



**e x p e r i m e n t a 1 9 9 2**

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## Introduction

by Jeffrey Feréday

MIMA's biennial Experimenta performance festival is a programme of innovative Australian performance work which utilises film, video, sound manipulation, computer imaging, and other photographic or electronic imaging technologies.

As such, it serves as a kind of showcase/forum event and a support structure which draws out of the cold and into the spotlight a diverse cluster of experimental interdisciplinary performative practices. For many of us who have interests in a critical performance practice, it is a well anticipated event.

Experimenta provides a focus for a scale of work which makes highly resourceful use of comparatively low means, and which operates more often from within individual or group-collaborative art production models.

The context of performance here is somewhat different to the usual conditions of exhibition which are undertaken by many of this programme's participants throughout the year — one-off or short-season performances at contemporary art spaces, art centres, or alternative spaces — for a festival brings particular values to the presentation of works and their reception. As event, Experimenta forms ambient relations in the order of cultural spectacle; as festival, its order becomes significant in the selection/exclusion of works in relation to wider practice and wider culture.

Significant also are the ways that Experimenta convenes interaction between performance and audience. The festival promotes conditions which present, simultaneously, as entertainment, as a hot-

house focus upon ideas/practice, and as a vehicle for cultural and artistic debates amongst a broader yet more directed audience than might otherwise be available. This begs the question of whether Experimenta's support for film/video/performance work is artificial in its construct, whether it pro-actively promotes work within a set of cross-media parameters that otherwise might not hold in that form.

The interactive and dynamic relations which might exist between performance and time-based imaging technologies have powerful aesthetic potentials, as well as cogent social resonance and cultural urgency.

Among the various selection criteria established for the 1992 Experimenta performance programme, the coherence or integration of the film/video components with the performative presence was of critical interest, especially as it figured within the overall theoretical and aesthetic rationale of each work. In selecting work towards a meaningful and experimental programme, the committee sought a mix which carried a diversity of approaches—works whose theoretical and thematic concerns and aesthetic means would sit interestingly beside each other, not necessarily without conceptual friction. To me, this interactivity and cross-referencing of approaches, concerns and means, constitute the progressive and productive strengths of experiencing works in a festival format; presentation of works in a common space and in close temporal proximity allows an audience to accumulate points of comparison, concord and difference, and forms questions that are perhaps overlooked within contexts of individual presentation. Is this Experimenta's most productive value? Are not questions, rather than apparent conclusions, the more interesting, ongoing products of the experimental?

prophesy. (Organisations, like news, are only advertisements for data.)

...Protection is the argument that the present has certain rights and they include the past. Oedipus had a good weekend...

...Sound is an unanalytic mode of sense. It is a collaborator with no loyalties, no implications (excepting, possibly, that agency be a sentimental maximising code with no or low exchange value.) Sound is true imperialism. Composers push sound around as if their careers depended on it. The client chimes in (cash is a cheap echo). When I grow up I wanna be a fact of life. (Chris Mann)

Barbara Campbell

### **Cries From The Tower**

15 mins

University of Melbourne—The Tower Queens College  
Sunday 22 November 9:30 pm

Mary Stuart was removed from her subjects for the last 14 years of her life. She spent most of her period of incarceration alternately writing letters to rally support for her release and embroidering tapestries of exotic and mystical beasts.

'Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair to me.' (German fairy tale)

She was executed on 8 February 1587. Her English captors went to great lengths to dispose of her blood-stained remnants of the act so that no holy relics could circulate and inspire a Scottish backlash.

'I felt in my hands and in my heart a confused, singular, continual, sensual desire to bury my hands in this charming rivulet of dead hair.' (Guy de Maupassant, *A Woman's Hair*)

When the executioner held aloft the dead Queen's head, the auburn tresses in his hand came apart from the skull and the head fell to the floor, revealing her real, prematurely greyed hair.

'All your hair, Mélisande, all your hair is falling from the tower! I am holding it in my hands, against my mouth, in my arms...It lives like birds between my fingers, and it loves me, loves me more than you.' (Maeterlinck, *Pelléas et Mélisande*)

Andrew Frost, Sean O'Brien

### **Other Loves**

15 mins

State Film Theatre Tuesday 24 November 7:00 pm

There was a period when we worked; every day, every night *and* every weekend. Two-and-one-half years later, we decided to take a break. But pretty soon the break was longer than the work; we'd forgotten who we were or where we had been going. Our sloth had become a self-fulfilling prophecy and somehow we had never felt so profoundly inspired in our lives. We knew this had to be documented, and *Other Loves* is the result.

'It [*Other Loves*] was a disavowal, a parody, of their Marine Biologists' work at the same time as preferring a pseudo-manifesto, ambiguous, elusive, this-is-where-we're-at, man. More a dialogue between the artists themselves than between them and the audience, it was often obscure but was rescued by some truly sublime imagery.' (*Filmnews*, May 1992)

Yuji Sone

### **Nonetheless Marinetti**

20 mins

Theatreworks Friday 27 November 8:00 pm

It seems to be the accepted theory that performance art history in this century began when the first Futurist manifesto was published in 1909 by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. The main concept of the writing was to attack the establishment value of the arts in that time. The movement created art works negating the limit and boundary of the old art concept.

Eighty years later, having seen the history of avant-garde—Constructivism, Dada, Bauhaus, Black Mountain College, Happening, Event and Fluxus—the core concept of the '90s performance art seems to resemble the Futurist one.

Should we, performance artists in the '90s, be criticised as repeaters? or; Should we blame societies which always have narrow sectionalism, or which only reluctantly allow inter-disciplinary/inter-cultural pluralism?

It could be said that one of the functions of