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Line And Point To Voice: Language Poetry & Urban Performance

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Terms

The line is something you can see, and/or hear. The voice, you can hear, and resonate to. The point is at once visible and theoretically abstract, of zero (0) dimensions.

Think of meaning in energy terms: kinetic and potential at the same time.
Think of figures that are not coincident with objects (but what figures are?).
Line and voice go also abstract, the point thick.

Voicing (1)

I'll read a passage from a book by Bruce Andrews, called I Don't Have Any Paper So Shut Up (or Social Romanticism) (1992). It was composed in the mid-80s. A decade before, in the mid-70s, Andrews and Charles Bernstein had co-founded LANGUAGE Magazine. This challenged the influential breath-based poetics of Charles Olson's great clarion call of 1950, "Projective Verse":

the HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE
the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE

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Here, alertness to the body's pulsings as it interacts with the outside, secures performance's authenticity. But the "Language poets" had just come through the Civil Rights and Vietnam War years, and had read their Marcuse. They focused rather on the ideological and technical dimensions already built into physical responses, as well as shaping what speech act theory calls 'performative utterances,' that is, utterances that have effects in the world.²

This is from the first poem of I Don't Have Any Paper, "All of My Friends Are Dead." It surely responds, among other things, to the opening line of Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" (1955-6) - "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked..."³

"All of my friends are dead - too bad for them; which was in practice little more than banging one inadequate category against another. Step on the advice of his children. Communication justifies the derelict headquarters at 2 Dzerzhinsky Square, Moscow, infinitesimal hot line to God, though formally associated in the medieval trivium, Israeli cabinet tastes like Mom. White gardenia what unspeakably sweet poke loyalty decline. Set yourself on fire to avoid homework. But this is a marginal point. No main head is an island. Wireless dupes of silly putty pop 'o' pies, pluralist disequilibria. Dark entity shoot the sharpshooters, timidity soliciting war on sloth and nonconformity, intelligent and sensitive people who oppose the welfare state, nosedive ironically jumping for joy. Pimples are supernumerary; conquistadores would have planted Burpee seeds.⁴

In the course of this paper I'll repeat this passage twice. Hopefully, on each re-hearing, more dimensions of it will become apparent. The "medieval trivium," for instance, was the grouped studies of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, and later meant a crossing of three roads. "Israeli cabinet tastes like Mom" sounds like an interjection from Woody Allen.

**Bridgings**

Call "space" that which prevents 2 or more Archimedean objects from occupying the same place at the same time. From the beginnings of human speech, therefore, space was inhabited by ghosts whose 'dimensions,' had it been a geometer, it couldn't even have construed as such. For it could be summer, but they're talking about winter. Poetry began as a technical means of remembering, among other things, winter. "Kora in Hell" was William Carlos Williams' term for winter in 1920, drawing on a Greek myth of the seasons.

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The Greeks had an origin-myth for geometry, too. Thales calculated the pyramids' height by their shadows, just when his own shadow was as long as he was tall. Two abstract diagonals, from head, to head of shadow. Identical triangles different in scale. Volume is needed for the sun to cast the shadows. But geometrical representations render volume transparent. Not until the 1820s, with the development of non-Euclidean geometries, do the mysteries of volume return. In the words of Michel Serres,

The right angle, the plane, the volume, their intervals and their areas, will be recognized as chaotic, dense, compact - again teeming with folds and dark hiding places.5

The pure representation can no longer exhaust the object by remaining separate from it. Between them isn't space, but zones of mutual contamination, interactive lines of uncertain breadth, as uncertain as space itself now is. And faster-moving.

"There is only one thing," Olson says, "[poetry] can do about kinetic, reenact it."6 And we find there's a particular kind of understanding linked to the evanescences of speed. Move too slow, and you start to lose such connections.

**Gaps**

Clearly, Andrews' is a writing of extreme discontinuities, not only from phrase to phrase, but even within seeming phrasal units. And it moves with a speed no voice could sustain in real time. But could, aided by text, in the real time of performance.

In a radio interview of 1996, Andrews recounted his method of composition to Charles Bernstein:

... to generate large amounts of material on very small pieces of paper - one, two, three, four, five words at a time, in clusters, short fragments of phrases, or pre-phrases, and then compose the work, sometimes much later... than when I had written the raw materials, into works based on a whole series of other decisions that I'll make later, so it's more like editing film footage. So that the editing process becomes the composing process. Or that's what gets focused on, more than some kind of point-of-inspiration moment that I actually wrote the words on.7

Discontinuous phrases, interactive lines of uncertain breadth. What gaps do they cross, and how? It's a difficult question, because gaps seem produced in the first place through violations of continuity-rules of writing. But there's also a pressure exerted by what exceeds both the immediate writing, and the later composing/editing: a pressure, and a getting-in-there.

Archimedean space keeps hard objects unmixed. But since the electric telegraph, technologies have been usurping word and thought in bringing what's not there together with what is. What's new about this is the immediate transmission over distance, and look

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at the material *lag* of the line in even saying that. "Sentences are short," Andrews writes, "words are long." (74)\(^8\)

Today, electronic communications systems *do not map onto* the one-time physical centers called cities (in Andrews’ case, New York). And the scales of measurement, as Paul Virilio insists, "share no common ground."\(^9\) Yet he adds that sensory reality and video reality are received as an instantaneous continuum, although in the one, is depth of field, in the other, the baffling depth of impled time. (30-1) Screened images are thus, precisely, *blindingly* obvious. *Between the line* of exposure/invisibility, lies a strange density, which the standard task of jump-cuts is to erase. Here is the security: anything can be joined. There are no gaps. Neither of the grand models of time, linear or cyclical, will hack this incontinence of techno-space-times. Obviously, this poses peculiar problems for any concept of repetition.

Voicing (2)

*I Don’t Have Any Paper So Shut Up* consists of 100 x 3-page poems. Excess is its very principle. I’ll now ‘peculiarly repeat’ the passage I read earlier:

Just let it bum itself on the bulb - cross-hatched pudenda  
chlorals to cause pneumonia; chirpy cha-cha, helicopters are  
fat - buff’s over. War = a money tune-up  
why so communicate scratch to shit: patsy pubes, wizards of  
ooze - I was injured in the act of eliminating civilians. One of  
the little fags on me?? - male triplets as floor samples: in a word,  
obody likes to be criticized. President’s wife as shut-in  
sexual athlete  
at least when they’re rich they don’t talk about jobs  
smile which coons patrol tripe = scalded honeycomb animal  
pizza, shape blood on consignment: *helicopters* do not vote  
U.S. history is a lie; adult thick the thrills.

...  
Suck my loan - you want *everyone* to applaud your self-absorption; D-day for King Kong lookalikes...

...  
Without fictionalizing the lives of the poor, I’m intolerant  
but the brain can’t hide: police waste  
parachute plagiarism  
blessing to be a former virgin. Wet me brown; clods eeling  
prep nationalists  
burn the Left, no other *disease*
matches it for drill resistance males would perpetually endanger - hurt by guilt over spam. Jab bog tilt sir fame debt as mercury speak winter through acetylene kindness, each handles its bunts.... (168-9)
Mechanical Dances Typology

Exposure to this writing can be like trying to follow a Merce Cunningham dance without a vocabulary for the movements. Here, then, is a gesture towards a notation of some of the kinds of phrases and kinetics, often overlapping, that Andrews uses:

Delayed precision. "Just let it burn itself on the bulb." Presumably a reference, sadistic or indifferent, to a moth. Recognition is delayed because another phrase - a metaphor, "burn itself out" - is ghosted or provoked here.

Immediate supports. Such ghostings - "Suck my loan," or less definitely, "Set yourself on fire to avoid homework," like the puns ("wizards of ooze"), supply an instant, oblique support to the words concerned.

Remote particulars. "Step on the advice of his children.". "Step on" is the niggling oddness here. It's as if the words offer to secure the particularity of a tenuously obscure scenario by the anomalies they strike. Is the phrase recalled, and its mystery deepened, by "male triplets as floor samples"? Andrews works to keep the words from collapsing into the disappointment of complete decoding, as happens so often, for instance, with the early experimentalist, Arthur Rimbaud. So often, to make an Andrews phrase (or "pre-phrase") mean something, we have to make uneasy allowances - to fit what it might mean to the words' stubbornly odd conjunction. Alternately, even to mentally change a word - a verb, say, from singular to plural, which promptly snaps back. By which time we're so far out on a limb that it, like a cartoon limb, has vanished. It's a kind of counter-entropy.

Sloganese. Sudden phrases where we recognise the words - "parachute plagiarism" - and may have accepted their combination before realising we don't understand it. And see thus, how easily slogans are coined. (Headline: "PARACHUTE PLAGIARISM NOW NATIONWIDE.")

Syntactical propulsions. Use of punctuation - especially the dash and colon - to suggest an equivalence or a consequence that the actual phrases seem to belie: "helicopters are fat - buff's over." Elsewhere, the recognizability of the succeeding phrase offers to render forgettable the obscurity of the ones preceding. Such propulsive techniques were first developed by Williams in Kora in Hell: Improvisations. To call it simply specious is to evade the issue. Andrews is unpacking ways generally used to make language effective, and the cooperative choices, on the auditor's part, that that actually requires - unpacking them to the very brink, but never beyond it, of rhetoric itself. It's a veritable compendium of means of linguistic manipulation currently operative.

Confrontations. "[Y]ou want everyone to applaud your self-absorption." No one is entirely immune - either from the charge, or from the desire to deliver the charge.
It puts guilt in context, while forever losing innocence. And the voice hectors for an engaged response.

Aphorisms. "Lose weight through cyanide" (169); "regret is like the processed cheese of the emotions." (23) Smartnesses that the fury pulsing throughout the book always bids to deform. The humor that likewise permeates the book, is politically necessitated, quite visibly, while the particular voice that it issues from is ever uncertain. (The word "I" in these poems is a linguistic device rather than a sign of self-expression.) "All of my friends are dead - too bad for them."

Dictionary multipliers. "[C]ross-hatched pudenda chlorals." Looking up "chloral" brings in DDT as well as a sedative or knockout drug. The meanings of "bunt" - "each handles its bunts" - range from part of a sail through a fishing-net to a baseball term to part of a wheat attacked by fungus. This multiplies not only the given phrase's possible meanings, but also (mightn't the dictionary multiply any word?) and the vocabulary range is immense) the passage's potential tripplings into endlessness.

Thematic stabilizers/Adequacies of the inadequate. Through repeated allusions and suggestions, tenuous stabilizings of meaning start to run both forward and back. "[B]lessing to be a former virgin. Wet me brown; clods eeling prep nationalists." Here a sexual initiation, perhaps of young Reaganes ("prep"/"preppie"), carries overtones of fecal mud, rung up later in "Jab bog" and at multiple points throughout the book. The burning moth will get drawn into the associative field of a militaristic mind-set: "I was injured in the act of eliminating civilians," and so on. Each instance seems flatish. This in itself might lead us to invest them with a surplus energy, trying to pull them up. But cumulatively, we might also realize that there is no 'rising in language to the occasion' without betraying the occasion to the purple thrill of the language itself. So, the adequacy of the repeatedly inadequate. Céline was the first master of this, as Julia Kristeva understood, probing his "oral" techniques of writing in Powers of Horror (1982).

Phrasal mergers/gaps. "[W]hy so communicate scratch to shit." The developing associative potentials force a necessary undecidability: either there is a flow of meaning here - perhaps along the lines of the look of a dried scratch - or this is one of those random conjunctions of partial phrases, "pre-phrases" again, in Andrews' term, from diverse sources. Yes, informational incontinence is forever producing these along the non-Archimedean sensory-video continuum. But it's hairier to see this mimicked in a book of poetry. Andrews makes wildly heteroclite references available for poetry, at once aping and contesting the shit-machine of data.

Thick words. These again interrupt the line's integration to a continuity of meaning: "smile which coons patrol tripe." It's a kind of material engorgement of techno-space-times, the architectural city embraced by electronic infinities, and secreting in its volumes, moment to moment, its own infinities. Speed and stall, traffic and blockage, become the performing voice's own excessive content, and the conditions of its dynamic. And in this insistence of 'short sentences and long words,' we grasp again how tenuous are the productions of meaning, in relation to
the words used. Line, and the line's points, its words. The dimension of the blindingly obvious that electronic images have inserted between the line of writing, becomes at once visibly blinding, and charged with an immense surplus of potential meanings.

Overloadings. "Jab bog/ tilt sir fame debt as mercury speak winter through acetylene kindness..." Suddenly: a cluster of substantives, without the conjunctions, prepositions, subject-verb structures that give your regular sentence its element of the unimploded. Too much is too strange here in too short a time. Regularly, indeed - but not in synch - we nod in and out of attention, only to realize that every combination had its treasures, now perhaps lost forever, but others keep rushing in. The listener inserts a certain physiologically demanded resistance, even as the voice/text plays its own game of stranding, hustling, changing voices, rebuffing, varying phrase-times, interspersing challenging exhortations to which we have to respond in real conditions of motion.

So, delayed precisions, immediate supports, remote particulars, losses of limbs, syntactical propulsions, aphorisms, thick words, and many other types of phrasing, made kinetic by rhythms of combining and recombining. Repetitions of the typology lend a structural stability almost drowned in the gnarled, insistent oddness of phrase after phrase. Again and again: figures not coincident with objects; potentiality as a live dimension, and the very condition, of meaning. This is the real-abstract: meanings in the situational architectures in techno-space-times.

Passages

I've offered, as a performance, an unpacking of Andrews' phrasings, reliant on time spent elsewhere poring over the text itself, underivable from listening to it read aloud. It's one more incommensurability, brought into the non-Archimedean field of here and now: across how many gaps, to this point?

Line, point, voice. Where are we, here or there? As Walter Benjamin knew, a city is where people and things get lost. But say there inheres in Andrews' lines, with their diminished powers of continuous integration, and in his points, his words, a new uncertainty about what location even is. For in the present symmetry-breaking fields, as Paul Virilio again notes,

[t]he dimensional dissection of classical geometry - where the point cut the line, and the line cut the plane, which then cut through the solids - has lost a critical part of its practical utility.

... What becomes noteworthy, then, is the recuperated importance of the point... as if the 0 dimension suddenly retrieved its numerical significance... (32-3)

These were Kandinsky's terms in Point and Line to Plane (1926), groping for a vocabulary for the notation of abstract art. But already in the ambit - or prescient - of a cultural groping (wartime aerial photographs, for instance) toward bits, pixels, and their endless,
momentary, fractal integrations. But now, without absolute source or overview, repetition ghosts less a time-line, than an insistence, or persistence, dispersed across fields of incommensurables. Ideology itself, in its rhetorical instances, is less content than persistence, or its content is, overwhelmingly, its saturating persistence. This is the quasi-baffled recognition Ginsberg came to, in his attack on the Vietnam War in "Wichita Vortex Sutra" (1966).14 Two decades later, Andrews, then, must attack his targets without possible culmination - misogyny, militaristic competitiveness, the Christian and moral cowardice that craves innocence at all costs, complacency with the absence of all gaps, and many, many more.

This poetics is a micro-politics of experience, because it also attaches itself to the human bodies that remain interruptive transmission- and emission-points (points of transformation). Bodies crossing distances that still take mortal time to negotiate. And who know that a writing which opens up to an excess of endurances, offers passage to talk with another kind of death. We glimpse the lining of informational entropy, the great threatened succumbing of the late 20th century. And we glimpse one condition on which this glimpse, both exhilarating and terrifying, is taken: that the poet can sustain his rapid-turnover micro-inventiveness.

Voicing (3)

There is no perverse self-indulgence here, rather an interventionary range of precise difficulties, of general pertinence. Now the poem can be the experience of itself, both initial and repeated, in real time.

Only the ego can pick up a pencil covers a tight fist, yes, ouvriesme; garter belt checks blood flow. Use foot dye for handjob, lasagna bandage, scrub down with concentration camp soap - tax nuts genuflect before artificial limb. Girl suits self, boy falters - unite velvet invention of verve adeste fiduciary. I got serious after aren't you hungry - dietary supplement with french tickler & lubricated tip valentine uniform makes me feel senile; crime glop - cheek respires. Bombard the headquarters! That is not my Burma! Cars pile up like hog retainers nothing neutral doing the latest Latin dances molly-coddled by barnstorming truss. Our boobies are different.

... How many dugouts do you want to exaggerate? - attribute structural consciousness to orthodontist's rental property? Deliberate Choctaw, just sits at her sofa to create the future of literature, patchwork fur quilt made solely of endangered species. Suck my cock like I'm totally sure?

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Venetian blinds will not complain; slush fund's gentle caress fit for fat felaheen book bait: socks hide the scars antiseptic spam. The other thing is gold rushes finish ugly, knockwurst cliché; noun is old hat, midget hurt his fill. Prisons in pretty places - remote control brain works by affirmative action - supremacists diddle with the fuse: suck your Buxtehude. I'm always at a funeral do I like it if I eat it?: amino rebirth. I want to go play in the Mafia. (199-200)
Endnotes

6. Olson, "Human Universe" (1965), in Selected Writings, 61.
8. There is probably a reverse homage here to Gertrude Stein, who used to insist that "Sentences are not emotional but paragraphs are." See ed. Patricia Meyerowitz, Look at Me Now and Here I Am: Writings and Lectures 1909-45 (1967), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984, 133. Although Stein also knew more than anyone about 'long words.'
12. I am grateful to my colleague, Dr. John Phillips, for conversations that set up this understanding.
13. See Walter Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism (1933-39), London: Verso, 1992, 43: "The original social content of the detective story was the obliterating of the individual's traces in the big-city crowd."

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Biography

Gilbert Adair was born in Armagh, Northern Ireland, and took his BA (Part I, French & Latin; Part II, English Literature) at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and his PhD at King’s College, University of London. This concerned post-1945 American epic fiction (Michener, Mailer, Pynchon, and others). While living in London, he developed an interest in experimental poetry. He ran the “Sub-Voicive” poetry reading series for many years, featuring poets from both Britain and America. To date, he has published 11 books of poetry with British small presses. Since 1992, he has taught American Literature at the National University of Singapore, discussing not only canonical texts, but ones from the wilder shores of both poetry and prose.
Killing Them With Beauty: The Arts And Industrial Protest

Janis Bailey and Di McAtee

Abstract

This paper examines the role of the arts and artists in an industrial campaign run by the Western Australian union movement in 1997. The target was the so-called labour relations legislation enacted in May last. For more than six months, various participants in the campaign were linked into a community of opposition using the visual and performing arts and music, and by spontaneous happenings and installations at a protest site known as "the Workers Embassy", near Parliament House. Traditional labour movement protest tactics were interwoven with devices such as surrounding Parliament House with thousands of burning candles the night the Bill was passed: "killing them with beauty", as one artist put it. While the protest did not prevent passage of the Bill, it rallied public support and created the basis for further protest when the new Act is enforced or when further legislative change is proposed. This paper argues that, at a local level, new partnerships such as this need to be forged between social and political protest movements, and artists. The world of work is being reshaped globally in accordance with notions about the primacy of the "free market" - the Third Wave legislation is one example of this trend. There is growing
despair in many quarters about the social implications of this transformation. This despair needs to be replaced by oppositional alliances forged from anger, defiance, humour, notions of social justice and community and - dare one say it - a sense of beauty. The arts provide the tools to create such alliances.

On the night of 15th of May last, an industrial campaign run by the Western Australian union movement reached its peak, with more than fifty union officials occupying the Upper House of WA’s Parliament for nearly a day. With feelings running high both inside and outside, the parliamentary building as the legislation the subject of the campaign was on its way to becoming law, an extraordinary scene took place. As night fell, thousands of burning candles were placed around the perimeter of the parliamentary precinct. This action was organised by community artist Lachie McDonald and journalist Chris (Smudge) Smythe, helped by dozens of Hansard reporters who had refused to cross a picket line set up by unions. Chris was later to describe this episode as an “artistic assault”:

And then we lit them and there was this silent glow and it just captivated people - it was extraordinary. Lachie was completely rapt by this because he’s a pyrotechnician in a sense, he does lots of fire art. And there was this absolute pinnacle of political demonstration where the people had lit these candles all the way around the People’s House - Parliament House - and the politicians were stuck in there. And in a way I think they might have been, not fearful, but overawed, to step out - out of this circle of light. We put these things along the fountains, and even cars were slowing down on the freeway below to look at these candles up at Parliament House. I remember Lachie saying, “Oh, Smudge, this is the type of revolution that we want, we’re going to kill them with beauty”.

Introduction

This paper has grown out of unusual collaboration between an industrial relations academic (Janis) and a community arts practitioner (Di). Both of us became involved in a campaign spearheaded by the Western Australian Trades and Labor Council (TLC) early last year, which opposed new labour relations legislation proposed by the Western Australian government. This campaign became know as “the Third Wave” campaign, for reasons which will be discussed shortly. To us, what was special about the campaign was the role
of art and artists in it. This was particularly so in the creation and development of a protest site opposite Parliament House, known initially as the "Workers' Embassy", and later as "Solidarity Park". To an artist, this site was first and foremost an arts installation where various "performance pieces" took place over a six-month period - a multi-arts celebration, for industrial and political ends.

Our starting point in this paper is the premise that the arts have a role in creating alliances with social and political protest movements. In the case of the Third Wave campaign, it seems to us that the partnership between the arts and social protest was particularly well articulated. But how and why was this strong link developed in the campaign?

The paper commences with a short description of our documentation project, then moves on to examine briefly the role of the arts and the artist in the labour movement. It then discusses the "Third Wave" dispute in its global context. The paper then describes and analyses the inter-relationship between the arts and industrial strategy during the dispute, and concludes with some comments about the role of the arts and artists in industrial protest.

The Study

Before we proceed with this, however, a few words about the genesis of this particular study. Both of us were participants in the events of the Third Wave, although in a low-key role rather than as decision-makers. Both of us represented our unions during period when those unions were "rostered on" to staff the site. In July we began a process of documenting the campaign, under the auspices of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Perth Branch, of which we are both committee officials, rank and file union members, and artists involved in the campaign), several hundred photographs, video material, artifacts and a wide range of written documentation (letters, pamphlets, press releases, TLC minutes, newspaper reports etc). Deliberately styles as a "people's history", the study recorded the campaign as it was occurring, from the perspective of participants at the Workers' Embassy.
The Arts, the Artist and the Labour Movement

The arts and culture, in the widest definition of the terms, have been integral to the struggles of the union movement since its inception. In a practical sense, the labour movement integrated culture and social action long before sociologists had developed a theory to explain how it did so. Eight Hour Day and May Day parades, concerts, art exhibitions, festivals, picnics, union banners, oral histories, plays, choirs, songs, poetry, story writing and film have all contributed to the union movement’s image of itself and its portrayal of that image to the wider society. The bundle of practices, policies and philosophies that developed in the 1980s in Australian unions has become known as “art and working life”, but art and working life, in real terms, have been integrated for as long as the union movement has existed.

Over the last decade and a half, artists have contributed their skills to the West Australian union movement in projects that have encompassed a wide variety of art forms and an equally wide range of cultural activities and projects. These have ranged from the reworking of traditional union symbols such as banners with new imagery and innovative techniques, to contemporary dance projects that have incorporated everyday movement into dance both in a collaboration with office workers and as individual performance pieces for the professional dancer’s repertoire.

A main characteristic of the projects was that the role of the artists working within unions involved not only officials, but also union members and their families in a collaborative context that encouraged self-expression and participation. In this sense artists were working in a community context which promoted skills development and exchanges between artists and workers.

As the artist and writer, the late Ian Burn noted:

Art and Working Life is constituted within a different model of exchange. That is, the relationships between the artist, the product and the audience are of a different nature and are constituted within different values to those of a gallery oriented practice.
And as Kathie Muir elaborates:

The difference is part of the attraction of Art and Working Life for many artists ..... Many artists ..... regard a diverse arts practice as invaluable, giving a breadth to their work and a comprehension of difference audiences. This diversity enhances artists' critical perspective and understanding of their own practice, as well as broadening their skills base.

For the artist who has a commitment to social justice and believes in the tenets of unionism, working with trade unions gives access to a breadth of subject matter and histories based on the cultural diversity of the workforce. The expression and maintenance of this diversity is important since the world is currently being reshaped by corporate global pressures that radically alter workers’ lives in ways that are seen as undemocratic and inequitable.

It is pertinent here therefore, before looking in a later section of the paper at the cultural aspects of the Workers Embassy and the role of artists in the campaign of opposition to the “Third Wave” legislation, to comment on the nature of working class culture. Ric McCracken, the former arts officer at the Trades and Labor Council of WA paraphrases a definition from a 1979 UNESCO publication thus:

..... there exists a working class culture characterised by a spirit of solidarity and community and by simple straightforward relations with workmates, neighbours and family. Technical skill - occupation know-how - is not lacing in this culture. But it is expressed in close connection with other elements (class solidarity, culture, technology) and in this way supplements them. Knowledge is not an end in itself.

In this view, knowledge is freely shared, and the boundary between artist and audience dissolves. Indeed, the artist(s) and the audience are one and the same. And the artist can be a professional artist, or an ordinary working person. This was the scenario at the Workers' Embassy, later Solidarity Park, where a long running protest campaign had all the hallmarks of a successful community arts project. The project was developed by means of the social interaction between artists and artworkers who may or may not have been unionists, union members and their families and various community groups.

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The Third Wave Dispute in its Global Context

The “Third Wave” dispute could be characterised as a parochial Western Australian dispute, with a Liberal-Coalition government in confrontation with the local trade union movement about new labour relations legislation. We argue, however, that the dispute may be seen as a microcosm of situations occurring around the world. Everywhere there are moves from collective systems of regulating labour markets, to more individual systems. The current neo-liberal rhetoric suggests that individual employer-employee relationships via individual contracts are desirable, and that unions ought to wither away, if they are not doing so already. An array of seemingly innocuous buzzwords in upon everyone’s lips: “freeing up” markets (especially labour markets), “flexibility” (of hours, wages, job tasks etc), and “enterprise solutions”. Third parties such as unions and industrial tribunals, which have historically played a role in balancing inequities in the labour market, do not have a central place in “the New Workplace”.

The Third Wave dispute has as its background this kind of discourse. Dubbed “the Third Wave”, the Labour Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, introduced in the WA Parliament in March 1997, was the third in a series of labour relations Bills introduced by the WA Liberal-Coalition government since its election in 1993. The “First Wave” referred to legislation enacted in December 1993, which introduced an option of individual employment contracts as an alternative to existing collective labour regulation, known as awards. A “Second Wave” of legislation, introduced in mid-1995, was withdrawn following protests from the union movement and pressure from the Liberal Part at a Federal level, which faced a crucial election in March, 1996. With that election safely won by the Liberal Party, the aborted “Second Wave” resurfaced as “the Third Wave” early in 1997. The campaign has been documented elsewhere (see Appendix to this paper for a brief synopsis). The “Third Wave” campaign found its most colourful and creative expression in the Workers’ Embassy.

The Workers’ Embassy Site

One way of examining the role of the arts at the Workers’ Embassy is to place it within a cultural studies framework. Stimulated by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Swidler argues
that culture provides a "toolkit", a variety of "symbols, stories and world views" which people use to solve problems and shape their activities. Moreover, people do this in skilled and active ways, rather than submitting passively to a dominant culture. Swidler also emphasizes that culture has dynamic and diverse elements, even where people share a similar value system. Brain expands these notions further. He suggests that cultural artifacts should be used not simply to "explain" social processes, which leads to a reification of those artifacts, nor merely to "interpret" them, which leads to a situation in which cultural artifacts are reduced to being seen as a result of certain social conditions. Instead, he argues that symbols which "say" something about the social world. Cultural objects are seen as "sites where the social world is given an objective (and relatively obdurate) quality" and where "social actors ..... make sense with things" (author's emphasis). It is with these statements in mind that we now look at the Workers' Embassy and the arts activities associated with it.

The Workers' Embassy was initially a "first aid post" in a caravan hired by the TLC for the rally on 29th April. That was the day on which an estimated 25,000 - 30,000 people marched from the city to Parliament House to protest against the Third Wave legislation. The caravan remained in the grounds of Parliament House after the march until the police arrested several union officials for trespass and ordered the caravan to be towed away. It was moved across the road to a vacant piece of land bordering a car park on the corner of Harvest Terrace and Parliament Place, seemingly an area with nothing to recommend it. However, the elevation and orientation of the site made it a perfect natural stage in the public domain: fronting Parliament House and the CBD, and bordered by the West Perth commercial and professional district. Ironically, the "theatre of resistance" that followed could not have found a more suitable location if a choice had been available!

Once established, the site was rapidly transformed and improved with a kaleidoscope of amenities. It grew rapidly to include a barbecue, a wood heap and a water tank, a herb, flower and vegetable garden, and a children's sandpit, along with the more modern amenities of portable toilets and electricity. This allowed the site to become a base for protest against the parliamentary processes until mid-May, and then a focus for continued opposition to the proclamation and enforcement of the new Act. The public was welcome at the site, and one woman who had taken up the offer advertised on a large sandwich board "to drop in for a cuppa and a chat" remarked that she just liked watching as there was
always something happening. Activity and celebration were a hallmark of the campaign. Professional artists played an important role at the site: singers and musicians played for the many events such as the Black Tie and Work Boots Ball or dropped in after a gig. A temporary and then a permanent stage were central features of the site. Songs were written and sung; poems were composed and read. Arts activities played an important part in maintaining positive social relationships and the establishment of friendships between the people who staffed the Embassy for twenty-four hours a day over a period of six months.

Installations and performances were an initial and ongoing feature of the Embassy. Their ever-changing totality gave the site an organic appearance, which with an amoeba-like fluidity crept down the embankment and onto the footpath and road verge. Some of the pieces had been created for the march by artworkers, others by participants in the march - paper mache heads of Premier Court and Minister Kierath, a large guillotine and coffins representing the death of democracy - all came to the site and were the catalyst for further works.

Two performance installations will be discussed, amongst the many that occurred over a six-month period and have been documented in our project. As noted, many of these episodes had the quality of “theatre of resistance pieces”, playing on a prominent stage to both site participants and the broader community. One installation involved the Public Transport Union (PTU) erecting a bus stop on Harvest Terrace at the front of the Embassy as a site improvement. It wasn’t unusual to see a Transperth bus pull up to the stop and the driver take an unscheduled break (a theatrical interlude) at the Embassy before driving off to pick up passengers on the normal route. The scarecrow was symbolically guillotined on the day the “Third Wave” Bill passed through Parliament, only to be burnt on the Guy Fawkes bonfire on 5th November. This was the final performance at the Workers’ Embassy before the curtain came down on the continual occupancy of the site and the players departed until a possible call out in the future may see their return.

Merging Art and Protest at the Workers’ Embassy Site

In analysing the relationship between art and protest at the Workers’ Embassy site, one can look at the contribution of three different groups:

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• ordinary participants (in the main although not confined to rank and file trade unionists)
• artists
• union officials, unions, and the TLC

All three played an important role in merging art with protest at the site.

As described above, ordinary participants created and then kept the site changing constantly, particularly in the first few weeks. The various installations were done by rank and file unionists without any specific project outline, but expressing creatively their opposition to events that were occurring or had occurred in the Parliament opposite. The operative paradigm was the iconic Aussie backyard, a scenario which most participants, whatever their background, would feel comfortable with. It met people’s needs for food, warmth, shelter, companionship and rest, while the protest against the Parliamentary processes continued until mid-May, and then it provided a focus to keep public and media attention on the new Act. At the same time, for others, it was somewhat of a “backyard from hell”, particularly for the landowners, the Perth City Council and the State Government. The site operated symbolically, using humour, parody and ritual to create an alternative “workers’ state” with its own services and rituals; a mirror (albeit a distorted one) to a state that, in the eyes of participants, was denying them democracy. The site was formally established on 1st May, traditionally a day of labour celebration. Moreover, it was initially pegged out by unionists as a prospecting site under the provisions of the Mining Act. The interviews we have done show that many of the participants are alive to the complex historical and cultural allusions of such an action. These include references to “white” occupation of Australia, the history of WA and its method of settlement, the Wik debate, and incidents in Australian history such as the Eureka protests and the shearers’ camps in Queensland during the strikes of the 1890s.

The participants made use of, but also subverted, many backyard rituals. Many instances could be given, but only one will be described here, the creation of the garden. Peter Stokes, at the time an organiser with the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) was instrumental in creating the garden:

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[U]nions [were] starting to put in their own small contributions to the site because it was barren, it was a dust bowl, it was great Depression type stuff .... [T]here were a number of people in our union who liked gardening and I can remember when we were first up there I decided we needed a garden in here. And people at first looked at me a little bit strangely. I said, “No, that’s symbolic, you know, we’re going to be here for a long while. We’ve got to grow things, we’ve got to feed the masses”.

But it did not stop at simply making a garden; people added gnomes and little plaster statues, parodying notions of suburban beautification. The scarecrow mentioned above appeared. A sundial was placed in one corner of the site, and wattles and olives trees, amongst others were planted. Food made from garden vegetables was consumed with mock-sacramental fervour (it even fed Embassy pets - guinea pigs - for a short time). The progress of the garden was always a topic of conversation. The creation and transformation of the garden exemplifies the ability of participants to tap into their own creative resources, to express the dynamism of the site, and the commitment of the participants. Suburban ritual, religious allusions to “the loaves and fishes”, direct political commentary and sheer playfulness and spontaneity combined to create a culture of unity and solidarity. Didactic elements (such as banners with strong messages and scarecrows that parodies government ministers) shared the scene with burgeoning broccoli plants, gnomes and sundials, none of which had overt political overtones. Defiance via domesticity is not such a surprising strategy in the late twentieth century, however. As workers are endlessly downsized, privatised, and “flexiblised”, then the permitted space for creativity is not the formal labour process but do-it-yourself work-pleasure during leisure time, a notion first developed by William Morris, and exploited to the full by site participants during the Third Wave campaign.

Christy Cain, a seaman and rank and file job delegate for the Maritime Union of Australia, said this about the site:

We’ve shown down here that you can bring your family down here. We’ve shown that you don’t have to be a unionist with a big beard and a big heavy [?] to stand down here. I mean, there’s kids playing round here, families. And they had animals for the kids to play on, merry-go-rounds for little kids, barbecue areas and [people] just generally come down and have a chat. I mean, trade unionists are human beings .... we don’t always talk about

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trade unionism. It's nice to come down here just for a day out ..... I've been to all the [special events]: the Ball, the family days, the marches, the rallies. A special event for me is basically seeing workers come here, being able to sit down, ..... have a bit of a chat, have a barbecue, and go away from here thinking there's something important to say, that the trade union movement themselves have contributed to.

Christy is partly critical and yet grudgingly acknowledges some of the site's more bizarre manifestations:

Yes, we do go off in different areas. I don't think planting a flower here or planting cabbages and lettuces or wearing red ties - this is my opinion on it - was doing much. And yet at the end when I sit back and realise what had gone on, a lot of people do take notice ..... Not that I agreed with it that way but maybe ..... [In response to a question:] Well, I thought a stronger aspect should have been taken ..... [but] consensus was that we went that way. Now, there's no one union or one rank and file person made that decision, and I went along with it, went to the rallies - and now looking back probably it wasn't a bad thing. It never did any harm to the campaign and in fact it made [the public] aware [of the campaign].

A Malaysian-born health worker, a rank and file unionist, notes the transformation of the site:

It was just a tent. It was just a tent and a few barbecue things and it was a piece of dirt here. And slowly when they developed ideas ..... and all the ideas come together and then they develop into beautiful barbecues with permanent pergolas and with the memorial for Mark Allen. ..... And then the way the order of the garden ..... I couldn’t believe it, you know. Each time I come and see from a little tent and a few barbecues they transformed it into pavings and all this ..... The parliaments call them thugs - and they can create! They make such a beautiful place. ..... To many of them I say “Can I just shake you hand to get some courage from you?”

A second and more formal way in which participants transformed the site, was via its metamorphosis into “Solidarity Park” beginning about mid-July. The more anarchic early “Workers’ Embassy” gradually became a permanent civic site; a proper walled park with

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brick shelters and permanent barbecues and neatly mulched garden beds. The structures erected (mainly by members of the building unions, but with some help from others) turned a chaotic campsite into a gift for the people of WA. This was connected to the TLC's strategy of disengagement from the site, which will be discussed below. This transformation highlighted the skills of building workers in the service of the campaign. In the process, the Embassy appropriated public space for "the people" and then "bequeathed" it to the public of WA, although not in a way that has found favour with the state. The newly beautified site became an integrated collection of public art works, not simply for adornment, but also expressing a set of broadly political concerns, about democratic parliamentary processes and equitable labour laws. It was very much a grassroots process, as opposed to the usual "hierarchy of practice" in public art, which puts the artist (and the community) "way down the list".

In the early stages, more ephemeral and spontaneous installations predominated. The garden was one of the factors that sustained the momentum of the site for six months and kept the Third Wave in the pages of the newspapers long after the legislation had been passed. But the garden made way for the more permanent structures that brought the unions' occupation to a close. Tracing the development of the site, one can say that in the early stages, notions of "process" predominated, which gave the Workers' Embassy its fluid, light-hearted, parodic, spontaneous character. In the later stages, notions of "product" took over, and Solidarity Park became more instrumentally oriented. In both stages, creativity meshed with industrial strategy.

The role of artists in the campaigns needs special mention. In our view, this can be traced back to the strong relationship between unions and the arts, both generally, as described above, and more particularly within WA. From the mid-80s until 1996, the TLC had a designated full-time arts officer. This position not only stimulated many art and working life projects, but developed within the WA union movement a strong appreciation of the arts and the role they can play in expressing the creativity of ordinary working people, particularly during industrial campaigns. Even though this position no longer exists, the legacy of the last fifteen years remains.

Perth-based community arts company Ran Dan has long been associated with the union movement, particularly its annual May Day marches. In this campaign, they assisted at the
large rally on 29th April, and again at the Defiance Day concert in June, on the last day of
the parliamentary session. Whilst some of the events they were involved in were traditional
protest events, others deliberately eschewed formality and rhetoric. At the Defiance Day
concert, for instance, TLC Secretary Tony Cooke exhorted the crowd to enjoy the singing,
music and comedy; there were no speeches at all. At this concert, on the steps of
Parliament House, Lachie McDonald performed his oft-repeated “Full Belly Immersion”
street performance piece, characterised by Jo Brown as follows:

..... the most political message on the Day of Defiance was performed by a man intent on
putting his pendulous belly into a plastic bowl half filled with water. Whilst performing
this marvelous feat, he continuously commented on the government’s, particularly [Labour
Relations Minister] Graham Keirath’s indiscretions. Bakhtin would see this as
characterising the carnivalesque, that is, according to him, “a boundless world of
humorous forms and manifestations opposed to the official and serious tone” of the
dominant order.

Ran Dan also contributed to the campaign in more informal and unplanned ways, one being
the candlelight vigil described at the beginning of this paper.

Other artists contributed to the campaign in significant ways. Singer and songwriter
Bernard Carney has contributed a song to the campaigns against both the second and third
waves. Singer Shirley Smith and her “A to Z” reggae band performed at many of the Third
Wave functions, becoming a familiar sight at the Workers’ Embassy. Shirley was also
employed as events coordinator during the campaign. These events are reported by many
site participants to have been a significant feature of the campaign. During these interviews
we did, artists spoke in various ways about the role of the arts in industrial protest.
Bernard Carney commented:

[T]hose rallies ..... can easily get out of hand and with a few headstrong people they can
turn quite ugly as they did in Canberra ..... The great benefit of having something relevant
to sign is that it ..... puts all their energies into a united front. It gives them all a voice so
that they can protest ..... an effective protest that is listened to. Like Pete Seegar says, a
movement that sings is something that cannot be ignored ..... You can’t get arrested for
standing around and singing ..... It’s all the aspects of the arts that are so important
because there were a lot of people there who don’t become directly involved in their daily lives with live performance.

Lachie McDonald discusses the same issues:

I'm very pro protests, I think it's necessary for a healthy society, but I don't advocate violence in any way. I think it needs to be peaceful and you need to put in place cathartic mechanisms to prevent violence .... I think that unions can use the arts and ..... have exploited it well in WA. Not just for propaganda but to celebrate working class culture. I think working class culture is going through a complete transition at the moment ..... A lot of manufacturing is dying and work restructuring has completely changed the way we view things. I think the arts can help people deal with those sorts of issues as well as celebrating things that are valuable about working class culture.

The TLC has been conscious of the role of the arts and artists in the campaign. Overall, a large slice of the campaign budget was spent in that area, and several thousand dollars creating the Solidarity Park site alone. Helen Creed, a senior union official and Senior Vice-President of the TLC, had this to say about the role of the arts:

[It was a very conscious decision to use entertainment ..... One of the reasons it seems to me that we’ve used entertainers ..... As someone who stood on the platform in front of the sea of faces, I can recognise skills that performers have that we as union officials don’t necessarily have ..... The difference between myself and a performer is their ability to sense the crowd and read the crowd.

It was not a simple matter of using the arts for crowd control, far from it. Stephanie Mayman, Assistant Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council, emphasised the notion of running inclusive campaigns (as did Helen Creed), for instance highlighting the presence of women workers and allowing various community groups to have their say. One illustration of this philosophy in action was the fact that the campaign as a whole, and the site, were not rigidly controlled, but rather allowed to evolve and express the diversity and inclusiveness of the union movement and its supporters. Peter Stokes sums up the tenor of the campaign:
[T]he important thing is that there's a line that I guess in life you do or you don't cross. During the Third Wave there was I think an invisible line and when people crossed it their world didn’t collapse. What they did was they gained more confidence, they became empowered.

However, while the union movement gave the site free rein in its early anarchic days, it later began deliberately to create “Solidarity Park”. The TLC was concerned that unionists might spend too much time staffing the park, to the exclusion of taking the campaign out to the community and to worksites. So later strategy was all about “moving on” from the finished site - the move from “process” to “product” noted above, from casual performances and installations, to public art (although no-one called it that). While many of the site participants interviewed were sad or regretful that the Embassy was tidied up, beautified and finally finished, they realised too the logic of the strategy. “See you at the Fourth Wave!” became a familiar parting shot during the last week the site was staffed.

**Conclusion**

Surrounding Parliament House with thousands of burning candles, tending cabbages and broccoli, reading poems, cooking stews and cakes, listening to string quartets and reggae bands these activities do not seem to be the stuff of industrial/political protest. A group of burly and yelling unionists (invariably male), preferably smashing something or other, is the stereotypical image of the labour movement. However, in the case of the Workers’ Embassy, a special community was created which sustained opposition over a long period, and created a basis for further protest when the new Act is enforced or when further legislative change is proposed. The oppositional alliance that was created there blended anger, defiance and a sense of social justice, with a very large measure of humour, parody, irony and community spirit - and a sense of beauty. The arts and artists played a significant role in creating this alliance.
Acknowledgments

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Appendix

The “First Wave” had introduced the option of individual employment contracts, with a minimum weekly wage of $335 per week. While the wages of people already in employment were protected, the “First Wave” legislation had the potential to allow employers to undercut wages in low-paid areas where turnover is high, such as retail, hospitality etc. The “First Wave’s” move to a more individualist industrial relations regime was, in the eyes of the union movement, boosted by the “Third Wave”, which was aimed at weakening unions’ ability to organise their members, recruit in the workplace, and take industrial action.

It is not the intention of this paper to debate the extent to which the Third Wave Bill was a challenge to the unions’ rights. Briefly, the Bill sought:

- the introduction of compulsory state-conducted ballots prior to many forms of industrial action
- restrictions on the right of unions to enter workplaces where they cannot demonstrate they already have members
- penalties for unions which seek to move from the State to the Federal industrial jurisdiction
- restrictions on political donations by unions (which do not apply to corporations or employer associations)
- the ending of the government’s willingness to deduct union dues for government employees (upon receipt of a procuration order from each individual union member) and forward them to the relevant union, a long-standing practice.

The new Bill had to pass through Parliament by 22nd May, for on this day the Government was in practical terms to lose its majority in the Upper House, a majority which it had in fact lost at the previous December’s state election. This fact angered many protesters, who said the government should not have passed legislation for which they had lost their mandate. The WA Trades and Labor Council (TLC), the peak union council representing the great majority of West Australian unions and unionists, mobilised public opinion by a

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series of actions: firstly, by means of a controversial peak-hour "slow down" of traffic on 7th April, and then by the largest public demonstration ever seen in WA, when an estimated 25,000 - 30,000 people marched from the city to Parliament House on 29th April. Despite a campaign of industrial action in various industries during April and early May, and civil disobedience in and about the vicinity of Parliament, the Bill went through on 15th May.

Biography

Janis Bailey worked as a union industrial officer during the 1980s, and for the Western Australian Industrial Commission. She is currently a lecturer in industrial relations and human resource management in the Faculty of Business at Edith Cowan University. She is undertaking a Ph.D. in union organising strategies at Murdoch University. Janis is interested in gender issues in the union movement and the labour market. She edits the journal Papers in Labour History for the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. Janis worked for a community arts group during the 1970s and more recently has done both paid and voluntary community arts work in her local area. She worked as industrial officer for the Operative Painters and Decorators Unions from 1988 to 1991, obtaining the first stand-alone award for visual artists in Australia.

Di McAtee originally trained and worked as a high school English teacher in Victoria and Western Australia before returning to study and obtaining a visual arts diploma in painting and printmaking in the early 1980s. Her interests then shifted from individual arts practice to the area of collaborative work with other artists and communities, particularly working with youth on mural and graffiti arts projects. From 1989 until 1996 Di was involved in union art programs, first as the Artworker Organiser with the Operative Painters and Decorators Union and then at the Trades and Labor Council. Here she integrated arts projects into her work as the Women's Officer and then as Workplace Change Adviser to migrant and Aboriginal community women. Di was an inaugural member of both the Government Public Art Task Force and the Arts Industry Training Council. From 1995 to 1997 she was the Chairperson of the Arts Sport and recreation Industry Training Council. Di currently works as a training officer in the area of community cultural development.

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Endnotes

1. Lachie McDonald, artworker, interviewed 16th September 1997 by Di McAtee
4. Ibid, p. 4
5. McCracken, op. cit, p. 3
10. The Government announced a “Fourth Wave” of industrial reforms on 27th October 1997; see Media Statement by the Minister for Labour Relations of that date.
12. These issues are discussed in more depth in Bailey and McAtee (1996), op. cit.
13. Peter Stokes, Organiser, Community and Public Sector Union, interviewed 22nd December, 1997 by Di McAtee.
14. Space does not permit us to analyse the allusive dimensions of the wattle and the olive!
15. We’re indebted to Eileen Janes Yeo for this insight.
17. Apparently a reference to the "Black Tie and Work Boots" Ball, the first major event on the site, held at the end of the tumultuous week when the site was established and the Bill was passed.

18. Christy Cain interview.

19. The first permanent structure built on the site was a brick memorial to this young union organiser who had been killed on a demolition site in August 1997, ironically whilst investigating alleged safety breaches; the inquest into his death began during the Third Wave campaign.


22. McCracken, ibid.


25. A reference to protests organised by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) against the Federal government's Workplace Relations Bill, in August 1996.


27. Lachie McDonald interview.

28. Helen Creed, Secretary of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union, Senior Vice-President of the TLC and a Vice-President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, interviewed 6th November 1997 by Janis Bailey.

29. Peter Stokes interview.

30. See footnote 10.


A Linear Heritage

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I am currently showing a small number of works at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts as the second in a series of three exhibitions dealing with synchronistic and constructed events that have in some way shaped my life. Working on the geographical 'Edge' so to speak is allowing me to view my past from a distance, to see its structure almost as third party and from a position of neutrality. In conjunction with the show, the paper offers a personal view and an insight into some of the issues that are integral to the current body of work. As a consequence the paper argues that spiritualism can expect to command little respect within western thought. The exhibition is named 'A Linear Heritage'.

My first experience of a political construct was as a child watching an episode of "The Man From U.N.C.L.E." where a map on the wall of head quarters portrayed America as the largest continent, Britain the same size as India, Russia large and significant and the Far East as a withering punctuation to the rest. Australia did not show at all, confirming my suspicion that it was just an exotic myth.
This was a kind of political propaganda that I assumed was only practiced east of the iron curtain. Its very existence questioned the nature of truth, and our fundamental difference to the east. As an art student and therefore amateur anarchist, I became absorbed by texts that offered an explanation, such as ‘The Elements of Cartography’ and ‘Design for the Real World’. The western assumption that a map is truth was quickly dispelled when trying to follow one on a Greek island and ending up hopelessly lost at a freshly painted oil can on a wall reading “End”. If the very notion of truth in western society is to be debated, then the history of cartography would serve as an excellent example in exposing the grey area between fact and interpretation.

The oldest and most popular theory regarding the nature on truth is that truth is what corresponds to facts. As Aristotle put it:

"to say what is is, or that what is not is not, is true"

This is the correspondence theory of truth and aligns itself with western thinking because of its reliance on evidence as proof of fact. Parallels can therefore be drawn between cultural, historical, religious and political frameworks that in effect form a mind set for our social, and economic strategies. The British judicial system for instance relies heavily on physical evidence when determining truth, likewise the reliance on text within western theology allows sub groups to be formed through its various interpretations. The development of our understanding of cultural history is no different in its ideology and its
hunger for the artefact. As Pierre Bourdieu points out, the common denominator driving this structure is the necessity for power and control.

An investigation into religious power particularly within the Catholic church reveals the workings of visual signifiers that are common across many cultural divides, and which highlight to some extent the differences between eastern and western attitudes to religion. The stained glass window uses primary colour illuminated from above to attract our primary sensors from an early age, fused with a black line signifying information through its relationship to the printed text. The physical height and dynamics of the structure dominate and indoctrinate, forcing us into submission and eternal devotion. The message is clear, this religion is founded on truth proven by its physicality and driven by its devotion to the sacred text.

Stained glass window  Cologne Cathedral 1280  We Gilbert & George 1983

The similarities between religious and cultural histories within the western world are no more evident that in the development of the gallery space itself. Brian O'Docherty in his book 'Inside The White Cube' likens the development of the gallery chamber to that of the church, sighting the Egyptian tomb as serving both religious and artistic needs. The similarities go beyond simply function of course, the subliminal effect on the individual confronted by the 'religious experience' of a gallery is located in the same power structure as mentioned earlier.
The historical path that links cultural, economic and social structures is clearly evident in its onward march, but how does this affect our view of 'The Other' and particular the East. A recent article by Professor Suuji Takashina, director of Japan's National Museum of Western Art, highlights the fundamental difference between eastern and western thinking regarding the artefact. He sites Japan's most sacred Shinto shrine, Isejingu, as failing to qualify for the world heritage list of cultural properties of outstanding historical value. The list includes China's The Great Wall, the pyramids of Egypt and some significant Japanese buildings. The criterion for authenticity would exclude the Isejingu Shrine as it is ceremoniously rebuilt every twenty years using timber from the surrounding forest and using time honoured rituals. The Japanese view this to be authentic, but to the western eye a monument has to be 'permanent'. This underlines a major philosophical difference in our attitudes, and undermines the importance of ritual and ceremony and our connection with the land. It also suggests that the correspondence theory of truth does not sit easily in eastern thought, where ritual and transcendentalism can take president over the document or artefact. Perhaps the pragmatic theory of truth, which tells us that a statement is true if it "works", ie. if we can act successfully on the basis of it, has more in common with eastern ideology.
Our reliance on the permanent artefact may in some part explain our inconsistency in the way we evaluate eastern culture and tradition. Our knowledge and respect for Chinese history may be due to the fact that philosophical and theological texts have been meticulously documented and preserved over the years forming an almost complete catalogue of Chinese literature and philosophy. Not so within Indian culture as many key texts have been either lost or until recently not uniformly translated from the Sanskrit or Arabic language. This together with the dominance of western philosophy introduced through colonialism into the teaching curriculum in Indian Universities around 1857, has contributed to our generally dismissive opinion toward Indian philosophy. Rather than documented, the wealth of short stories and narrative writings have been passed down through the spoken word, subtly changing through its interpretation from one generation to another, but again offering little in terms of permanence.

Roy Perrett from Massey University recently delivered a paper entitled “Truth, Relativism and Western Conceptions of Indian Philosophy” and in it argues that there are many western approaches to Indian culture, few of which pay tribute to the analytical achievements of Indian writing. He mentions a wealth of writers who have amplified the exotic myth fuelling the Romantic vision of India. Roy comments:

“*In their different ways these writers constructed an image of India as an "Other" that exemplified those valuable qualities that Europe lacked: in particular, various forms of spirituality, transcendentalism and anti-materialism.*"

Edward Said goes further and argues that “Orientalism” as a description of the “Other” is a construct of the western imagination. If it was the classic tradition that was extracted from ancient Greece then it is truly the romantic face of India that is exploited by the west.

It is no coincidence that it was the romantic vision of India in particular that was revitalised through the Pop movement of the 1960’s. Episodes of ‘The Man From UNCLE’ were punctuated by songs from the Beatles who turned our heads eastward for the first time since the Empire through a superficial but sympathetic gaze at Indian philosophy and religion. What was extracted for western demand was a romantic and exotic caricature which in retrospect was successful only contributing to our misunderstanding of eastern values and traditions. Not only was it a curious look over the opposite garden fence, but it presented an alternative to the power and establishment of
western politics at the time. The assembling of the Beatles most desired audience included such notorieties as Edger Allen Poe, Karl Marx, Tarzan, Carl Jung, Mae West, Muhamud Ali along with seven Gurus. (Hitler was originally included but sidelined at the last minute). The photograph accompanied arguably the most pivotal album in history and was to set the scene for an eclectic and indiscriminate gathering of influences that would drive popular culture for the next decade. It also demonstrated the power of music and art in conveying a taste of a distant culture in a way that news and politics could not. News could inform a generation, but art could influence it.

*Sgt Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band  The Beatles/ Peter Blake 1967*

Within the global context, where one might ask is the spiritual content within Australian art. I would argue that because our definition of truth is part and parcel of the European heritage, then it would be contradictory to think that our embrace of spiritualism was anything less than Said's romantic construct. The notion of the spiritual, and in that I include aboriginal culture, is still that of the exotic ‘other’. Compounding this is the feel good factor, our own under estimation of the importance of the arts in playing a pivotal role in the development of Australian life. John Pringle in his book ‘Australian Accent’ written in 1956 reflects on this in relation to young practicing artists by commenting:

"The artists themselves seem curiously casual in their attitude towards their work and rarely seem altogether professional. They like music, painting etc but it does not really matter. The same feeling that enables young Australians to try their hand at anything with cheerful confidence also stops them from developing as artists. Part of their confidence comes from the fact that they think it is all much easier than it is. There is a universal conviction that art is somehow a social activity not an intellectual one."
This brings me to the work itself. It would be easy to illustrate theory in this respect but I am neither a writer, as you can tell, or an illustrator. Rather the work promotes my understanding of events in a more circular fashion, the two are linked but neither in the driving seat. The notions of truth and its relationship to our constructed history are forming in my mind as the work develops. I liken my own history to that of a cultural express train travelling on a straight path stopping frequently to pick up truck loads of artefacts as souvenirs of the visit. The artefacts are then laid out end to end to offer knowledge through chronology and logic, neat in its package but baring little relationship to each other and serving only to misinterpret their original context. It will be interesting to see whether the indiscriminate and multi directional nature of the internet as a learning resource will offer a better alternative. Its reliance on the operator to direct its path may cause its own derailment.

I have always worked with progression whether this is getting from A to B or through cause and effect. This set of work introduces the vertical and horizontal as a dynamic device. O'Docherty says:

"Life is horizontal, just one thing after another, a conveyor belt shuffling us toward the horizon".

I offer the vertical as a foil, rich in its dominance and authority and boxed for authenticity and permanence. It is important to say that this show does not attempt to
offer an alternative or even a critique, rather more an observation or celebration of my own learning curve (a curve being a line with attitude).

The work itself is in transition and may re-appear in a different form at a later date, a true representation of myself at this point. In my catalogue notes I summarise by saying:

"This exhibition looks back and attempts in part to re-draw the line, and in doing so pays homage to its linear path, a tongue in cheek farewell before the future becomes lateral".

Clive Barstow 25.1.98
Changing Technologies And The Arts; The Arts and Technological Change

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The role of the artist is in a constant dialogue with the wider industrial context within which representational technologies are developed. With this in mind, it is worthwhile considering the notion that many forms of art are technologically mediated, and changes in this mediation are surrounded by questions. Many of the questions that currently surround the development of "new" technologies have accompanied the introduction of different media in the past. Photography is a good example.

Understanding the idea of "technology" in the historical context of representation is important in contextualising current developments.

Does technology embrace the arts or the arts technology?

In every instance, the arts embrace technology. An outgrowth of the aesthetic inquiry of the artist, the utilisation of new technologies is a means of coming to terms with technology and giving it emotional and expressive resonance.

With new technology can we all be artists?

Perth, Western Australia.
The idea of the artist is a broad one, which might include all practitioners who can mediate aesthetics. Definitions which have a strong history in the plastic arts or are slanted to the traditional visual arts are both limiting and obsolete, although they still enjoy enormous currency amongst “critics” and commentators.

New technologies are a vital part of the expanding language of aesthetic experience that is negotiated by the arts. Technology alone is insufficient to provide the critical and interpretative insight that separates work of artistic intent from other forms of cultural or industrial production. Technology of itself does not an artist make.

Opportunities emerge with new media for alternative routes to the production of art. The negotiation of artistic territory is no longer limited to the possession of certain motor skills or craft skills. Opportunities have arisen for the combination of artistic, scientific and aesthetic concerns through new technologies recalling the artist/philosophers of the renaissance.

In some instances, there is also a democratisation of the possibilities for artistic production through the use of ubiquitous media technologies like the modern computer.

The role of externalised subjectivity comes under question in this practice, as the authenticity of the artistic “gesture” is often obscured by the use of new technologies. Raising the critical awareness of the artistic strategies that are employed in technology based art is vital to a healthy and evolving cultural sector. Finding a balance between unquestioning acceptance of work based on technology and the outright rejection of it is essential to finding a balanced appreciation of such work, and the work finding both immediate and long term audiences.

**What strategies are there for the survival of the artist?**

Artists are not so much threatened with extinction as forced to adapt to and redefine their role in the context of a changing cultural and technological landscape. Artists are increasingly taking the role of creative personnel who add value to other forms of cultural activity. A system of patronage from the church, government, and later from industry, has
been retained in the world of the public and architectural commissions. Artists working with new technology are able to play a vital role in the construction of public space, however the prevailing attitudes are historical in their perspective rather than contemporary, and broader programs of education are needed to contextualise technologically based arts.

Developing a better profile for “technology arts” through proactive exhibition and development programs is extremely important, and Australia has an active string of public agencies and galleries doing this.

Artists are also called upon to create a “pact” with industry where they want to use more expensive technologies. The need to creatively explore artist / industry partnerships is critical in the development of both arts and industry, and their meaning for society at large. These partnerships are both necessary and highly desirable.

**How will artists retain ownership of their intellectual property in the new millennium?**

The development of a moral rights regime is essential to maintaining the conceptual integrity of artist’s work in an age of global networks and digital reproduction.

Maintaining the ability to exploit work for an artist’s own economic benefit is more difficult in any medium which allows itself to be mechanically reproduced. The sad fact is that there is less that artists are able to do as individuals, than corporations, who are regularly faced with the same dilemmas. Learning from the corporate world, an artist may adapt by leveraging themselves as their product more than individual examples of work. The establishment and longevity of the “brand” is the real repository of value, rather than a specific instance of “product”. This is a response to the idea of the ubiquity and increasing volume of cultural production.

Perth, Western Australia.
Biography

John Colette is a digital media specialist whose work encompasses digital film and video applications, CD ROM and print media. Originally establishing a background in film and video production, commercials, corporate and music video, John has focussed exclusively on emerging digital production technologies for the last seven years. With a wide exhibition history internationally in digital Fine Arts, and a professional history in both academia and industry, John has spanned the breadth of traditional and new technology applications.

John was a key member of the production team at the Museum of Sydney project, and his work is seen in venues ranging from the exhibition floor at the Museum of Contemporary Art to the Drama theatre at the Sydney Opera House. He is currently the head of Digital Media at the Australian Film, Television and Radio school.

Perth, Western Australia.
Synchronistically Engaging Art And Machines

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Synchronistically Engaging Art And Machines

"Although technological art is a relatively new art form its coherence and continuity, as well as its aesthetic, sociological and cultural value can be established. It is an international phenomenon, and its origins are traceable back to antiquity" (1.)

History has recorded how artists have consistently utilised the machine in its many forms (organic, environmental, mechanical, electrical and now cyber machines.) for their own devices.

Perth, Western Australia.
In order to express their concepts and images more potently and to a far broader audience (via the natural lateral thought process inherent in the creative mind), they have grasped the potential to enhance or expand upon the principle of an apparatus, turning an industrial application or invention around for a use other than was intended. Quick to accept a challenge, with the vision to adopt new ideas and technology, then to adapt them for a non-commercial purpose which the inventor did not (and could not) perceive, the artist pushes the limits and widens the specifics placed on technological developments, realising its potential beyond the norm. Arts and artists mesh easily and comfortably with machines, having been at the vanguard of machine usage and development.

Humankind has been seduced and mesmerised by the exploration and exploitation of new media, tools and methods, that enable the production of art works. From the knapping of stone tools, early humanity could shape, whittle, carve, slice and engrave. Thus the edge of a knapped stone tool was a step towards the mechanised technologies of our contemporary society.

The domestication of animals paved the way for involvement with organic machinery, earth works of early civilisations have a direct influence on contemporary environmental artists each working with the available technology of the day.

EG. The indigenous new world inhabitants creating their various monumental structures and ground works or Robert Smithson using bulldozers to make many of his earthworks ...for example ‘Spiral Jetty’.

“At school we learn who owns history, or, rather who has enough clout to make it look like they own it. We are not told that history is only one version of truth among many, and that it is made legitimate simply by being taught.” (2.)

The value of history lies in its interpretation by the researcher / historian, recognising that their point of view is one of many. Remember that what is taught is the version with the most clout. In the age of the brave new world, what once was fact becomes fiction and what was fiction becomes fact. The interpretation of history taught, published or exhibited, being accepted as fact, is not necessarily the case, as we recognise today.

Perth, Western Australia.
In her introduction to the catalogue for the 1978 exhibition The Mechanised Print, Pat Gilmour makes the point that throughout the history of Printmaking (which can be arguably traced back to the Mesopotamian period and certainly to 7th-8th Century China) the artist collaborated with a range of craftsman, such as the wood carver/engraver, and the printer in order to produce the final image in unlimited numbers.

Her point of course being that, simply because an art work is not the sole endeavour of the artist who conceived the idea and resultant visual outcome, but potentially the endeavour of a group of professional individuals (craftsmen, technicians, tradesmen etc.) does not / should not lessen the intrinsic worth or evaluation placed upon it.

The other aspect which is inherent in her overview, is that Printmaking has always utilised technology, from the earliest printing methods up to the latest digital technology of the late 1990’s, artist printmakers have employed the services and skills of others, as required, to enable the production of their artistic output.

"An airbrush and a spray gun can produce a smooth and impersonal surface treatment which is beyond the skill of the hand. I was not afraid to employ such tools in order to achieve machine-like perfection....In an industrial age, the distinction between art and non-art between manual craftsmanship and mechanical technology is no longer an absolute one..." (3.)

So said Moholy-Nagy the constructivist artist/engineer of the 1920’s.

There is little difference between the introduction of the camera in the 19th century and the computer based technologies of the 20th century. The camera is a valued tool of the artist and so too are the applications and software, associated with electronic age. No matter what transpires the role of the artist will as always, challenge conventional visual dialogue, stimulating discussion over the issues of cultural and philosophical importance.

‘While the histories of artists’ prints of the last century have rarely mentioned photography or the equally taboo photomechanical adaptations of the four main graphic processes, the last two decades have seen these pariahs..... entering art as a central means of communication,...’ (4.)

Perth, Western Australia.
Today traditionalists may argue that purity is the only way to move forward, without contamination by techno-wizardry. Young Turks might counter this, stating that the only route ahead lies exclusively with the new technologies. The truth of course is a compromise, to move unfettered into the arena of technological mastery with the ability to influence and control outcomes or achievements by applying acquired experiences and values rather than superseding them.

Since the start of the twentieth century we have broken the code of nuclear production, overcome the forces of gravity facilitating better and quicker lines of communication. We have invented personal communication devices with their ancillary accessories, (ie satellites, computers, fibre optics) which have led us to hyper space and virtual environments. It is the advancement of knowledge and our (the artist & designer) willingness to explore and invent, that sets us apart. Each turn of a century brings about great change and unrest, as well as advancements in technology. It is our interaction with this technology that has brought us (artists and designers) to this particular point of synchronistically engaging with machines.

The challenge for us now, lies in being able to keep pace with the frenetic advances in technology. These advances have opened labyrinth-like avenues to explore. Artists cannot afford to exclude the scientist or the techno-dweeb from their world and vice versa.

"By ignoring science's contribution to contemporary thought, the arts and literary communities only show themselves to be out of touch...". (5.)

This was the headline to a 1996 article by Professor Paul Davies. The article goes on to quote that,

"... the distinguished polymath George Steiner, opening the Edinburgh Arts Festival, remarked that science has now seized the high ground of human intellectual endeavour, leaving the arts floundering and looking irrelevantly self-indulgent." (6.)

Traditionalists argue for the retention of the status quo, in order to maintain standards, to enhance and polish the past. The influence of the present on the actions of the past have
guided Art Education programs this century. The introduction of acrylic paints provided the artist with a product of expression based on science and our plastic society. We know the pros and cons of oils versus acrylics, yet fifty years later the longevity of acrylic still sparks debate. The traditionalists who speak of contamination to their discipline are blind to history. The expressed sentiments by the Salon to the French Impressionists or the comments by the critics towards the 1889 Melbourne exhibition entitled ‘9X5 Impressions’ by the Heidelberg School, are classic examples of non-acceptance of change and development in the art world. The ready acceptance by humanity for change in science, is the paradox to this attitude.

Artists must move on or be left behind in the detritus of swirling history. It is not a compromise to trial new tools, media or machines, rather it is a natural expectation of the artist to explore the promises of the future. We are a complex organic machine, able to internalise diverse information and processes, discovering what fits our unique abilities and perceptions.

The promises and expectations of a bright new society through technological interaction are vast. Many of those possibilities will become a reality, while others will fall short of our expectations. There are artists who are exploring the numerous technological advances in order to gain new ground in visual expression and design, but these individuals or groups remain a minority in the field.

Science has stolen the limelight on the brink of a new millennium. The techno-electronic ‘wall’ has almost been hit, such that the next step will be towards the realm of the bionic machine. Nanno-technology it seems, may change science fiction to science fact. Yet it remains the artist who can lay claim to the term of the bionic machine.

Debuffet described his method of working thus...
‘...a machine for checking all reason and replacing everything in ambiguity and confusion.’ (7.)

In an article headed ‘Bionic tune-up tip for future’, Professor Richard Zare commenting in an article titled Chemical and Engineering News, about human bionic advances in the next century said...
"Toward the possibility of putting man and machine together..."  (8.)

When writing his article, we are convinced Professor Richard Zare was unaware of the Australian artist Stelarc, who's manipulations and investigations of the human body's interaction with machines is internationally acknowledged and respected.

All of the above harkens to the generic term coined by William S. Burroughs in his 1961 novel of the same name, to describe the human-being as 'The Soft Machine'.

Where does this leave the artist and designer (soft machines), continuing the tradition of reflecting the values of society while trying to interact with a profit driven philosophy. The annual income of an artist is low, the artist's access to current technologies is at best limited and in most cases out of reach, because of prohibitive cost factors.

Where are the great art patrons of the past, where are the Medicis' and Guggenheims' of the 1990's and of the next century?

What are the owners of multi-media empires, doing to assist individuals and small groups of artists and designers? For it is obvious they support their own empires via monolithic constructions which forever etch their corporate centred philanthropy in capitalist history. Why is there little support for the individual artist or small group of designers who need access to those new technologies controlled by multi-millionaires, giant corporations and multi-nationals? Do they not see a viable return for their investment? Can the power brokers not see a nexus between their philosophy and that of the artist / designer?

"Although technological art is clearly the art form most representative of our Electronic Age, its full implications lie in the future. The artists have in common a preoccupation with exploiting a vast spectrum of aesthetic categories in their work with the various advanced technologies. At the same time, what separates them from the previous generation of artists also working with technological factors (and in some cases from their own previous research) is their awareness of the extent of social and cultural change produced by the latest technological developments. In the 1980's and early 90's these artists have been trying to bring about a significant relationship between basic human experiences - physical
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"psychological and mental - and the radical and global intrusions into them, of the new technologies, in all walks of life, with all the beneficial effects, potential hazards and immense possibilities they offer." (9.)

The effect of new technology upon the youth is astounding. The influence of the VDU and the next generation of visual displays (yet to be invented or perfected), will shape their perception and visual dialogue.

Visual perception today will alter due to the influences of new technology, in turn evolving the visual values of our youth. It is possible that aesthetic tradition as we know it may be as quaint to future generations, as silent film is to ours.

The value society placed on artists in the past needs to be urgently reinstituted. Australia, as a multicultural nation approaching the new millennium, must consider the ramifications and impact artists and designers have had on culture and their influence on future culture.

Artists and designers have proven their worth in the development and redefinition of new technological devices. The value of the artist appears constant throughout history and must continue into the future.

It is essential that governments and corporations provide resources and access for the artist / designer, enabling society to benefit from their unique visual, aesthetic and cognitive processing. Art is in a constant state of flux forever morphing into a representation of the values of society...or is it corporate values these days?

"The end of civilisation as we know it? Certainly. But a new civilisation may be emerging. While I believe that the greatest art has always been defiantly local, it's hard to prejudge, to condemn the global culture we've yet to experience. A global culture wherein the written word may, like the dead parrot, join the choir invisible." (10.)

Where do you sit? Are you a traditionalist stuck in your ivory tower salon? Or are you willing to push the limits of your own envelope?
The only certain thing one can count on it is said, is death and taxes.

Perth, Western Australia.
Well, we would like to add change. The technological trinity for the 21st century. Death, Taxes, and Change!

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Biography

Stephen Davidson BA., BA.M.E.D., MA, is a lecturer in Visual Arts and Art Education at the Australian Catholic University, and is Lecturer in Charge of Visual Atts at the Aquinas Campus. He is a practising artist who exhibits nationally and internationally with works in public, private and corporate collections.

Allan Mann BA, MA, is a Senior Lecturer and Co-ordinator of Research and Higher Degrees in the School of Arts at the University of Ballarat. His previous publications include, Danny McDonald - The Science in His Art; Democratically Dispersed - Regional (print) Keepers; C.P.F.V.S.(Cloud Pool Fire Veil Shield); Real Virtuart ily; Mad Scientists, Philistine Engineers, Intellectual Snobs and the Arty Poseurs; Charts & Ciphers; Jacky Parry - An Australian in Glasgow. He is a practising artist, with works in national and international public, private and corporate collections.
Changing Institution And The Artist As Facilitator In The Third Millennium

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This is a broad area to cover, so I have tried to identify some key issues that might interest you. My background is not an academic one, I was trained as an actress and I have always created my own work. At present I am Executive Director of the European League of Institutes of the Arts, ELIA. My contribution will be a pragmatic one.

Most of the problems we are facing in Europe are very different from the ones you face in Australia, Asia, the USA and Africa, but there are global problems that concerns us all, directly or indirectly. Through sharing information and learning from each others’ good practice and mistakes and by discussing global issues we may be able to develop our institutions in a more efficient and interesting way, we will not re-invent the wheel over and over again. I would like to thank the organisers for inviting me to this conference and I would like to congratulate them for making an effort to bring us together. I sincerely hope that this initiative will result in a network that will continue the exchange of information.

Perth, Western Australia.
Changing Institutions

Who and/or what is causing change? Changes from outside, changes from within. There are political decisions concerning budgets and systems, there are invisible and slow changes from within society itself and there are new scientific developments. Looking at Arts Education Institutions from the outside changes are implemented by directors, teachers and artists and sometimes changes are initiated by students demanding new possibilities for themselves.

Minor changes or decisions can have major consequences. I would like to give you an example. The story goes that in 1794 in the USA Congress, an effort was made to replace English with German as the official and legal language. Half of the representatives voted for the introduction of the German language. Thereupon the Speaker of the Assembly, a man named Muhlenberg, cast the deciding vote in favour of the English language. Imagine the consequences, a German-speaking America in times of the first and second world war. Decision makers, be aware .....  

Major changes in Europe in this century that changed our lives drastically have been:

1. The development of the European union
2. The development of new technologies
3. The Berlin wall that came down
4. The changing role of the market and economic values

How did these developments affect arts education institutions in Europe?

European Union

Jean Monnet, one of the founders of the European Union, said: if I could start again I would start with culture.

Perth, Western Australia.
That expresses the mistake that was made in his opinion and that caused some of the problems Europe is facing now. There is a total lack of cultural policy. Only recently, in the Treaty of Maastricht, a Cultural Chapter was added, a very general one, but it is a start.

Because there was no policy for cultural development there was not a lot of funding available for cultural projects. If you would compare it with agriculture: agriculture is a year and culture half a day ..... The programme that is dealing with culture is very poorly structured. At present discussions are taking place to improve this programme.

With regard to Arts Education there is an important programme for education in general which includes Art Education. Arts Education Institutions can apply for exchange grants to improve mobility of students and teachers, grants for joined projects and curriculum development.

It is one of ELIA's duties to inform Arts Education Institutions on changes and new conditions for the programmes, deadlines for sending in applications etc.

It seems essential that in developing a European Culture artists and those working in arts education are involved in identifying a new European identity; strengthening the national and regional identity in Europe and celebrating our rich cultural diversity.

New Technologies

The development of new technologies play a very important role in the development of a new European society. It makes information accessible, it makes international contacts possible for everybody. For instance for Eastern and Central Europe it is an essential tool for the rapid changes they experience. Many institutions in Eastern and Central Europe skipped the fax and immediately started with computers and email.

The spectrum of application for the new technologies is most evident in the information and communication sectors, where the widest economic base has been secured. Here, the technologies actually have the power to change society.

Perth, Western Australia.
In the forthcoming information society, however, power will be acquired not by knowledge but solely by having control over the production and distribution of information. A possible scenario could be a massive and deliberate take-over of vital social functions by individual media conglomerates that dominate the world market.

Commercialisation of culture and the monoplisation of mass media also threaten Art and Arts Education. “Either find a niche or get big and fight!” Could this phrase be applied to the actual situation in Art and Arts Education? What is the possible role of Arts Education in this evolving so-called “information society?”

In the domain of new media, artistic creativity now involves find a niche where works can be sold as products in the emerging global market place. However, Art is not the purely private pleasure of its creators or collectors, and it is not at all a commercialised object adding to competition in global market places.

Arts Education Institutions have to investigate the domain of New Media.

The crucial importance of counterbalancing the commercialisation of culture necessitates that new instruments be appropriated for those works or art worthy of being deemed genuine. Instead of restricting the curriculum to the pure application of new audio-visual media, future artists and sector professionals must be given a proper grounding in the political and social responsibilities involved. If the technological myth has conferred mythological status on new realms of the media, such as information highways, virtual reality or immerse simulations, the central task of arts education will be to tackle the deconstruction of this myth.

**Eastern Europe**

Another major change we recently experienced in Europe was an unexpected and political one when in 1989 the Berlin wall came down. It was a shock for both eastern and Central Europe as well as for Western Europe. I was visiting Berlin on a regular basis, so I had the opportunity to witness the change with my own eyes. I remember the city of Berlin, cruelly divided by a deadly wall, I remember the extreme difference between the rich and
commercial West, with its lights, its advertisements, restaurants and shops and the communist East, dark, severe, controlling, suspicious people, no shops or restaurants, but very interesting theatre. I remember the day that the wall came down, people walking under the Brandenburger Tor from east to west and west to east, with tears in their eyes, in disbelief of what was happening. I remember the day that the German Mark was levelled and all the inhabitants of East Berlin received 2000 Marks from the government to spend. Overnight the shops were filled, MacDonalds was installed and advertisements were placed. Coca Cola everywhere. I will never forget the silent mass of people in East Berlin, walking through the shops, looking at all the things they were supposed to desire, supposed to buy. But they were not buying, just looking. I shivered when witnessing this silent mass marching. And now when I visit Berlin I see the unemployment under the people of East Berlin, I see the west taking over with their rules, conditions and confident attitudes. Orchestras are disappearing, on the streets you hear gifted musicians play, collecting money in a hat in order to survive. Many unpleasant and tasteless jokes are told by the “west people” of how stupid people from the east are. Such a long way to go.

In 1991 ELIA organised a symposium in Budapest with representatives from East, Central and West Europe to reflect on the situation and on future perspectives for Arts Education Institutions after the wall came down. We discussed how we should organise the new relationship between East and West, two parts of Europe that had been divided for so long. We analysed the difficulties, the obstacles and misunderstandings. We experienced that it is not possible to discuss art for any longer than 5 minutes because politics got in the way. We talked about growing dangers, first of all an overpowering market, secondly the rise of nationalism, all over Europe. That was 1991, nowadays it is still difficult for East to meet West and vice versa, it takes a lot of time to create mutual understanding and respect, to strengthen international competence and to enrich without feeling threatened. Artists play a very important role in this process.

**Market**

We live in a society that is becoming more and more market orientated. Values in life are related to financial profit and short term successes. Quantity wins over quality. Art is by definition not market orientated, that is a fact. But how about the cultural industries? Do
You know the origin of the word “entrepreneurship”? It is written in the Oxford Dictionary that entrepreneur is (a) the director or manager of a public music institution or (b) one who sets up “entertainments, especially musical entertainments”. Art fits in perfectly with market conditions, big successes, tons of money. Art can be very lucrative and many art forms do contain an economic value, even a huge one; pop music, classical music, events like the Salzburger Festspiele, Documenta, the last book of John Grisham, Madonna, the Spice Girls.

Are we equipping our students with the skills needed to manage themselves in order to survive and progress in their chosen professional field. Institutions are under pressure from students, anxious to secure their prospects in the marketplace. They are also called to account by the professional sector which, as the first point of contact for emerging artists, is well placed to gauge their preparedness and expectations.

When submitted to commercialisation, however, art loses its societal function and becomes merely entertainment. This also applies to education in general and, more specifically, to arts education. Depending on private funding, sponsored by industry and commerce, arts educators can be reduced to suppliers for the market, thereby losing their critical potential for shaping the field of art.

Our educational system should not prepare young people only to become employees. It should give students the necessary grounding to deal with current developments and to educate their creative and artistic qualities as well as to develop their entrepreneurial activities.

**Changing Arts Education Institutions**

In the Middle Ages Arts Education Institutions were created by the artist who was teaching the pupil. Then a system of “new academies” for the different art disciplines was developed in order to prepare skilled artists. They were supported by the king, by the state. A system that partly still exists and at the same time is questioned .....
During the years there have been changes made by governments. In the universities of the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Norway and the UK departments of arts education and sometimes other branches of universities and institutes of higher education were merged into big institutions. In the UK most arts education institutions that were mainly polytechnics were merged with universities, following the USA system. I can not address all those changes but I would like to give you an example of the system closest to me, the Dutch system. From August 1993 the whole system of higher education in the Netherlands became regulated by one law - the law on higher education and academic research.

Art education in the Netherlands is part of the higher education system, which is state funded. Before 1991 education in fine art and music was structured in 5- and 6-year curricula, but from August 1991 fine art education has been reduced to 4-year courses and from September 1994 music courses too have been reduced to 4 years. On the other hand only for art the government subsidise post-graduate courses (with a maximum length of two years). These post-graduate courses started in September 1995 in the fields of fine art, theatre/dance and film and television. In 1998 post-graduate courses in music will start.

Normally institutes are subsidised according to the number of students. However institutes of art education have their own system. The government and the political parties want to reduce the number of art students - students in fine art, music, dance and theatre. To stimulate the institutes to admit fewer students the financing of courses is based on the following system: the number of new students is fixed per school, based on the admission during three previous years. This is called the 100% standard. Institutes can admit 80% from this 100% standard without being cut in their budget. In fact the subsidy per student rises. So the quality of the courses and of preliminary courses can be raised.

In 1986 the Dutch government decided that institutes with less than 600 students had to merge; if not, the courses would no longer get financial support. At the time there were about 400 institutes of higher education - now there are about 70 (excluding the 13 universities). Most art schools had less than 600 students, so in 1987 the Amsterdam School of the Arts was founded through the merging of five, and later on six, art schools. None of these schools really wanted the merger, but there was no choice. They could have chosen for a merger with non-art schools, but they chose the best solution: to merge with other art schools.

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Systems and institutions will always change, it is up to the directors and staff of the institutions to use the changes creatively and turn them into a positive development. As they say, it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.

**The Importance of Networking**

Besides the existing institutions new, informal ways for co-operation were being developed: networks.

Economic, political and social networks are as old as human history and form the basis of all social structures. Cultural networks are a more visible and more contemporary form of social cohesion. I believe they are an answer to the complex, overwhelming, chaotic, information-saturate societies we live and work in.

European (or International) Cultural networks are an essential instrument for cultural co-operation. Networks transcend borders and cultures, involving co-operation, communication, exchange of information and discussion between thousands of organisations and individuals. Networks often manage to be recognised as advisers and/or partners of both national and European authorities.

The “raison d’être” for a network are its members. The needs are expressed by members and the activities have to be supported and initiated by members. A network has to be flexible, dynamic, innovative and not too bureaucratic. ELIA is such a network, representing all art disciplines with 300 member institutions from 41 countries. The main aims of ELIA are providing information and to defend and lobby for the arts and arts education in society.

**The Artist as Facilitator in the Next Millennium and Research in the Arts and Arts Education**

My believe is that there is not enough attention and respect for the work in process, for the artist as researcher. A painter might stare at an empty canvas for six weeks and paint his

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(her) work of art in one day. Society concludes that the artist needs one day to produce. We know that the artist needs six weeks, six months, years, a lifetime to produce. Research is a necessary process for the artist and for art, both in and outside art education institutions.

Society judges by concrete and immediate results, results in light of financial profits and quantity. How on earth can we explain the artistic and creative process? We need to develop new arguments to defend innovation, identification, questioning, quality, beauty, paradox, dreams, ideas, cultural diversity and awareness, all indispensable qualities generated by means of artistic and creative thinking. It is not easy to defend abstract and non-economic values. On top of that, artistic and creative thinking is considered threatening, even dangerous. The first to be censored and often destroyed in times of political conflict are the works of art, and with them the artist.

We have to formulate arguments, because if we don’t do it nobody will. We must formulate arguments to explain and re-introduce the necessity of art and of artistic and creative thinking. We have to stress the importance of artistic and creative teaching in the education of our children.

We all know that, generally speaking, there is not enough artistic and creative teaching in and outside the schools in our societies. Furthermore I can tell you that the budgets devoted to art in the world have been reduced by 18% during the past 10 years.

I strongly believe that the lobby for larger investments in art in general and artistic and creative education and training in particular will have to be the priority in our activities these coming years. A lobby on a national, European and global level. We need better conditions for art, artists, art education and for a life long education in the arts.

It is our duty to make it understood that the contribution of the artist to society is as important as the contribution of the scientist. It is our duty to defend and encourage the discovery and fulfillment of each person’s talent as a manifestation of a fundamental freedom.
Research in art and arts education is needed in order to identify the role of the artist as facilitator in the third millennium. We have to reflect on the role and responsibility of the artist in our changing society. We are looking at changing career patterns and different needs, a multi-cultural society, interdisciplinary art forms, access to an international society and the development of new technologies, they all have consequences for arts education institutions. The role of the artist is changing, the artist, as a facilitator, has to identify him/herself over and over again.

A considerable expansion of art education institutions in Europe can be seen during the past 15 years. Young people are strongly attracted to artistic disciplines, in spite of the unpredictable career prospects. What do the art education institutions offer their students, how are they tuned in with the changing career patterns?

I believe, with all respect, that art education institutions in Europe in many cases still educate with a 19th century image of the artist in mind. The professional perspective in art education institutions ins in many cases not a realistic one. Reality is that 5-10% of all students that are educated to become a professional artist indeed end up as practitioners. The others find work related to the cultural sector or even in completely different sectors. Artists have very important and useful contributions to make in all fields of society.

It starts with the very young. The children of today that are the artists and audiences, the future politicians and teachers of tomorrow. I would like to stress the importance of the involvement of the artist in the artistic and creative teaching of children and young people. How can we involved artists in this process? Are artists at all interested in being involved? Some artists are lousy teachers, some are brilliant teachers, some discover that they are extremely inspired in their art through teaching. There are several ways of involving artists in the educational process. For instance the involvement of cultural institutions such as museums, concert halls, opera houses and theatres. They should develop structural programmes for children. This is already the case in some European countries, on a regional as well as a national level. Existing examples of good practice should be identified. Also the involvement of theatre companies, orchestras, festivals etc. is required. They should develop structural ways of co-operation with schools to perform for children as well as stimulate and educate their artists to work in schools, in co-operation with teachers, and to pass on their skills. Not skills as teachers but as artists, as experts, an
interaction between artist and teacher. Further examples of good practice can be identified, for instance the National Theatre in London has a very interesting and efficient programme.

Bernard Shaw wrote: “Then came the romantic man, the Artist, with his love songs and his paintings and his poems; and with him I had great delight for many years and some profit; for I cultivated my senses for his sake; and his songs taught me to hear better, his paintings to see better, and his poems to feel more deeply.”

I believe that more attention should be given in art education institutions to the awareness of all different values that artists can contribute to society. The status of the artist and the status of the artist as teacher should be improved, in society as well as in art education institutions. We have the responsibility to educate the artists of tomorrow as well as we can, making creative use of the changes around us. We have to convince our students that we believe in them, that we believe in the artist of tomorrow who will create his/her own face, the artist of tomorrow who will create his/her new identity through art.

To underline the importance of the artist in our lives I would like to conclude with a little and very personal story: it is a story of a six-year old girl living in a provincial town. She played the piano, attended her ballet classes and she lived her little life, until one day, one afternoon, the artist came to her school. The artists asked her to transform herself into a tree, and the six-year old girl did transform herself into a tree, the artist taught her to hear like a tree, the artist taught her to seek like a tree, the artist taught her to feel like a tree. A whole new dimension of hearing, seeing and feeling, a whole new dimension of living was introduced to her. That afternoon had a great influence on my life. Without that artist I probably would not be standing here today.

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Biography

Carla Delfos was born in The Netherlands and graduated from the Theatre school in Amsterdam 1976. She worked as an actress, theatre director and writer until 1988 and was involved in the organisation of international events and director of Foundation EuroTheatre from 1987 until 1989. She worked as a drama teacher in the Theatre school in Amsterdam from 1976 until now. She was a Board member of the Theatre school Amsterdam from 1982 until 1989 and played a role in the establishment of the merge into the Amsterdam School of the Arts. In 1989 she started developing the Founding Conference for the European League of Institutes of the Arts - ELIA. Since the founding of the organisation in 1990 she is Executive Director of ELIA. She was awarded by the French Government and was knighted as “Chevallier dans l’ordre des Arts et des Lettres”. 

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Educational Processes and Communication Strategies for the Development of the Creative Musician within a Conservatoire Environment.

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The world order is being radically transformed. In the last five years alone we have possibly seen more social, economic, and political changes than in any previous five year period in world history. "Music-making" is in a similar state of change as demonstrated by the emergence of a diverse musical culture with a level of interdependence and range of aesthetic and musical attitudes unprecedented in the entire history of Western music.

The Conservatoire faces its own challenges in today's multi-faceted musical world, as it begins to question its traditional mission - the education of young musicians for careers as soloists, chamber musicians, orchestral players and opera singers. Given the rapid pace of developments in the music industry and the relatively small number of positions which exist within these specialist areas, however, it is vital that the Conservatoire broadens its scope to embrace a more extensive range of professional outcomes. If it is to develop an appropriate educational model relevant to contemporary musical practice, it must also re-evaluate its fundamental directions in a way which can support music-making as a dynamic experience, with a sufficient level of energy to engage the community in an active way. Only then can we ensure music remains a creative process of engagement central to people's lives, rather than just becoming another marketable commodity.

Although it is essential that high quality music practice remains at the core of the Conservatoire's ethos, the appropriateness of a solely Western art music-based education model must also be
examined. Re-evaluation of the Conservatoire's directions is also affected by an increasing market demand for studies in contemporary and popular musics, music technology and new media. With decreasing government funding and a higher level of accountability driven by a "user-pay" system, students will be looking for reassurance as to the career prospects that they may expect when they graduate. As a consequence, students will demand more; market demand will tend to determine the educational agenda; and the Conservatoire, if it is to be self-sustaining, will be required to offer a range of educational options which would not have been considered possible five years ago.

If the Conservatoire is not only to keep pace with the developments which are occurring within society, but also sustain itself as a creative community, it should endeavour to provide an artistic and educational environment in which the individual student can explore a range of musical options which cross over traditional stylistic and technical boundaries. With the high level of interconnectedness which is now emerging between the various styles of music-making, the Conservatoire has a responsibility to create a learning environment which can interface with, and respond to, the way music is being made in the community.

Contemporary music-making now incorporates a multitude of musical forms, from Western art music and jazz, to popular music, music theatre, world musics, music technology, music for film, multi-media and various related interdisciplinary idioms. In addition, other fields of professional musical activity, including pedagogy, music therapy, arts management, music production and software design, are all being viewed as serious and alternative professional options by practising musicians. For the Conservatoire to adequately respond to these changes, it must move from its current position of an institution of high specialisation, to that as a musical and educational community which can embrace the 'plurality' of musical approaches as identified by the leading musicologist Leonard B. Meyer in 1967.

... the coming epoch (if indeed, we are not already in it) will be a period of stylistic stasis, a period characterised not only by the linear, cumulative development of a single fundamental style, but by the coexistence of a multiplicity of quite different styles in a fluctuating and dynamic steady state. (Meyer, 149)
The Conservatoire has a major role to play in supporting the education of our future musicians who are destined to operate within a musical world which offers a wide range of musical styles and professional opportunities. Within the Conservatoire environment, the "multiplicity of styles" to which Meyer refers is only now starting to affect its internal practice, which until recently, was entirely focused on Western art music and the maintenance of an elitist model in which other types of musical practice were generally excluded from the curriculum.

The future of our orchestras is also becoming dependent on their ability to interface with the community. This has resulted in both an increase in the performance of popular and light musics for the general public and the establishment of new entrepreneurial, educational and creative projects with community organisations, as a means of ensuring that their financial and audience-base is maintained. One example of a radically changing orchestral context is that of the traditionally conservative Chicago Symphony, which has just launched a $2,000,000 music education facility for young children, in which they create their own personal composition for the orchestra through interactive manipulation of sound samples in real time. Their own work is then played back to them both aurally and visually. This programme is supported by a range of player-directed educational projects in the community. Developments of this kind both acknowledge the need to develop a broader audience base and also to encourage the creative musicians of the future. From the type of change process the Chicago Symphony is now undertaking, it can be seen that even the most traditional musical professions will require a different type of musician if they are to sustain themselves into the long term.

It could be argued that it is not the province of the Conservatoire to address the nature of the changes which are occurring within society, as their primary purpose is to conserve the traditions of the past and to produce leading professionals in specialised areas of musical practice. The majority of students who will graduate in the future are, however, likely to combine their specialist discipline with teaching, or other related forms of artistic activity and income generation. Most will participate in a diverse range of musical activities and be responsible for maintaining their own artistic directions and employment base. Their future as working musicians will depend not only on their musical ability, but also the capacity to create their own music-making contexts and relationships with the community. This will require a high level of musicianship, craft, flexibility, creativity, adaptability and effective interpersonal and leadership skills.
skills. To prepare students for these challenges, the Conservatoire will clearly need to change its own practice.

As the orchestral and more established performance career pathways diminish, professional musicians will need to become multi-skilled. If the Conservatoire is to be able to provide a flexible *learning environment* in which diversity and choice is encouraged, students must be given the opportunity to combine their major practical study on an instrument or voice, with project-based studies in composition or multi-media. Classically trained musicians should be able to cross-over into improvised musics and jazz if they wish, or to create their own music on a range of media, rather than have their instrument as the sole focus of their music-making. This more flexible approach can offer the individual student a broader musical perspective, a greater range of employment possibilities and the opportunity to be part of the global musical developments which are beginning to shape future musical practice.

In this more diverse musical environment, the stylistic differences between various forms will blur and new musics will undoubtedly begin to emerge, in which the music itself is determined by the nature of the relationships between those people making the music. A more eclectic basis for musical practice may then be created, in which aspiring composer/performers will be able to find work in a range of media, from concerts and studio recordings, to CD Rom or interactive music projects delivered over the internet. In turn, the division which still exists between *people-based* and *technologically driven* processes will also tend to dissipate, as the support of individual creativity, rather than the exchange of information, will start to influence the development of musical and educational practice. The success of these initiatives, however, will largely depend on the institution’s capacity to both support and nurture the individual student’s development, whilst still maintaining a strong craft focus.

In order for the musician of the future to be able to establish an appropriate basis from which to move, it will be vital that they not only develop a broad stylistic grounding, but also the ability to compose, arrange, teach and present their music within the community. For this to occur, the freedom must exist for the individual student to move within the curriculum and the institution in a way which can support the development of their own creative voice. Within a more flexible educational model, students can be given the choice to take a broader range of options or to maintain a highly specialised programme of studies. For the individual student to be able
determine their own musical direction, however, it is vital that core aural and theoretical studies be sufficiently flexible to cover a wide range of styles and approaches necessary for their development as a practising musician within a diverse musical environment.

If the individual student is to develop a sense of interconnectedness with the musical community of which they are a part, then their learning process must also be placed in a broader context which recognises that the Conservatoire is part of the wider community. Enriched connections can then be achieved through the creation of a learning environment built around interconnected project-based learning, in which the focus is on the work being produced, rather than the study of discrete and disconnected areas of information, in which the relationship between the areas is rarely considered. With the individual student part of a creative team, the individual roles of composer, performer, producer, recording engineer, arts manager, publicist and project manager combine together to produce the finished work. Students, through these self-directed group projects, can also be given the opportunity to work together in collaborative teams in a range of community projects designed to encourage a better understanding of how the music industry functions.

For the individual student to interact creatively with others, it is essential that they make a connection with their own inner musical voice. In proposing a new form of music-making as “composition”, Jacques Attali offers a highly personalised act with the potential to shift our attention from the external considerations of music as a market driven commodity, to the internal world of self transcendence.

... music could be lived as composition, in other words, in which it would be performed for the musician's own enjoyment, as self-communication, with no other goal than his own pleasure, as something fundamentally outside all communication, as self transcendence, a solitary, egotistical, non commercial act (Attali, 37)

Attali advocates that communication with oneself and the discovery of a personal musical concept are essential before one can engage in meaningful music-making with others. It may be difficult to conceive of how this view can be integrated within an educational model, but in
clearly evolving one's own musical voice and placing the attention on making music as "self-communication", comes the potential to make a more meaningful music with others. By giving one's total energy (at the initial stage of the musical process), to creating a private music with which one is personally satisfied, a stronger foundation can then be built from which the individual can communicate outwards with the community of listeners.

Classically-trained musicians have generally undertaken their training in a closed environment, in which the teacher is perceived as the master, and as a result, the teacher generally defines the musical goals and context within which the student is able to operate. By encouraging an approach which is directed from the basis of self-communication, however, the possibility opens up for the institution to create a learning environment in which the student is given more freedom to explore their own way of making music. The Conservatoire can then become a shared learning context in which teacher and student can explore their own creativity and through exchanging views as creative musicians, contribute to the sense of music-making as an activity which can unfold in the spontaneity of the moment.

In order to support the student in finding their own creative voice, the teacher must become a facilitator of a more significant musical action, in which the student is encouraged to take responsibility for the creation of their own music, from research into repertoire and analysis of appropriate performance practice, to the presentation of a shared musical activity before an audience. Consequently, the one to one sessions between teacher and student should not be viewed in isolation, but rather placed in a larger context, as part of a network of group-based projects, from workshops, performance seminars, student-directed concerts, interactive ensemble sessions, to CD recordings and outreach projects in collaboration with community and industry partners.

Attali, in advocating individual creativity at the core of the musical process, establishes a basis from which the individual musician can evolve their own musical direction. This can be appropriately supported by a curriculum framework in which the students (with the guidance of their teachers), can continue to re-create themselves as musicians during their period at the Conservatoire, through a balanced programme of essential core studies and a range of modular options and other supporting studies. In this type of model, students can be encouraged to take responsibility their own learning. Through these activity-based sessions they can also "compose"
their own music, whether that be as composer, performer or listener or a combination of these roles.

If music-making as a dynamic activity is to be central to the educative process, then music’s function as a ‘sounding’ medium must drive the interconnected relationship which can exist between performer, composer and listener. The concept of music as notation within current Western art music practice, however, has tended to support music’s position as an object of interpretation. The American composer Harry Partch questions this understanding in outlining music’s two fundamental characteristics.

Music, ‘good’ or not ‘good’, has only two ingredients that might be called God - given: the capacity of a body to vibrate and produce sound and the mechanism of the human ear that registers it. These two ingredients can be studied and analysed, but they cannot be changed; they are the comparative constants. (Partch, xvi)

It is only when the body vibrates, as Partch suggests, that a shared performance context can be developed, in which the composer, performer and listener can come together to create an interactive music-making environment in which a “sounding” music and its perception are central to the musical experience. The energy created through these interconnected contributions is heightened not only by the making of the sound (either pre-composed or composed in the moment), but also by those actively involved in listening to the sound in the moment of performance.

The making of the sound therefore involves a network of constantly evolving and interconnected relationships embracing the individual contributions of the composer, performer or listener. In moving from a curriculum based approach centred on music as notation, to an activity-centred approach based on sound, the learning environment can function more as a framework for making and listening to music, than as a pre-determined system, in which there is an unstated assumption that there is a set body of knowledge to be learnt within a specified period of time if one is to become a successful professional musician.
Creative music-making requires not only the nurturing of the individual musician, but also the establishment of an educational environment in which clearly defined management and artistic structures endeavour to establish effective communications amongst staff and students. If the Conservatoire is to become a vital learning community centred on shared music-making, then it is crucial that its primary focus shifts from its obsession with the one-to-one relationship between teacher and student, to the creation of an integrated "ensemble" concept of learning, in which there is a high level of interactivity at all levels of its operations.

This type of shift requires a major commitment from both staff and students to the development of academic and administrative systems which support a high level of student choice and self-directed activity. The master-disciple one way transmission of musical concepts must also be supported by the creation of a learning environment in which teachers and students are committed to the establishment of a musical community in which stated roles and relationships are in a continual process of transition, change and development. As described by Thomas A. Angelo, "Faculty become less transmitters of information and more designers of learning environments and experiences, expert guides, coaches, and practicing master learners". (Angelo, 3) To achieve this level of change, however, the Conservatoire community as a whole must be committed to the development of a collective position that "music is not primarily a thing or a collection of things, but an activity in which we engage." (Small, 52)

In order to maintain a sustainable and creative educational environment, it is vital that the interdependence of the various activities within the Conservatoire be recognised in the design of the curriculum. Further, the work being undertaken within the confines of the institution must also move out into the community. Although the curriculum may provide a framework through which the basic parameters and guidelines can be set, it should be seen not as the driving force, but rather as a trigger for creating the "whole" of what it means to make music with others. This view is in line with that described by Zinker in outlining the type of creativity which needs to be engaged in if a successful group process is to be established.

Creativity is not merely the conception, but the act itself, the fruition of that which is urgent, which demands to be stated. It is not only an expression of the full range of each person's experience and sense of uniqueness, but also a social act - a
sharing with one’s fellow human beings this celebration, this assertion in living a full life. (Zinker, 3)

To establish an interactive musical community, the Conservatoire must commit itself to developing an alternative teaching and learning context, in which the focus shifts from the articulation of the curriculum, to a diverse range of networks incorporating various musical and personal relationships centred on creative music-making. This requires a movement away from a hierarchical model in which the teacher and curriculum is the centre of the educative process, to the establishment of a “web” of connections, in which the student is encouraged to create their own pathway. In this more fluid environment, a dynamic learning pattern can then be established, in which students become teachers, teachers become students, and the curriculum serves not to dictate the musical agenda, but to facilitate the diverse range of musical activities which are central to the establishment of a Conservatoire community.

In acknowledging the relationship between the individual and the group Zinker goes on to say:

A group cannot be accounted for simply by adding together the individuals in it. Every group is a unique system, with its own special character and its own sense of power: a conglomeration of energies exuded by individual members and interrelated in a systematic pattern. It is a whole, an entity, a Gestalt whose nature is greater than the sum of its various parts. (Zinker, 156)

The establishment of an effective communications network which can assist the development of meaningful personal and musical relationship between individual musicians is also critical to the establishment of a creative music-making community. The nature of this network should mirror the type of people-based processes described above. Active music-making, from concerts, workshops, and master classes, through to recordings and the development of multi-media product all contribute to an increased awareness of the Conservatoire in the public domain. In a music-making world in which there is a fine balance between people-based processes and technologically driven advances, an effective music technology environment can be utilised in its appropriate role, as an integral part of the music-making process, not as an alternative. It can then act as a catalyst in the support of performance, production, research, publishing.
documentation and public relations, with the purpose of both facilitating and sharing the Conservatorium's musical output with the wider community. In looking to the future, the advances in interactive technology which are now with us and are in a continual state of evolution, also give us the opportunity to make music with musicians on the other side of the world, through the sharing of musical ideas and teaching concepts with each other in real-time. The global musical community is definitely with us and here to stay.

If making and listening to sound are to be viewed as primary elements in the music education process, the Conservatoire must acknowledge the need to develop an artistic and organisational methodology in which making sound and the establishment of meaningful relationship are at the core. Communication can take place on various levels, both visually and aurally, as influenced by the degree to which all students as "listeners" are engaged in the music-making process in an active sense. Through giving full attention to the perception of sound in every stage of the music-making process, the relationships between the sounds and those involved in the making the sounds can be determined through a natural series of connections, which although they may be difficult to quantify, are centred on the sounds themselves. This position is clearly articulated by Christopher Small in stating that:

Relationships are built at every stage into the musical act, relationships not only between the sounds created, but also between the participants - among the performers, between performers and listeners (assuming that there are listeners), and among the listeners. (Small, 29)

The Conservatoire must be pro-active in its efforts to reach out to the community if it is to adequately address the nature of music-making within contemporary society. As part of this process, it is vital that strategic partnerships and collaborative projects are established with other professional and community arts organisations at local, national and international levels. Large scale changes may then be initiated within an approach to music-making which is centred on shared making and listening to sound of sufficient strength to influence the way music is developing within society.
Through the support of a more diverse and holistic musical action, the Conservatoire not only has the potential to create its own internal creative community, it has the opportunity to provide a musical service of meaning to the external community on a much greater scale. By focussing outwards and encouraging the public to become part of its active music-making process, the public may then be more inclined to contribute a level of moral, financial and political support, essential in sustaining its continued growth into the future. For large-scale change of this type to be achieved, however, any future developments in the Conservatoire’s educational model must acknowledge that each individual student is a creative musician capable of changing the nature of music-making in society.

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Changing Societies And The Arts; The Arts And Societal Change

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"Pictures, if they are to have effect, must have the tremendous intensity of silence (…) the silence before the storm."
L. Tuymans

Static societies, just like static art, are doomed to disappear: rest rusts, as they say. This is extremely obvious, like the statements made by the mythic French figure from the 16th century Monsieur de la Palice, 'water is wet' being a perfect example: a static society with static art is simply a contradiction in terms, a phenomena which does not exist, which is in fact almost nonsense.

In this context there is, nevertheless, an extremely large difference between the way we approach society and the way we approach art. With "we" I'm not referring to those who are sitting here and who are involved in the art world, but instead I'm using it as a collective name for humanity.

If we are all of the opinion that society has to develop continuously further, then we live -I in any case- in the hope that the destiny of humanity (referring here also to the general

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living conditions of mankind) shall improve as a result of this development. Development, therefore, for the benefit of all.

Reactions against the changing society are in my opinion a lot less a result of a resistance to new structures and new technologies than to a resistance to the way in which these new structures and technologies are used: not to the advantage of humanity, but to the advantage of a few.

As positive as the universalisation of the economy may be in itself, it hasn't brought a great deal to humanity a priori up to the present day unless -I'm thinking here of the third world countries- a universalised (and thus an anonymous) exploitation of poverty in place of a local exploitation with a well-known exploiter is considered advantageous. Universalisation means above all "anonymisation", just as it all too often cuts everything down to the same size, shape, and colour, we all know that, making the plank level in a downward direction. In this way Hans Magnus Enzensberger lectured for some time on the dichotomy between "manifestation culture" and "culture" in a nutshell. We experience, as he correctly noticed, an explosion of "manifestation culture", a cultural celebration of presentations, introductions and performances, meetings, speeches and lectures, round table meetings, authors' speeches, conferences and symposiums, dialogues, lecture series, congresses, stage discussions, framework programmes, talk shows and discussion programmes. Politicians support this manifestation culture, being in control of the budget. Always emerging and parading triumphantly, it is because of them that culture is treated so badly, resulting in continually less financial resources being put forward because it is not very flashy or lurid: it remains an unobtrusive happening, a happening where the controller of the budget can not attain any improvement in his or her status. I'm thinking obviously in this regard also of the increasingly diminishing funding for art education.

Discussions involved with changing societies are essentially ideological and are not a discussion of form, so I won't have time to philosophise about politics. Societies will certainly always -whether they may want to or not-be in a state of change in one direction or another. The development of the new technologies can be pushed in either direction, be that for the benefit or the disadvantage of humanity-or at least a large majority of mankind. In this regard I'm thinking of the financial resources for Star Wars as an example, versus
the genetic manipulation of plants which still has developed little economically despite the fact that it is scientifically possible.

Static societies don't exist, however, and have never existed or have only vegetated for a short period. Research has sufficiently demonstrated that the societies that appeared to be static, or were introduced in this way - I'm thinking in this regard about the Middle Ages, for example - were entirely not so: also in those cases there has been continual change and after that still more change, and these are changes which worked to push into the future. On the moment that a society is static, really static, it implodes.

In opposition to this, however, there is the person as an individual who, in whichever way that may be, thinks for a larger part statically: what is finished is mostly always better than what is coming or what will come. De Dutch poet P.C. Bloem says it flowery: A change is always a worsening even if this change is an improvement. One connects him/herself to something safe because every change can bring about a (new) insecurity. Even if they support necessary changes, they still want security and permanence, a static reference framework - we live for such a short time!

This allows us very clearly to witness, for example, the way people treat new technology, both from my generation on the one hand and the young people of today on the other hand: for the latter it is a normal, logical and obvious extension of their daily activities, for us "the pre-PC-generation" it is at the most an object to be used. We don't really know how to 'play' with this equipment. Nevertheless I am of the opinion this lack of true understanding does not suggest that our intellectual capacities could be less worthy. In our developmental process, however, these new technologies have never had a real place. We have learnt to use them from rational reflection. Young people, as far as this is concerned, have neither had rational nor, as far as I see it, even emotional reflection: they use these technologies as useful and, at the same time, familiar, tools.

I am talking about my generation and the generation of my children, although this conflict could equally as well be situated between my generation and the generation of my parents who as children got to know electricity and radio, and as adults learnt to use telephones, cars and aeroplanes, and today see 'the chip' conquer everything... For us something that may seem absolutely obvious, always requires from them a reflexive and necessary
adaptation process. And this process shall repeat itself with each new generation quicker and quicker; what we learn during our youths is at the most just a beginning point, it isn't any longer a basic foundation grammar or a language. During the last thirty years 90% of what we know today has been discovered or developed. Those, therefore, who have gone through the education system twenty or thirty years ago, end up because of this in a sort of a vacuum which clearly forces us into questioning things and into feeling insecure. Static values, therefore, speak for themselves as essential experience. as a form of security.

Because individuals think statically, therefore, they are searching for security. There are lots of different types of security to be found: in morality, in interpersonal relationships, in our relationship to our work - even though they have been mixed together to not just a small degree in the last decades. One security remains over, however - even though it is mostly unconscious - and that is art. Our appreciation of art remains, for a large part, static. This goes with the understanding that the majority of people choose permanent values, which means they choose famous or well-known art and are unwilling to accept new tendencies and new artistic communication forms. In itself this is an absolute misrecognition of the essence of art in itself because as societies evolve, art also evolves. Art is an integral part of society in the sense that it articulates the essence of society in an implicit and tactile way. If it doesn't do that then it becomes static and is in definition of no possible meaning for the society in which it has developed. The art is then merely of anecdotal value, certainly important for the maker of those anecdotes, but supporting ultimately an irrelevant societal discourse. Just by asking one can establish without any doubt that the works of Rembrandt, Rubens, Monet and Van Gogh today are more highly appreciated than the work of Joseph Beuys, Nan Goldin, Damien Hirst or Panamarenko. People can recognise themselves in the static values of classical art, whereas they don't recognise themselves at all in contemporary art. They appear to adopt old fashioned forms of communication in a contemporary context. And it is here that we are presented with a number of contradictory movements:

1. The work of Rubens, Rembrandt, Monet or Pissaro have endured the years because they were embedded in their own time. Rubens' works symbolise the power of Catholicism in a triumphant counter-reformation, Rembrandt is an emanation par excellence of the mercantile 'Golden Century' (which was the 17th century) - the time of triumph for the protestant, North-Dutch United Provinces, whereas Monet...
and his impressionistic friends reacted against the classical and academic art which preceded them, and Van Gogh wanted to give expression in colour to his personal powerlessness. Each of these artists were strong figures of their time, being able to adopt the communication forms of their ages and to give it expression. Communication forms were used, however, which transcended strictly local and hyperpersonal particularism, being forms which can communicate internationally - Rembrandt can be appreciated by an Asian, a European and also a South-American, be that in significantly different ways. Contemporaries of Michelangelo, Vermeer or Monet who were truly accepted and respected artists in their time-and there were even some artists who were more famous than the named artists-were not able to make use of this deeply human and international communication form which reached past the surface deep into the flesh of their age. As a result their work has now been largely forgotten and they have become secondary or even unknown painters.

2. This reflection of their own time period, the reflection of the changing society in their own work, is in essence an individual, lonely process. It is a process which can neither be taught nor imposed, being an organic process.

When the Russian revolution was triumphant in 1917 it was supported by enthusiastic and fantastic artists, including Malevich, Tatlin, Lissitzky and so many others. The strength of these artists was not that they subordinated their artistic media to the demands of the revolution, but just the opposite : they put their own idioms at the disposal of the revolution, or even better they operated parallel to it : the White on White patch of Malevich, de Rosta-windows of Mayakovsky, the Tatlin-towers, and so many more. Not as a manifesto but as a language. For the first and who knows the only time two processes ran together : a political renewal process, and an artistic-semantic process.

When slowly -or rather quickly then slowly- the suffocating bureaucracy expanded its tentacles, the leaders of another art form were presented. A little later in the name of socialistic ideals, the ideologist Jdanov postulated a historically situated, academically and for a larger part hagiographic art form. This would be an absolute art form, one of less value which reflected the 19th century and because of

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this, as positively as it may have been intended (on a social or an educational level), it became empty and worthless. They should, all the same, have known: in 1918 the people's commissioner for culture Lounatcharsky showed that the Tsaristic regime clearly demonstrated itself as being politically a product of the past on the basis of the fact that it had chosen 19th century academic French art and had shown its preference for European interiors of the petit bourgeoisie: no contemporary art but tasteless remakes of bygone tastes and values. For him it was clear: societal change and aesthetic change were one. New communication forms together. The bolshevisation from the middle of the twenties had, however, developed no new artistic languages: in order to confirm and justify itself, echoes of a bygone era were necessary, values which were familiar. It was not accidental, because they were also grasping politically backwards ipso facto towards those values.

3. The Flemish painter Luc Tuymans said recently, according to my opinion correctly, that we are evolving from a society in which the rarest was the most valuable to a society in which the most accessible is the most desired. He brands this as being something horrible and situates the role of the contemporary artist in this context. Not as a spear towards the future but as a sort of anachronism. For him, art is a form of time stagnation as related to the image, or to what we perceive. I think personally, however, that it can also run parallel. I'm thinking here not only of the Italian and Russian futurists, or of Cubism which arose on the crossroads between scientific discoveries and industrial developments, but also of the work of Nan Goldin, Damien Hirst or that of Forced Entertainment. Testimonies of our time and moments of memory at the same time.

4. In society both undercurrents and overcurrents develop which run against one another. The laws of the dialectic postulate that these currents alternate themselves. What was once the overcurrent becomes weakened and is replaced by the undercurrent which then moves to the surface, and then after it has been dominant for awhile it starts to sink and gradually becomes subversive again: a continuous repeating cycle. This allegory can also be extended to the role of art in contemporary society where we have on the one hand the rationality which the economy has traditionally used as its basis, and the irrationality which emerges from much contemporary art, reacting against the rigidity of the economy. We
have, for example, Viviane Forrester who in her work "The terror of the economy" moves protestingly against the current economic social order and postulates the essential value of art as being "against the stupidity" and even adds that "cleverness and art can be even stronger than violence." Strikingly, it can be noticed in today's hectic society that the traditionally rational economic world is realising how important the institution of the artist actually is: we have pure bred managers such as Gary Hamel of the London Business School who are of the opinion that in order to succeed in the industrial world, one has to have the institution of the artist, and at the same time an enormously popular "emotional intelligence," a new notion which comes from the same tendency. The 'irrational' and traditionally subversive nature of contemporary art is now being appreciated in a new light, floating to the surface if we apply our analogy. This means to be critical, flexible, creative, polyvalent is the only way to succeed in the contemporary economic field. Critical, creative, flexible and polyvalent and thus questioning society and allowing it to move. To develop continually further.

In order to end as simply as I have begun, I can only conclude that society is a continually changing given and that art per definition is also like this. Thanks to this continually changing evolution there is -or at least there has to be- a correlation between the two. In view of the critical stimulation of art, it shall always remain, however, in the undercurrent or countercurrent. It shall always be a form of social conscience. Once it has been officialized and made sacred, it loses its stimulatory function, its function of being a form of social conscience, and also its questioning role.
Optik Performance Phenomenology

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Demonstration

The development of performance from POSITION VELOCITY CONSCIOUSNESS (suspending all assumptions about existence and why things happen).

Key Words

acceptance  complexity  dynamic  impulse  resolution  time  
action  concentration  effort  independent  response  timing  
agent  constant  emergence  instantaneous  right  totality  
alone  consequence  empty  intensity  rules  transition  
alignment  contact  energy  intuition  scale  uncertainty  
balance  continuum  engagement  left  sensitivity  universal  
behind  coordination  essence  line  singularity  unpredictability  
 bilateral  corporal  event  pattern  space  vastness  
body  cycle  exploration  perception  spontaneous  vulnerable  
centre  decision  facing  proposition  stillness  waiting  
chaos  development  field  proprioception  stimulus  wanting  
change  direction  flow  randomness  structure  wave

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Performance Witness

I am able to make very precise observations, look with a new intensity at the relationship between the performers and the spectators.

Optik's performing develops a mood of sensitivity which lets me listen, watch, respond to private, to public sensations. The performers raised for me the whole questions of what makes a 'successful' piece of theatre. We all have the capacity to experience worlds of feeling and possibilities, of potential. We often marginalise these, block our own selves, 'sectarianise' areas of ourselves in order to control and manipulate. Tonight, Optik offered us a theatre which opens up the 'no go' areas, which entertains, which heals.

The movements are not based on virtuoso technical 'gimmicks'. They are at once elementary and deeply innocent: an opening up of the performer as him/herself and as link to the spectator's self, too. The sequence of movements is impossible to predict, and can come at an extraordinary pace. A performer moves here and there in the space. Stands runs and then stands again. Breathes, lies down. The performers sometimes do this very close to one another, or very close to a spectator, sometimes 'isolated'. Suddenly one of them goes diagonally across the path of the others. A 'hindrance' is created, and with it a performance koan of contact/non contact. The communication is intense, inexplicable. Buried in such moments is the continuous 'flow' or pulse of the performance. This deep underground rhythmic score surfaces as shattered silences, as long held sequences of repeated actions, as sound.

Each spectator seems to perceive fragments of story in some of these moments. But as soon as they are recognised (and sometimes even before then) the moment has passed, the stage dissolves. There is no story, no meaning.

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This performance has left me awash with impulses, sensations. I have spent an hour in the company of a large number of people, acutely aware of watching and being watched, of bodies sitting, moving. It is a strange and peculiarly exhilarating experience. Simple things fill your mind: how people walk toward one another, how they meet, have contact, leave one another. Postures, movements become startlingly clear.

I am left with a feeling that is absolutely precise yet impossible to determine exactly. I settle finally for this: I have been watching what people are.

_A letter handed to the company by a spectator, ES, after a performance in Germany._
_Translated from the original German._

How does it feel when the group have come together at the other end of the space leaving you completely isolated and alone? I felt so alone the tears just flowed. I could not control that feeling. Not that I broke down and cried because I was still in control of myself and my body. Yet there was no doubt that the vast space between us had brought about a very strong emotion within me.

_Written by performer LB after a performance in the Czech Republic._

I just had this idea that I was coming down this line and that we three performers were just going to be kicked off as it were... into the universe and completely... just never come together. And that would be a failure. And I was desperate to... Because I remember, we ran round the space before, really strong. And we were so together. It was a real buzz. And suddenly... it was shit... where are they? And I was desperate to get back to them and I thought I never would. And then I just walked the other way. And I thought oh, that doesn’t matter... that doesn’t matter...

_Transcript of performer AW-B talking at the Optik Live Art Performance Symposium London._

Berlin. Spring. A performance at Tacheles. I am observing a spectator on the opposite side of a space, some seats down from me. She is agitated, moving in her seat. Looking from side to side quickly and back to the something in the space that is occupying her
whole attention. She gets up and places her hands on the shoulders of a performer who is running on the spot. She pushes down. She stops the running. As her hands leave, the performer waits. She resumes her seat. The performer resumes running on the spot - the impulse has re-surfaced, not gone away. The spectator is caught now. She must give up or continue. Everyone waits. She decides to continue. She returns to the performer. A hand on each shoulder. The performer is tall. She has to reach up. She presses down. The performer accepts the contact. This gives rise to an unexpected frisson of intimacy which catches her and us by surprise. The performer stops running. She releases but stands close, waiting. The performer waits. They wait together. Her head is lowered, looking at his feet. They are about to move again, shuffling and squeaking in one shoe for some reason. For the spectator this squeak has become the most irritable sound in the universe. It threatens to destroy her sense of reality, of when and where things should happen. She has to bring it and the person responsible, the performer, under control. A split second before the feet move again she has crouched down, grasped the shoes, and is untying the laces. She then ties them together again, locking the shoes together. A complete stranger, another spectator, races to the woman almost before she has time to stand up. He picks her up off the floor and carries her unceremoniously away. She is taken completely by surprise. She is yelling. The performer is trying to run forwards this time and is falling down at each attempt. Another spectator comes to untie the laces. I watch as people go back to their seats. I notice that the three performers are moving together in a line slowly down the space toward the far wall.

*Written by Barry Edwards after Optik's season at Tacheles Berlin*

**Performance Analysis**

**Rules / Neutrality**

As you expressed it, there are no 'rules' laid down in advance of actional possibilities. Workshop, rehearsal, performance: the same. Consider that in most performance that actional options only arise in the development of the work, ie in the rehearsal process. In the moment of performance the work is not being discovered, but re-enacted. If you like there is one big rule governing the overall behaviour system of the performers (the rule of

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performance itself), mediated by lots of smaller ones (ie what has been learnt in the
rehearsal process and has to be repeated). There is an illusion of variety since we are not
looking at the performer’s choices at that moment but at the selected repertoire developed
in rehearsal. Selection becomes the key factor. Now in an Optik performance selection is
not a factor since the performer is not being asked to present actional sequences to
spectators. There is therefore nothing to select. The performer is however constrained in
what they do by a constant barrage of impulse information which they have to fine tune
both to receive and to respond to. They have a choice with regard to their responses but
only in so far as they feel they are determined or not determined by the information they are
being subject to.

In an Optik performance the performer is in a ceaselessly changing stimulus environment,
and has to concentrate very hard to explore it fully. So it would not be strictly accurate to
say that rest and motion are ‘unpremeditated’. The shift from one state to another is not
planned in advance, and is not initiated to produce an external effect. But each performer
can ‘know’ which state they are in at any one time (rather than losing themselves, they find
themselves more acutely), and can use this knowledge, and the capability they have to
change their state, in order to explore, fine tune, respond to impulse fields.

Games / Boundaries / Grammar

In that there is a game, it is the game of being human. Performance itself as a game is too
limiting. So performing cannot limit itself to its own boundaries - as you rightly suggest.
The useful thing about the notion of boundary is the way it creates inside and outside
fields. If you then, as is attempted in Optik work, explore the notion of fractal boundary,
you begin to understand the complexity of the whole affair. It is possible to feel oneself, as
a performer, ‘inside’ the performance with every-thing/one ‘outside’, but this can shift to a
position of being ‘outside’ while every-thing/one is ‘inside’. I use the word ‘feel’ since I
think that understanding of this sort cannot be disassociated from emotion. Therefore the
analogy with language and grammar is not appropriate since language always stands
‘outside’ the phenomenon it is describing, and is linked to reflectivity, to reasoning. There
is no Optik ‘grammar’ of movement, since none of the movement is pre-scribed. There is
though a systematic attempt to work with the released weight of the body, and without

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uncontrolled tension. But this is precisely because those 'knots' of tension and habit are little 'grammars' of individual body movement, encrusted 'statements' of expressivity. It is when these are removed (as far as is possible) and the performer starts to work that the 'individual differences' that you describe start to glare out.

**Barba / Belief / Form**

I have trained for a short period with Eugenio Barba, and initially was particularly influenced by his frame by frame breakdown of rehearsal/training actional sequences in order to collage performance sequences. I sometimes think that what I am doing is taking Barba's frame (his notion of smallest actional sequence) and going beyond that to a 'quantum' field where frame ('particle') also exists as constant dynamic flow ('wave'). As a wave function of course, constantly emerging actional possibilities cannot be re-created since once fixed they 'revert' to non-dynamic actional moments, 'frozen' (Barba's term) in time.

The problem for me with Barba's term pre-expressive is that it creates the need to invent the expressive. Barba has an end point in view - his performance. His work on biomechanics is therefore teleological - its purpose is to produce performance. I have no such purpose, therefore there can be no 'pre' or 'post' state, indeed no 'expressive' state at all. So there is a question of course which is what do you do, or how do you start?

The key here is the attempt to explore non-purpose driven movement/action. Notions of form and content are the casualties in this experiment, since one is ceaselessly flowing into the other. As far as I am concerned there is no content, no form, *in advance*, but they seem to emerge nevertheless, in performance. They are rarely discussed in rehearsal.

**Stillness / Movement**

I have done a lot of work on this in the training process. In practice the performers are encouraged to see no difference between the two. This can be dangerous, lethal even, as
when a stillness of ten minutes or so can happen (as at Union Chapel). This has to be taken as just one of the hazards of the enterprise - if it is a hazard at all. I do not use intention-led movement. This has strange consequences which can be explored by the performer. For example, the performer can be walking toward a wall (observer's aspect) but engaging the feeling of stillness. This will produce the sensation of the wall moving toward the performer (performer's aspect). This becomes even more critical in respect of other performers/spectators, where it can be reversed. A performer is walking toward another performer (observer's aspect). The 'still' performer engages the feeling of movement (but remains 'still') thus producing the feeling that they are moving towards the other performer (who is actually moving). This shifting of perception parameters is constant, and becomes just one of the impulse generated elements of information that the performer has to deal with.

Openness / Possibilities / Objects

Performers, spectators are not objects, they are humans. The range of potential each has can be restricted by others, both physically and somehow 'conceptually'. In the Union Chapel performance a spectator dropped her sheet of paper (the programme) and it floated aero-dynamically onto the floor in front of her, but far enough away from her seat to be 'out of bounds' in some way. She lowered herself in her seat so that her foot could reach out to get it but it was too far. So she moved the other way, curling up and extending her arm so that her hand could grab the paper and instantly recoil. This action in itself, as this description implies, produced far more interest than a deliberate, relaxed standing up walking forward, picking up would have done.

So without question there are constraints and possibilities opened up during the performance, for everyone there. The spectator (like the performer) can spend a long time feeling/dealing with the impulse to enter a space (like the woman with her programme) or to leave the space completely. And many points in between. What seems to happen is that people feel the impulse information physically, and this means they must 'have' the impulse (no difference between performer and spectator here). It does not mean that they must 'action' the impulse, but they cannot just wish it away either.
Space / Lines

Space is what lies in between (people / objects). According to some perception scientists we do not look at the matter 'filling' the space, but at the 'gaps' in between. If this is the case it has many implications. It must be that at the very least we are matching occupied and unoccupied space in order to perceive. What happens when the performer is occupying both fields (potentially)? There is no certainty for a spectator that the performer is going to occupy that area and not that one. The boundary between filled space and unoccupied space becomes fluid. The uncertainty, or fluidity between filled and gap is mediated by time, which is also relativised (and so linked to space). There is no prohibition as far as going anywhere is concerned. In Optik there is not an obsession with 'pathways' or some such notion (though a spectator may develop such an obsession - even though it will be apparent it is a pathway to no-where/everywhere). The performer is not making a selection.

The question of straight lines is very puzzling. In rehearsal I do talk about moving forward, facing forward, and about the bilateral symmetry body (six co-ordinates: in front/behind, right/left, below/above). The option seems to be: circles or lines. Of course the line is a fiction. It is in fact a part of a (very large) circle (around the globe). But for the performer who impulses forward, and faces forward the direction will always be straight ahead. What we perceive as straight lines is actually an accident. Or is it? The visual cortex of the brain has specialist cells that deal with orientation in space, including straight lines. These cells respond to alignment and to orientation. Certain cells also respond specifically to lines of orientation in motion, while other cells specialise in movement away and movement towards. In the development process cells also have a sense of symmetry built into their internal chemistry.

The performer is not making a selection: therefore to move off the line of forward movement deliberately would invoke an infinity of choice (one degree? 31 degrees? etc).
Centre / Consciousness

Each performer is asked to work with themselves at the centre. I think this goes beyond the subjectivity of each individual. Going back to the performer consciousness of inside and outside, the notion of centre allows these boundaries themselves to become fluid. We could be moving from a notion of collective outside (the traditional notion of audience and single meaning), through a transitional notion of individual outsides (your proposition) and towards a notion of collective inside. In this condition the performance is not 'composed and created' by individuals (the individual outside) but the whole notion of an outside performance disappears to be replaced by the currents and signals of impulse recognition and response. What does this 'look' like: can it be seen? Do we make it up via some process of eidetic intuition? Or is what we see nothing to do with this at all? We don't yet know.

A reply by Barry Edwards to a letter from a workshop training participant, with questions concerning rules, boundaries and other things.

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Optik Video Archive
Optik Video Archive currently comprises 19 videos filmed and edited by Terence Tieman covering the company’s international and national performance programme from Krakow Poland in November 1993 through to the latest performances at the Differenti Sensazioni Festival in Biella Italy in July 1997. It is housed at Brunel University Library Uxbridge UK

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Biography

Barry Edwards is director of the performance group Optik. He researches contemporary performance at Brunel University London UK where he is Reader in Drama.

In 1995-6 he directed the Arts Council of England funded one year training initiative in live art performance for professionals from around the world. In the past three years Barry Edwards has also given demonstrations and lectures on his work internationally in Germany, Italy, Bulgaria and elsewhere. He has directed special commissions for the Encounter 97 Festival, Czech Republic in 1997, for the Arena Festival Germany in 1996 and for Theatermerz Austria in 1994.

Optik gave its first performance in the early eighties. In 1991 Edwards embarked on the current cycle of performance work which he regards as both professional practice and experimental research. Since 1992 Optik has concentrated on international touring, which to date has taken the company to many venues and sites in Central and Eastern Europe and to North Africa.
East Meets West Meets North Meets South; Is There A Global Look To Contemporary Art?

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When I was a child, my mother said to me, "If you become a soldier you'll be a general. If you become a monk you'll end up as the Pope." Instead I became a painter and wound up as Picasso. From Francoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, Life With Picasso [1964], pt. 1

When Leonardo created what is considered to be the most famous painting in the world, his portrait of the Mona Lisa, I don't think he was consciously concerned with notions of self expression or drawing attention to social constructions of his identity. Although there have been interpretations of his famous painting of an unknown woman that would lead us to believe that through this portrait, Leonardo was, albeit inadvertently, responding to some basic questions about his origins. However, our sense of Leonardo as a person, or persona, is not necessarily gleaned through the viewing of this signature painting. What we do recognize as "Leonardo" in this work is the technique, and painting methods, employed in such a way that creates a style of painting that we associate with him. It is through our recognition of his personal style that we can thus differentiate Leonardo's work from that of Raphael, Michelangelo, or Titian and place Leonardo in a specific historic time and place: Renaissance Italy.
Almost 500 years later, through an appropriation of Leonardo's universally recognized portrait, the English artist Sadie Lee has created an image that at first glance makes us laugh, as she alters, through a mere change of clothes and shreared hair, the sexual identity of Leonardo's mysterious seated woman to one of a con-temporary and popular stereotype of a "butch" lesbian. Through her alteration, Ms. Lee has also encountered us with the cultural myths and gossip about Leonardo's reputed homosexuality and his search for his unknown mother.

What is interesting about Ms. Lee's use of the Mona Lisa to reinforce a visual stereotype of a lesbian identity; is how this reconstructed image confirms our understanding of current art practices related to identity, as it simultaneously replaces and erases Leonardo's considered and developed artistic style. Sadie Lee's altered portrait also reminds us of the power and role visual representation plays in the cultural constructs of ourselves and another.

In his time, Leonardo would not have directly addressed, through his work his sexual identity. Autobiographical information, although frequently included in Renaissance paintings through the inclusion of self portraits was not the primary subject matter of Renaissance art. Questions of the artists' sexual identity was not popular Renaissance iconography. This was information that was kept private; perhaps whispered about as gossip by those who worked with or knew the artist but it certainly was not a subject that Leonardo or other Renaissance artists called direct attention to in their work. Leonardo's identity as an artist was achieved through his strivings to recreate what he saw in nature. It was significant to him to make his paintings look as real as possible - to mimic the appearances of the natural world on canvas. The fact that he developed a form of working, a signature style, that we can recognize as his, was probably not the impetus for making the kinds of paintings he did but a result of his intense desires to recreate the world as he saw it and his experiments with chiaroscuro techniques.

During the Renaissance, with the interface of individual artistic style with ideas of beauty, the concept of originality, and especially artistic originality as represented with work done by the artists' hand, became valued in art. In western culture the individual style obtained or created by the artist came to signal authenticity and was thus evocative of an artistic and personal freedom. The artist who had discovered his or her own style, or who was able to

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create work that was distinctly and uniquely his or hers, was believed to have reached a place of ultimate success. This level of artistic achievement could also be seen as a form of self discovery. Artists could, through their work succeed in gaining access to the core of their being. Their work becoming an expression of uniqueness, originality, one of a kind.

Ideas of genius, and its association with certain practitioners of art, has had a pervasive and powerful influence on art and artists for several hundred years. Although genius, as a concept, is thought of as having evolved foremost in western culture, there were similar systems of recognition for outstanding artistic merit established in Eastern, near Eastern and African cultures.

The word genius when applied to artists indicates exceptional talent, originality and intellectual capacity. It also summons up deep rooted beliefs of natural ability. A gift one is born with, artistic genius isn't something you can strive for or work towards achieving. Part of the mythology about genius however, is that it is something the artist could discover and unearth about him or herself in the course of his hard work. A notable something that can only be made manifest through the individual artist. Notions of artistic genius, closely intertwined with our understanding of artistic originality, thus influence our thinking about the artist as a person in search of his or her authentic and true self. What began in the Renaissance as placing value on the originality of an artist's work, work that presented itself as a product made by the artist's hand, unfolded over time into some very strong connections between the development of an individual style/mark, genius and an expressed artistic authenticity.

Contemporary artists who, like Sadie Lee, directly address considerations of personal and sexual identity, frequently create work that functions to refute and debunk social stereotypes, while concurrently pursuing visual pretexts of self affirmation. Their work is more about the means of creation, utilizing already available visual codes, than the evolution of a signature style based on unique form or marks.

Artists working in the 1990's amidst issues of identity frequently are not interested in making work that promotes the growth of their artistic identity based on an identifiable, consistent and self consciously considered style. Instead these artists use media and materials that usually negate or contradict the presence of the artists' hand. In the late 20th
century the quest by artists for authenticity continues. It just doesn't look like the old
search. The emphasis has shifted from concerns of creating new forms and techniques, to
one of using of the communicative power of already existing visual signs and language.

These artists attempt to make work that reflects, subverts, and exposes, our socially and
media constructed identities. Identities that have become through mass culture uniform and
standardized representations. It is through the stereotyping process, where boundaries of
visual language and forms, which once helped to establish diverse cultural and individual
identities, have become eroded and trivialized: making precarious any artistic and
personal negotiation in a quest for authentic expressions and experience.

In the United States a lot of attention has been focused upon artists that have worked with
issues pertaining to our constructed, imaginary and real identities. The work of these artists
has been characterized and categorized as "Identity Politics". A characterization that is in
itself political considering that many of the artists working with these issues are considered
to be racial, sexual and ethnic minorities. In the process of making images that would best
address their social, economic and artistic positions in mainstream culture, these artists
have used visual information from pop culture, literature and high art that calls attention to
and confronts the popular stereotypes contributing to their minority status. Many of these
artists however have been engaged in identity related work for quite some time prior to the
90's.

Robert Colescott, The United States representative at the 1997 Venice Biennale is an artist
who has explored issues pertaining to race and stereotypes for over 25 years. His work
has a distinctive and consistent style. Colescott's way of working has been purpos-fully
cultivated from cartoon like images stereotyping African Americans. These unflattering
characterizations were popular in American culture for most of the 20th century. Colescott
ironically paints the stereotype confronting his audience with the knowledge of how he and
other people have been defined. His appropriation and subsequent ownership of the
stereotype reverts its' power back into his hands.

Adrian Piper is an artist who teaches philosophy at Harvard University and has also been
exploring identity issues through her work for the past three decades. Piper, whose racial
background is African and Caucasian, utilizes performance, street encounters and video installations to confront her audience with questions regarding their personal fears and assumptions about her mixed racial background. Most recently, Piper has confronted us, in our liberally viewed art institutions, about our fears of groups of African American men.

John Coplans using photographs of his own body, presents us with a different view of the white male, in a play with gender roles and body fantasies. The fact that his body is one of a middle aged and aging man, photographed naked, without a face, creates a caustic energy to his work, allowing it to resonate within a context of representations of anonymous and objectified others.

Joyce Scott, is another American artist, who uses a different visual strategy, to address the interface of social status, personal connection and the myth of religious history in racial relationships. The fact that she makes small scale sculptures out of beads, a material that has a direct and symbolic correlation to her African roots, becomes a strong artistic political statement. The size and material of Scotts' sculptures, while addressing our attention to fetish figures and voodoo dolls used in African daily life and rituals, are in direct opposition to the size and materials used to make 'monumental western art'.

The artist Kirk Wang, a recent immigrant from Shanghai, China, currently teaches art and western humanities at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida. Kirks' most recent work shown at the Center for Art in St Petersburg, was an installation, elaborately constructed to move the viewer through sequential formative experiences and decades of the artists' life. Kirks' recent paintings combine images that represent traditional Chinese and Western Art as well as forms and signs that are indicative of modern and contemporary art influences.

Nicole Awai is an artist from the Caribbean Island of Trinidad who is currently living in Tampa and New York. Nicole, whose ancestry is Chinese and African, makes art using a variety of forms and media to address the effects tourism has on the natural environment of the islands in the Caribbean. The role tourism plays, in a continuing colonization, of Caribbean peoples is another theme in Nicole's work. Nicole has also explored, through her work, the influence of African and Caribbean art and traditions in American culture and visual language.
The work of Florida photographer Dominic Martorelli explores his own voyeuristic artistic identity, in relationship to his desires to make photographs of sexually alluring women. Through these photographic explorations, which involved turning the lens of the camera on his own naked body, he began to understand how his views of women have been molded in part, by the time and culture within which he lives, as well as his religious indoctrination and education. Dominic, a recent graduate of the M.F.A. program at the University of South Florida claims that for himself making art is a means of self discovery. He sees no difference between making art and self understanding.

Claudia Leon, an Artist from Columbia, South America has employed Colombian folk imagery and language in her ceramic constructions, wood carvings and drawings. Now living in Tampa, Florida, what Claudia misses most about her country in South America is the music and folk culture in her country that is attributable to the indigenous peoples of Columbia. As a South American, living in the United States, it is Colombian folk culture and the people who have created it, that Claudia claims as the source of her national identity.

Orlan is a performance artist from France, who in her collaborations with a team of plastic surgeons, has recreated her own visual identity to match the traditional ideals of feminine beauty as exemplified by Leonardo's Mona Lisa, Botticelli's Venus and Ingres' Odalisque. Here we see a portrait of her as Frankenstein's Bride, taken after the completion of her facial transformations. Is this an instance of an artist literally creating a fictional identity or is it self creation? Where is Orlan's authentic self?

Guillermo Gomez-Pena and Roberto Sifuentes are Mexican performance artists whose work encompasses viewer participation in colorful and flamboyant reenactments of the rituals of confession. Through their work Gomez-Pena and Sifuentes address economic and political relationships between Mexico and the United States, that foster the fears Americans exhibit towards Mexicans.

I Wayan Bendi has chosen to use a traditional Balinese folk style to create a painting that depicts the colonization of Bali under Dutch rule. Bendi's work is an example of the work of many Indonesian artists, trying to redefine their cultural direction after long years of
colonization, that resulted in the subservience and disempower-ment of their indigenous forms and visual traditions.

There are many more examples that could be used to illustrate the diverse visual adaptations used by artists, from around the globe, in articulating their personal and artistic identities. It is interesting to speculate about the influence this work has had in terms of dissolving the visual boundaries that in times past provided us with frames of cultural difference and reference. There are many instances for example, whereby contemporary art being produced in Africa is not distinguishable from work currently created in Japan, Mexico or the United States. Our cross-cultural fertilizations and new technologies have worked to enlarge and enrich our visual languages but they have also worked to create a form of global visual homogenization. What are artists to do in the face of all of this? Perhaps the identity politics of the 1990's have served to offer us the possibility, that the only authentic identity is the one that is self-invented; but not as a reaction to external impositions.
Biography

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Being Artaud(ian): Playing on the edge

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Co-Presenter: David Coslett

On the 13th of January 1947 Antonin Artaud gave a solo performance of his own work at the Théâtre de Vieux-Columbier, Paris, just six months after release from an eight year incarceration in various lunatic asylums. Amongst his many contemporaries, André Breton, the leader of the Surrealists, tried to discourage him, fearful of the fragility of his health and sure that he was being exploited. His younger admirers, aware of his last controversial lecture at the Sorbonne in 1933, where he somatically elaborated his “Theatre and the Plague” te Pxt, encouraged him to do the presentation. Having revived his ideas on the ‘theatre of cruelty’ he was determined to go ahead. According to one biographer no definitive account of this important evening exists, though Artaud’s transcript has now been published in Vol 26 of his complete works. The basic structure of the evening can be gleaned from the various accounts, however the details is conflicting. It is the general performance and not the detail or the content I wish to evoke.

The event was entitled ‘Histoire vécu par Artaud - Mômo’ (The Story Lived by Artaud the Idiot). The publicity went on to read, “Tête à tête par Antonin Artaud, avec 3 poèmes déclamés par L’auteur” (Alone together with Artaud, with 3 poems declaimed by the author). Artaud’s celebrity and repute were confirmed by accounts that all 600 seats in the theatre were occupied and many were turned away at the door. The audience was constituted mainly of young people though there was an array of friends, from every period in his life - André Gide, Roger Blin, Albert Camus, Georges Braque, Jean-Louis Barrault, Arthur Adamov and others. Breton, apparently, positioned himself at the back of the auditorium waiting for a disaster. It was a highly charged evening, the atmosphere replete with expectation. At 9 p.m. Artaud entered the
stage, as one commentator recalled, 'his emaciated and haggard features reminiscent of Baudelaire and Edgar Allen Poe. His hands hovered above his face like two birds of prey, ceaselessly clawing at it. When he started to chant his beautiful, but barely audible poems in his hoarse voice choked by sobs and tragic stutterings, we felt ourselves lured into that danger zone, as if we were reflections of that black sun, caught up in the all-devouring combustion of a body consumed by spiritual fire.'

At first there was heckling but this was silenced by the 'magisterial gravity' of his presence. The first hour was given over to a declamation of recent poems, complete with screams, cries and violent gestures. These were 'The Return of Artaud, the Mômo, Centre-Mother and Boss-Pussy and Indian Culture'. The content of these works seems to centre around the denial of language, body and origin, ideas which recur though all his work, and which focused the evening. At the end of this section it is reported that André Gide leapt on the stage and embraced him. Artaud's opening was generally well received.

After a short break he returned with a pile of papers and began to deliver the prepared text of his lecture which was to be an account of his own life. Again according to Barber: 'It (the lecture) was concerned particularly with the denial of death which Artaud was formulating at this time. For Artaud death was always an invented state, imposed by society so that the inert body would become vulnerable raw material for malicious robberies and attacks as it enters a state of limbo, such as he claimed to have experienced during electroshock coma (50 times without anaesthetic) at Rodez asylum'.

He asserted that 'with a strong enough will to live, and sufficient resistance to social compromise, an independent human body could live for ever powered by anger'. Anger was certainly part of his delivery through this two hour onslaught on the audience. Suddenly, he dropped all his papers and could not find his place. From all the reports he stood in a frighteningly long silence rooted to the spot. When he eventually resumed he abandoning his notes and went into a fragmented and tormented improvisation, full of screams, scatological exclamations and tortured gestures, condemning his awful treatment in Rodez. He openly denounced Dr Gaston Ferdière by name, blaming him for all his suffering there. Interspersed
within this invective were fragmented accounts of his experiences in Mexico and Ireland and how through black magic he had been bewitched.

At this point he appealed to the now dumbfounded and incredulous audience, 'I put myself in your place, and see very well that what I am saying isn't interesting at all, it's still theatre. What can I do to be truly sincere?' He tore up his lecture notes and before his exit he read another poem from Artaud the Mômo which according to Schumacher concluded with

All the exercises of yoga
are not worth the desquamations
of the cunt of a dead dyke
when the maid who possesses it
pisses with her udder split
to get through the syphilis.

The accounts of how it ended again seem to conflict. One says he carried on until he was hoarse, another that he just walked off, and another that Gide escorted him off screaming. Whatever happened it was for Artaud another failure; again he could not break the barrier he perceived between theatre and life. However, all of his failures according to Susan Sontag's perceptive comments were, 'constituent parts of the authority of his ideas'

For all who saw this event it was an affective experience personifying Artaud's ideas about theatre and the plague, '.... like the plague it is a revelation urging forward the exteriorisation of a latent undercurrent of cruelty, through which all the perversity of which the mind is capable, whether in a person or a nation, becomes localised'. All were left shocked and transfixed, rooted to their seats in stunned disbelief. Some of the words used to describe the event were - unforgettable - haunting - atrocious - pitiable - painful - frightening - revolting - unbearable.

As for Artaud, resilient to the last, he insists that did not lose control, and that it was all planned: 'as for the improvised words, what I had to say was in my silences, not in my words. If I did not say what I had come to say it is because having arrived at the actual point, I renounced it, and because after the poems, it appeared to me that what had to be said could not
be said in words’ Breton however accused him of merely presenting an histrionic, exhibitionist spectacle, proving he was still just a man of the theatre Artaud angrily replied,

So yes, I appeared on the stage, once again, for the LAST TIME, at the Vieux-Columbier theatre, but with the visible intention of exploding its framework from inside, and I do not believe the spectacle of a man who wails and yells fury to the point of vomiting his intestines is a very theatrical spectacle .....I abandoned the stage because I realised the fact that the only language which I could have with the audience was to bring bombs out of my pockets and throw them in the audience’s face with a blatant gesture of aggression .... and blows are the only language in which I feel capable of speaking.

For Artaud this performance revived all the conflicting concepts embodied within his theatre of cruelty - the mind/ body dualism; representation and authenticity, language and words etc.

What he realised was that ‘this unique experience with language and the languages of theatre - this boundary experience of subject - cannot be translated or reduced to a theatre aesthetic. In his exposure during the Vieux Columbier performance he attempted to ‘make the causes of suffering audible through the reality of that suffering’. Artaud was, without a doubt, a man of the edge, for what people saw in the Vieux-Columbier performance was a madman, recently released from an asylum. A physical wreck of a person caught in his own persecuting delusions and disintegrating in a cascade of scatological, vindictive and blasphemous invective - a classic case. Artaud though had been on the edge all his life as a writer, poet, surrealist, actor, director and theorist. His small book of essays entitled The Theatre and Its Double is responsible for changing the whole of Western theatre and is still used as a boundary text. Sontag wrote in 1973: ‘....all recent serious theatre in Western Europe and America can be divided into two periods -before Artaud and after Artaud.’ And that is still true today.

‘Edge’ in the context of Artaudian theatre therefore implies danger, boundary, liminality, the space between opposites. This for Artaud is the space of theatre and performance, a space he persistently investigated up to his death in 1948. Theatre is a paradigm of ‘edge’ because the
action of ‘live’ presentation evokes all the problems of theory and practice - essence - being - self - authenticity - the Real (Lacan) - affectivity - representation, all clashing against the modes and skills of presentation. Theatre dies in the moment of its birth and is born in the moment its death. Artaud in his writings on theatre prized open these gaps, though the key words of his discourse were plague and cruelty. Plague meant an uncompromising, affective theatre that resulted in either ‘death or drastic purification’\(^4\), and cruelty implied rigour ‘strict control and submission to necessity’.\(^5\) The way performers are to achieve this is to transform their whole way of being, to rid themselves of all representation and create in real terms a body which is present and can signal its own presence.

In the various essays in The Theatre and its Double he sets out a vision for his new theatre, but unfortunately he elaborates no concrete method a performer can follow to achieve an Artaudian practice! As one recent commentator, Helga Pinter, says: ‘ ..... it has been the questions Artaud posed rather than the individual answers he offered that have contributed to the development of a tradition around his ideas on the theatre.’\(^6\) What constitutes being Artaudian therefore proves a problem - one intrinsic within the Utopian nature of his ideas. We can view this problem within the context of the reception of the ideas over the last four decades of the Twentieth Century.

The key names for the reception of Artaud’s ideas in theory and practice in the 1960's are those of two directors: Peter Brook, whose Theatre of Cruelty season ran at the LAMDA Theatre in London during the autumn of 1963, and Jerzy Grotowski, whose Teatr Laboratorium forged a concept and practice of Poor Theatre at Opole in Poland between 1959 and 1970. Brook, in his seminal book The Empty Space, suggested that “Artaud applied is Artaud betrayed”. He was warning practitioners that we cannot merely overlay Artaud onto existing forms to give them a fashionable, dynamic boost. Do not overlay, says Brook: rethink and restructure. Artaud’s ideas, according to Brook, are not a method but a way of life, and there is something in them that can be called a style - not just of theatre but for living. There were many theatre groups in the sixties and seventies who embraced Artaud as an icon of liberation, particularly liberation of the senses, making the body the site of culture.
In his book Towards a Poor Theatre, Jerzy Grotowski dismisses Artaud’s practice as undefined and yet he acknowledges Artaud’s intuition in recognising the centre of the actor’s art as a ‘total act’. For Grotowski, Artaud was the embodiment of the sickness of the age, his and ours. ‘Civilisation is sick with schizophrenia, which is a rupture between intelligence and feeling, body and soul.’ Like a shaman Artaud had taken this sickness into himself and was battling with it for a cure. This became the model for Grotowski’s ‘holy’ actor: one who performs an act of self sacrifice before witnesses in a theatre. Where he parts company with Artaud is on Artaud’s desire for purification through violence and cruelty. Grotowski prophetically sees the ‘blind powers’ that Artaud wished to release as controlling rather than liberating the stage. So we may ask: is it not the case that some contemporary theatre and performance art which acknowledges Artaud as its progenitor is becoming what it originally set out to confront? When a piece sets out to expose exploitation or pornography but becomes exploitative and pornographic then the ‘blind powers’ have assumed control.

At the same time as these practitioner-theorists were fashioning their images of Artaud, the rise of critical and cultural theory after the great structuralist debates of the early 70’s constructed a very different Artaud. In particular, two essays by the deconstructionist philosopher Jacques Derrida, on the question of presence and the body in Artaud, proved to be highly influential. Artaud was serving to define the turning-point in intellectual history. This Artaud, in engaging with the problem of language, the problem of matter, the problem of consciousness seeking itself, was confronting the most profound intellectual questions.

Through the 70’s, 80’s and 90’s Artaud’s ideas have been present in the development of dance and physical theatre. (Pina Bauch, DV8 etc) The rupture between the body and language was being explored from the perspective of dance adding to the blurring of the edges between forms of theatre. As the exponents of theatre dominated by the primacy of the word were searching for the body, dance was rushing to meet it from the other direction by reintroducing the voice as the bodies absent limb. This search for a ‘total’ theatre and an interplay of all the signifying systems, was always at the centre of Artauds work. Similarly, in the past two decades, post modern and intercultural performance practitioners from West and East (Robert Wilson, Ariane Mnouchkine, Kazuo Ohno’s Butoh etc) have used Artaud as a referent. In fact there is no
experimental theatre practitioner, this side of the new millenium, who has not made some direct or mediated reference to Artaud's writings. All continue to explore the central problems which he recognised as being imperative to 'live' theatre. What constitutes the body? Can it escape from representation? Can it be present and can this presence be authentically communicated? However it is these issues which caused analysts like Derrida, Sontag, Kristiva to pigeon hole Artaud as the 'theatre of the impossible' or an 'impossible' theatre. Such labels may be the betrayal of Artaud for they could 'be understood to neutralise his role as a figure who actively sought to change the very foundations of western theatre'. Yet, to go back to Peter Brook, there is something there in Artauds theatre, something that still infects contemporary performance practice and theory. Pinter sees the signs of 'a new space being cultivated on stage,' a space for the Real, 'asserting itself in opposition to the theatre of the “as if”, or the arbitrary signifier'.

She cites directors like Jan Lauwers and Jan Fabre who draw explicitly from Artaud. This takes me back to the significance of the opening anecdote about Artaud's performance at the Vieux- Columbier. The story is important because through his catastrophe on this very public occasion he foregrounds the play of some of the above issues. No matter how chaotic it may have seemed there were genuine explorations which still inform today's boundary theatre. It also reveals how his ideas on the interplay between text and body in the theatre of cruelty developed, in the latter years of his life, from a rejection of a community experience to that of each individual experience. A shift that pre-expresses millenial concerns.

In the first half of Artaud's presentation every one in the audience knew the person who walked on stage. They may have been shocked by the extent of his premature aging but he was known. What I mean by this is that he was not a stranger or a new force on the performance scene but a remembered persona. Artaud, prior to his incarceration in various asylums through the War years, had been a leading and respected figure in the French avant-garde. By this performance he had become a minor cult figure to the young artists, writers and intellectuals of post-war Paris. As the audience listened in expectation to his most recent poems exploding into attacks on sex, God, and fatherhood, punctuated by piercing cries, screams and 'glossolalia' or his made-up language' - everything was as it should be. Shock and surprise at his ideas and the modes of his presentation were all part of the familiar currency of the occasion. Here was the

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rebel returned from the grave and looking for rebirth amongst his critics and admirers. The irreverent and irrational creator of the theatre of cruelty was once again pushing the boundaries of ideas and presentation, and all of it was here, theatrically displayed in front of a willing audience. The body that he presents on stage at the Vieux-Columbier was a fictive, historic body, inscribed by tradition and confirmed by expectation.

Suddenly, through a clumsy accident with his script, the known and reassuring flow is ruptured, and for a time, there is no time: the structure reveals its anti-structure, and the audience enters a spontaneous state of liminality. Unexpected slips in the controlled process of any performance can have this effect as when the tight-rope walker catches herself at her unexpected loss of balance. Awareness of real danger immediately enters the frame. This awareness is transmitted through the action of the performer’s body into the body of the audience, spontaneously affecting each spectator. Such immediate communication is not the result of the words in the script but of anatomies as Artaud had proposed it should be in the Theatre and Its Double.

There was Artaud on the stage, transfixed and exposed in front of a large expectant audience, all willing him to succeed. He hovers once again on the edge of failure, which had been the pattern of his whole life. However as the moment holds and bleeds from stage time into real time, the body of Artaud the performer becomes problematised. It begins to fluctuate and flicker, like an electric light bulb nearing extinction, between being real and being represented, familiar and unfamiliar, present and absent. The silence is pregnant with the possible and impossible causing the audience to become unsure of how to read the signs even if there were any signs to read.

Artaud may have ‘lost it’ for that moment or he may have been fully aware of his intentions - as he said in hindsight - but this was the moment of real cruelty - not what followed, as many commentators insist. Here, in his definition of cruelty, was ‘a kind of strict control and submission to necessity ..... in the Gnostic sense of a living vortex engulfing darkness, in the sense of the inescapably necessary pain without which life could not continue’. The clash of every opposite, particularly the mind and body, was now embodied in his excruciating figure. This was why he could say afterwards that the silence spoke more than any words.
Being a consummate performer he retrieved the moment, abandoned his script and improvised moving the event from theatre (representation) to performance - 'that is the manifestation of the subject's presence by his doing'. But presentation can also be theatrical and repetitive unless it enters (in Lacanian terms) the Real or 'that which neither finds nor can find a signifier, but nonetheless continues to write itself uninterruptedly'. This is what happened for what the audience witnessed was a graphic and disturbing display of the actual pain and suffering of his being. They were not prepared for his. He did, however, fall into his own trap for as he had said in his essay 'Oriental and Western Theatre', 'Any true feeling cannot in reality be expressed. to do so is to betray it. To express it, however is to conceal it. True expression conceals what it exhibits......Any strong feeling produces a kind of emptiness within us'. Artaud applied himself to being Artaud and found, as he had predicted, betrayal.

The audience could not or were not prepared to hear what he had to say, so they filled the vacuum by viewing the event as just blatant histrionics and exhibitionism, confirming their expectations of his condition that here was Artaud the madman. His impassioned and useless appeal to the audience about 'how to be sincere' became further proof of his mental collapse. Authenticity was masked by his actual body, which unfortunately had became encrypted with a distorted and inescapable history. This is the problem of all theatre that moves towards being Artaudian, in whatever form: the danger is always one of language. How systems of language may write us instead of us writing them. Authenticity and presence are very real issues for us all.

The realisation of this intractable lack affected him deeply, for in an essay he wrote later that month entitled 'Van Gogh le suicidé de la société', he defended the idea of the 'authentic madman'. He argued forcefully that 'madness was defined by language; it was instituted by particular social communities or nations as an instrument of exclusion, silence and suppression'. Many theorists developed these ideas in later years not least Michel Foucault and R.D.Laing. The cruelty that Artaud thought would be realised through his revelatory and authentic, physical body had now become a lack that he could not conceal.

One of the most striking features of Artaud's life was his resilience in the face of failure and his capacity to reinvent himself, and to use the action of reinvention as a revolutionary act. His life
was a process in extremis, continually pushing the boundaries until they either collapsed or open onto new vistas. 'For Artaud then the circle of existence was eternal: destruction and rebirth - perpetual creation'. 27 His solution was that when the body becomes a problem go through it. A physical body is like all texts to Artaud signifying a false and distorted origin. His search has always been for the pre-natal primordial body, the body before creation, for a body as he envisions it 'without organs' The pairing down had to be to the bone, particular when the image of the bone symbolised according to Knapp 'the fight each individual must wage with himself between being and living':

To be you can let yourself go until you just exist.
but to live.
you must become someone.
to be someone
you must have a Bone
not be afraid to show the bone
and to lose the meat by the wayside. 28

He did appear live in another performance at the Galerie Pierre, surrounded by an exhibition of his drawings, which was a kind of proto-performance-arts piece. It is noticeable from the text for this event, entitled 'Science and Theatre', that the body to which he now referred was a reconstructed and transformed body:

[T]heatre... is the crucible of fire and real meat where anatomically,
by stampings of bones, limbs and syllables bodies are remade. 29

One way to present this transformation is through sound: cries, screams and tonal variations filled all his performances during this period.

His final performance was a radio piece entitled "To have done with the judgment of god" in which the only body perceived is the one created through the sound of his voice. It is now reduced to a modulated and rhythmic text complete with cries and screams from which a body is
constructed. The physical body out of which the voice emerges is no longer a referent. Now the body grows out of the voice. This is the epitome of the decentred subject.

The point of departure of the body is now in the disembodied voice: cruelty is now manifested through the sound, revealing the authentic body. Of course the voice may be prompted by many past and present agencies, as much as any text, and so we reach another hall of mirrors. This progression may also challenge the myths of physical theatre but only if it is fixed on seeing the physical body as closure and not opening. This absent body echoes the silence of the Vieux-Columbier moment which thus becomes a prism through which the many facets of Artaud's ideas on theatre can be viewed, particularly in relation to the body.

In Samuel Beckett's Not I the body of the speaker is reduced to a mouth positioned eight feet above the floor. The mouth takes on the aspect of all the orifices of the body out of which flows its waste and through which its life is sustained. The absent body is constructed through these images together with the text and its sound. To Beckett as for Artaud ‘less is more’. I reducing the body you do not restrict its physical presence rather you amplify it Artaud’s goal had always been to create a theatre where ‘thought could find a body’. It is only when we diminish the real body and look in on ourselves that we begin to see the impossible. The theatre that Artaud sort through his life was an impossible theatre for it was of the mind and his imagination. If it existed anywhere it was in the silence at the Vieux-Columbier, in the diminution of the persona that is the body. His legacy is the extreme nature of his ideas, together with a positive and an unshakable faith in the affective power of live theatre through the unmediated presence of the performer. One of his final letters before his death in March 1948, reiterated this relentless passion, for what he wanted was,

- a theatre of blood
- a theatre which with each performance will have done something
- bodily to the one who performs as well as the one who comes to see others perform.
- but actually
- the actors are not performing

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they are doing.

The theatre in reality is a genesis of creation. 33
Endnotes

1 'In Marseillais slang mômo means 'idiot', but Artaud may also have been thinking of the word momie (mummy) and the word môme (child, brat).’ Ronald Hayman Artaud and After (London, 1977) Chap 9 p.133.
4 Ibid p.136
5 Ibid p.137
6 Schumacher, p 183
7 Susan Sontag, introd, Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings (New York 1976) p. xxvii
8 Antonin Artaud, The Theatre And Its Double (Calder & Boyers, 1970) p. 21
9 Hayman pp135
10 'A blow - anti-logical anti-philosophical anti-intellectual anti-dialectical of language pressed down by my black pencil and that's all ......... probing or thrusting in all the directions of hazard, of possibility, of chance, of destiny '. Barber pp.144-5
11 Ibid p.138-9
12 Ibid p.137
13 Sontag p. xxxviii
14 Artaud p. 22
15 Ibid p. 80
19 Artaud p. 66
21 Finter p. 19.
22 Artaud p. 80.
23 'The Real for Lacan is the given field of brute experience over which the Imaginary and Symbolic range in their rival attempts to control: one can say that it is that to which all reference and action have relevance, but which can be handled through signifying practices - a Mobius strip’ Structural Criticism p. 110
24 Finter p.37.
25 Artaud p. 53.
26 Barber p141
28 Ibid p.195
29 Barber p.146
31 Lawley p.407
32 Finter p.25
33 Finter p16
Pixels and Paradigms: The Culture of HDTV Private

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“What am I seeing?”

From time to time in the history of visual technologies, viewers look at a new medium so startling that it evokes the primal response of an infant opening its eyes. Viewers of the first photographs had no means of comparison that would allow them to comprehend the automatic, unrelenting detail of the Daguerreotype. When the Lumiere brothers’ black and white, silent image of a train appeared at the beginning of cinema, audiences ducked beneath their seats. Early in the history of television, Edward R Murrow sat at his anchor desk playing with the transcontinental television long lines. Before us was the Golden Gate Bridge and the New York skyline, not as reproductions but in real time, replacing each other at Murrow’s command. For an instant, there was a sense that mediation has vanished. The screen had become a window.

“What am I seeing?”

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Most recently, the response has been elicited from viewers of the American version of High Definition Television (HDTV). HDTV triples the number of scan lines on the television screen producing an image comparable in density to 35mm film. This sort of image density, particularly for those not used to seeing it on the small screen, yields an illusion of three dimensionality. The distortion free digital signal also produces an unforgiving depiction of its subjects. On HDTV, television make-up looks like television make-up, painted sets look like nothing but painted sets and the once heroic athlete is bathed in a puddle of sweat. Digital sound produces an affirmation of the visual acuity.

Impressive as these effects may be, the real point of HDTV is not to invent new television but rather a new television audience. Television, whether low or high definition is, after all, a means of creating and selling audiences. The larger these audiences, the better. And in this regard, the most basic fact about the HDTV audience is that it will be enormous. It will include all television watchers in the United States and, quite possibly, the world.

By decree of the American Federal Communications Commission, HDTV will replace conventional television in the year 2006. American viewers will be forced to either buy a new HDTV or an adapter capable of transforming the new imagery back into the old. In fact, without much public debate, this mandated changeover has already begun. HDTV television sets are currently being manufactured. The new digital video disks (DVD) are HDTV compatible. American broadcasters have been compensated for the expense of re-equipping by giving each licensee a second channel in the 500 channel spectrum.

But how will this highly intrusive government action be sold in a country where metric conversion is still seen as the work of the devil and lunatics blow up Federal office buildings in order to protect their guns from an imagined confiscation? Part of the sales pitch will appeal to the audience’s patriotism. HDTV is the FCC’s declaration of victory...
in a ten year struggle to defeat the Japanese analog HDTV standard. It can, and probably will be sold as the 1990s version of the Manhattan Project and the moon landing. Documentaries and mini-series' on the birth of HDTV will be full of heroic hackers, selfless beta testers, iconoclastic corporate executives - all sweating the details in exchange for nothing more than fabulously lucrative intellectual property rights.

HDTV will also be sold as a sign of American industry’s return to world leadership. Magnanimous in their self-proclaimed victory, the Americans have invited all the world’s broadcasters to adopt their system as a single global standard, superseding the half-century long split between the North American (NTSC) and European (PAL) television technologies. To date, there are no takers.

Wherever they live, the potential HDTV audience will be asked to purchase not just a box, but a startling novelty, the legend of the technology’s heroic birth, a promise of its inevitable future, and its globalism. They will also be sold on its smarts. HDTV will be “smart” as a fashion statement. It will be “smart” in the sense the word has taken on since it evolved from a slightly perjorative term for human intelligence (eg. “smart ass”) to a way of describing how machines and industrial processes can replace intelligent humans (eg. “smart cards”). HDTV will also be a way of associating the buyer with those smart humans who are kept at a safe distance. The expression “smart as a rocket scientist” (which, strangely, became current shortly after the Challenger explosion) may be rewritten as “smart as a television scientist”.

The propaganda stick that accompanies this celebration of smarts will be the derision heaped on the old technology. We will see it in advertising. We will see it as well in the scripts of television shows. Low definition television will be the butt of jokes, an emblem of deprivation - in much the same way as we now talk about that “crummy old black and white television set.” Peer pressure will be stimulated in children, social status buttons pushed on their parents. In a remarkably short time, low definition television sets
along with their cumbersome HDTV adapters, will begin a migration toward cottages and pawn shops.

It is possible that the global HDTV television audience will be in place not long after the American's changeover date of 2006. But then we might ask: what will that audience see as they are asking "what am I seeing?" Almost certainly, the size of the HDTV audience and the enormous expense of re-equipping the industry will insure that content for the new technology is constructed as a commercial entity. HDTV broadcasters, like their predecessors, will customize audiences by studying them from every conceivable perspective and then designing programs in response to that research. Large populations will be reconstrued as demographics, identified and prodded into their individual slots by genre programming created in an increasingly formulaic manner.

However, the exercise itself will be far from formulaic. HDTV uses not television programs but the very technology of television to address its demographics. It is targeted at today's audiences, people who have threatened to become immune to conventional demographic manipulation by designing their own television. They flick the remote past increasing numbers of specialty channels, rent VCR films and tape programs for their personalized prime time schedules. Their most subversive ploy is to access the interactive potential of the high definition television monitor perched upon their computer. After a long history as the idiot box - the very icon of passive reception - television is now wired to that great cliche of boundless choice, the home computer.

HDTV's job will be to shift audiences away from these values of choice and interactivity. It is, in this sense, the first post-interactive technology. By the time we uncrate our new HDTV, we will have been taught to think of it as the machine that has taken over the arduous audio-visual tasks we have been performing for the past couple of decades. All that flipping back and forth, running to the video store, beaming down satellite movies, playing with the computer was work toward the end of capturing the satisfying, high
quality television experience. Why else would we knock ourselves out being so interactive? Now, with HDTV, almost everything on the screen will be enormously impressive and eminently worth watching simply on the basis of its high intensity audio-visuals. Broadcast a tropical fish tank and they will come. And they will stay - fixed on the image's acuity. When the HDTV remote slips under the couch, there will be no great rush to retrieve it.

There is also a built-in demographic receptivity to a more passive television. HDTV will be marketed to a tidal wave of retiring boomers, people looking for a machine to take over their generation's definition of work, ie. the manipulation of a monitor's content. For the aged boomer, HDTV will also offer the comforts of a long forgotten pre-interactive television - the television of one's childhood.

HDTV may be the boomers' last trend setting toy. When it is taken up by the population as a whole, the predispositions of HDTV will replace the open ended tuner and wired connectivity with the more gentile and manageable values of quality over quantity, intense commitment over choice. And because so many people will spend so much of the next century watching it, HDTV will likely shape a social landscape that extends well beyond the limits of the screen. The obsessive appreciation of the prepackaged image will spill over into the non-television world of 2006 and beyond. That world will be characterized by a mass desire to obtain single, essential experiences with startling clairty, whatever that experience might be: the perfect plant, the perfect bit of chocolate, the excruciatingly perfect child.

A related phenomenon may be a new value placed on personal intensity. In McLuhanesque terms, HDTV changes television from a "cool" medium defined by audience response to a "hot" medium actively defining the viewer. To adapt one of McLuhan's favourite examples: On HDTV, Nixon would finally win the 1960 presidential debate because his busy face would be far more intriguing on a screen that
revelled its every detail; Kenedy’s low definition face would look wrong. Loud and blemished personalities - the Rush Limbaughs and Howard Sterns - always at home on radio, would work better on HDTV than on our conventional sets.

The same personalities may also work better in the street as intensity itself would become a value enhanced by its unceasing practice on the new tube. Imagine soap operas without make-up, seemingly three dimensional faces in their viewers’s faces. The HDTV soap opera will either turn up the heat in our off-screen personal lives or it will cause us to run screaming from an intensity overload.

The close up may either rule us or repel us. We may suffer a gaggle of personally intensive leaders. Or we may see them coming.

This uncertainty of viewer response may indeed be a problem for HDTV broadcasters. For once we get beyond the fish tank stage, no one knows how viewers will respond to conventional programming - nor, despite years of research, will anyone really know until the results are in from the actual HDTV audience. It is quite possible that entire genres will not make the cut to the new technology. The new HDTV sets will have a screen ratio similar to that of feature films. But will wide screen epics work on HDTV or will viewers be too busy looking at the images to follow the plots? Perhaps audiences will prefer more visually subdued performances such as concerts and stage plays. Location news footage may be yet more entrancing. Or it may be so realistic on HDTV as to become unwatchable.

We might guess that, whatever happens, commercials on HDTV will be spectacular. They will have to be in order to pay for the broadcasters’ tremendously expensive learning curve. This, in turn, will up the ante of television production the same way the ante was upped in cinema with the advent of Hollywood feature. Over time, the small cable network will be successfully marginalized the way that Hollywood has

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marginalized films not made according to its model. Quality over quantity may become something of a self-fulfilling value or at least a self-fulfilling proclamation by the few remaining “quality” networks. It is conceivable that we will not, after all, be viewing the much promised 500 channel universe. A few years after the advent of HDTV, we may be back to the major network dominance more familiar to the world of forty years earlier. In this scenario, HDTV may actually be a “retro” medium, bringing us back to the days when we could remember what day of the week which network brought us what beloved entertainment.

Alternatively, HDTV may play a role in ending our current high regard for “retro” itself. We may assume that our new television will depend for content on old television. Nobody is going to buy into a technology that cannot deliver half-century old I Love Lucy episodes. However, with HDTV’s improved visuals, these old format programs will come to look like something other than television. They will, instead, take on an intriguing otherness.

On the HDTV screen, there may come to be a kind of tiering of our daily visuals not dissimilar to the tiering of our language. Low definition television will be like Anglo-Saxon words: pithy, naive but rooted in the mists of time. HDTV images will be our Latinate vocabulary: distinguished, daunting and in some dimly remembered way, foreign and imposed. As we do every time we speak English, we will negotiate our visual world among these subtle but essential connotations.

It is this negotiation that will become the interactivity of HDTV and the world it helps shape. Denizens of the early twenty-first century will choose not among channels or web sites but between the passive reception of highly produced, visually intense content and the active rejection of that bombardment for some form of less defined discourse. And it will be a struggle. For some smart hacker is going to find a way of digitally enhancing I Love Lucy, making it look and sound like HDTV. It will take a smarter viewer to
remeber not only why this new version is no longer the original, but why that distinction is important to life both within and beyond the television set.

**Biography**

Seth Feldman is the Dean of the Faculty of fine Arts at York University. With more than 2000 undergraduate majors and 300 students in six disciplines, York Fine Arts is one of the largest such units in North America. Dean Feldman also serves as Chair of the Canadian Association of Fine Arts Deans and Board Member of the International Council of Fine Arts Deans. His academic writing includes extensive publication in the areas of film and television studies with special interest in Soviet cinema, documentary cinema, Canadian cinema, television theory and new technologies. He is a well-known commentator in the Canadian media as well as the author and presenter of 18 feature length radio documentaries on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporations' series, IDEAS. Dean Feldman is also known for his regularly appearing essays in the journal, QUEEN'S QUARTERLY.
The Theatre As We Knew It Is Redundant.

It Is Now On The Street,  
On The Screen,  
In The Stadium.

Provoking Design “out of the dark”.

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“out of the dark” was a visual arts event on Theatre Design within the 1998 New Zealand International Festival of the Arts. Comprising of a 2-day National Symposium and 3-week curated Exhibition, it emerged from the need to debate the future of performance and design in Aotearoa NZ. The Arts Festival provided an ideal platform for igniting this “conflagration” where the designer was asserted as conceptual originator, visual director and essential collaborator in the process of producing performance. Design, so often relegated to the margins of theatre, sought to stand boldly in the light.

Conference: A meeting for conversation, rendezvous  
Confluence: A coming together; collecting in one place  
Conflagration: A great and destructive fire
This forum, which drew together artists, designers, architects and those interested in theatre, sought to both raise (as in set forth) and raze (as in tear down) issues on design and performance. As a National Symposium with International speakers, it not only utilised the festival for its theatre artists from abroad but established some fiery local debate through 3 major “provocations”:-

1*  **The Search for a New Zealand visual culture has lead to a (b)anal fixation**

What is New Zealand visual Culture and can it reflect itself in performance design?

2*  **In a world where anyone can do it the designer is a whore**

What is the value of design in the New Zealand theatre industry?

3*  **The Theatre as we knew it is redundant.**

It is out on the street, on the screen, in the stadium.

What other worlds asset performance design?

The third and final provocation (for which I was the provocateur) explored other arenas for informing theatre design. Celebrating contemporary culture and the “Theatre of Images” this paper posits strategies for emerging from a perceived theatrical gloom whilst questioning notions and definitions of this slippery word “redundant”.

**Redundant:**

Superfluous; not needed

The word has been transcended by the image.

**Image**

In October last year, Peter Greenaway, the English film-maker, spoke to an audience of 350 people in Auckland’s Aotea Centre. The auditorium for this prestigious appearance was the “New Zealand Insurance Conference Room” and the stage was the vertical surface

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of a large video screen. Greenway, who was unable to show in person at the last minute, linked up through live video with the registrants of the "Engaging Practices" Forum for artists and museums. The initial disappointment of the audience was soon surpassed by a fascination for this giant talking head speaking to spectators without actually seeing them or the space they occupied.

"Live"

In this "live" performance. Greenaway stated that "cinema is rapidly dying". His disenchantment with film at the end of the twentieth century came from a belief that "it does not fulfil the cultural complexity of the imagination."

Imagination

This statement came as a surprise to me, as I had always maintained that the Theatre was in a terminal condition, tragically surpassed by television and film; media which accented the reduced literacy in our increasingly image-based Western culture. As Greenaway asserts the primacy of the text has been supplanted by the primacy of the image and the Theatre needs to embrace this shift, in order not only to survive but to thrive.

Redundant: no longer needed at work.

Unemployed because of change in demand

Theatre (as we in New Zealand have come to know it) is clearly redundant. Company theatres continue to close their doors leaving practitioners without homes, either physical or creative, to house their weary hearts.

One evening in 1992 I sat in an Auckland bar full of actors and technicians from the Mercury Theatre who should have been employing their craft that night. The show, Perth, Western Australia.
however, did not go on. The theatre had closed down with both performers and audience uncremoniously escorted from the building by security guards. All 60 full-time staff and several contract practitioners who worked therein were redundant ..... out on the street! The rather flaccid reaction from council and public to the closing of the country’s largest company theatre suggested it was no longer considered necessary to the cultural life of Auckland city. The theatre and all who sailed in her became frighteningly dispensable. We sat together in the bar feeling superfluous and homeless ..... adrift!

Adrift

Since the Mercury Theatre closed its doors over five and a half years ago New Zealand has lost the Downstage Theatre Company, Inside Out Theatre, Theatre at Large, the Watershed Theatre, and Taki Rua Theatre. If theatre therefore finds itself out on the street, an opportunity is presented to look around, reskill and embrace a new theatrical language which re-enlives its considerable talents.

Time to emerge from the dark conventional interiors of the black-box or proscenium arch theatres with their polite, passive and too often deadly products. These have been more successfully replaced by the television set or cinema screen which can better frame and control the action. However, unlike film or television, in the theatre performers and spectators breathe the same air. But the air is stale and the shabby blacks are sucking up the energy. Theatre lacks visuality, imagination and open-endedness. It not longer reflects the complex way we experience the world.

Consumption of the Image

Our daily world is constantly reconfigured as a multi-media project where participation is mediated by technology. Events such as the Tri-Nations Rugby Shield at the MCG and the Funeral for a Princess in London have become global spectacles. Through television coverage the thousands/millions of on-site spectators become implicated as performers before an audience of millions/billions.

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Television news readers now interview people on video screens presenting us with frames within frames; virtual talking-head to virtual talking-head. Yet we have come to take this complicated viewing system for granted in a "culture of alienated spectacle where all aspects of experience, from shopping to warfare, are routinely transformed into thematised entertainment."1

Bonnie Maranca writes:

"The world is not one because human beings have the same body parts and live and laugh and love and give birth astride a grave; rather it is that, in the world of global trade, of common markets, everyone consumes the same imagery. Multinationals have colonised Olympus and turned Fate into economic necessity. If once great books and their heroes unified cultures, today it is Coca Cola the classic that generates myth, forging a new collective unconscious. Coke brown snow of conformity, bottled rage."2

Rage

Give in to the rage ..... 
Take to the streets 
return to the carnival, the spectacle 
The body of the crowd.

Redundant

Superabundant, superfluous, excessive

"Carnival! Carnival!" says the revolutionary plumber in Genet's Balcony. "You know well enough, we ought to beare of it like the plague, since its logical conclusion is death. You know well enough that the carnival that goes to the limit is a suicide!"3

Excess is the song of contemporary Western culture and unlike the control of the spoken or written language the primacy of the image is power thrilling and dangerous. Nowhere is it more dynamic than in public spectacle which at any moment can run riot and wreak havoc.

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Herbert Blau refers to; “the living image of the participatory spectacle itself, where the dismembered body politic would be transformed from an amorphous silent mass into the vociferous equity of the crowd.”

Spectacle

Spectacle comes from the word spectare: to look, the emphasis being on the visual. In Italian a performance of a play is a spettacolo. The word, in English, has become associated with an impressive show of public entertainment. Something striking, set before the public gaze; an object of curiosity, contempt, marvel or admiration. One of the OED’s definitions for spectacle is “A piece of stage-display or pageantry, as contrasted with real drama.” This statement privileges the proper aspects of theatre with its nobility and restraint and marginalises the drama of the spectacle with its excesses.

A few years after the closure of the Mercury Theatre, I bumped into actor/director Mike Mizrahi who was thriving having shifted “Inside Out Theatre Company” sideways into “Inside Out Productions” and corporate spectacle. Their last theatre show “Spectacle of One”, a brave and abstracted theatrical adaptation of Carson MacCullers “The Heart is a Lonely Hunter”, had lost a lot of money. Disillusioned with the world of theatre Inside Out now embraced the Spectacle of Many particularly the openings of Auckland’s Rugby League team “The Warriors”. Not only can they pay the bills and feed a family as Mike said they can fulfill their creative imaginations; “I’d have an idea of having 20 Father Christmases leap frogging over each other in front of a wall of falling sand and in the theatre all I’d have was a bucket of sand, one actor and a Santa suit.”

Consider the complexity and excess of a sports game ..... as people park and gather moving through suburban streets, gathering, transforming, uniting across a city into the stadium, becoming a huge and dangerous beast, roaring, drunk and dynamic. Celebrating itself; chanting, faces painted, bodies adorned, fists clenched, bums touching on the terraces and, at times with arms up stretched, creating a circling rippling wave of bodies and sound. But it doesn’t stop with the clamourous crowd. There is the before, during and after spectacle of produced entertainment. The gargantuan images projected in fragments on screens surrounding the stadium. Action replays. Stop start, slow motion

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and closeup. The titanic gladiator adjusting himself or clearing his nostrils of its contents ..... theatrical detail, visceral performance.

And layered upon that we have the sponsors, their logos meshing with the game and distorting the perspective on grass painted in corporate colours. The point of view now becoming the camera and the viewer at home. The audience noe expanding and fragmenting into living rooms and smoky bars all over the country. The image contained within the frame of the screen. Live and virtual married moment by moment as the spectacle unfolds.

This is theatre.

Far from the deep and dark interiors of shabby auditoria, sealed and cosseted balck boxes; in the blinding light of banks of halogens, paparazzi flash, the flare from the firework, headlights from passing cars or the clear light of day.

The games, the raves, the catwalks, the parades, the riots.

Jump Start

As Camille Paglia contends, we need to jump start ourselves with the energy of mass media and swim in the cultural mainstream with its daily excitement and vulgarity.⁵

Whether you believe that mass culture locates us in the realm of freedom or has colonised the minds of people, it continues to appeal to real desires and the needs of the people. Rather than obsess about its threat to extinguish the utopian spirit of High Art why not appropriate mass cultural artifacts for our own purposes? Mass culture is culture.

Theatre of Images

Mass culture is culture and mass culture is dominated by the visual. The written word is no longer the priviledged text. The text is the sum total of sound, setting, light and action.

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The theatre of today is a Theatre of Images spearheaded by luminaries such as Robert Le Page and Robert Wilson, who are director/designers. This connection between design and direction is no coincidence.

"The theatre of images", Bonnie Marranca claims, "reconceived the role of director, actor, writer, space and audience. It was a theatre that turned away from such things as psychology, realistic conventions, and audience identification and instead reorganised the sense of space in theatre, recast the actor, created texts in which words were sometimes used for their plastic qualities, and made technology an expressive feature of the work."6

In this theatre imagery carries the weight of the narrative. The present moment is emphasised cultivating a new spectator who experiences time space and narrative in a more immediate, sensual way. Collages of contrasting styles and fragmentary images mirror the contemporary mindscape.7

Multiplicity

Linked to the happenings and art performances of the visual art world the Theatre of Images offers a multiplicity of images as a new language. Dialogue is excluded with a minimal use of words. Aural, visual and verbal imagery dominates the stage in a theatre which has to be seen to be understood. As Marranca says; "to read the text alone is to lose the sensual delight and intellectual exchange of this theatre."8

Extra

"Extra-theatrical", this Theatre developed aesthetically from non-theatrical roots; Cagean aesthetics, new dance, popular cultural forms, painting, sculpture, and cinema. It emerged from a highly technological western society dominated aural and visual stimuli, and is produced by a generation of artists who grew up on television and movies. It opposes the traditional theatre which suggests the "proper" emotions and responses to staged events.9
Redundant
abounding to excess.
plentiful, capacious, exuberant

Theatre, as we have come to know it is safe and not so sound. The audiences no longer
demand it and have turned elsewhere for drama and entertainment. As a result it could be
declared redundant. But an examination the original meaning of this word “redundant”
highlights it as “characterised by copiousness, fullness or abundance.”

Theatre may no longer be needed, but as Lear said:

“O reason not the need,
... nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear’st.”

Reason rather the desire.

Rather than need, the Theatre is about desire.
Theatre should therefore be redundant, excessive, plentiful, capacious and exuberant.
It should “redound” and thereby make a great contribution to our contemporary culture by
bridging the gap between popular culture and high art.

Richard Schechner asserts theatre as a “dynamic braiding of ritual and entertainment”
which incorporates aspects of play, games, sports, dance and music. Today’s mistresses
and masters of performance are our Visual Artists, Video Jockeys, Events Designers and
advertising whizz-kids. Those who deal with the sensual excesses of contemporary
culture.

And if the audiences are not coming to the theatre, take the theatre to the audience. Take to
the streets emerging from those stuffy interiors .... into a blaze of sound, image and light.
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Biography

A senior lecturer at Wellington’s Schools of Architecture and Design, Dorita Hannah began designing for theatre at the Mercury Theatre in 1985. After working in Melbourne Italy and London (where she worked specifically as a theatre and Creative consultant, she returned to set up a multi-disciplinary design practice in 1990. Work in Wellington has included Farewell Speech, Lashings of Whipped Cream, at Crica in 1993 and Henry 8 at Taki Rua. In 1994 and 1995 Dorita was involved in Taki Rua’s Bicultural Theatre Company, Ta Moopa Whakeari for which she designed Nga Tangata Toa (which was performed at Auckland’s Watershed Theatre), Swamp Dancing and Whasa Wakirau Mother Hundred Eater. Nga Tangata Toa won Best Costume Design in the 1994 Wellington Theatre Awards and the design was exhibited at the Prague Quadrennial in 1995. Recent work includes the costumes for Ricord’s, a new performance piece commissioned by the Wellington International Festival of the Arts in 1996. Travels with my Aunt for the Auckland Theatre Company in 1996 and The Visit at Downstage Theatre (for which she won Best Set Design in the 1996 Wellington Theatre Awards.