from previous years in which one of the pleasures of the festival has been the freedom to wander from screen to screen, dipping in and out of the light, sliding from scene to scene in the light of the programme, or perchance to stay, having the luxury to take a punt on an unknown. Alaus, the days of being a film fan, those days of making up your own mind, are a choice, discretionary exercise of buying power—and it hurts.

Two films which paid in full at the State were Human Resources and Balzac1899, both described as being reminiscent of Ken Loach's films despite their differences in look and feel. What they shared was a focus on working class communities under stress, from contemporary industrial France to the tenement blocks of 70s Glasgow. Human Resources also recalled Bertrand Tavernier's It All Starts Today from last year's festival, particularly in the way it documented the effects of post-industrialisation and economic rationalism, as well as in its use of a mainly amateur cast. In Tavernier's case, however, this local talent was portrayed as inherently passive, a silent oppressed mass waiting to be saved through the efforts of the professional classes—the schoolteacher, the artist, the social worker and human resources. Another option, hands on the other hand, captures the complex interaction and antagonism between classes, even within the same family, and presents all the players as dynamic, engaged individuals: the result is a film about the campaign for a 35-hour working week which is also a moving Oedipal drama.

The special quality of Balzac1899 lies in its uncompromising nature, not so much of any gritty, in-your-face shock tactics—it's a tough but tender film and weepingly beautiful throughout—but rather in its absolute refusal to sentimentalise the lives of its characters. In this respect it suggests Loach's Kes—Ramsey goes close to offering us the fulfilment of a happy ending but can't quite do it, doesn't go for the easy satisfaction—but it reminded me especially of Terence Davies' films about childhood, notably in the use of song and sound to evoke the most deeply wrought emotions concerning family, loneliness, and despair.

Time to get personal. Innocence and A Pornographic Affair offered contrasting views of a woman and a man's lust in action, or perhaps love in all its glory and pathos. Paul Cox's new film examines what happens when feelings you thought you had experienced many moons ago turn around and bite you with renewed vigour even

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St Kilda Film Festival: digital links

Anna Dzenis

Fusion, n. Fusion; fused mass; blending of different things into one; coalition

...seem two strange images meet, two images that are the work of two poets pursuing separate dreams, they apparently strengthen each other...”

Gaston Bachelard, Poetics of Space

Fusion was an evening of multimedia presentations, a part of the St Kilda Film Festival program. Curator Sue McCauley successfully brought together a range of material with the stated aim of exploring the interactive possibilities of digital media. The program was scheduled to take place in 3 separate sessions. The first introduced several new innovative CD-ROM works; the second focused on the demonstration of a number of politically charged photographic documentaries; the third showcased a variety of performance pieces which also incorporated digital material.

Curator Sue McCauley comments: "As the curator of the program for the second year in succession, I knew that the festival and particularly the venue was a fantastic opportunity to showcase the interest in CD educational programs. It is not often that artists get this sort of opportunity. As a survey type, I felt that I could do 5 very different sorts of programs where artists could demonstrate their works for the general festival-going audience.

"I have recently also coordinated the digital arts program for the Next Wave Festival, Wide Awake Dreaming at Twilight. In both events I focused on creating contexts for the exhibition of multimedia works that did not rely on viewers looking at works on the computer. I was interested in getting away from the idea that the site of production was the exhibition platform. I want to give artist the opportunity to escape the box which has shaped their work. So works were incorporated in installation, in theatrical performance as installations.

"It has become common practice to incorporate CD-ROMs into film festival programs. In the last couple of years at the Melbourne International Film Festival, exhibitions of multimedia works have been set up in foyer and adjacent gallery spaces enabling patrons to move between film screenings and the interactive works, however, this year we made the Fusion program quite distinctive. First was the diversity of material that was presented—a demonstration of the real range of work currently being undertaken. Second was the impressive way that a human presence was brought back to the centre of the multimedia stage. This took the form of the creators of the CD-ROMs actually presenting their work, taking the audience through some of the pathways of their creations, and answering questions about the work and the creative process. It also took the form, in the final session, of a number of manifestations of the performing body, from playfully acrobatic monologues to high-tech choreographed dance ensembles.

The first session, Surface Tension, featured 2 CD-ROMs which could be described as explorations of personal spaces and the subconscious, shifting zones beneath the surface of things. Leon Czielewski and Josephine Starr's Dream Kitchen is an interactive stop-motion animation. The space for this interactive is a pristine, gleaming kitchen setting. Czielewski explained that the concept originated in a story from Japan where people put VR helmets to see what their dream kitchen might be like. Once we start to explore this dream zone, however, we encounter 'easy borders' which allow us to slip into the oven, under the fridge, down the sink. Here we discover debts, missing pens and pencils, and rodents: we are even able to administer electric shock to a rat. Each returns to the kitchen space finds it in increasing disarray—dirtier, messier, falling apart. In comparison, the space for Matthew Riley's Mono is more personal and meditative. Riley's idea was to create an artist's diary full of hand-drawn, painstakingly sketches and scrawling text in a high-tech medium. He wanted this journal-like structure to incorporate his many observations of the relationships between popular culture and the everyday. He felt that interactive technology would enable him to suggest complex combinations of meaning between situations as diverse as phone sex, football, gambling, and shopping, with a focus on the different ways in which language works.

The second session featured a series of interactive documentaries with tough political content and social issues. It became clear that interactivity has provided practitioners with many new opportunities. It was also evident from the work that the interactive form of documentary has become the site of close collaboration between the subjects and the storytellers. Filmmaker and activist Richard Frankland introduced the CD-ROM The Love of the Land and spoke of the way Frayneworks Multimedia's work supported indigenous people in telling their own stories by not editing the material that they have collected. Similar sentiments were expressed by those who worked on the disturbing and poetic East Timorese film Resistance and Dreams of Rebirth, which purports to be a fact-finding mission. The filmmakers are facilitators encouraging the stories of East Timorese refugees in exile to be told. The final documentary, Mabo: The Native Title Revolution, turned out to be an equally interesting hybrid that includes a re-edited film of filmmaker Trevor Graham's Land Bilong Islanders with a new cueding taken from his other film Mabo: Life of an Island Man. A great deal of extra material has also been gathered together into this CD-ROM to make it a valuable research resource with clear educational potential.

The third session was the most provocative and high octave. Live performers interacted with digital projections of pre-recorded images—a fusion of voices, bodies, and dancing limbs in a multimedia theatre-scape. Frank Lovecote's Poquants was a voice-driven work dedicated to narrative. Lovecote's fan-track monologue touched on issues of violence, the republic, race and class as his words and voice interacted with the CD-ROM and projected images. A series of screens and structures were strategically set up on stage to further break up and fragment the images, and complicate possible readings. The performance was seen as a performance of images of themselves projected through the screen—a theatre of the figural. The final performance was a futuristic work of art which comes from the Tokyo-based collaborative group 66th/cell's Cyberneth, a collaboration of Japanese and Australian performers. The work they presented was a remix of Satoshi Kawasaki's series of films Intermission—in which characters played from the text freeform, clothed in graphically striking cyber costumes which intermittently flashed and created de-forms of shadows, performing choreographed Bush-inspired dance movements which also incorporated digital video projections. During question time, one of the artists explained that they had tried the piece with visuals alone but felt that it wasn't enough. The stage, they said, needed a human body. This was one of Fusion's real achievements. Involving McCauley's words, Fusion was a program which "escaped the box".

Fusion, St Kilda Film Festival, The George Ballroom, Melbourne, June 2

FILM shots

Hurt, a film made by young people in North West NSW as part of a project in conjunction with non profit arts group BIG HART (seen in performance at the Adelaide Festival), has been nominated for 4 AFI awards. With the assistance of filmmaker Phillip Crawford and screenwriter Scott Rankin, 250 children from Walgett, Narrabri, Tamworth, Armidale and Moree were involved in the making, NSW Premier Bob Carr commented, "the film has a lot of heart." The film is to be screened in regional cinemas and national festivals.

Extreme Heat is a new project (financed by Pacific Film & Television Commission and AFC) geared to creating low cost production opportunities for OZ filmmakers. Ruben and Anthony Mullen (who shot and directed the film at this year's Cannes Film Festival) direct Graham's Mohammed's Possesstonal Crisis by AFI winner Evan Clarry are the first films funded under the scheme and will be completed in late August.

Soaked, Cyberneth

TV shots

Four new TV programs have been commissioned under the FTV/SBS Independent DIY TV Initiative, which encourages original and imaginative ideas for TV. Video Diary, in the "Live" section, will allow viewer's to share their lives through the TV. Political forum, on "Olympic Swimmers" and "The Kelly family Christmas dinner". The ABC is planning a second season of "Short and Sweet" broadcast in December and is scouting for short stories with no restrictions on style or content. Call Wendy Cherel, 02 9550 3939.

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**Will the AFC gag screen conversation?**

**Ben Goldsmith**

In keeping with our new approach for public discussion, I have decided to share my thoughts on the Australian Film Commission's (AFC) recent decision to fund a new series of screenplays under the banner of the AFC's "Script Development Fund." I have been a member of the Australian Film Institute since 1996. I think it's fair to say that the Institute's activities have been a positive influence on the development of the industry, both in terms of creating a platform for voices from all walks of life, as well as promoting artistic expression in all its forms. It's important that we continue to support these initiatives.

I recently attended a screening of the latest production from the AFC, "Making Movies Matter," which was featured in the Festival of Films for Change, held in Berlin last year. The film received critical acclaim and was well received by audiences for its message of social justice and human rights. It's important that we continue to support these types of films, as they help to promote important issues and foster a greater understanding of the world around us.

The AFC's decision to fund a new series of screenplays is a positive step in the right direction. However, we must ensure that this funding is used effectively and that it is directed towards projects that have the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the Australian film industry. This is why I believe that the AFC's decision to fund these projects is a positive one, as it will allow them to explore new ideas and approaches in the field of filmmaking.

I urge the AFC to continue to support these initiatives and to ensure that they are used to their full potential. It's important that we continue to support the arts and culture, as they play a vital role in shaping our society and helping to create a more just and equitable world.

Thank you for your attention.
Cinesonic 3: all ears at the movies

Anna Dzenis

For a third time Philip Brophy has brought together an eclectic, impressive international group of film academics, professionals from and practitioners for Cinesonic, a conference on film scores and sound design. Cinesonic has firmly established itself as a place where theorists and practitioners come together and their work, analyses and language can interact and create a new dialogue.

True to its reputation, Cinesonic once again brought to the centre-stage sound artists and industry professionals who have received scant attention; it programmed papers which complicated the ways in which we might think about sound and music; and it continued to raise important questions about the relationship between sound and the cinema. Films chosen for analysis in films from Alice Guy-Blache's silent film, House Divided (1915) and the exploitation film Spermuda (1976) to Vinci Giarrusso's Malibybo (2000), recently selected for Director's Fortnight at Cannes. And for conference participation, a number of participants who had been itching to put such knowledge into practice—to really 'listen to' and 'hear' a film—there were several programmes precisely because of their particular soundtracks.

Practitioners

For this year's evening session kicked off with a much-anticipated "Conversation" with the extraordinary Jack Nitzsche who came onto the stage gloriously resplendent in embroidered, beaded and fringed black jacket, studded boots, layered chains, dark glasses and wicked black hair. He was a visu- al and sonic spectacle—delighted to be invited and acknowledged. Nitzsche's music credits are astonishing—they extend right back to his work with Phil Specter, The Rolling Stones, Neil Young, The Monkees and The Cramps. And, as a "rock migrant in the cinema", he has also been involved in composing scores and producing music for more than 150 films. His music is richly interspersed with clips from films like diverse as Performance (1970), One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975), Blue Collar (1978), Hard Core (1979), Cruising (1980), Cutter's Way (1981), Starman (1984), The Hot Spot (1990) and The Bedazzled (1981). Nitzsche shared anecdotes about his work with performers such as Diving Belles,.parameter David Carradine and actresses such as Dennis Hopper and Sean Penn.

The second of the practitioners' sessions was an industry presentation from sound designer and Dolby Consultant Bruce Emery who tried to demystify the history and practice of the Dolby Laboratories and explain how Dolby has contributed to the sound we hear. Their access to an insider's knowledge and was supported by a surprisingly informative instructional video. But the real coup for this year had to be the privileged insight into the creative collaboration of director and composer, producer Fiona Raggor and sound designer/music supervisor Philip Brophy on the much-anticipated feature Malibybo. A number of clips from the film were screened, to the delight of everyone present, and there was detailed discussion about sound and music choices, and how the process of "talking through" helped every one in the audience to arrive at a mutually satisfactory solution to the many creative problems that were encountered. Brophy's theory that "you can have a radical approach to sound-production and still end up with a non-dubbing film" appeared to have been put into practice.

Theorists

Bill Routt's provocative "Hearing Silent Images" was the first of the day sessions and, just like strong coffee, it set the mind and the senses. Routt's paper investigated the apparent incongruity of "sound in the silent cinema", asking what it meant to "hear silent images." Using the work of theorists such as Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean-Luc Nancy, he proposed that there was a way of talking about silent films as though they could be apprehended through hearing rather than seeing or reading. His analytical and cinematic investigations were compelling. Equally provocative was Adrian Martin's "Musical Mutations" which was also interested in the incongruous as a way of rethinking film history. Martin's presentation began with a treasure trove anecdote from John Cassavetes, that he would be interested in making only one musical, a musical based on Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment.

Martin proceeded from this surprising example to play a quite different history of the musical—the mutant musical—illustrated with sparkling examples from Jerry Lewis' The Ladies Man (1961), Sally Potter's The Tango Lesson (1997), Bertolucci's Twice Upon A Time (1979), Godard's Pierrot le Fou (1965), Nanni Moretti's Caro Diario (1994) and Tsai Ming Liang's The Hole (1998) to name only a few of this genre's varied oeuvre.

Several other papers were interested in the musical soundtrack, but more specifically in the "processes of reading and interpreting the soundtrack" and "judged procedurally chronologically through the Kubrick注重 uncovering out his increasing control over the film's musical scores and pointing out how these have codified the films as artefacts of high culture. Annahed Kassabian's paper was more concerned with musical scores in popular Hollywood films. Beginning from the premise that music was an important to identification as image and narrative, Kassabian made a sharp distinction between the different ways that "composed scores" and "composite scores" tracked identification. The complexity of this identification was highlighted by a detailed analysis of Dangerous Minds and The Mark of Zorro.

Other papers dealt with the sound of the voice in film, and as a result of the conference, Philip Brophy's paper explored the practice of "dubbing" and "talking over" in films, beginning with the observation that most people think Astrology is American because of its dubbed soundtracks. These presumptions were rather problematised when the American and Japanese Godzilla films were compared, and their distinctive cultural sensibilities examined. Rebecca Coyle's "Speaking Strive", locating 'Australia' in Film Voice & Speech' was also concerned with voice, dialogue and accent. But Coyle's study was focused quite specifically on Australian feature films that have been marketed successfully overseas, with examples such as Crocodile Dundee and Muriel's Wedding foregrounding vocal cultural stereotypes.

For the last 2 papers, the focus was on the "marginal" and the "overlooked". Jeff Smith's "Taking Music Supervisors Seriously" elaborated a history of the music supervisor's role and how it has been so consistently disregarded. Ian Pennan's paper was another left-field contribution. Firstly, because of its wild title: "Gorvey's Ghost meets Beidgger's Grist—oh, how DUB became everyone's soundtrack. And secondly, because Pennan's background in music writing brought a different perspective to the study of the cinema soundtrack. His mesmeric presentation used the poetry of words and their metaphoric associations to make his argument, with the low hum of dub coming from the speakers. But what was particularly memorable was his suggestion that dub was, in fact, its own film. Even more provocative was his suggestion that we don't need more soundtracks for the cinema—what we really need are more and better films for our soundtracks.

ScreeNCULTUREshorts

As reported on at the bafilms website (a useful collection of film industry comment), a recent Australian Writers Guild forum held at the Sydney Film Festival highlighted the importance of supporting creators and producers. Stephen Swallow and Louis Norra argued for more understanding of the craft of screenwriting and Ian David (soon AWG president) commented: "When you consider that the FIC has invested in over 200 Australian films and less than 6.5% have returned their production costs, there is something a little out of the script, it's a people who put the deals together). Kim Dalton, AFC Chief Executive, claimed the media have been responsible for blaming poor performance at the box office on poor screenwriting, and that the AFC plans to establish programs targeted at script funding. www.bafilms.com/

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission recently announced a month trial of open captioned movies in an attempt to make cinema more accessible for people with hearing impairments. The new release films will be screened August - September at specific sessions in Greater Union, Hoyts and Village Village Cinemas in Melbourne and Sydney CBDS. Participating cinemas and film distributors proposed the trial as part of an inquiry set up following a complaint from a man who is hearing impaired. Open captioned films are more sophisticated than subtitles, with icons and written descriptions of sounds used to help convey the film's atmosphere. More information: www.hrec.gov.au, www.auscump.com or check newspapers for screening times.

Peter Bart, editor-in-chief of Variety, will speak on how cinematic imagination has been overtaken by executive greed in Hollywood. A panel convened by the AFL, coinciding with the Melbourne Writers Festival. The Malthouse, Melbourne, August 26; MCA, Sydney, August 29.

And how does listening to people talking about sound and music inform our own listening and hearing? In response to such questions, this year's Cinesonic programmed 2 quite distinctive double bills. The first program, Satanic Noise and Screaming Rock'n'Roll, was introduced by Adrian Martin who compared the cacophonous, often incoherent sounds of the Maharajas (1967) and the Exorcist (1973) with Symphony for the Devil (1970), a film he described as totally sound-driven with absolutely no conversation. The second program, Sounds of the City, was introduced by Philip Brophy who invited a comparison between the brooding, breathing, percolating city in Taxi Driver (1976) with the vibrating, clinking interior spaces of domestic objects and people in Playtime (1967). With its invitation to listen to the cinema. Cinesonic is well on its way to achieving its aim of instigating a vibrant sonic culture. For those who were unable to attend last year's Cinesonic, the book with all of the conference papers is now available: Cinesonic: Cinematic and the Sound of Music, edited by Philip Brophy (Australian Film Television and Radio School, 2000).

Cinesonic 3—Experiencing the Soundtrack, 3rd international conference on film scores and sound design, RMIT, Melbourne, June 29-July 2. http://cinesonic.rmit.edu/
Cinesonics: The Straight Story

Philipp Brophy

What is it like to be alone, truly alone? You have no one. No one understands or granted every moment of our social exis-
tence: proximity. Things, objects, events, people, would be held from afar. All would be out of sight, beyond reach, away from you. As you get old, an auditory loneliness develops in tandem with a psychological and physical self-forsaking of the self. Faces and voices become muffled and out of reach, everything appears to be occurring 'over there' as the senses become dulled, diffused, dilated. Combine this with the loss of objects, friends, even acquaintances, and all immediacy and prox-
imity start to fade.

David Lynch's *The Straight Story* (2000) is one of these moments, and as such, it conveys the fragility of our human con-
sciousness. We know of him, albeit fit-
tered unnecessarily through a cullium of surreality, absurdism and artifice. Do not presume that Lynch's predilection for pro-
ducing a psychospectro for psychotica marks a fixed disposition to loudness. No matter how 'loud' his cinema may appear at every level of its execution, Lynch is more concerned with the way his cinema is experienced, the way it extends to the social plane of physical space of how vibra-
tions can continue unabated until the ground of physical touch will reduce them to a barely distinguishable whisper (David Lynch is also the sound designer for *The Straight Story*). This type of post-literary cinematic object of narration. In the hands of a less tuned direc-
tor, this same narratively envelope could be presented through the conventional trap-
pings which both literary types and so-
called subtexts would foil the purpose and poetic. But the power of Lynch's cinema lies in his ability to wrench those traditions, which is why the year in the video should be to revere on the archival and should therefore be treated with polite disdain.

Lynch's approach to the dramatic sig-
nification of non-speech and unspoken events is not as dull as the tradi-
tional theatrical and cinematic formalism. Lynch is deeply concerned with the history of his children due to her own psychologi-
ical instability, her speech patterns carry the scar of this wrenching, leaving her to speak grammatically correct sentences in a timing which forces the flow of meaning through a series of ruptures and spurs of fragmented phrases and clauses. (It is truly remarkable to observe Alvin, her voice is her story, not through words as written into her, but as words sounded through her. Note also the way these words "speak" Alvin's simulated speech as warm blankets that flow forth from the friendly family with whom Alvin stays while his tractor is being repaired en route. Their rich sonority and the effortless way in which it flows from their mouths sonoritally portrays a comfortable middle America—
retired and retired—not in a parodic way, but as a means of contrasting their fortunate life against the emotional trauma which Alvin has been holding within him for so many years.

The documentary Brother's Keeper (1992), one of 2 brothers accused of mercy-
killing a third brother (all past their 60s) takes the stand in a court trial. This with-
tilled shelf of a man is struck catastrophic and devastating blow. His arm uncontrollably. The court adjourns. He takes the stand again, opens his mouth—and reverses to the same state. The court adjourns again. And again. It is hard to think of a more moving scene in a documentary, struck by a complete inaccuracy of the human voice at the point of its declaration. The ending of *The Straight Story* reminded me of that scene, and of how much I detest things that call 'scripts' of which I wish scriptwriters would try shutting up for once. Stop stuffing words down characters' throats and making them mouth their author-
ial power. Consider the options of having an actor perform the silence that more aptly reflects how often we are lost for words and rendered speechless in our everyday encounters of silence. John W. and Mary Sweeney's lean script for *The Straight Story* is the result not only of 2 people who write well, but also listen well. Mary Sweeney's editing and direction of W's farm sounds and W's speech evidences the need to word our hushnesses as much as our speech.

Second sonic feature of *The Straight Story*: the permanence of quietude. In an era when ambient sound has found favor with the public, Lynch's choice to maintain non-
disturbing levels and more impactful transient peaks, is forgotten how effective the rela-
tively presence generated through the absence of surface sound is in noise design. Don't mistread me here: I'm not advocating 'quiet' in today's 'noisy movies.' Such a movie stance leads to letting sound's chords on grand pianos and soft strings of acoustic guitars, which to my ear are repeti-
tive signs of conservative times. My point is that you can achieve a type of object silence in digital sound wherein the absence of sur-
face noise creates dramatic and psycho-
logical holes in a narrative, intensifying equal modes of identification (sucking you into the mental and disorienting you by removing the 'ground hum' of a pic-
ture). *The Straight Story* is possibly the first film to explore the psycho-acoustic rami-
fications of silence at depth.

There are many moments in the film where you hear absolutely nothing. Conditioned to hearing the crackle of the optical print, the hiss and the residue of the soundtrack always comforts you, saying 'I really haven't gone away.' Even 'fades to black' rarely occur in silence, as they will carry an audio fade-out, fade-in or resolv-
ing musical cue—all of which will work toward preparing for the fade-up before we are stranded in a cinematic void. The absolute silence of *The Straight Story* echoes the tactics of the loss of proximity engineered by old age: lite-

tally, we are removed from the film—not merely from a certain narrational moment, turn or passage, but from the realm of narra-
tion. We are left sitting in the cinema in total isolation, like when the cinema's amplifiers suddenly cut out. Yet the film also exploits the digital soundtrack's capac-
ity to move accurately between these aura
extremes. The mix of the film quite notice-
abley does not stay at a median of acceptable sound. Rather, Lynch's sonic work in particular will hover within a comfortable and desirable range, utilising a variety of compression methods to keep the signal level at a low as to avoid distracting and compromising legibility on the part of the cine-
ma listener. *The Straight Story* has numerous moments where you are urged to listen more carefully, not because of distractions, simultaneous events or sonic density, but simply because you are at a remove from spoken sound. How Lynch demonstrates this is when Alvin is chatting with the family with whom he spends a few days. In one unedited shot, we hear a long, quiet and intimate conversation at a very low level, filmed from a long distance so as to create a calming, casual observational feeling. A vicarious deafness is experienced here in that one can manage to understand words—as do old people suffering the onset of deafness—but at a severely reduced audi-
tory level. *The Straight Story* again pro-
sides the sonic suit within which we can experience old age.

Third sonic feature of *The Straight Story*: aural decay. In the history of modern sound design, Lynch is the harbinger of deep booms and dark drones noticeable in his early work. More impressively, his sound design has re-addressed this approach, developing it initially into the thick textures of sonic nothingness which permeate the psycho-acoustic environment throughout *Lost Highway* (1997). With *The Straight Story*, Lynch has focused on the residue of those events. In scintillating pas-
sages of silent attention, a bare textural hum is heard ever so faintly on the sound-
track. It sounds like a long-ringinger reverber-
ant patina of parts of Angelo Badalamenti's lyrical score—almost as if a phrase of his music has been digitally processed and run through a jum or light purue of diffusion which gently coats the auditorium. We faintly make out the haunting presence of music, yet recog-
nisable instrumentation and tones are absent. Orson Welles engineered a similar effect with a Bernard Herrmann cue in *Citizen Kane* (1941) as Susan Alexander lies in her bed, exhausted from the opera forced down her own throat, the orchestral dis-
ring softly yet fatally in her head, inter-
mingled with the sound of her own fading breath. The effect in *The Straight Story* also carries the weight of its place in the film, distinctly but, due to the rich yet fixed tonality of these harmonic sheets of soft pink noise, these hums have a base key which works contra-harmonically to Badalamenti's whis-

cial cues. The music rolls on lovingly as Alvin distractedly puts his pointers on this, while these tones well up in the proceeding silences as a forecast of the possibility that his brother may have already died.

Many people have not heard these tones in the film, but they are there. Sonically and symbolically, they recall the sensation of a distant ringing in the ear, left over from loud events that affected the ear the night before, some years ago, or in your youth. Like an emotional tinnitus, this ringing is sub-
tle but persuasive. It is the sound of the past, lingering, longing, it is the ring-
ing which will not stop until Alvin speaks with his brother. And only then, only that which appears auditory moment when they are near enough to hear the other's voice, will the silence be pierced and the silence of calm. Only then will the decay reside.

The Straight Story, director David Lynch, is currently on video release.
The second series of The Games, currently screening on ABC TV, is one of the most sophisticated combinations of good writing intersecting with contemporary political reality to appear on Australian television.

The Games has developed from a satirical observation of the Olympic phenomenon to a dark and richly layered commentary on the political and social implications of a multi-million dollar event.

In the first series, John Clarke played the naive and often bumbling CEO of the Sydney Olympics, a Gillrude adept in the world of savvy media assistants and shrewd financial controllers. The series became an indictment of amateurs leading the blind, and suggested to the viewer that no one at Olympic headquarters really understood the enormous task they had undertaken.

The second series has changed its dramatic balance—Clarke’s character is now learned, cynical, and aware of the chaos (financial and political) that is just in front of his every footstep. The absurdity of the Olympics has become real for him, whereas his two assistants have retreated into Olympic-speak, believing their own press releases and openly discussing how to fool the public.

In this interview, Ross Stevenson talks about the scripting process of The Games and the tussles surrounding team writing and producing.

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Web convergence traps artists and consumers

Nadine Clements

Anyone interested enough to pass by the stock exchange building in Sydney a few months ago would have witnessed the spectacle of the dot-com crowd, with a "new media advocate", as financial pundits would have it. Small-time investors and internet start-up owners stood, some with noses unconvincingly pressed to glass, watching their stock deval- uate minute by minute. Informed by the U.S. NASS- DAG (the American financial index for new media stocks), the electronic ticker tape sported a scary story: some stocks nosedived to within a hair's breadth of their issue price, others simply entered negative figures.

The crash came at an interesting time. In internet years (roughly comparable to dog years in terms of development), the web was colonised by technology corporations a very long time ago. They are responsible for both interpreting the web as a rampancy commercial space (with all that entails), and developing sophisticated platforms from which to serve what they like to call "content", a suitably defined term which means anything from editorial to a nifty, Javascript-based button on a navigation bar. Strategies ranged from providing millions of free email addresses and chat rooms and skimming a percentage off the top of credit card purchases. Very few of them made actual money and the market eventually got nervous, hewer the crash. Things, as they say, will never be the same again.

The development of the technology, howev- er, continues apace. WAP (Wireless Application Protocol) will come to pass, promising to someone with a fairly hefty mobile phone plan near you very soon, delivering components of the web (news head- lines, movie session times, sporting updates and of course, advertising) to the mobile phones just used to go ringing. Interactive TV has already been introduced, and Pay TV viewers are familiarising themselves with the idea of finding a website interface with broadcast programs—checking their email while the cricket is playing. All pretty handy.

So what's an article about a bunch of well-off wankers losing their money during a period of vastly accelerated technological growth and innovation doing in @artfor? Serving as specula- tion of the future? Yes, and what all this talk of "content" means is the way in which we want to find and 'content' we might very well create, will be disseminated in the future. These emerging tech- nologies indeed be handy, when we are setting the agenda as to how they are used! In a post-crash environment, when the cash won't be flowing as freely as it did before, the web as it spreads to TV and your phone will be economically rationalised.

Internet service providers of all kinds now have a vested interest in keeping their subscribers within the walls of the content that they have purchased or aggregated. Some are giving away free access—you don't pay a cent, but you can't actually leave the network you're in to explore the rest of the web. So if you're forced to bank online because your local branch has closed down, and you can't afford to pay for an inter- net connection, welcome to the "walled gar- den." Others provide services exclusively to their paying customers; everything from 5 email addresses to animated short films and "superior" news services. One wonders whether the rabbit will never see, unless they upgrade.

Of course it's all in the name of commercial good sense, but does it have to be inevitable that the medium that started as a tool for Cold War military communication, transgressed into an academic language (Hyper Text Markup Language or HTML) and still boasts worldwide access to information about abrasive and mar- ginalised cultures, will become a segregated medium?

Firstly, to the culture. The internet industry would have you believe that some of the same technology heads outside of the science world. They are able to solve problems more quickly than it would take them to explain it, and remain wholly apolitical within the sphere of the work- ing day; a geeky empire unto itself. But the industry is still blotted with counter-culture powers, under 35 years-old with Palm Pilots and wardrobes full of utility chic couture, spouting new media pseudo ideology-speak as flimy as the content they are responsible for publishing on the web. Attend a meeting of all the intellectuals with chips and buzz phrases such as "synergy" (a greasy economic fit between 2 businesses) and "robotic nature" (the ability for "content" to be pillaged for commerce opportunities and syndication models) will zap around like so much locally rounded data. It is very possible you will witness those encouraging each other to "think outside of the square" (come up with ethically unsound solutions to content problems, such as sell the arts section of a website to a sponsor and skew the editorial in its favour). And if you're unlucky enough to suggest something which doesn't have a "fit"—even outside the square—it's possible you'll be told to "take it offline."

It is to these people that many writers and filmmakers will be entrusting their work. These are the people who will privilege sport and mainstream computer games over the arts because the stars tell them to. If you're lucky enough to find decent arts listings on a commer- cial website, it'll be a personal indulgence on the part of the producer who knows the rabble will never see, unless they upgrade.

Further up the food chain, however, are the heavyweights. The ones glamourised by IBM advertisements. Old tie private schools, ex- lawyers, ex-traditional media and too bright MBA grads, who, come lately or by right of birth, subscribe to the old capitalist school of dress and behaviour; they wear suits (jeans are allowed on Fridays, providing they don't have a meeting with the Telstra guy), make or tasteful- ly ignore sexist jokes and earn a shoal of money for the privilege. Despite the recent dot- com crash, world-wide on the NASDAQ, they still command salaries that start at 140k (even without equity) and just keep on getting higher. A potdok of marketing executives, business strategists, e-commerce directors, CEOs and managing directors, these are the people who hold the purse strings. They are the people responsible for encouraging the syndication of content (ie that stuff we used to call editorial) —the stuff it simply doesn't make sense to pro- duce in-house) across as many portals (the gate- way to the rest of an internet network) as possi- ble, to whom the term "media saturation" is freely interchangeably with "cost-effective."

These are the people responsible for the hype surrounding convergence, which are cur- rently shaping the "content" landscape on the web, setting the precedent for the licensing of short films from artists at click-of-stories, really getting rid of web pages that aren't paying for themselves. These are the people who are excit- ed by the prospect of an internet/interactive TV/broadband (expensive, fast access to the net) environment by which your capacity to surf is limited to the content the corporation owns. Despite what the Information Technology (a strange misnomer if ever there were one) sec- tions of newspapers would have you believe, convergence is a fair way off becoming a digital reality for most people. But by the time it is, get- ting the right kind of money from a web com- pany who wants to appear credible by licensing your film, might be nigh impossible. Looking to your interactive TV for imping content will feel strangely out of place. And the Internet. Only instead of there being 200 channels of refreshed crap, there will be thousands of sites showing near advertorial and e-commerce opportunities down your throat—and the few rebranded corporations that used to form Microsoft will have a finger in most of them. We'll look back with wistfulness nostalgia to the time when advertising was actually distin- guishable from the television show itself.

Maybe when the Coalition is voted out there will be more government subsidies and new media grants to ensure that these sites are built and web events take place. And hopefully, some of those projects will use the medi- um to critique the medium.

And hopefully most of us won't be sucked in by a website funded by a bank who's spuri- ously deconstructive sociopolitical agenda—or is it an advertising campaign?—is to "unlearn."

Keith Gallash

Once again @lux media arts has played a notable role in the Sydney Film Festival, dis- playing interactive digital works in its @art00 Exhibition at Customs House, Circular Quay (several of the works are reviewed in Working the Screen, see below) and screenings in the Dendy Opera Quays cinema. Both events were well-attended. While the interactive works offered various levels of pleasure, depending on your experience and the availability of com- puters, and pretty much looked how you'd expect digital works to look, the films and videos were another matter altogether and provided some intense variation.

There was more than a hint from @art00 Project Manager Susan Charlton in her preface to the program that there would be an issue here:

What should we now expect a digital art- work to look or sound like? Have digital technologies become so refined that they are almost invisible? There is no question that artists are increasingly taking up digital technologies to create their works. But how are we measuring it?

This theme of invisibility and its ramifications is developed by Mitchell Whitehead in an extension of a paper (Working the Screen, page 3) he gave at the @art00 forum in which he proposed an end to the use of terms like new media arts and digital arts. Peter Tait's review of the new work at the Melbourne Planetarium by The Men Who Knew Too Much, Virtual Humanoids (Working the Screen, page 18), offers another perspective on the same theme.

The @art00 screenings provided 2 kinds of response. The first was a reaction to the absence, pretty much, of conspicuous computer animation and pleasure in a return to avant-garde form—short bursts of serious, grisly, sometimes sexually filmmaking, various discontinuities and ruptures and a short- age of Tropeffect. The second was a disparage- ment, surprise that instead of digital films and video are being relegated to going up to- wards the well-established conventions of Super 8 experimentation. A disapprehensive viewing could sympathise with both sides; the weary of slack digital animation but too familiar with the film language, but the selection was certainly curious and there was a pronounced formal retro nostalgia offered a certain charm. The works that offered most appeared to exploit new technology more visively, and that feeling was doubtless exacerbated by the unadventur-
The documentary goes online

John Grech & Matthew Leonard

In July 1950, a Sydney schoolboy was abducted and killed. His family had recently won 100,000 pounds in the Opera House lottery—the reason Stephen Lesley Bradley target ed the boy—which triggered cultural responses like 'stranger danger'. There have been a variety of readings of this narrative, and Sharkeed is the latest, a new ABC website which highlights some of the challenges and possibilities for delivering documentary content on the internet. Here artist John Grech and sound designer Matthew Leonard discuss some of the issues raised in its production.

ML Attempting to bring the philosophy of the radio feature or documentary to the internet harks back to elements of the historical form after the Second World War. There is a real emphasis on writing again; and balancing this with the potential for carefully deployed images and sound. Both share a sparseness of texture.

JG There is a lot of scope for artists to transform their practices into new media. However, this presents the same problems that early filmmakers faced. For example, how do you make a movie like Metropolis when no-one's ever made a movie like that before? How many movie genres do we have today? Back in 1900, there were no such production discourses available. But artists must adapt their techniques to new technologies to utilise new media possibilities, not try to make new technologies do what old technologies do. Also, writing highlights the origins of documentary. As film theorist Bill Nichols pointed out, the distinction between writing as description (traditional documentary) and writing as narrative (fiction) is spurious. Writing a fictional narrative and writing a documentary description are both highly constructed, creative acts of storytelling.

ML Sharkeed has enabled us to explore the subjectivities that surround these various acts of storytelling. Another interesting aspect has been the disruption of chronology which historically characterises 'classic' radio and cinema documentaries. Has this also had an impact on your approach to the visual materials?

JG Visual art is basically a spatial medium. Although the web offers an unpedicatable space, it still deals with time as time, not just by spatialising it as visual art does. The digital screen is a fascinating way of experiencing both time and space, but I'm not sure there is yet a very useful critical or theoretical framework on how people actually experience these.

ML Again, if we compare it with existing forms, the experience of hearing a radio program is driven by the durations of sound events, conversations, voices. This has a critical impact on the tone of a program, but part of the trick with the internet is being able to anticipate such factors as download time and server timeouts which strongly dictate the 'tempo' of the work. From a sound perspective, this is a critical difference.

JG This probably represents the greatest limitation of the medium. But it is closer to how people experience an exhibition in a gallery—one might walk quickly or haphazardly through a space, while another might tread very carefully along a more predictable path. One major difference between the web and a gallery is the fact that people in galleries still determine the speed and succession of events. On the web, these are determined more by technology. The web is still at an early stage of development.

ML The potential for synchronous sound on the internet is still at a fairly primitive level, and seems to require a high level of commitment and experience from the users to get the most out of it. We agreed it was important that the site represent a mixture of period and contemporaneous interpretation in a way that leaves interpretation open for the audience. However, I feel that Sharkeed has also become an interrogation of our own processes of understanding, particularly with the inclusion of a variety of subjectivities in the experience.

JG That was one of the lies about conventional documentary. What gave analog photography the "aura" it had was the belief that it truly was the "Pencil of Nature" or that it created a footprint of the real world on a negative which was incapable of being interfered with by its maker. Thinkers like Walter Benjamin, Umberto Eco and Roland Barthes have shown that no image is neutral of its maker's subjectivity. If we eradicate our subjectivity from the things we make, they would become meaningless. Subjectivity gives meaning to things. Without subjectivity, everything is reduced to a flat and featureless landscape. It's the difference between noise and sound, although people like John Cage have played a lot with such distinctions.

Sharkeed, archival footage, courtesy ABC

Sharkeed has enabled us to explore the subjectivities that surround these various acts of storytelling. Another interesting aspect has been the disruption of chronology which historically characterises 'classic' radio and cinema documentaries.

OnScreen feature in RealTime 39

Projections and Prizes

A critical preview of the 2000 AFI Awards

Reviews of nominated films and articles on awards issues.

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WriteSites: the email liaison as novel

Esther Milne

You’re the cutest thing that I ever did/see/really love your peachy wanna shake your tree/lovey dovey, lovey dovey all the time/lovey baby I just show you a good time.

Er, sorry about that. Don’t know what’s wrong with me today. Must be that email I just got from Peaches. I mean seriously, do you know someone called Peaches? What about Back, heard from him lately? Unlikely as it may sound, this nonsensical resonates with literary guasus and the portent of tele-communications historigraphy. Stay with me.

Since McLuhan’s observation that new technologies are always inscribed by earlier modes and practices, media theory has insisted that its forms do not arrive unheordered. Cybercultural genealogy is awash with theorists peering further and further into the past. Consideration such as Margaret Wertheim’s (The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of space from Dante to the Internet, Doubleday, Sydney, 1999) argue that the idea of cyberspace is unknowable without a historical metaphysical and scientific conceptions of space, and writers like Janet Abbate (Inventing the Internet, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1999) or Katie Hafner and Matthew Lyon (Where Wizards Stay Up Late: The Origins of the Internet, Touchstone, New York 1996) dispute the conventional myth that the internet’s origins are limited to American military scenarios. But as these areas of inquiry are comprehensively covered, others remain somewhat under researched.

Electronic mail, while implicit in the cited studies, seems not to receive the same sort of sustained critique. One way to redress the gap is to historise the email novel. This emerging genre can be placed to 18th century British and European cultures where an increasingly literate population and the technological advancements of the postal service give rise to the epistolary novels. Writers such as Les Liaisons Dangereuses by Choderlos de Laclos, Jean Jacques Rousseau’s La Nouvelle Heloise or Samuel Richardson’s Clarissa. Communications were constructed from letters whose format and thematic elements preface certain contemporary literary genres.

How to spot an email novel? Well, the title must include technological form, literary vehicle and a signifier of lev. Cyber word, colon, love word. Consider, Chat at cyberworld (Nat McCarthy, Peepitch Press, Berkeley 1996; Virtual Love a novel (Simon & Schuster, New York 1994); Safe Sex: An email romance (Linda Burgess & Stephen Stratford, Goodwin Publishing Limited, Auckland 1997) and Email: a love story (Stephanie D Fletcher, Headline Book Publishing, London 1996) and you begin to see the point. To a large extent, email novels function according to the general principles of epistolary fiction. The exchanges are presented chronologically, framed by dates, salutations and signatures. In both genres there is a strong emphasis on the body’s absence; correspondents are separated spatially and temporally and the reader is invited to negotiate this gap. And both narratives are informed by themes of love, seduction, adultery and betrayal. More specifically, one might draw parallels between 2 of the texts by comparing their articulations of subjectivity formation.

Both the 18th century epistolary novel Les Liaisons Dangereuses and Fletcher’s Email: A Love Story, for example, wrestle with the problem of women’s sexuality in terms of the transgression of institutional ideology. Lacs’ Mme de Merteuil is called because she dares to usurp the masculine privilege of the sexual aggressor and Katherine Simmons, the protagonist of Email: A Love Story, is reformed at the novel’s end by her return to legitimate sexual acts defined by the marital contract. The configuration of identity seems to concern both genres since the epistol form permits an opportunity to explore or radical transformations of subject formation. Mme de Merteuil explicitly refers to her propensity for displacing and reenacting herself and the correspondents in Fletcher’s text regularly discuss the advantages of and need for the use of pseudonyms (hence “Peaches” and “Your cowboy, Back”).

While the 2 genres share some formal and thematic elements, there are of course points of departure. Part of the problem is to do with the awkward mimetic situation of email novels because they use the conventions of print technology to describe, represent and invoke the tropes of electronic communication. Email novels spurn the digital sign. In place of the usual epistolary epistle, Email a love story begins with 3 pages that reproduce the instructions for a fictitious computer based communications system called ‘lumax’ (based presumably on services such as America On Line or Compuserve) “to learn more about electronic mail simply click your mouse over the mail icon on the screen.” Needless to say, there is no mouse, icon or screen.

This mimetic fissure is tackled by Carl Steadman in a facilitating internet based project called Two Inclinations, an email romance (http://www.freedomia.com/). Steadman (one of the co-founders of Slack) has written a novel dictated by the email interface rather than the print environment. One ‘subscribers’ to the story using similar protocols to Lestery discussion groups. What follows is a series of emails purported to be copies of the correspondence from the exchanges of 2 people of indeterminate gender (Lane and Dana) but amorous intent. The technological verticemum is so successful that it is quite possible to forget one is reading fake mail. It is a compelling literary experiment clearly informed by the epistolar theory of Jacques Derrida’s The Post Card (1987).

Where Steadman’s theoretically astute email fiction is overly indebted to an epistolary past (and all that that implies about the author/reader dynamic) and the conventions, the email novels must also be seen within their literary heritage. Just because someone in Email: A Love Story signs his missives from a ‘cyber room’, doesn’t mean he can’t grow up to be John Malkovich.

d-art00: digital exceptions

continued from page 25

code, baby’) da Rimini, looked like it would be more at home on a computer screen and all the better for being manipulable—at least to get a better look and to attend property to the gush girl’s texts (see Working the Screen, page 26). The artist is a Dutchman, Sander Bakel, a film writer of 1999), set in the columns beneath a freeway, initially appears to be a formal exercise, rearranging the columns by angles and varying tenses. But a man is introduced, leaping into the air until he remains suspended between the columns, the camera circling him magically without interruption or ed. Of course Matteo did this kind of thing but without offering us the opportunity for a long, contemplative gaze. As I watched, Matteo Gondeau, France, video, 1998) a brisk digitally animated advertisement has its best moment early on in its 1:30 when a cut-out muscular young man coughs up a diesel motor vehicle, as if given birth. Sought after that, unless you see flashes of ‘Static’ and ‘Monomonia’ as meaningful.

Somewhere between the traditions of the avant-garde and the new technological virtuosity (not that I know how she did it) is Festa Mobile (Moving Party: Valentina Goccetti, video, Italy, 1999), a visual feast, a bizarre animation with the key figure a bulbous black duck (an image from somewhere in modernist iconography) transforming into a mouse a la Mickey, a bear and an elephant and moving in and out of westerns, pomography and travelogues against a soundtrack shifting elegantly from romantic strings to jazz by composer Nuini. Despite the hacking, earnest animation we know so well, there was a deftness of touch and a visual richness that underpinned this increasingly sinister reverie.

The d-art00 screenings were a very mixed bag. Whether they affirmed the curatorial thesis of the increasing of visibility of the digital is another matter (it would have been interesting to have more detailed technical program notes on each film—the future possibility). While the truth of that invisibility is obvious in many respects (eg in action feature films) the argument does little justice to a different kind of distinctiveness, the hybrids emerging in places other than cinemas and screening rooms, like d-art00 in Customs House, in theatres and public places and events like Cyber Cultures. While it’s pleasing to see film festivals embrace ‘new media’, it does position such work as an adjunct to the movie experience (while doubtless promoting an interest in it). Why, with a few inviting exceptions, did d-art00 place itself firmly back in film tradition? What exactly is its curatorial rationale, or are we really at some defining moment where the old forms rule again and film is film, dance is dance, the are in theatre?

d-lhexa arts, d-art00 screenings, film & video, Sydney Film Festival, Dendy Opera Quays cinema, June 20, 22

See Working the Screen page 6 for reviews of Rebecca Bryant’s TellTale, Linda Wallace’s tolovetch, Tobias Kutscher Grimes’ Electronic Sound Remixer, Leon Cmielewski and Josephine Starr’s Dream Kitchen from the d-art00 exhibition, Customs House, Circular Quay, Sydney, June 8 - July 2

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Staging the political romance of the waterfront

Suzanne Spanner

Over the last month in Melbourne audiences have been exposed to 5 new plays which address contemporary politics in Australia. Front by Melbourne Workers Theatre, Michael Garr's Crazy Brave at Playbox and, from Brisbane, Matrix Theatre's A Beautiful Life. This in politics on stage whilst our government's every effort is directed towards ensuring that it's backstage, reduced to the whale in the hip pocket. Issues of rights and principles of democracy have been chained up and the UN told to butt out as Howard resiles from honouring our obligations under the conventions we have signed, not to mention the ordinary conventions of democracy which include the right to unionise and to strike, the very issues at the centre of Front.

Director-writer Peter Houghton was already writing a play set on the Australian waterfront and intending to examine the dangers of social division when the Docks dispute erupted in 1996 and the real drama unfolded. In many ways Front mirrors the dispute by masking in heroic-rhetoric the romance of the waterfront. While the dispute was settled for the wrong reasons, reasons that were easy to grasp—the right to strike, the right to unionise, the spectre of paid goons and balacclava-ed thugs who looked like termites, the idiocy of Patrick Dohm's vintage workforce—none of us was forced to look at much harder issues like the need for waterfront reform and the connection between the waterfront and the export markets we need to maintain. We want the workers to be right when they have been so grossly wronged by the dan- tardly complacent of bosses and government and it becomes too much to ask for things to be better and more efficient and more sustainable in the long term.

This well made play almost from another era, the male characters convincingly delineated, the woman sketchy and stereotyped, and not as interestingly perforated. Houghton wisely does not burden the play with detail of the actual dispute and avoids any documentary element by condensing a year of complicated deals and double deals and myriad workers, union leaders, dock owners, mercenaries, strikebreakers, minis-

ters, the Prime Minister and the National Farmers Federation into a cast of 7 and compresses the action into just 7 days. Instead it focuses on charac-
ter, history, types or style of a modern fable or morality play. "The fience sits, the title, the hero is presented, as they are in most plays. Your job as an audience is to decide who is who" (program note). Within its own terms it succeeds admirably, with the addition of the faithful wife and the duplicitous vamp to its list.

In the opening scenes Front's characters and the apt and witty metaphor of the Monopoly board are skilfully set up. In the union tea-room, personalities are vibrant, intragroup rivalries ventilated in cigarettes of vignettes chink-chking each other. From then on, things move fast and furri-
ously, clearly and clearly in a plot that's both tight and too care for words, but carries you along as drama. The experience is emotionally satisfying, but stumbles critical reflection and denies the intricacies and complexity of the Realpolitik. It denounces the forces that are the bosses' agents but also lets the bosses and government off the hook, although it certainly doesn't purport to represent any of the other side's argument that might have had any validity, which is perhaps fair enough given that it is MFT. What it does well is animate the old story, the way things were on the docks, the job for life, the traditions of the sea and the ships and the men who unload them, from the International to moving renditions of sea shanties. That's the story we loved in the media and that's the story we get here; and along the way the complexities of the Monopoly board metaphor get lost.

Melbourne Workers Theatre, Front, Theatreworks, St Kilda, June 14 - July 1 www.melbourneworkerstheatre.com.au

IRAATheatre and the implicated audience

Suzanne Spanner

It is only possible to write about The Secret Room at a meta level because to write about the rich theatricality, the potent visual imagery and the dense language is to betray the secret at its heart.

The events it deals with are shocking and intensely personal but the experience has been shaped as a beautiful, delicate and erotic work of art, layered with resonant images where nothing that we see or hear is accidental or casual.

Its grasp on its audience is para-
adoxical and contradictory. You can see it as live performance in a house in Carlton where you are received as a guest along with 6 other strangers. Performer Roberta Bosell is your hostess. While you wait for everyone to arrive, you sit by a fire in her living room and watch a house movie on TV. Then she invites you into her dining room to share a meal that she has cooked, and facil-

itates a conversation with you and your fel-
low diners in which you all share secrets. At the end of the meal she dons something dreadfully unsettling that is dealt with politely and discreetly (as people do at a din-

ner party when a guest goes too far). You wonder if it really happened and query whether you should take action to remedy the gaffe or look away, and wait for social order to be restored by the hostess. Afterwards she takes you upstairs through her bedroom to a secret room and reveals "herself" and "her story". At the end of the performance she leads you downstairs and farewells you into the night and your own thoughts.

On another night at the same time, in your own house, you can log in to a website and watch the same performance in real time, but of course it's not the same per-
formance because you are not part of it. You can download the script and listen to sound-
byte. You become a voyeur, willing or unwilling, invariably implicated, an acciden-
tal mesmerised witness to another person's pain.

It is uncomfortable, disturbing, and calls up an ambiguous response because the boundaries are blurred between private life and public life, the domestic interior and the infinity of cyberspace, the performer and her guest, the audience and the guest, inti-
mates and strangers. Ultimately the audience is controlled by the mediations of the sites of the performance and the complicity of director and partner Renato Cuocolo, the unseen operator of the video camera. The most disturbing element was my desire to know if it was "her" story or made up, a perfor-

mance to seduce me into an overwhelm-
ing identification. The invitation to voyeurism is powerful and the only way to feel in control is to partake fully. I have kept the secret, it is now my secret, I have not talked about what I saw either privately or here, because the voyeur's pleasures must remain her own.

The Secret Room is included in this year's Sydney Carnivale, Oct 1 - Nov 5 Enquiries 5251 7974. Bookings 1800 064 534 Venue confirmed on booking


Roberta Bosell
Digital purgatory: the horrors of Jet Lag

Sophie Hansen

The NT season at The Barbican Theatre in London is all about high quality international theatre. Alongside productions from gems like Laurne Anderson and Luc Bondy, there is cutting edge new work from rising stars such as The Builders Association (USA), who presented Jet Lag, their collaboration with architect Diller and Scofidio.

The Builders Association has a reputation for seamlessly merging technology with live action. This collaboration carried their trademark rigour. Check full of effects, there was nothing gratuitous or showy. Every element of Jet Lag seemed to have been examined with the critical eye of the outsider, asking 'so what?' questions about theatrical conventions, with a skilled theatre director similarly probing the dramatic intention of each multimedia tool.

The American actors projected their characters with vigour amidst the screens, monitors and microphones which littered the stage. In the first of the 2 true stories presented back to back in this 80 minute piece, the actor playing yachtsman Donald Crowhurst spoke only through his on-board communications equipment. He filmed himself for the television station tracking his competitive round the world voyage, he radioed his distant wife and made a video diary to chart his descent into paranoia and confusion. Crowhurst's fake voyage, ending with his mysterious disappearance, was packaged so tightly within the media which conveyed it, that his simple human tragedy hinted at universal meaning. Crowhurst's creative editing of his reports, the difficulties in their transmission and the spin put on their receipt by presenter and publicist all served to obscure the man behind the media. Part one fizzled out with an intense sense of loss.

Similarly, the protagonists of the second story were constantly meditated by technology. A sophisticated 3 dimensional computer environment moved constantly behind the characters, taking them through one never ending airport/airplane continuum. The flimsy of the projected image, combined with grainy security camera footage of the pair struggling to sleep on vinyl chairs, treading bags through barriers, communicated the purgatory of international travel.

Sarah Krassnoff crossed the Atlantic 167 consecutive times to flee the father seeking custody of her grandson. In 6 months they did not leave an airport and eventually Sarah died in transit, of jet lag. The nauseating statistics of this modern tale are announced with a monotone lack of drama as Sarah and grandson trample wearily up another escalator; thousands of hours spent restrained by the seat belt, tens of days lost forever, tens more lived twice, hundreds of bags of peanuts consumed, hundreds of films viewed (each on average 22 times). Again, when Sarah expires, against an awesome rendering of an aircraft interior to live sound effects created by visible actors, her small soul departs without a whisper. The roar of the landing aircraft, like the buzz of Crowhurst's dead radio, wipes the stage clean of human presence. This intensely self conscious production buzzed mystery and meaning at the audience in a barrage of media which remained multiple, partial and inconclusive from first to final byte.

Jet Lag, The Builders Association, Barbican Theatre, London, July 5-8

You sharpen your axe on the hardest stone

Kevin Gilbert
Adelaide theatre: swinging 60s implosions
Dickon Oxenburgh

In a twist of zeitgeist the latest productions from two SA theatre companies tackle the underbelly of family life in the 60s.

Both Svetlana in Slingbacks by South Australian playwright Valentina Levkovzic and Learning to Drive by American Paula Vogel explode the sentimental notion that growing up during the 'Swinging 60s' was all love and idealism; rather, for many it was a season in hell; in which the real revolution lay not out on the streets or the battlefields, but in that nest of ungrateful vipers known as 'family.'

Svetlana in Slingbacks is a result of 5 years development by Australia's only full time women's theatre company Vitalstatisx and further consolidates the company's commitment to new Australian theatre.

Playwright Levkovzic has established the right balance of humour and pathos in her characters' differing experiences of assimilation and alienation. The play is a wry, magic-realist look at migrant life in the western suburbs of Adelaide in the 60s as seen through the eyes of the central character Svetlana Fretova - a young girl trying to imagine her future while coping with her parents' past. Her family, emigrants who have escaped from Cold War Russia, now find suburban life in Australia almost as oppressive.

The family is dominated by Boris (Michael Habib), a 'good hard working man who wants only the best for his family.' But the best is not always good enough. Boris looks on helplessly while his wife Ludmilla (Sheila Duncan) is torn apart by the ghosts of her Stalinist past. While Adelaide looks after its own backyard and basks in the glow of Maralinga and 60s sit-com TV, Ludmilla lifts the iron curtain on a lifetime of repression and lobotomises herself with an avalanche of prescription drugs. Unable to cope Boris retreats into work, chasing the Australian Dream, now a bitter irony.

The resulting emotional carnage is absorbed by Retov's 2 baby-boom daughters, teenager Svetlana (Caroline Mignone) and her more adult sister Sonya (Jacqueline Cook). The girls react by escaping - Sonya into conventionality and marriage, while Svetlana casts herself adrift in deep space fantasy, her only companion Zorgon, Master of the Universe from the planet Alpha Gammaddon (Nicola Tulint).

At the play's end author Levkovzic leaves Svetlana's life in the balance, a Slavic heritage of nostalgia and pessimism adrift under the Southern Cross. While some of the sub-plots and multiple roles could have been streamlined further, Svetlana in Slingbacks' brand of reflective narcissism was good for the soul.

The State Theatre Company's latest offering is Paula Vogel's Pulitzer Prize winning Learning To Drive, a confronting fable into 'forbidden love and parallel parking.' With searing insight the performance deconstructs America's psycho-sexual obsession with cars and girls, very young girls.

Invoked as a memory journey by the central character 'Lil Bit' (Lisa Hensley), Learning To Drive uses the process of Lil Bit's learning to drive as a brilliant metaphor for gaining personal empowerment. The twist is that underpinning the lessons is the complex web of manipulation and volition of a long term paedophic relationship between Lil Bit and her mentor, alcoholic Uncle Peck (Nicholas Edie).

The drama explores the relationship, deftly shifting gear through time and space, alternating between the lessons and scenes of domestic life with Lil Bit's grotesquely carnal family (Marlo Grocke, Penny Maegraith and Rolly Walker). Finally the maze-like journey turns in on itself, and the beginning and the end of Lil Bit and Uncle Peck's ambiguous relationship, in a hotel room, a long way away from 'home.'

Strong performances abound, but Nicholas Edie's performance deserves special note. Rather than demonizing the character, Edie gives us a pathetic bewildered man-child, the kind of which is not uncommon, anywhere.


Carnivalé resurgent

Apparently unfazed by the dramas of its departing artistic director and manager, Carnivalé has resurrected itself under the direction of Michelle Jammal and come up with a program that includes some adventurous theatre works for connoisseurs of the form. This year's celebration of multicultural Australia includes ITAA's highly acclaimed The Secret Room (see page 28) performed at a secret location in Leichhardt and SideTrack's remarkable performance of Theo Patrikarakos' The Promised Woman (see review, RealTime 37) with Nick's International Boarding House erected inside The Studio at the Opera House; Theatre Physical directed by Carlos Gomez makes multimedia mayhem with the family album in Overexposed based on a tale by Brazilian playwright Nelson Rodrigues; Shopfront Theatre collaborates with local youth refuges and a group of newly arrived migrants to investigate notions of family in All the Things You Want to Happen, for will be Multicultural Theatre Alliance's Saunders; featuring 6 new writers from culturally diverse backgrounds creating short works on 'sleep deprivation in the Olympic city'; Mysterious is a comic solo written by Noelle Janacrezewka and performed by Asako Iizawa about an ordinary woman who doubles as a dial-a-clairvoyant. Playwright Duong Le Quy is on a run right now with his Meat Party included in the Melbourne Festival and 2 works featured in Carnivalé: The Request of Spring, a multi-artist performance and A Graveyard for the Living, both presented in city venues by Vietnamese Arts Culture Exchange Project. Meanwhile CityMoon setups contemporary theatre with a Vietnamese-Australian bent in The Monkey Mother, 'a whirl of legend and contemporary life.' There's a cross-cultural showcase at Bankstown BSL featuring CityMoon, Birrong Boys Arabic Hip Hop Group, Bankstown Samoan Girls Choir and Urban Theatre Projects with participation of The Morning Star Vietnamese Theatre Dance Group. At the Parramatta Riverside Theatre, Leigh Warren & Dancers take on Masterpieces of the 20th Century while Anandavalli and the Lingalayam Dance Company lift the veil on brides of god in The Temple Dancer. Playworks hosts Poor Relations, an evening of readings and talks on matters multicultural at Pilgrim Theatre in Pitt Street, while at Artspace. Bethinking History explores the construction of Australian history and the contemporary processes of abstraction in a collaboration between Juan Davila, Constanze Zikos and Nikos Papastergiadis along with an online project by Brook Andrew and John Sealy. There's an eclectic music program, an experimental short film and video festival at Valhalla co-ordinated by film-maker Mahmoud Yekta, a cyber magazine, performance poetry and much much more than we have space for here. Festival events will be located in both city and suburbs with satellite events in Newcastle and Hunter regions, Campbelltown, Blue Mountains and the Illawarra. See for yourself...Carnivalé October 6 - 29. For full program details, tel 02 9251 7974, www.carnivale.com.au.
Jonathan Andrews-Wesley

A mute, irreducible black form sits astride a horse—he is part of the horse—and through the slit in his position you see the Australian landscape. So Nolan depicted Ned Kelly—not as a man, or even a myth, but a frame for colonial anxieties. Despite the imposing bulk of Melbourne's neo-classical Supreme Court, much of 1880s Victoria remained little more than a series of slabs barely distinguishable from the menacing stringback scrub they Looked out upon.

Myth, art, history, empire: all attracted by the magnetism of Kelly's helmet. So too theatre and the law. Sentencing Judge Barry admonished Kelly that the outlaw would go to Hell. Kelly retorted: 'I will go farther than that—I will see you there.' This oratorical bushranger has entranced theatre-makers (and filmmakers) such as Douglas Stewart and others. Law is always good theatre, be it sometime theatrical author Machiavelli's dicta on the rhetorics of evil, Rumpole, or the gladiatorial combat of parliamentary question time on television. Ritual, conflict, display, oratory: powerful languages Kelly drew upon through the symbolic potency of his largely non-utilitarian armour and renown as a wise-the-wisp bushman.

So what of this staging of Kelly's trial today? There has been a vague for reitals since the posthumous Lee Harvey Oswald re-tele-trial of the 1980s, and both this reital and the 60 Minutes report dramatised the poor performance of Kelly's young defence barrister Bindon. Even so, to layer theatrical sensibilities over an already theatrical event seems like gilding the lily. There is so much in Kelly that actor Peter Green's short musings as old Bindon cannot encompass, a fact highlighted by the 60 Minutes report's cursory treatment of this section of the reital. History as mere sepia-toned prologue? By contrast, the report's footage of Nick Jagger in the 1970 Tony Richardson film seemed impressive.

More significantly, theatre as theatre—as myth, magic, metaphor and poetry—has no interest in theatre as the law sees it. The courtroom, heavy with accretions of time, only reluctantly submits to the moody, low-light vision of reital director Nick Harrison. The law wants to be seen under bright lights, in all its glory, so its pomp and ceremony can carry its full, iridescent force, and the baroque mouldings and rich, dark wood of the Supreme Court can speak their own articulate language.

Theatre as theatre has no stake in legalistic details such as Bindon's preparations, or how much ammunition the pursuing officers carried. Journalism on the other hand revels in the potential scandal hidden in such facts. These minutiae come to life under judicial scrutiny, in the eloquent mockery of modern defence barrister Michael Broomes. Once theatre has had its say and the actors have spoken their prescribed lines, the real lawyers reclaim Kelly—real not because they are practicing 'silks,' but because they submit to the theatrics of the law. The improvised, verbal sparring of these bright, bewigged masters animates otherwise banal technicalities, both in the courtroom, and in its televised and archival traces—a function doubtless by the para-legal role of the journalist as an interpretive anchor for 60 Minutes' televisial montage.

In this aesthetic victory of law over theatre, the law's involvement with Kelly focuses on the sole question of whether the outlaw was guilty of this specific charge of murder. Tele-journalism mediates this relationship between law and theatre, drawing on both. Thus at the very moment of judicial closure, Kelly slips beyond the reach of the law, and into the realm of myth and journalistic legend. Kelly never was, and will never be, described by a single crime.

The Queen versus Edward 'Ned' Kelly. Victorian Barr Theatre Company, director Nicholas Harrington, writers' dramaturgy Tom Wright, Banco Court, Supreme Court of Victoria, May 19-20; Consider Your Verdict: Ned Kelly goes on trial, reporter Ellen Fanning, producer Stephen Taylor, 60 Minutes, Channel 9, May 29; the 60 Minutes poll found Ned Kelly not guilty of policeman Thomas Lonigan's murder 4,578 votes to 1,186.

In RealTime 39
Sydney Performance feature: Blueprints and outcomes
The Kosky-Hughes-Seneca Oedipus, the Andrews-Wertenbaker-Marivaux La Dispute, the Enoch-Hughes-Euripides Black Medea, Nikki Heywood's Inland Sea, an interview with Robert Oedipus Menzies, PACT's Replicant Hotel, Carnivalé's theatre offerings, Performance Space's Intersections and the Benedict Andrews-Wesley Enoch Blueprint program for the Sydney Theatre Company...and Cultural Olympian Pina Bausch.

A revitalised Performance Space, a Sydney Theatre Company with some great productions and signs of vision, the Hyda collective newly housed in the Seymour Centre, an abundance of workshops and forums...what does it all add up to?
Dedicated
to
nurturing a culture
of contemporary
trends into the 21st Century

development
opportunity

Next Wave Festival invites Victorian-based theatre artists to submit proposals under kickStART, a professional development scheme. The scheme is open to young and emerging theatre artists (in early career stage, generally within first five years of professional practice). Successful applicants under the scheme will receive facilitated access to a mentor and financial assistance (up to $7,000) for creative development. The scheme also offers a skills development package in proposal writing, budgeting, project management, and evaluation techniques. If you intend to apply, please first obtain an application form and guidelines from Next Wave Festival.

Tel 03 9417 7544 Fax 03 9417 7481 Mail 31 Victoria Street Fitzroy Vic 3065 Email nextwave@nextwave.org.au

CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSIONS Friday 15 September 2000

Next Wave Festival acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria – Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The Young and Emerging Artists Initiative is an initiative of the Theatre Fund of the Australia Council, the Commonwealth Government's arts funding and advisory body, in partnership with Next Wave Festival.

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what’s on at PICA?

August 26 - September 17

100 Years of Art & Design
Perth Technical College to Central TAFE

To mark the centenary of the Perth Technical College, and therefore the hundredth anniversary of the Perth Tech Art Department, the School of Art and Design is holding a mammoth celebratory exhibition featuring art, design and craft works from some outstanding practitioners associated with Perth Tech throughout its history.

November 9 - December 17

The New Republics
Rebecca and Kenny Baird, Richard Bell, Gordon Bennett, Willie Bester, Dominiqe Blain, Elizabeth Gerakis, Trevor Gould, Fiona Hall, Moshehwa Lang, Brett Murray, Lella Sujic, Clive Van Den Berg, Sue Williamson, Jin-me Soon

An oblique critique of a former European power through a study of its effects on Canada, South Africa and Australia.

An Australian Centre for Contemporary Art / Organisation for Visual Arts, London touring exhibition

Full program notes for all PICA exhibitions and performances at

Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts

winner gallery venue: Tuesday - Thursday 11am - 9pm. gallery admission is free.

email: pica@pica.net.au TEL 08 9227 1414 FAX 08 9227 9139 BOOKINGS 08 9227 9329

PICA's touring programs are virtually supported by the Australian Government’s Arts- and through the Australia Council for the Government's arts, learning and sharing body and sponsored by Healthwest to promote Family Planning's new S.A.P. message.

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Australian Centre for Contemporary Art

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art

RENT 1 to 3 Sept
Andrew Hurle, Ricky Swallow, Louise Weaver, A Constructed World, Danius Kesminas & Mike Stevenson, Philip Brophy, Kate Beynon, David Rosetzky, Julia O'Sullivan, Callum Morton, Mathew Jones, Kenneth Place, Ruth Watson, Ah Xian, Geoff Baker

Public Events
12 August - Rex Butler, Juliana Engberg, Edward Colless 'Post Appropriation' forum
21 August - Philip Brophy 'Evaporated Music' talk/performance
29 August - Philip Hassan 'What was Postmodernism!' public lecture

8 September to 8 October

TMMF Marco Fusinato and Thurston Moore
100 mph David Noonan and Simon Tavener

ACCAC Dallas Brooks Drive Sth, Yarra VIC 3141 Tel 03 9664 6402 Email acca@bnet.net.au
Website www.arts.org.au

RealTime 38 August - September 2000
Text/art: an artist in the Olympics

Jacqueline Milner interviews Ruark Lewis

Ruark Lewis is a well-known practitioner on the Sydney art scene, both as visual artist and writer/performer. He has a particular interest in the relationship between text and art, as well as a preoccupation for collaborative projects, most notably with Paul Carter. Over the last year, Lewis has exhibited in a number of Florida projects and produced illustrated literature, to an installation that responds to a recent book.

Tell me how you came to develop your overarching artistic approach, this exploration of the relationship between text and image.

Very early on, while still at art school, I began writing poetry, verbal accounts of paintings by such artists as Arthur Boyd and Albert Tucker. Out of that, I eventually wrote a play about George Baldessin that I performed at the AGNSW for a Baldessin exhibition. I was drawn to text as a challenge. In some sense I thought that, for such a visual person as myself, a text was more difficult to grasp. I gradually tried to remove myself from the writing, I felt it was a more modern project, not creating grand narratives and biographical paintings. I became increasingly interested in the dysfunction of language, in distorting the text, in making false narratives, that is, texts that appear to be making sense, but really are not. At the same time, I was interested in Constructivism, in Malevich, in Chagall, and in the synthesis of turning sound into form. I wanted to transcribe sound into visuals, experiment with the visual responses to musical scores. I sometimes say, "Arthur Boyd taught me to play the piano", in that apparently Arthur, after the fashion of his father, would sit at the piano and madly bang away on it eliciting a cacophony of discordant, aleatory sound. I experimented with this musically un schooled approach to music and performance. Partly I was inspired by my contact at art school with David Ahern, who had been an assistant to Stockhausen and had a highly sophisticated knowledge of modernist music and sound.

From an early interest in the Angry Penguins, I was drawn more and more to the Australian abstract painters, painters who historically remained very much the underdogs to the expressionists. And it was during the high point of recognition in the 1980s, when I was sharing a studio with a gestural painter, where I started to transcribe words into painting, as a reaction against the visual excess. I would not always use my own texts to transcribe... the process of selection then became an important aspect of my work, that I started to formalise a system that transcribed words and sound into paintings and drawings.

Rah, one of your recent major projects, deals with issues of translation and transcription, focusing closely on European records of the lives of Central Australian Indigenous communities. What is the history of your engagement with this material?

I was drawn to Australian Indigenous culture by chance. I found a watercolour, by Albert Namatjira's nephew Benjamin Landis, in the garage in Dover Heights. I cleared off the muck to discover the delicate, beautiful painting, which intrigued me into doing some research. I began doing traces of the paintings, trying to deconstruct them. It was while researching these early watercolours by Central Australian Aborigines that I came across the writings of T.G.H. Sheffelow [LINGUIST and Aboriginal classicist]...and I was instantly drawn to this water, its Sophoclesian, and anthropological perspective, so distinct from the writings, say, of Battarbee [who is famed for introducing Namatjira to watercolour technique and wrote on these early Aboriginal watercolour styles]. Sheffelow had a marvellous archive; a poet, he was also interested in music and sound... so he merged seamlessly with my interests.

And a long-term collaboration with Paul Carter, comprised an installation (first exhibited in 1995) of gesso-coated timber beams inscribed with continuous text which in 6 languages narrated the tragic story of Ted Strehlow's father Carl, a German missionary who died in Central Australia. The installation also involved audio-work: textile works and canvas textpaintings. Most recently, Ruthapple, another shape of a book, which not only documents the installation, but also includes poetic reflections on the process of translation and the recording of 'history'. [MJ]

Your interest in the visual power of the word has also led you to produce an exquisite artist's book exhibited earlier this year, based on a play by French author, Nathalie Sarraute. Tell me about this project.

Back in 1991, I asked a friend, translator Kaye Morley, whether she knew of any text that would lend itself to visual translation, and she suggested Nathalie Sarraute's Pour ou contre [Pour or Against] (Nodding), originally published in 1981. It was a play principally for 2 players, although with 4 characters overall, in which the tone and the silences as well as the words themselves trace the revelation of a loss of intimacy between friends, one a failed Romantic, the other a family man. Kaye had translated the text, a long and subtle process whereby she attempted to intum Nathalie's silences and elisions as much as her words, and so began a collaborative project between Nathalie, Kaye and I.

The project began as an experiment in colour typography and chance procedures. The design leavis towards Nathalie's theoretical ideas of subconvention and the new novel. I set the actors' speech in prose style to create, in effect, a visual Morse code of colours. I then made drawings intended to prepare the reader, to induce a hypnotic mode of meditation that is at once highly optical and essentially non-illustrative. In the final art book, 52 pages of poly-chromatic characters are fitted grid-like into each page of justified prose, punctuated by origi nal drawings.

This experiment with the colour-coded layout of text is also evident in your most recent major work, Relay, another collaboration with Paul Carter, and part of the Olympic public art program unveiled in March this year. Relay is a prose poem engraved over the distance of one kilometre in a set of granite steps encompassed between the Aqmcian Centre and Stadium Australia in Homebush Bay. It was a truly collaborative project, realised with the assistance of a team of architects, draughtspeople and stonemasons.

The work reflects a certain aversion to 'space' in preference to 'place'. We wanted to make 'place' Indigenous, by drawing not only on historical evocations of the Olympics but also on a series of Australian inflections. The text is divided into themes, corresponding with a tier of steps, and a colour—red, blue, yellow, or green—which also triggers certain associations. The themes include early Australian Olympics—for instance, the amiable story of Edwin Rack, the runner who got lost during the marathon of 1896—the contribution of women to Australian Olympic achievements, the 'living greats' who competed in the last Olympics on Australian soil, the role of the 'harbour city' and the imaginings for the Olympics of the future. Within the sequence of words are hidden colour-coded messages. The words run into each other; sometimes one word will lend a letter to the next, so that what is created is a sense of a relay, a cycle that comes back to the beginning to start again. [MJ]

Relay is an elegant and quietly provocative work, whose multiple layering of texts and architectural lines attempt to embody, in Paul Carter's words, that 'sport is not about infinite progress, but about harmony, tension, balance'. [MJ]


The underneath

Virginia Baxter

You enter Trent Parke and Narelle Autio's breathtaking exhibition at Stills Gallery to the sound of waves.

There are 30 pictures. Sonic is standard size and framed. Others are over a metre long digital panoramas formed from 2 computers images and printed to the wall. All are black and white, all unframed. All belong to that burgeoning photographic genre (especially in Sydney) of people on beach-es. More interestingly, the effect of these photographs is to give the viewer an immersive experience of water.

From the walls of the gallery, water spews from lips, curls through hair. Arms open to receive it, heads push against its weight, limbs plough through, torsos tumble in it. It becomes a liquid landscape for glorious and gawdy photographs. A heavy rain hags calmly seated in the air, with no fear of what's falling into. A hand dramatically breaks the surface, reaching just short of the inverting body beneath. A monumental head breaches a wave: like lips, a woman's outstretched arms break the water's tension. Headless bodies dangle in underwater light. Another ascends to what looks like the heavens is probably just some ocean pool somewhere. An old man surrenders himself to the dark below, his head slightly bowed, arms outstretched. He makes Bill Viola's Messenger appear way too simple.

As much as it's about water, this is also an exhibition about photography. It's about hexagonal droplets on lenses, grays of black and gelatin sil-ver, an image pushed to its limits to fix light, and eyes for composition that are as pure as any precious stone.

In the accompanying notes, Narelle Autio describes the photographers' 2 very different experiences of water. "The Newcastle beaches of Trent Parke's childhood situated on the east coast and open to the huge energy of the South Pacific gave him an immediate sense of the power and danger of the ocean. Growing up in Adelaide with the protection of a peninsula, the sea for me was more often than not, flat and without any sense of treachery."

In The Seventh Wave ("they say it's the biggest") we experience this sense of the seemingly calm and the fearful calm of a couple of photographers holding their breath as they hover with their Nikons as long as they dare in the depths. Catch it.

Each colour in extreme close-up is individually captured by video camera, and instantly replayed through monitors mounted beside the original, Pyrex containers. This is real-time, live camera action. This is Drying Paint, an electronic meditation on boredom at the nexus of art and technology.

Drying Paint effectively strips all sense of romanticism from the idea that technology enhances and improves our experience of the world, as each camera's increasingly lurid interpretation of the potted colour is expressed via the television's inaccurate composite. West Australian artist Tremain Egan's confident, equipment-intensive work dominates the central space of the Hatched: Heathcarya National Graduate Show. It is undermined only, but pointedly, by the approaching obsolescence of its own technologies.

Egan's commitment to confronting discourses surrounding representation in the age of economic and technological imperatives is matched in strength by only a handful of the 65 graduates represented in the exhibition. Trepidation and anxiety about addressing current social and cultural issues are revealed by the proliferation of artists in this year's survey who chose the path of the resistance by revisiting first-wave, middle-class feminist, reconstructing perspectives of historical events, or merely demonstrating historical results that in aestheticity pleasing, but shallow work.

The plethora of works in Hatched addressing issues of domestic and corporal power-relations reference not only the histories of such decorative textiles practices as crochet and needlepoint, but activities assigned to the realm of the household chore. There are several works that stand-out from these largely didactic, object-based exhibits. Video artist Elizabeth Anne Gratwick takes the closed, private anxieties normally relegated to the realm of the domestic, to the street. Her Performance Series is a collection of videotapes both projected against a wall and screened on a series of small TVs in a darkened corner of PICA.

Gratwick sits writhing at the comer of a CBD intersection, applying fake blood to her clothing while apparently sewing herself into the same white frock. Another tape depicts the artist lying, as if entombed, upon the sumolith stone of a parking bay. Her total introspection and focused actions, like repetitive

remontations of piety, are recognised and abruptly ignored by successive passers-by, as if they were programmed to reflect public manifestations of madness or religious fervour (particularly those of a woman whose crotch is stained red).

The bloodstained, white dress reappears as the remnant of a performance and part of the installation, Mother, by Monika Tischack. A video replays the painful embrace of 2 women after one, pierced hundred of times by pearl-empred pins demarcating and defining areas of her body, is unpinned by the other. The impact of this documentation is somewhat reduced by the obviousness of the series of sculptural works surrounding it. Lucston, pink and red folds of velvet are formed into habitual, sterile mounds, and synthesized with disembodied fragments of the Hollywood sex-sirens: long, blonde hair, stockings, and pearls.

In Small Lives, Jude Mauree takes only the baby dishware of the kitchen, leaving its politics behind. Diamonisms of ameticical fictions are enacted on the surface of a series of used sponges, with tiny white trash-sort-fugurines sproutting like fungus from the shrunken faces. Set on the top of tall, perspex vitrines large figures on the turfirste of scraping pads are placed into narratives of potential abuse, murder and conflict in seemingly picturesque settings.

The final piece of the series has an old man trundling a wheelchair behind a grazing cow, a fine close-in to a dark investigation of cultural growth that follows human evolution from crawling out of the mire of bacteria, to shoveling the shit of our own making.

The contemplative, meditative works of Sarah Elson and Claire County focus the attention of the viewer to the ground, and furthermore to the processes of growth and renewal. Elson's Flourishing, fantastical silver casts of augmented plant matter, are combined with wax, foam, and semi-precious stones, and set into a rhythmic circle. County's Powder also utilises the potential elements, wrongly perceived to exist outside the natural processes of decay. Water drips from suspended buckets, eroding the steel plate beneath in a circle of rust. With the microscope nearby, the viewer is invited to place its membrane on the cold, hard steel, and listen to the beating heart of a thing that never lived.

Hatched: Heathcarya National Graduate Show 2000, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, May 12 - June 25

Minister of Fate cuts globalist ribbon

Identity arises from an accretion of nature, nature and culture. Korean performance and installation artist Ahn Pil yun explored identity and cultural tension in 2 memorable performances in Adelaide.

At the Contemporary Art Centre of SA, Ahn had lined the rear room with mirror plastic printed with drawings of scissors. Inflatable plastic scissors bearing Korean seals, and a rag woven from plastic, hung from the ceiling. In the centre room, which was strewn with cardboard strips, 6 monitors showed her video. Famously, in an extension cord coils snake-like around an apple, the plug's two pins repeatedly penetrating the fruit (the bite as copulation) followed successively by images of other performances, Korean street scenes, geometric patterns. Pairs of wrought metal scissors fasten the front room.

Suddenly a long white wedding dress enters the gallery—lappet, wrapped red rope for the bride's head—emitting recorded pop rock and traditional music. The dress swishes about on its motorised figure, bumping into walls and onlookers, interrupting the opening speeches.

Ahn, in shaman costume, face painted white, runs in, then runs out the side door, in the front door again, calling out. Stepping, she earnestly takes an onlooker's hand, begging "has it finished?", runs another lap and accosts another onlooker. After many laps she collapses exhausted, sighing "finished!"

Assistant Professor of Art at Konkji University, Seoul, Ahn Pil yun has shown widely in Europe and Asia, and has designed major public artworks. She is also a shaman, with both Catholic and shamanic ancestry. Her work blends art with shamanism, colliding Korean and Western culture. She is a "stop-daughter."

The characters printed on her scissors are stop-daughter names, given to girls in the hope that the next child will be male. The wedding dress is her own. Scissors symbolise the creation of new elements, enabling extension. Present in all Ahn's work, the technical cord is an extension, babies/reproduction are an extension, clothes an extension, her performance extends Korea into Australia. Her mirrors both double and extend images and reverse their meaning.

In her second performance her shaman costume is draped with plastic scissors. She ritualistically distributes candles around the courtyard, 2 artificial rocks nearby. Then one rock moves by itself. She avoids it but it chases her. Taking courage she pushes the second rock after the first. She whispers to an onlooker to pass on the message "she really knows" through the crowd. The battle of animated rocks continues until she falls exhausted, crying "it's finished."

The mirrors symbolise viewpoints, grind-stones, spirits, cultural clash, transformation. Ahn's audiences embody friend/enemy, judge/accessory—custodians of tradition. Ahn, wielding her magic symbols, departs cultural (extension through her own fragmented identity. Her performances portray a resolution of this tension, a healing or "finish." But this climax can't be realised by the actor alone—we custodians must accept her and her intervention.

Extension, Ahn Pil yun, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, June 2: Leon Art Centre Courtyard, Adelaide, June 7
Custom made confessions at CCP

Ned Rossetky

There's a certain banality in discourse that disinvites an emotional disclosure of its intense affective dimension. The syntactical range in which utterance takes form to give emotive presence its line of reason is so often limited, repetitive and hackneyed. A making conscious of the unconscious. Expression bound by genre. And this can be brutal. For me, it's the accumulation of exchanged little gestures of expression—a glance, the break of air on the back of a neck, the smell of skin, a crack in the road witnessed together, the murmur of sleep—that imbues a discourse on love with seemingly unbounded resonance. Intimate exchange is effectively attenuated when the singularity of love makes its circuitry, for instance. Bodies become lost in the disfiguring work of narration.

One shows at the Centre for Contemporary Photography engage with such a thematic, staging private intimacies as public confessions, but here I'll focus on one. David Rossetky's Custom Made is an installation consisting of 2 exteriorly placed video projectors whose image is interiorly set on single translucent screens within 2 large wood veneer panels. Bench seats for viewing are fixed in alcoves opposite the image screen. Audio speakers are embedded either side of these by benches. This half-enclosed chamber of sound and vision repeats itself with one image panel the inverse of the other, one soundtrack echoing in the booth diagonally opposite. What not exactly an exhibition of photographs, this installation is curiously photographic in its resemblance to the 18th century panoramic photographic apparatus of the camera obscura.

As you sit in the alcove a drum, bass and symphony is played into your ears by the noise of a bustling suburban interscenes a series of monologues confessed by various social 'types' projected as a video-loop. Like the seated viewer, each subject sits against a wood veneer wall. We are positioned as an addresser as they engage with the camera and hence bound, however fleeting and tenuous, in some relationship of complicity or dialogue. In another sense, as with the camera obscura, we are positioned as the very image which passes through the hole of the dark interior. Still again, the pew we occupy and the confession we hear are not so different from those techniques of social redemption and reversion characteristic of the church. Ideology, as French Marxist philosopher and troubled Catholic Louis Althusser knew well, needs to be inscribed across and in institutions in order to do its work of reproduction.

Placed to one side of the screen, a pubescent girl with red hair speaks in privacy of her best friend at school. An older, darker girl fades up next to her. The redhead dissolves, while the new girl speaks of the incapacity of boys to articulate their emotions and acknowledge the significance of a relationship. A guy wearing a Mao-style jacket and ubiquitous Japanese fishing hat—2 key signals of the interchangeable fashion of globalised contemporary urban youth—speaks of a reconciliation between father and son, or maybe it's between friends. It's often unclear who is being referred to in these confessions. A slightly anxious man in his late 30s or early 40s who might have a diet of boose, coffee, fags and hard work is dressed in a snappy powder blue t-shirt and has a bit of a state punk-rocker haircut. It's a gentle guy and distinctly troubled by his estranged relationship with his father, son, or lover. Again, it's unclear. A 20-something tattooed Japanese guy with slicked hair and a Chastity growth of beard speaks dearly of how he and his English speaking girlfriend overcome the difficulties of different languages. He fades out replaced by a kind of zany post-Calvin Klein Vincent Gallo 20-something guy who waxes lyrical on his remarkable attraction to women—In his case, a girl introduced to him by a mutual friend. An Australian-Vietnamese girl decked out in op-shop chic delivers the next monologue on screen-right. She speaks of her great love of all things plastic, rattling on about her friend, mother or maybe grandmother just can't understand what she gets off on, surmising that this has something to do with a difference in values. In many respects these monologues are easy to dismiss for the earnestness of their youthful angst. But this overlooks the range of ages and cultural backgrounds of the subjects. Nice, perhaps, is to see the expression of intensity of the relationships for all of these people as relative to their type. You know, a different strokes for different folks kind of thing.

What is interesting about this chonographic staged confession of real as real the way a desire for presence is played out in the installation as a whole: Here, I think the model of the camera obscura again has something to offer. Writing on the use of the camera obscura as a metaphor for ideological consciousness in Marx, the unconscious in Freud, and forgetting in Nietzsche, Sarah Kopman notes how for all these key modern thinkers there is a fascination with the corruption of the real through 'reflections of reflections, simulacra, fetishes', all of which are severed in some way from their source (Camera Obscura of Ideology, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1999). Reading, Marx, Kopman suggests 'the camera obscura functions, not as a specific technical object whose effect is to present, in inverted form, real relationships but, rather, as an apparatus for occultation, which plunges consciousness into darkness, evil and error, which makes it become dizzy and lose its balance. It is an apparatus which renders real relationships elusive and scarce.'

While there may be a will to transparency and desire for presence intrinsic to the model of vision of the camera obscura, Rossetky's Custom Made underscores such rupture with distinct ambivalence. The wood veneer chamber signals its objectness as something already past: as a building material, the wood veneer—a thinly applied surface to a cheap wood composite—is of the kind found in carnivals, booths and those '70s game rooms in modest suburban homes, homes whose once outer-fringe locations have since been demolished or become the interior of a greater suburban sprawl. Furthermore, there's nothing stable to the transcendent projections: just as the images dissolve beside each other, the monologues might as well be rehearsals of any TV soap beamed in from out there. Custom Made suggests our sense of reality is constituted precisely in the refurbings we make of mediatised commercial culture.

David Rossetky, Custom Made, Gallery One, Centre for Contemporary Photography (CCP), Melbourne, June 9—July 1.

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Saturday 9th September 2000
presented by Australian centre for photography
and university of new south wales
at the college of fine arts

info@acp.au.com or tel: 02 9332 1450
At a time when the world will be fixated on the body poised to its extremes, this Symposium will explore other corporeal limits - the baccio obverse of the Olympian paradigm. The body, on the brink of decadence; wellbeing/malady; the dysfunctional body; the visceral reality of the post-Calvin superfluous. With contributions to the classical aesthetic of 'surface of a closed volume'; the corporeal as it shades into the spiritual, the senesce as it merges into the virtual.

untitled (sketch) [detail] 1969 © Diana Thorneycroft

SPKERS INCLUDE
Dr Kit Messaham-Muir
Lecturer in art theory department
UNSW at COFA
Jon Baturin
artist and Associate Professor, York University Ontario
Dieter Huber
artist, Sidney Australia
Diana Thorneycroft
artist and Adjunct Professor, University of Melbourne
Victoria Ryan
Medical Historian
Michael Wardell
Head of Curatorial Services
Art Gallery of NSW
Rebecca Bray
Department of Criminology
Melbourne University

This symposium accompanies the exhibition
the liminal body
Australian Centre for Photography
8th September - 15th October 2000
11.00am - 6.00pm Tue - Sun
ARTISTS INCLUDE
Jon Baturin, Farrell & Parkin
Sue F. Pogue
Dietrich Huber
Bill Jacobson
Diana Thorneycroft

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Opera activists: 
Amanda Stewart & Colin Bright

Harriet Cunningham

The Greenpeace volunteers are back on the streets, ready to wreak the consciences of Sydney-siders on their best Olympics behav- iour. "Do you like whistles?" asks a well- 
scrubbed face with a clipboard. Being 8 months pregnant, it's hard to resist being gifted. 'No, but I know how they feel when they get beached.' The environment is an unendlessly worthy cause, deserving urgent attention, but this activity's overt reminder backfires—it's all too earnest, too emotive, too much of an inva- sion of my personal and psychological space.

What hope then, for artists seeking to communicate an issue through their art? Is it an instant turn-off, or a chance to interrogate difficult subjects with a little more distance? I spoke to composer Colin Bright and poet Amanda Stewart about their opera The Singing of the Rainbow Warrior which is based on the scandalous 'L'Affaire Greenpeace.'

The Singing of the Rainbow Warrior was originally commissioned in 1990 as part of the Australian Music Centre's one-off opera proj- ect. It took another 6 years before the work reached the public in a spectacular outdoor performance against the backdrop of HMS Vampire, staged by Nigel Kellaway for the 1997 Sydney Festival. In 2000, after much editing by Bright, Stewart and ABC producer Andrew McLennan, a radiophonic version has been broadcast on ABC Classic FM and will be released on CD on the Australian Music Centre's label, Vox Australia. The CD release brings the project full circle and, by a happy accident, also coincides with a visit from Greenpeace's flagship, Rainbow Warrior, dur- ing the Olympics. It makes for a satisfying res- onance between the events and the work.

The tension between artefact and fact has proved to be one of Bright and Stewart's biggest artistic challenges. As Amanda Stewart explains, 'It's very powerful work to compose Colin Bright and which is still very fresh in people's minds. You have to treat the story with the utmost humility but at the same time bring forth what you believe: unanimous sympathy and detachment.'

Talking with Colin Bright about his musi- cal inspiration exposes a raw sensibility which, he admits, many critics and commentators find hard to take. An unrepentant activist, much of his music is driven by sociopolitical issues including the environment, Aboriginal affairs and gay discrimination. It was his idea to explore the story of the Rainbow Warrior because it was such a significant turning point in the history of the Pacific: 'It was like a moment where Australia lost its naivety. We realised that a friend and ally would betray a fellow ally. It was a coming of age.'

The collaborative process of composing an opera was a key to balancing the raw and the detached. Amanda Stewart's journalist back- ground (which includes making a documen- tary film about the development of subatomic physics with Nicolette Freeman in 1983) gave her a huge reservoir of facts to draw on. For Colin Bright, it was more a gut reaction. As she explains, 'Funnily enough, he'd often want to be more literal and narrative-driven than me. It's important that Colin's passion for the idea was knitted in there. It was thus he had the stamina to go on. He writes very directly and passionately. I tend to be more elusive.'

Stewart adds, 'It is appropriate that the writer has distance, and the composer has more passion. Just to deal with the issue—in a purely passionate level—could have degenerat- ed into didactic opera. The writer has to look at the skeleton, the bare bones and have some responses to these structures. I am passionate about these issues, particularly about how the Pacific has been used as a laboratory... But when presenting something in public one has the responsibility to reveal deeper structures, as well as unfortunate manifestations. L'Affaire Greenpeace is not an isolated incident. It is representative of many.'

This tussle with real life and art produced a work which is resonant on many levels. The need for distance, combined with a tight budg- et, resulted in the story being distilled into a narrative for 6 characters who each represent a summary of the many activists, journalists, lawyers and onboarders involved. Fernando Pereira, the Greenpeace photographer who was trapped aboard the Rainbow Warrior when she sank at her mooring, is invoked as the narrator. Beyond his literal role in the event, however, he is also an archetype, the betrayed warrior who cannot rest, haunting the present in his search for vengeance.

"The underwater idea in opera has many parallels," says Stewart. "Fernando is seen and unseen; the dead survive in the will of the liv- ing, and the effects are carried in people's hearts. Thus you interrogate the tension between myth and history, you find structures in people's behaviour and undercurrents which lead to particular events. Originally opera was a form of ritual—ritualizing events, displacing familiarity. We had to make [The Singing of the Rainbow Warrior] complex and layered rather than simple. It appeals to the intellect. Hopefully, it's not emotionally void, but that's not its backbone.'

And does this dense, intellectual web of references make for a successful work, dra- matically and musically? Stewart admits, "It's quite a hard listen, not an easy work. A new opera is very difficult." Bright views these difficulties as symptomatic of the sub- ject matter rather than the genre. Like much of his work, this opera does not fit easily into an establishment venue. He often writes for alternative outlets—free outdoor performances, CD-ROMs, electroacoustic and collaborative works. However, as he observes, operating outside traditional con- fines makes establishment support harder to come by: the funding bodies and the gener- al public do not seem to value free, grass roots, community-based works of art as they do high opera.

This issue is not confined to Bright and Stewart's collaboration. As Stewart points out, "Opera is meant to resonate, but Australian operas don't have an infrastruc- ture to fit into... People writing new operas mostly would be aware of European tradi- tions, but there's no obligation to obey that tradition. There is the excitement that one can deal with issues that are local, using that form [opera] but twisting it to define our own cultural priorities." Looking at other operas emerging in Australia, it is interesting to observe the number inspired by recent cultural issues: Andrew Schultz's Black River (Indigenous imprisonment), Martin Wesley-Smith's Quest (East Timor) and the un-produced Lindy (Chamberlain) by Moira Henderson. None are comfortable works and, especially in the case of Lindy, all have faced ongoing problems to find a relevant context for presentation.

So The Singing of the Rainbow Warrior returns, not on stage but as a radiophonie presentation, complete with sound effects and archival recordings from Australian, New Zealand and French reportage of the time. As an alternative to the staged version (spectacularly realised in 1997 on Darling Harbour outside the National Maritime Museum, Sydney and performed on ships, docks and in the water) it will hopefully ensure many broadcasts—there is already strong interest in the work from New Zealand and Canada.

Is it, however, a loss for opera and an admission that 'high' artforms cannot carry a political message in Australia? Although it is disappointing that the original work is unlikely to have another live performance in the short term, both Bright and Stewart are relieved that the work has been distilsed into an accessible medium. For, as Bright points out, "I used to think [art] could change things. But it's more like it creates a vibra- tion in society. I think that's what it can do."
Libra Ensemble: traversing the limits of modernism?

Jonathan Marshall

While modernism frequently conforms to classical Aristotelian poetics, radically postmodernist music is antithetical to such ideals—US minimalism aside. Beauty, symmetry, harmony—and their extension into deeper, metaphorical, emotional or conceptual harmony—while the integrity of polyphony, etc.—remain central to both classiﬁcation and modernism. Postmodernist classical or ensemble music therefore represents a paradox, hence perhaps the interpenetration of modernist sonorities and musical ideas throughout Libra Ensemble’s recent proﬁle of 20th century music.

Curatoristic: Carl Rosman disavows "any grand portentous statements" on the history of music. Even so, the relative paucity of ﬁercely anti-classical avant-garde works from Dada, Futurism or Fluxus seemed idiosyncratic. Consequently much of the series produced the sense of an energetic, talented pantheon circulating the dark, cold star of 20th century modernism. As Richard Barter noted in his program essay: "If recent works in this series are anything to go by, [contemporary composers] are 're-modernizing', a trend echoed in Australia, Belgium, Finland, France and others. Nevertheless at the moment of audience, this heritage remains compelling. The most fascinating works however are those which go beyond, traversing the limits of modernity by actively inhabiting and sonically embodying modernist ﬁnitude and collapse. Peter Maxwell Davies Hymnus extends the (late) modernist approach of molecularizing and individuating sonic musical fragments such that traditional sonority dissolved down. Today, historical music forms droop under the weight of predetermine affective responses: melancholy natural landscapes and mountains, not necessarily separated, but agent-driven urban worlds of psycho-sexual alienation for Modernism. These models of emotional signiﬁcance do not apply to Davies’ radically de-structured sounds however: as sono-musical separations become replaced by explosive conﬁnement and combination, piano and clarinet transformed into pure noise machines. The different strategies of Young, Gerhard, Rickston and (notably modernist) composition produce similar ruptures.

Libra’s tendency towards high modernism also restricted the concerts’ performative qualities. Dressed in black, the unassuming musicians came across as living embodiments of the anti-aesthetic aesthetics underlying ch. black sound systems. No Cage or Beuys here. Richard Barter’s “interference” was in this sense a superlative exception. This Terry-Guilliam-esque piece of avant-garde sideshow featured Rosman screaming in Latin across nearly 5 scores, dropping into death-metal growls, and intermittently punctuating his speech with a comically booming pedal drum, before unlatching as his trillations were redi-rected through great, brassy loops of the con- trabass clarinet. By vocalizing into its coils as one would a didgeridoo, Rosman transformed instrument into prosthest, the sounds of the body extended into gleaming metal in a way akin to Uijes Munner’s Love Aone (Munner is a Japanese ‘cabaret’ artist and half of the band Gorgeos).

Katharina Stockhausen’s Genug der Jangögsche echoes those binary contradictions that dog Modernity. As musique concrète—composed from that most material of objects: magnetic tape—Stockhausen’s work journeys towards a spiritual evanescence, a transcen-dence of materiality through the processes of the eternally-endowed, electronic mecha-nism. In doing so, performance and history themselves evaporate. Yet to Jean Pennam observed of dub, the ‘ghost’ of the past—a spectral, Heideggerian haunting of the zeitgeist—remains in the echo, the estranged sound, and the original process of montage (Perrin, “Klang” Garvey’s Ghost meets Heidegger’s Gist, or How dub became every-one’s soundtrack already, always & forever more”, Canossa Conference, July 1). If modernist spirituality is haunted by materialist alienation, then postmodernist classicism remains deeply complicat in modernist musical structures.

Once Upon A Time: A journey through the music of the 20th century, a four concert series from the Libra Ensemble, Joan Soprano, Auditorium, Victorian Arts Centre and North Melbourne Town Hall, May—July.

Phil Niblock: composer with laptop

caleb k

This Artspace evening commenced with a less than typical Phil Niblock work, the collage piece Ghosts and Others. We entered the space with the work in full progress, clashes and clumps, loud and hard to take. 3 gaiters improvising with/over the piece while images of workers were projected on 2 of the walls. Niblock is known as a second generation minimalist who, since the 60s, has been com-posing as well as making film. Guitar Too, For Four (1956) was the focus of the evening. The piece is for 3 guitars (performed by Orea Ambarchi, David Haines and Julian Knowles) played with bows to enable continuous and sustained tones, and laptop (Niblock). The sounds play in a phantom space ﬁlled with microtones. That is, the sounds, though extremely simple, create a space ﬁlled with overtones, sum and difference tones, and inter-ference patterns, which have the effect of cre-ating a soundspace which suggests many more notes and tones along with rhythms in a com-plex space—both in the architecture of the room and in your head. The work requires the room be reective as the notes bounce around and off each other. Bearing drones take on a life of their own as they are let out into the acoustics of the space where they seems imme-sive and extremely dense. When it was ﬁn-ished, there was a sense of loss, one which I found hard to shake.

The performance is centred on pre-recorded tones which have been slightly bent in pitch. These are then played on a laptop which Niblock has real-time control over, laying the sounds along with the live performers. The guitar-ists improvise around a few notes, bowing, changing octaves, hit-ting harmonics all in their own style and in conjunction with each other and Niblock. From something so simple comes an extremely complex array of sounds. This is loud. With no volume the sound becomes architectural. It is interesting to note that Phil Niblock says his hearing hasn’t been affected by years of exposure to these sounds often around 110 decibels sound. His work calls for very good ampliﬁcation and speaker systems, something which has only become readily accessible in recent years.

During the performance Niblock has his back to the audience, working the tones. As the guitarist leave so does most of the aud-ience, meaning the overall work tends to be played and a once-off opportunity to see and hear the unassuming Niblock at work. Why does the audience need to see performers?

What does it mean to perform with a laptop? The question of performance in the face of the ubiquitous Powerbook is at present being wrestled with as performers go to new extremes with the tool. Phil Niblock’s charac-teristic of ‘bespoke code’, those who have come across him and his music well know.

Phil Niblock with Orea Ambarchi, David Haines and Julian Knowles, Artspace, Sydney, April 20

New Music Notes

The New Music Network is about telling audiences and performers where, when and how to hear the best in new music performance around Australia. Visit the NNN website for more performance details and a full calendar.

August - September

Dominating the contemporary music calen-dar is the 11th Sydney Spring Festival of New Music. The festival will play host to the 2nd annual Peggy Glanville-Hicks Award by eminent compo-siter Barry Conyngham on the eve of his departure from Australia to take up the Chair of Australian Studies at Harvard University, Studio Foyer, Sydney Opera House, Sunday August 13, 2.30pm. That’s on the ﬁnal day of the Sydney Spring Festival, also the day of two New Music Forum sessions: Elena Kats-Chernin, Richard Vella and Teresa Crea share insights into recent collabora-tions, and speakers from a variety of musical backgrounds discuss ‘Is Chamber Music Dead?’ chaired by Barry Plevs, Executive Producer of the Spring Festival.

The Image of Music, an exhibition of contemporary composer and performer portraits by Bridget Elliot will be launched in the Studio foyer by Elizabeth Manley, Sydney MCA, Wednesday August 2, 6pm. All of the New Music Network events in Sydney Spring are FREE! You could spend the whole of August in Sydney visiting the Young Composer and Young Performer Studios, the NNN Forums and Academic早晚 to discuss new works and then ﬁnishing the day by purchasing tick-ets for the festival’s grand ﬁnale, Sur Incises by Pierre Boulez, conducted by Simon Wright, with an outstanding ensemble.

There are too many Spring Festival highlights to mention: Claire Edwards fresh from Rotterdam Conservatory to launch a solo performance of contemporary works for percussion; the launch of The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior CD-ROM The full festival program is available on our website. All bookings are through the Sydney Opera House.

That “giant-knit new music commando” Sydney Alpha Ensemble will present another wonderful program of contemporary works, Across Generations, featuring works by composers: Damien ‘Rickelemeen’, Michael Smetanin, Michael Finnissy, Matthew Shlomowitz and Brian Ferneyhough. Damien Rice will give a pre-concert talk at 7.15pm and the concert will commence 8pm in the Eugene Goossens Hall, ABC Centre Ultimo, September 1, Tickets $20/adults/$12/students, $15 for NNN members.


For more info on times, prices and venues visit our website: www.nnn.org.au and for ever more information call the NNN ofﬁce on (02) 9281 5939.

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Elision: the art of infectious interference

Richard Wilding

The Queensland Art Gallery is a noisy place on a Sunday. The concrete halls and open spaces echo with the fragmented sounds of people chatting, the voiceovers on cycling video-exhibits and children being kids—almost a shopping mall effect. Into this sea of ambience, members of the Elision contemporary music ensemble injected some of their own sounds including a new work by European composer Richard Barrett, aptly titled Elision.

Scored for contrabass clarinet, voice and pedal bass drum, Elision tested the talents of solo performer Carl Rosman. Beginning with a fabled Latin sprechstiumme set to a fragment by the poet Lecercus, it descended gradually to a baritone vocal growl before launching into a virtuosic exploration of the sonorous qualities of the contrabass clarinet all accompanied by the periodic punctuations of Rosman's right foot on the bass drum pedal. An earlier collaboration by Barrett and Elision, Transcript, managed to play with resonances in the cavernous space of Brisbane's drill Tenancy power station to great effect. Similarly, Elision wove its way through the general background ambience of the gallery, echoing through the space and attracting a curious crowd of onlookers.

The premiere of this new work by Barrett is just the tip of the iceberg as Elision is part of a larger installation work, Dark Matter, which will involve an international collaboration between the composer, Elision, artist Per Inge Bjerto and the Cikada Ensemble of Oslo.

Another solo piece followed, with Ben Marks performing Klaus H. Höhler's Carré for trombone. Like Barrett's work, Carré was an exploration of the sonorities and exhalations of the instrument. Marks' trombone gave itself up to a wide range of textures from rich blues to muted melodic tones which perfectly suited the acoustics of the space.

But perhaps the real treat was left to last with an improvisation between saxophonist Timothy O'Dwyer and percussionist Ken Edie. O'Dwyer's experimental metal cymbals and outbeats were the perfect companion to Edie's array of metal jetsams, flowerpots and home handyman artefacts. Serious music was never so much fun. I had to control an impulse to jump out of my seat and rattle a coffee pot.

Each of these pieces brought the respective performer's virtuosity to the fore but did so without dry or inglistant displays of technique and the members of Elision reciprocated by communicating an enthusiasm for the works that was infectious. This last aspect was especially appreciated by the audience who, due to the very public setting, consisted of more than just the usual suspects who attend new music performances. I suspect that some of the kids who listened will discover a whole new world of sonorous potential in the pots and pans cupboard at home.

The performance as a whole stayed well clear of total centres instead allowing the varying nuances of the instruments to become the focus of attention as they deftly navigated through the sea of ambience that suffused the gallery. The title of Barrett's work takes its cue from the interference patterns produced in the interaction of wave phenomena and we can think of it as a metaphor for the performance itself as the soundwaves from the pieces interacted with and explored the gallery's acoustical and social spaces. This is a type of interference that can be constructive, resulting in expanding wavefronts of creative interaction.

Elision contemporary music ensemble.
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, May 14

Other ways of recording music

In a fit of intense documentation and celebration of Australian contemporary music and concurrent with the the indefatigable annual Sydney Spring Festival, the New Music Network, photographer Bridget Elion and curator Lisa Herbert, with the support of the Australian Music Centre, are displaying over 40 of Elion's portraits of composers, artists and music 'movers' in the foyer of The Studio at the Sydney Opera House.

The exhibition is titled The Image of Music and is arranged in groups of four, each group constituting a 'story.' The title plates will focus on the links between the subjects in each group, with an underlying theme being participation and/or association with the Sydney Spring Festival.

Here are a few of the 14 groupings:

Adventures in Communication, Movers & Shakers: Roger Woodward, Marshall McClure, Roland Pedersen, Barry Coughnam; Young Performers: Claire Edwards, Alison Fiddington, Simon Trottuci, Philip Ackerman; Australia Connection, Elena Kass-Chernin, Tamara Golovina, Philip Shovk, Michael Semetlick; An American Connection, Matthew Sikonowitz and Australians with America in the US, Lisa Water and Vincent Plugh; An English Connection, Andrew Ford, David Lumdaine, Piern Lace; Younger Composers, Gretchen Miller, Georges Lenz, Raffelie Marcellino, Damien Ricketson. There are many more well-known and newer names, a testament to the quantity and quality of artists and composers currently at work in Australia.

TOAN is the Orchestras of Australia Network and it's about to launch the 1st National Orchestral Awards on August 5th. The Award will be presented by Federal Senator Peter McGauran and will be followed by the TOAN Orchestras' Alve Conference.

Seven awards will be given: Individual Awards (2) to a person who has fostered excellence, innovation and creativity in an Orchestra in a regional area, and in a metropolitan area (individual nominees are Martin Jarvis, Gary Stavrou and Martin Smith). Orchestral Awards (3) to a Professional, Community and Youth Orchestra, which has extended the public's perception of Orchestras (nominees are The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Penrith Symphony Orchestra, Darwin Symphony Orchestra, Orange Symphony Orchestra and Sydney Youth Philharmonic Orchestra. Youth orchestra nominations are Cairns Youth Orchestra, Australian Youth Orchestra Camerata and Nova Youth Orchestra). Enlightened Support Award to an individual, a company or organisation which has provided enlightened or exceptional support to an Orchestra (nominees are: Penrith City Council and Willoughby City Council).

TOAN Chair Anne Cahill says "...it's amazing there have not been any awards for orchestras until now. By creating awards for community and youth orchestras as well as for our flagship professional orchestras, the TOAN awards show how important orchestral music is to hundreds of thousands of people across Australia. With all the talk of amalgamations and downgrading and so-called 'efficiencies' in the arts, there's never been a better time to celebrate the role that orchestral music plays in all our lives and the importance it has in Australia today of the people who make it happen."

The Image of Music, The Studio foyer, Sydney Opera House, July 31 - August 14

The TOAN 1st National Orchestral Awards ceremony takes place at the ACO Studio, Opera Quays, Saturday August 5, 6pm.

Geoff Garner

photo Bridget Elion
**Australian Music Centre**

The Australian Music Centre is pleased to announce the launch of the CD *The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior* at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, on Saturday, 12 August 2000, following a concert by The Song Company, performing as part of the Sydney International Spring Festival.

**MAKE A NIGHT OF IT!**
Attend the prior concert by The Song Company. The night features the world premiere of a new work by Gerard Brophy, as well as Andrew Ford’s *The Laughter of Mermaids*. Tickets for the concert are $35 adult, $26 student & concession and are available from the Sydney Opera House Box Office (02) 9250 7777.

**BE A PART OF AN HISTORIC EVENT!**
The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior by Australian Composer Colin Bright and poet Amanda Stewart, is an evocative sound play of spoken and sung words, music and sound effects. It captures the emotion of the events surrounding the sinking of the Greenpeace flagship, *The Rainbow Warrior* in 1985. The CD includes original radio broadcasts and features the voices of The Song Company and musicians of australYs. The night will feature a presentation of the CD to Greenpeace and speeches by the composer and people directly involved in the production of the CD.

Level 1, 18 Argyle Street, The Rocks, Sydney
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Connecting the world with Australian Music

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**The New Music Network Inc.**

**at The Studio and The Sydney Spring Festival**

**The Exhibition August 2nd - 14th The Studio Foyer**
The Image of Music: an exhibition
A superb exhibition of photo-portraits of Australian music's finest composers and contemporary performers by Bridget Elliot. For many years Bridget has been photographing the inspirng individuals and ensembles that make up our new music community. The exhibition, curated by NMM's Lisa Herbert along with Bridget, reflect the impact of the Sydney Spring Festival on the life and output of this creative scene.

10:45am - 11:30am August 13th Forum #1 The Studio Producing the Music: The Partnerships
Composers, choreographers, and collaborators discuss the synergy between directors and music-makers. Does an obsession with the visual limit, or can it enhance, the appreciation of music? Speakers will be: Elena Kats-Chernin, Teressa Oea and Richard Vella.
Chair by Nick New Music Network President Marshall McQuire.

12:15pm - 1:15pm August 13th Forum #2 The Studio Is Chamber Music Dead?
Speakers from a variety of backgrounds discuss the placement of and audiences for chamber music in the 21st century.
Chair by Barry Pews, Executive Producer Sydney Spring Festival

**The Peggy Glanville-Hicks Address 2:00pm The Studio Foyer**
Sunday, 13th August. The year 2000 marks the tenth since composer Peggy Glanville-Hicks died. Given this year, by composer Barry Curningham the PGH Address was established as an annual forum for the presentation of ideas, to discuss issues relating to new music, and to honour eminent musicians involved in new music. Peggy’s trailblazing career as a female composer in a predominantly male world highlights her outstanding achievements and determination. The PGH Address celebrates the achievements of this much loved composer. Barry Curningham has been invited to give the 2nd PGH Address on the eve of his departure from Australia in September to take up the Chair of Australian Studies at Harvard University for 2000/2001.

All events are free, for further information please call Lisa Herbert on (02) 9281 5939 or email: admin@nmm.org.au The New Music Forum and Peggy Glanville-Hicks Address are funded by the NSW Ministry for the Arts

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