

# Nonetheless, TISEA

Shaun Davies and Annemarie Jonson

Barbara Campbell's performance began with a melismatic voice that seemed to be coming out of nowhere – Mina Kanaridis high on a walkway in the atrium of the ABC Ultimo Centre in recital of the *Mass for Four Parts* by William Byrd (1543–1623). Opposite, separated from the voice by the otherwise 'empty' space of the atrium, stood Barbara Campbell in Elizabethan costume. As Karinidis sang, Campbell unwound her dress, a spiral of black ribbon embroidered in blood-red with text from *Mary, Queen of Scot's Casket Letter, Number III*, and lowered it, centimetre by centimetre, into the crowd assembled below. This issue of ribbon, lengthy enough to reach the ground from the 'tower' and to circulate amongst the crowd, became the counterpart/point of the material that was the recital. Text, written or spoken (here, sung), literally derives from the Latin *texere*: to weave or compose – to make material. Materiality took three forms throughout the performance: the voice weaving its gossamer high above the heads of the crowd; secondly, the falling ribbon/text, and thirdly, the depthless pixels of the video image of the artist.

A video camera tracked the performance in close up as if scanning the dress/text line by line and relaying it in electronic wavelengths to the viewers gathered around the monitors below. Eyeballing the performer's 'slow reveal', the camera dismembered, fetishised Campbell's body as she turned her skirt to ribbon, rotating in an ironical *twist* – a double exposure of writing (on ribbon and video monitor) and skin.

Campbell's performance literally resonated: mass reading of the dress/letter was interwoven with *Mass* listening; the release of voice/breath into the air, a metaphor of the release of the spirit from the body at the point of death. The decapitation (and severing of the vocal chords) that forms the denouement of Mary's story was paralleled by the chasm between Karinidis' voice and Campbell's body.