

© INTERDIGITATE '98 AOTEA CENTRE AUCKLAND ELECTRONIC ARTS COME UP AGAINST THE HERALD THEATRE'S VIDEO WALL IN SOUND, IMAGE AND PERFORMANCE. A BIENNIAL EVENT INTERDIGITATE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CHOSEN FEW TO LOCK INTO THE SYNERGISTIC AND AGONISTIC DEMANDS OF TECHNOLOGY+AUDIENCE INTERMEDIATED TIME-BASED ART.

INTERDIGITATE 3 3 R H3T PERFORMANCES

REVIEWED BY JULAINNE SUMICH

5 - 8 NOVEMBER 1998

Common to each of the three main events of Interdigitate '98 is an urgency for a heightened consciousness of the senses but unlike the '96 event no breach is made of the territory between audience and stage [save for jimekus' single trawl of the audience feeding data to bold Arachne! the muse of cyberspace].

To interdigitate is to interlock, like the fingers of clasped hands; a gesture implying intimacy, control, anxiety, supplication - qualities that are variously presented in this year's programme.

Each performance is a control system - from Kerr's flashlight to the Ockham's razor of Vasulka's bow to the oddly cued exhibits of Everyman. Between the relationships of parts in two of the events there is at times a lack of control; just as to interdigitate can also signal a slippage between the fingers; something beyond the grasp.

Steina Vasulka is guest artist this year and takes Centre stage in the pro-gramme. With a fiddled prosthesis and 20 years in video we're talking some other country here. The Icelander carries her MIDI and disk player in suitcases. The travelling economy of an everyday housewife.

GHOST

A PERFORMANCE DIRECTED BY SEAN KERR

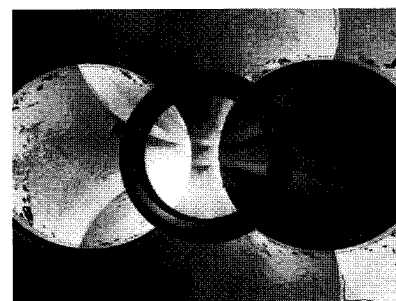
Audio: Sean Kerr

Dancers: Megan Adams & Sean Curham

Video Treatments: Kim Fogelberg

As if seen through a glass mottled

Fogelberg's ghosted images focus attention on Kerr's quadraphonic soundscape. A drone rises on wavelengths of frequencies towards an archaeology of stones embroiled in thunderous lightning flashes on screen sound and stage.



Still from Sean Kerr's Ghost

The stage performance is drawn from the margins; the dancers' deflections of movement to and from each other stretching diagrams through diaphragms. They bring a closed circuit of videocamera nuzzling into play but this falls short of a benediction. It's just a kiss lapped in awash of sound. Oblique N²

1 Never one to be explicit Kerr directs disparate traces of enigmatic image and sound that fall inward and lope back in pitch shifts and sliding screens. Behind this curiously unmoving moving event there is a smouldering sense of outrage that is never realised upfront. Emotions withheld. Someone might live here behind this architectural facade. The tempo picks up - churning out oblique reversals before a wall of fire.

Flash lights pop and splutter on stage coming again on screen. Images degenerate there but not there. A fuzzy logic. Intuition before substance. Patterns of patterns no name is the Ghost in this machine. Kerr's direction operates on three levels of sound, image, and performance inducing interstices between these elements.

"This is an operation of differentiation or of disappearance...."² By doing so it could be said that he induces the 'ghostly'. But compared to the soundtrack the choices of the dancers' performance and some of the imagery do not carry equivalent weight to produce the potential of *Ghost's* modus operandi; that is, "to make the indiscernible ... visible."³

A foghorn sounds and celluloid crackles. Somewhere out there tonight a Guy's on fire.

ORKA [LIFE FORCE]

A M.I.D.I. PERFORMANCE BY STEINA VASULKA

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She plugs in and draws her bow

On the videowall a white-suited performer leaps to her command. He is superexcited man and she's a hard-wired woman and he's dancing on glass like a ragdoll on skates with the pathos of Chaplin and Annie Lennox he falls 8 times a dozen times and times again. Her fiddle makes him flip as the violin skitters between a flutter a pluck and the ground-down timbre of your dentist's drill from rapid vibrato to an extended fifth dimension.

What can I say of this stunning image/music performance when I can't say what is poles apart and I have no purple socks.

Steina's bow catches the dancer mid-air and flips him again batoning down a vertical hold that could only happen here at this M.I.D.I.⁵ point of Interdigitate. It's not the stuff of documentaries and can't be packaged for The Morning Show.

Somewhere else crossing an intersubjective dateline Steina plays with herself all the younger for it. The mirror on stage. What sounds like a chopper from *Apocalypse Now* breaks off at images of Iceland's geysers and the Fantasia of some foolish muddy taniwha — Vasulka playing Disney for all she's worth.

Salutations from Tokyo and sliding screens of Japanese elevators She waits

the elevator shafts into a volcanic landscape a 'welcome to my world won't you come on in' while 20 polite white gloves counterpoint and marshall me back to Laurie Anderson's *America the Brave*.

and still she waits

The Heavy Metal Doors

hidden hydraulics weight-bearing

lodes of grafted sound screens become strings become musical staves I'm dancing as fast as I can vibrating notations monographs which were here with her that half second past between cause and effect. Shrieks skin galvanise from the ZETA from a Baconesque excuse for a man caged by the grid of the video wall. It's a sight to make your eyes smart and your nose run. *The English Patient* gone haywire gargling ganglion nerve endings in 'JESUS LOVES YOU DOCTTTTOR'

a face mangled by a sound wave

'Meeeeeeeeeee e e e'

forces "AM" screeches 'Doctor'

'Whadda-yamean nochatnopills? 'just tell me who I am!!!!!!'

slight shifts of the bow string him out keep him dangling then cut him off and out.

Ms Steina's feeling for life - a MeisterKraftwerk.



Steina Vasulka

THE EVERYMAN

A PERFORMANCE BY BRENT HAYWARD

Lady in Red: Annelise Sally Kuegler

Woman in Blue: Sally Louise Legg

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'ARE YOU HAPPY NOW?!!!!'

'... the future begins in 3 minutes - right between the third eye!.... An androgynous baptismal Christ blows his own trumpet.

After he'd seen the light Paul of Tarsus set out from Damascus to convert the Mediterranean soul to his way of thinking. In his preaching he employed a form of mirrorspeak reflecting the tongues of the various regions. This was the form of his sales pitch; the secret of his success. It made the locals happy. He was their kind of guy.

In an upheaval of mass-media iconography Brent Hayward promotes his Everyman as a sort of neuro-mancer on this theme of the rhetorical spirit. A born-again apostle garnering unto himself a cross-section of our local populace.

Funicula vernacular.

A scene of unbridled chaos: Bondage man Newsman Paperweighted boy Veteran The tourist Birdman in a shopping trolley - the whole goddam Hoi Polloi [right stage down is a seated figure in a hobo hat often seen in Felix the Cat. But this hat wears a camera and antenna. It's jimekus the Webmaster feeding Everyman live to the Internet.] Who is really the Lord of this dance?

On screen - rubbery tongues, preachers, and loudspeakers.

This is the swag of the Everyman his heart on his thigh as he wrestles with his mic astride those lost in spirit 'NO MORE MEDIA MOUNTAIN!'

A postmodern cross between Swaggart and Warhol who leads us all in the dance said he. No longer wise men but Lady in Red and Woman in Blue [we're dancing with you] come bearing gifts of frankincense

and firewater.

And lo! yonder come the children all dressed in white - must be the children of the Israelites - but will we lay down our life for this Lord?

Does Hayward succeed in turning us around; does he convert us from the chaos of capitalism - the wailing wall of cruciformed T.V. screens 8x10?

Or is this 'Hair' revisited? a retrospective on an old adage of innocence for everywoman everyman? More than the styro-foam dollar signs those crosses are the subtext, the burden of his task his struggle to gain a spiritual foothold - making a spectacle of his twenty minutes of fame.

The kids had a great time. They loved it - whether or not you slept with Jesus.

And everyone enjoys a good sparkler.

NOTES ON

Russell Campbell is senior lecturer in the School of English, Film and Theatre, Victoria University of Wellington.

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Harriet Margolis is senior lecturer in the School of English, Film and Theatre, VUW.

Rebecca Robinson completed an MA thesis on Peter Jackson with the American Studies Department at the University of Canterbury. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Glasgow, researching British television comedy.

Martin Rumsby is a film maker and writer based in Auckland. Recently he has been tutor for R.A.V.E (Real Alternative Video Education).

Jane Sayle is a lecturer in the Wellington School of Design.

Julainne Sumich is a video artist based in Auckland whose most recent work is *Happiness*. She writes and teaches in the visual arts.

Illusions 27 was Tony Chuah's last issue as designer of the journal. After 8 years involvement with *Illusions* pressure of work has forced Tony to retire from this position. We wish him well for the future.

With this issue we welcome Claire Robinson as the new designer of *Illusions*. Claire is a graphic designer and lecturer in visual communications design at the Wellington School of Design.

Also, beginning with the last issue (No. 27) Martin Rumsby assumed responsibility for distributing the journal in Auckland and Hamilton.

1 she who thought herself a better weaver than Athena the goddess of wisdom bom of her father's brain.

2 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, London: The Athlone Press, 1989, p.179.

3 Ibid p.180.

4 With pre-recorded performances by Saburo Teshigawara unknown 10 years ago when Vasulka taped his performance; now famed throughout Europe.

Steina in the '70s; a duet fastforwards into the imperfect tense.

Tim Thompson in the '80s - schooled in Verlaine and Rimbaud. In Santa Fe prison workshops he listened to the talk and wrote the script.

5 M.I.D.I. Musical Instrument Digital Interface.

CONTRIBUTORS