

Nerve 9 on the edge of the arcane

Dance: Bodyworks Program 4 Tess de Quincey

Where: Dancehouse, Carlton until February 24

Reviewer: Vicki Fairfax

By any standards, Sydney-based global performer Tess de Quincey is a formidable artist. Here in the south we rarely get a chance to see — perhaps experience is a better word — her intense, many-layered, intricately worked creations where the body, decentered and edgy, negotiates the mutated, arcane landscape of contemporary culture.

De Quincey spent the years 1985-1991 with the Butoh artist Min Tanaka and his Mai-Juku Performance Company and has spent much of the time since translating his teaching into the Australian landscape with her *Body Weather* investigations in the Northern Territory, her performance works developed over five years on the dry bed of Lake Mungo and series, *The Durational Trilogy*, which was performed over six, 12 and 24 hours respectively.

By comparison, *Nerve 9*, at 58 minutes, might seem a diminutive work, but all its many elements are so highly compressed it turns out to be a weighty beast indeed. While it is ostensibly a solo work by de Quincey, it is, in every sense, a real hybrid, drawing on the creativity of a number of artists working with text and digital technology.

There is an extraordinary soundscape, put together by Debra Petrovitch, with text by Francesca da Rimini, comprising pieces of snatched conversation, a river of words that tumble out in fragmented heaps meaning everything — and nothing — and the colliding images of Amanda Stewart's sonic and visual imagery. Image editing and design, which includes a mesmerizing sequence of close-ups of the talking mouths, is by Russell Emerson. The lighting and digital design is by Richard Manner.

With *Nerve 9* De Quincey and her collaborators have created an epitaph for our time.