

Transformance

This exegesis is submitted to the Auckland University of Technology for the degree of Master of Art and Design.

Warren Pringle October 2011.

Attestation of Authorship:

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

Signature

Date

Acknowledgements

Firstly I wish to acknowledge the support of Jia-Yin Loo. Jane without your inspiration and support this project would have never happened.

Secondly I wish to acknowledge the patience and support of Lorraine Marson, my partner, and Jake Pringle, our son. Thanks for the support over the long haul.

Thirdly I wish to acknowledge the support of the artists who participated in the project; Grace Chai, Olivia Garelja, Nick Konings, Jane Loo, Jeong Whang, Elise Chan, Kristian Larsen and Eason Lin.

And of course thanks to the guidance and support of my supervisors Sue Gallagher and Nancy de Freitas.

Lastly I wish to thank AUT for the use of space and the equipment that has ensured the success of the project.

Transformance

| Table of contents | Page |
|--|------|
| Attestation of Authorship | 2 |
| Acknowledgments | 3 |
| Table of Images | 6 |
| Introduction | 10 |
| 1. <i>Transformance</i> – the concept | 13 |
| 2. <i>Transformance</i> – the exhibition | 22 |
| Introduction | 22 |
| Curatorial Process | 22 |
| Artists Talks | 28 |
| Group Show Critique | 31 |
| Jia-yin (Jane) Loo – <i>A Sense of Dislocation</i> | 31 |
| Grace Chai – <i>The Embodiment of Narcissus</i> | 35 |
| Olivia Garelja – <i>Image Beyond Image</i> | 38 |
| Nick Konings – <i>The Transformative Mirror</i> | 40 |
| 3. <i>A Sense of Dislocation</i> – the performance artwork | 42 |
| Introduction | 42 |
| Workshops | 47 |
| Analysis | 50 |
| Conclusion | 56 |
| 4. References | 57 |

| Table of contents | Page |
|--|-------------|
| 5. Appendices | 60 |
| <i>A Sense of Dislocation</i> | 60 |
| Workshop Timetable and Programme | 60 |
| The Workshops | 62 |
| 1. Alchemy of the Human Mind | 63 |
| 2. VoiceWork 1 | 70 |
| 3. VoiceWork 2 | 71 |
| 4. The Text | 73 |
| 5. Humiliation | 76 |
| 6. Gesture | 81 |
| 7. Introducing the Choreographer | 85 |
| 8. Choreographing the work | 86 |
| Artslabtoo Blog | 86 |
| The Script | 87 |
| Transformance Artists Talks Notes | 90 |
| Jane Loo | 90 |
| Grace Chai | 92 |
| Olivia Garelja | 94 |
| Nick Konings | 96 |
| Wallace Arts Centre <i>Transformance</i> Webpage | 97 |
| Chinglish Webpage | 97 |
| Artslabtoo Blog page | 97 |

Transformance

Table of images

Figure 1 (page 12).
Loo. J. (2010) Grace Chai
Artist's Talk, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 2 (page 12).
Garelja. O. (2010)
Performance, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 3 (page 21).
Garelja. O. (2010)
Exhibition, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 4 (page 21).
Lin. E. (2010)
Exhibition, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 5 (page 21).
Lin. E. (2010)
Exhibition, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 6 (page 21).
Loo. J. (2010) Nick Konings
Artist's Talk, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 7 (page 22).
Loo. J. (2010)
Artist's Talk, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 8 (page 24).
Garelja. O. (2010)
Performance, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 9 (page 25).
Loo. J. (2010) Screen Shot
A Sense of Dislocation
Exhibition, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 10 (page 27).
Loo. J. (2010) Invite Design
Exhibition Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 11 (page 29).
Loo. J. (2010) Grace Chai
Artist's Talk, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 12 (page 29).
Loo. J. (2010) Grace Chai
Artist's Talk, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 13 (page 29).

Loo. J. (2010) Olivia Garelja
Artist's Talk, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 14 (page 29).

Loo. J. (2010) Olivia Garelja
Artist's Talk, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 15 (page 29).

Loo. J. (2010) Nick Konings
Artist's Talk, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 16 (page 29).

Loo. J. (2010) Nick Konings
Artist's Talk, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 17 (page 31).

Loo. J. (2010) *A Sense of Dislocation*
Exhibition, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 18 (page 32).

Loo. J. (2010) *A Sense of Dislocation*
Screen Shot, Exhibition,
Wallace Arts Centre,
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 19 (page 34).

Loo. J. (2010) *A Sense of Dislocation*
Screen Shot, Exhibition, Wallace Arts Centre,
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 20 (page 34).

Loo. J. (2010) *A Sense of Dislocation*
Screen Shot, Exhibition, Wallace Arts
Centre, Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 21 (page 35).

Chai. G (2010) *Embryo of Narcissus*
Original Photograph.
Auckland, New Zealand: Private collection of Grace Chai.

Figure 22 (page 36).

Chai. G (2010) *Creation of Narcissus*
Original Photograph.
Auckland, New Zealand: Private collection of Grace Chai.

Figure 23 (page 37).

Loo. J. (2010) Grace Chai
Exhibition, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 24 (page 37).

Loo. J. (2010)
Grace Chai
Exhibition, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 25 (page 38).
Garelja. O. (2010) *Land Dunes*
Original Photograph.
Auckland, New Zealand: Private
collection of Olivia Garelja.

Figure 26 (page 39).
Garelja. O. (2010) *Low Tide*
Original Photograph.
Auckland, New Zealand: Private
collection of Olivia Garelja.

Figure 27 (page 41).
Konings. N. (2010)
Transformative Mirror
Screen shot. Auckland, New Zealand:
Private collection of Nick Konings.

Figure 28 (page 40).
Konings. N. (2009)
Final design in early stages of life
Photograph of impermanent sculptural portrait. Auckland,
New Zealand: Private collection of Nick Konings.

Figure 29 (page 42).
Garelja. O. (2010)
Performance, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 30 (page 43).
Garelja. O. (2010)
Performance, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 31 (page 46).
Garelja. O. (2010)
Performance, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 32 (page 46).
Garelja. O. (2010)
Performance, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 33 (page 46).
Garelja. O. (2010)
Performance, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 33a (page 46).
Garelja. O. (2010)
Performance, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 34 (page 48).
Loo. J. (2010)
Workshop, AUT, North Shore
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 35 (page 49).

Loo. J. (2010)

Workshop, AUT, North Shore
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 36 (page 49).

Loo. J. (2010)

Workshop, AUT, North Shore
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 37 (page 50).

Garelja. O. (2010)

Performance, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 38 (page 54).

Garelja. O. (2010)

Performance, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 39 (page 55).

Garelja. O. (2010)

Performance, Wallace Arts Centre
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 40 (page 60).

Loo. J. (2010)

Workshop, AUT, North Shore
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 41 (page 61).

Loo. J. (2010)

Workshop, AUT, North Shore
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 42 (page 62).

Loo. J. (2010)

Workshop, AUT, North Shore
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 43 (page 76).

Loo. J. (2010)

Workshop, AUT, North Shore
Auckland, New Zealand

Figure 44 (page 84).

Loo. J. (2010)

Workshop, AUT, North Shore
Auckland, New Zealand

Transformance

“Art has always been this - pure interrogation, rhetorical question less the rhetoric - whatever else it may have been obliged by social reality to appear.”¹ Samuel Beckett

Transformance is an on-going research project that came about as a direct result of my recent personal experience of cancer and subsequent surgery, treatment and recovery processes. The work evolved from an underlying desire to transform the way in which I live, think and feel. It highlighted the way in which my own acts of transgression could change the way I perceive the world, act out my life and interpret the environment. I wanted to turn my life's work into artwork.

The formalized studio research and development for this project was driven by two questions that emerged in the early stages. What is the nature and transformative power of creative communication, performance and display in

individual and collective development where there is an empathetic sharing of skill and creative expression? How does the curatorial process function in this context?

The exegesis is composed of four parts that describe the conceptual ideas, the experimental work and associated theoretical writing that have driven the development of this practice-led research project:

1. *Transformance* - the concept; a description.
2. *Transformance* - the exhibition and artwork; the curatorial process and analysis, the artists' talks, my curators exhibition critique.
3. *A Sense of Dislocation* - the performance artwork, workshops and an analysis.
4. *The Appendices* - a workshop manual documenting the research workshop process, the performance artwork text and the artists talks notes.

The development and staging of the performance artwork, central to the *Transformance* exhibition opening, has been the core curatorial practice component of my research.

¹ Columbia World of Quotations. Retrieved August 03, 2011, from Dictionary.com website: <http://quotes.dictionary.com/>

Over the development of the *Transformance* project my primary 'seer' has been Antonin Artaud with some original 'idea' samplings from, Augustus Boal; the cop-in-the-head: subjective internalised oppression, Jerzy Grotowski; the energy transformations that occur with incantation and vibratory songs, Julian Beck; the suicidal nature of an individualistic culture, and a recent accomplice in Kathy Acker described in her obituary by Diamanda Galas as "a keeper of the flame of our blood brothers, Nerval and Artaud and Baudelaire."

Are we to read from and interpret the 'seers' or are we to read from and re-interpret the 'analysers' which both of course we must. Are we 'explorers' or 'scientists'? Should we fold back the Cartesian split and again (un)consciously re-integrate with the cosmos?

Original thought, originality, is a rare commodity. Mostly, as individuals, we imitate and make analogy to (an)other(s); people, animals, objects behavioural analogies and have our lives modelled for us by moralities imposed in familial, peer, political and societal surroundings.

It is my intention, as best as I am able, in this project to originate both thought and theory by taking from, addressing and absorbing the work of a historically status-quo critical avant-garde. In the face of the continuing onslaught of ideologies promoting as normality exploration and exploitation, ideologies that are in fact contributing to the destruction of our living world, many peoples globally, including sections of our own society, and not only an avant-garde, experience isolation and exclusion.

Using the example of techniques to subvert "the control system inherent in verbal discourse" (Wallen 2006, p.3). utilized in literature by Kathy Acker and taking from her appropriating, plagiarizing piracies as a first formulation, and inspiration, and re-interpreting and experimenting with others' projects, my intention is to arrive at a polemic and methodology that describes my own project *Transformance*. Artaud also wrote of "our artistic dallying with forms" (Artaud 1994, p.6).

The methodological orientation of my research, and the resulting exhibition and performance

artwork, the artists talks and exegesis, is of a phenomenological approach. One that emphasizes performativity and liminality; performative as in being ‘enacted in action’ with the liminal being that space in which the action progresses, where separate or similar ideas might come together and be developed.² It is also in the liminal and the performative that the project’s theory and practice are linked. Bell (2008) describes “the threefold projects of performativity as a theory of identity, a strategy of critique, and a political practice” (p.176).

² The liminal space described by anthropologist Victor Turner in *From Ritual to Theatre* as a space of transformation between phases of separation and reincorporation.



Figure 1. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010



Figure 2. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

***Transformance* - the concept**

Transformance is the making and experience of artwork, either visual or performative, which enables passive or participatory emotive identification and transcendence. In portraying political, social and environmental forces the *Transformance* research project looks to create enablement, dynamicization, and critical social interpretation from and by participants and viewers.

Transformance includes creative transgressive work and acts that go beyond and challenge normative limits set by the institution of the 'family' and the institutional privileging of this normative; the 'proper' and the socially regulative. In this sense *Transformance* is a showing, an enacting in actions, a recognizing, and an understanding of inherent social 'plays', their possible expansion and transcendence.

Transformance in a performative theatrical sense brings us to that place where representation is presence and presence is *energy*; "theatrical representation is finite and leaves behind it, behind its actual presence, no trace, no object to carry it off. It is neither a book nor a work, but an

energy, and in this sense it is the only art of life" (Derrida 1997, p.56).

McKenzie (2001) notes that critical dialogue on liminal rites of passage in the early 1980's between anthropologist Victor Turner and performance theorist Richard Schechner provided performance scholars with a model "to theorize the ways in which theatre and other arts can help to transform individuals and society at large" p.36), a model which Bousiou (2008) describes as leading to "a transformation of consciousness which can acquire a collective dimension involving groups and communities" (p.2). McKenzie (2001) further states that "separated from society both temporally and spatially, liminal activities allow participants to reflect, take apart, and reassemble symbols and behaviours and possibly, to transform themselves and society" (p.36).

I would argue that we 'perform' our lives and during this performance we continually experience the liminal. As a space of transformation life is theatre, emotion its topic, its subject. Consciousness is emotion in flux; our

selves continually on the threshold of becoming, “sempiternal, that is, a self that moves and creates itself at every instant” (Artaud 1976, p.465). A perpetual liminal present this theatre of life is an energy separated neither temporally nor spatially from society but a forever fluid motion in which we drift, sift from one dynamic to another, from one paradigm to the next.

Starting with myself as an artist, curator and creative producer understanding that “it may be necessary to think further than I do, and perhaps otherwise” (Artaud 1965) and in order to affect change I have looked to both the physical and psychological fields to find a way of transforming what artist Karel Teigev calls unacceptable reality into a reality of desire, or possibility made real (Hames 1995, p166).

Theatre director Peter Brook, re-iterating the teachings of many a mystic, has written that “(t)he most radical change that can be made in human existence is by one person on himself. This is hard, very rare. But it happens. There have been individuals who, by their own bootstraps, have turned themselves inside out, and pulled

themselves to another level. That is possible. The next possibility is in small groups (together) building a new world.” (Porter 1968, p.68)

Antonin Artaud could be considered as such an individual who in an attempt to portray the essence of both theatrical and visual art turned himself inside out. Suffering physical and psychological conditions from an early age he was encouraged to draw and to write and prescribed opium to alleviate his pain. Described as “one of the greatest examples in art of the imaginative retrieval of a life that was beyond repair” (Artaud, 1995, p.1) his concept of art and theatre derives partly from ‘primitive’ and Gnostic ritual, partly from alchemy. His concern is with a communal act conducive to a metamorphosis of the individual soul. Artaud implies an analogy with the Eleusinian mysteries, which must, he says, have worked towards resolving “all the conflicts produced by the antagonism between matter and spirit, idea and form, concrete and abstract” (Hayman 1977).

“(Artaud) no longer exists. But the residue of his existence – a million words in a long row of collected writings and letters; his drawings; the shape of his body still moving in his films; the strident tones of his voice on the tapes he recorded – all that not only exists but is still alive and active” (Esslin 1976, p.115.)

Artaud’s focus was primarily on staging performances that would make visible his theories relating to a new type of theatre. Innes (1984) believes that “Artaud’s theoretical writings overshadow his practical work in the theatre” (p.65). Quoting from Artaud’s 1928 *Alfred Jarry Theatre* season programme that “better than any theories, our programme is there to make our intentions manifest” (ibid) Innes argues that Artaud was more committed to practice than he was to principle. Artaud’s theoretical writings are as much creative musing on culture and civilisation as they are on the theory and the practice of theatre. It is in the performative that the empirical in ‘practice’ and ‘principle’ are conjoined.

In a letter written in 1946 to Peter Watson, the then art editor of the English magazine *Horizon*, Artaud wrote:

“I entered into literature by writing books in order to say that I was unable to write anything, my thought when I had something to say or to write was what denied me the most. I never had any ideas and two very short books *l’Ombilic des Limbres* and *Le Pese-Nerfs* (both written in 1925)... revolve around this profound, inveterate, endemic absence of any idea(b)ut after 20 years’ lapse they appear staggering, successful not in respect to me but in respect of the inexpressible” (Artaud 1995, p.81).

Bell (2006) writes that Artaud has been ‘mined’ by many writers and philosophers for principles and philosophical insight. Three amongst those many are Jacques Derrida, Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. All three, Derrida and Deleuze alone and Deleuze and Guattari together have concocted an ongoing intellectual discourse in academia around the “borrowed concept of *body without organs*” (Cull 2009 p.234).

My interpretation and reading of Artaud and the attention given to and discussion around these three words; *body without organs* within the academy inspired me to incorporate them, along with other texts from Artaud, as the “script”¹ for the performance art work *A Sense of Dislocation* – the key component of my research project. These three words *body without organs* from Artaud’s reported output of a million and their reduction first to an aphorism and then to the anagram “BwO” by Deleuze and Guattari are from a line of spoken scripted text in Artaud’s banned 1947 radio broadcast *To Have Done with the Judgement of God*.

Bell (2006) interprets Derrida’s reading of the body without organs as a “reconstitution of the body” one that Artaud had hoped to achieve in his much espoused Theatre of Cruelty – a theater in which “all difference will be purged” – the restoration of “a lost presence and purity” (p.157-8). Bell (2006) further interprets Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of the *body without organs* as being a philosophical site; a “surface for the recording of the entire process

of (the) production of desire” (p.160) in all its manifestations; a place from and onto which our potentials are realized.

The words ‘*body without organs*’ in their original context are from the proposed, but cancelled, 1947 radio poem entitled *To Have Done with the Judgement of God*. Artaud had been invited to prepare a programme for a new radio series. He reworked some older material on a peyote ritual and wrote several new pieces “preoccupied with the hopeless vulnerability of the given human body and the necessity to reconstruct it” (Artaud 1995, p.36):

By having him undergo once more but
for the last time an autopsy in order
to remake his anatomy,
I say, in order to remake his anatomy.

Man is sick because he is badly
constructed.
We must scratch out the animalcule
which makes him itch to death, God, and
with god his organs.

¹ See Appendices

For tie me down if you want to,
But there is nothing more useless than
an organ.

When you have given him a body without
organs, then you will have delivered him
from all his automatisms and restored
him to his true liberty.

Then you will teach him again to dance
to dance inside out as in the delirium of
dance halls and that inside out will be his
true side out (Artaud 1995, p.307).

The interpretation and meaning of this and other texts by Artaud continue to preoccupy intellectuals and the academy. As McDonald (1998) in his preface states: “(t)his means, among other things, that (the) text does not fully control its interpretation; nor can any single reading pre-empt the field of readings. Both the text and its interpretations remain plural” (p viii) forever fluid, performative and dependent on social context and the conditions of its enactment. In any interpretation of Artaud we must address the question asked by Sontag

in *Against Interpretation*; is the interpretation a liberating act, does it revise and trans-value or is the interpretation reactionary and stifling?

Bell (2008) notes that “Derrida maintains that (as) *all language is citational* All language can be lifted from its original context” and ‘quoted’ in a different context” (p.188) contrary to the distinction made by J.L. Austin, in *How To Do Things With Words*, “between ‘normal’ language use and language that is ‘cited’, or ‘quoted’ on the stage. All language is an iteration, or a repetition, with no link to an original version” (ibid). Esslin (1976) in discussing Artaud’s wish for his 1927 Theatre Alfred Jarry to offer its audience theatre created with “precise predetermination” contradicts, as Derrida notes in his essay *The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation*, Artaud’s later wish for a theatre that is unique and unrepeatable. Esslin points out that Derrida in his argument has used passages from Artaud’s work that “are taken out of context and refer to quite different points” (p.118). “Beware of ideologues” writes Roger Shattuck, of those who doctor and quote Artaud out of context (Shattuck 1984, p183).

Sellin (1975) in one of the first English language critiques of Artaud's work and vision, *The Dramatic Concepts* of Antonin Artaud, prefaced his critique with a discussion on Artaud's influence stating "that secondary and tertiary 'influencees' like Peter Brook and his disciples have popularized a misinterpretation of Artaud's ideas based to a large extent on a semantic rather than metaphysical or aesthetic understanding of the word 'cruelty'" (viii).

Portentously Artaud wrote, in *Interjections* a collection of dictations and the last book of his work that he himself edited:

"Ideas don't come without limbs, and so these are no longer ideas but limbs, limbs fighting among themselves.

The mental world was never anything but that which remains from a hellish trampling of organs while the man who wore them is no more." (Artaud 1995, p.247).

Here Artaud is envisioning the "extermination of individual consciousness" (Conrad 1999, p.357). While in Mexico in 1936 he wrote that "the destruction of the individual consciousness represents a high idea of culture; it is a profound idea of culture which gives rise to a whole new form of civilisation. Not to feel oneself live as an individual means escaping" from "the capitalism of consciousness, since the soul is the property of all" (Artaud 1976, p.369). This he saw as "a revolution to win back *the indigenous soul* as it was before Cortez" (ibid). He envisaged "an original form of culture" developed between the culture of pre-Columbian America and the "fragmentary culture of modern Europe" (ibid p.373).

One could also argue that a *body without organs*, the "*BwO*", signifies that state when core consciousness is freed from bodily attachment as organs con(s)t(r)ain consciousness and inhibit awareness. The "*BwO*" frees consciousness from that attachment; it enables consciousness to shift from a physical ego sense-based awareness to an extended participatory awareness of 'the world at large'.

Deleuze and Guattari (1980) further expanded their initial idea of *body without organs* “BwO” to “...the Earth - the Deterritorialized, the Glacial, the giant molecule - is a body without organs. This body without organs is permeated by informed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles” (p.40). This resonates with the theories of the noosphere postulated by I. V. Vernadsky and Teilhard de Chardin. According to the original theory of Vernadsky, “the noosphere is the third in a succession of phases of development of the Earth, after the geosphere (inanimate matter) and the biosphere (biological life). Just as the emergence of life fundamentally transformed the geosphere, the emergence of human cognition fundamentally transforms the biosphere”.² For Teilhard de Chardin who further developed Vernadsky’s idea the noosphere emerges through and is constituted by the interaction of human minds. The noosphere has grown in step with the organization of the human mass in relation to itself as it populates the earth. As

2 retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Ivanovich_Vernadsky

mankind organizes itself in more complex social networks, the higher the noosphere will grow in awareness ultimately leading to an Omega Point – a becoming into a supreme consciousness. This process, psychedelic philosopher and Teilhardist, Terence McKenna describes as “being sucked into the *body of eternity*”.³

Although not the province of this project I might suggest that a rendering of the *body of eternity* to the “BoE” could be added to current philosophical discourse on the work of Terence McKenna and aligned to discourse on the *body without organs*, the “BwO”. McKenna believed that the human DNA template proves that we are textural beings and that our evolution is no longer biological but mental; we are undergoing an epigenetic change that is “taking place in syntactical structures that are linguistically based” (McKenna 1994).

In his description of Narcissus in the *Dictionary of Symbols* Cirlot (1987) quotes an idea originally postulated in 1942 in Gaston Bachelard’s *L’Eau et les Reves* by Joachim Gasquet, a friend and a

3 retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Teilhard_de_Chardin

critic of the painter Cezanne; “(T)he world is an immense Narcissus in the act of contemplating itself”. Cirlot states that Gasquet “sees the Narcissus-myth as a primordial illustration not on the sexual but on the cosmic level, so that Narcissus becomes a symbol of this, self-contemplating, introverted, and self-sufficient attitude” (p.226).

This reading of the Narcissus myth could be extended to describe our present day experience of the world and our lack of understanding of both our environment and our place in it. In our selfish arrogance and our perceived autonomy we do not recognise the reflection of our own (the world’s) divine status in the universe (the cosmos).

As Plotinus reminded us in his reported last recorded words perhaps we need to “(s)trive to bring back the God in ourselves to the Divine in the universe”.

Transformance - the exhibition



Figure 3. Olivia Garelja. *Image Beyond Image*. 2010



Figure 4. Jane Loo. *A Sense of Dislocation*. 2010

<http://www.tsbbankwallaceartscentre.org.nz/current-exhibitions/transformance/>



Figure 5. Grace Chai. *Embodiment of Narcissus*. 2010



Figure 6. Nick Konings. *Transformative Mirror*. 2010

2) *Transformance* - the exhibition

Introduction

The *Transformance* exhibition included a five-week group show featuring the work of four digital media artists; Grace Chai, Jane Loo, Olivia Garelja and Nick Konings, an exhibition opening performance art work featuring four performers; Jeong Whang, Elise Chan, Kristen Larsen and myself, and a series of artist's talks with the digital media artists. I performed a curator's role for both the exhibition and the performance artwork and I structured and interviewed the artists in the artists' talks.



Figure 7. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

Curatorial process

My curatorial preference is to extend creative and critical processes through the display of trans-disciplinary work that performs on multiple levels. This preference is aligned to the promotion of participatory co-operative qualities more inherent in the making and display of the 'performing' arts; a curatorial strategy that transforms the role of the curator from that of a presenter of artifacts and objects to that of an enactor in action performing and displaying both his/her own and other artists' artworks; creating an environment where representation is presence and presence is *energy*.

In mounting the *Transformance* exhibition my curatorial intention was to actively build a community of participants. In my extensive experience researching, evaluating and developing dance theatre and contemporary music creative arts projects I have found that a shared management style encourages the maintenance of well mannered, healthy, working relationships between peers and helps to build strong team links. I have also found that processes that enlist cultural understandings and focus on building shared responsibility maximize

potential creative opportunities; thus ensuring well profiled, consulted on and successful projects. My intention was to bring these live performance production processes and skills to the staging of a digital media, visual and performance art exhibition.

In 2010 I meet the four AUT digital media artists; three Honours students, Grace Chai, Jia Yin (Jane) Loo and Olivia Garelja and Masters student Nick Konings, whose 2010 final years work I subsequently curated as the *Transformance* exhibition.

Sharing a collegial postgraduate workspace with Chai, Loo and Garelja throughout 2010 made for an ideal environment within which to interact. I discussed with them the methodologies and digital mechanisms with which they were constructing their projects and the theoretical influences on their work. I attended the August 2010 Post-Graduate Conference at which they presented their work and the September 2010 Postgraduate Symposium at which Konings presented his work. A thematic connection had previously been made to Konings work resulting

in his inclusion in the exhibition. Discussions were continued in an informal manner, on and off campus, as I developed the *Transformance* construct on which to base the exhibition.

Each of the artists displayed in their respective artworks different modes of transformation; portraying ideas of human physical, linguistic, mental or environmental adaptation and change. Ideas based on reflection, of self-creation and the creation of alternate identities and locations were significant transformative themes in their artworks. Although their artworks were very different in context generically they all worked in digital media. Given their collegial motivations it seemed logical to me that the Chai, Loo and Garelja would be ideally matched to share the one exhibition space. Konings, I decided, whose work was composed of more than one medium would have his own exhibiting space. A complimentary and aesthetic placement of the artworks within each room was then easily achieved. This worked for both exhibitors and viewers of the work as the two exhibition rooms, each containing a variety of media, were themselves transformed into engaging performative sites.

A key component to the performative context of my research project and the exhibition I also created, produced and performed in a meditation, a performance artwork, inspired by exhibiting artist Jane Loo's exhibition work *A Sense of Dislocation*. Background presentation ideas for this work included the themes of alienation and oppression, the emotion of humiliation and its strength sapping correlatives shame and fear; all



Figure 8. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

elements of Loo's original artwork. Performed as the opening event of the exhibition, in the large lobby space that connected the two exhibition rooms, the work also referenced, through performance and spoken text, themes and ideas portrayed in the artworks of the other exhibiting artists.

In early March 2011 I selected and confirmed the group of performers with whom I would create the opening performance artwork. Selected were Jeong Whang, a recent Elam Fine Arts graduate, Elise Chan, a Unitec dance graduate and Kristian Larsen, a choreographer and dance theatre maker. Larsen agreed to join later in the workshop programme to assist with facilitation of the choreography. Jeong Whang came to my attention as a performer when I saw her perform in a work designed by artist/curator Kate Muggeridge at opening weekend of the *Lost Playgrounds* – a public art exhibition held in Britomart in Auckland February 2011. Not trained in any specific physical theatre medium Whang has an underlying interest in the intersection between the architecture of movement and its realisation in and relationship

to spatial environments and their design. Elise Chan I came across by chance when she was rehearsing an outdoor public dance performance for the Auckland Fringe Festival February 2011. Part of Chan's practice lies in the exploration of dance making in public space outside of normal dance work for theatre spaces. Kristian Larsen I first met when he performed with artists Ko Nakajima and Kentaro Taki from Japan during March in Video Life an exhibition curated by Phil Dadson for the St Paul St Gallery AUT in association with the Auckland Arts Festival. I subsequently meet with each proposed performer and discussed the *Transformance* concept and showed them Jane Loo's exhibition video.

I began discussions with and sent a proposal to Deborah Lawler-Dormer the director of the Moving Image Centre (MIC) on Karanghape Road in Auckland for the *Transformance* exhibition in October 2010. The exhibition was confirmed early November 2010. Simultaneously I began discussions with the Julia Durkin, Director of the Festival of Photography for the inclusion of *Transformance* in the 2011 Festival of Photography. Confirmation on this

was received early December 2010. I made a successful application to the Asia NZ Foundation in November 2010 for funds to assist in the mounting of the exhibition. A similar application to Creative New Zealand in February 2011 was not successful.

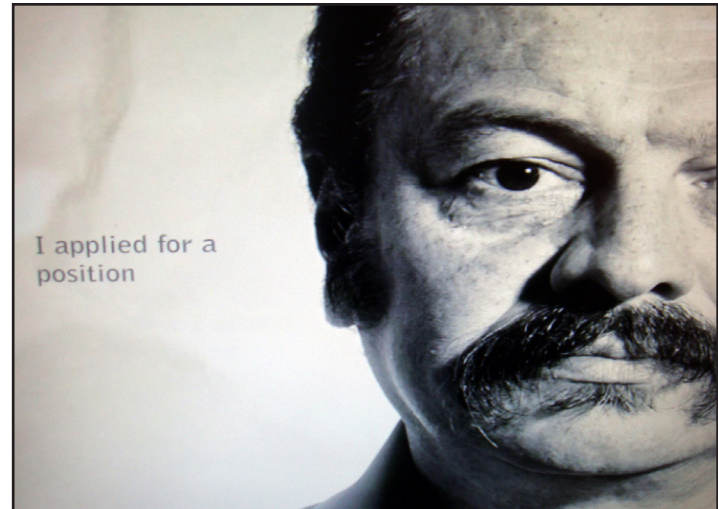


Figure 9. *A Sense of Dislocation*. Moving-image. Loo, J. 2010

My first directions in September 2010 for the opening performance art work saw me having a plaster model made of the face of the model that Loo had used to portray herself in her artwork. My intention was to engage, to cast, two women of Chinese descent to perform with me in the performance meditation at the opening of the *Transformance* exhibition. They would both be wearing masks cast from the plaster model. However, in the process of mask making, the plaster model was accidentally destroyed. As the model used by Loo in the making of her work had left the country to return home to Korea the idea of working with masks was shelved.

Although originally planned to stage the exhibition at the MIC because of its closure in March 2011 *Transformance* was transferred through the initiative of Deborah Lawler-Dormer, the director of the MIC, to the Taranaki Bank Wallace Arts Centre housed in the Pah Homestead in Hillsborough, Auckland. This shift in location proved to be beneficial for the project in that audience numbers and demographic were dramatically increased on those projected for MIC and the Wallace Art Trust purchased works from two of the exhibiting artists.

In order to assist in the promotion of the exhibition I commissioned participating artist Jane Loo to design a series of five postcards, one for each of the digital media artists and one to promote the opening performance art work. My discussions with the artists continued on into the formal Saturday afternoon individual artists talks that I programmed during the exhibition.

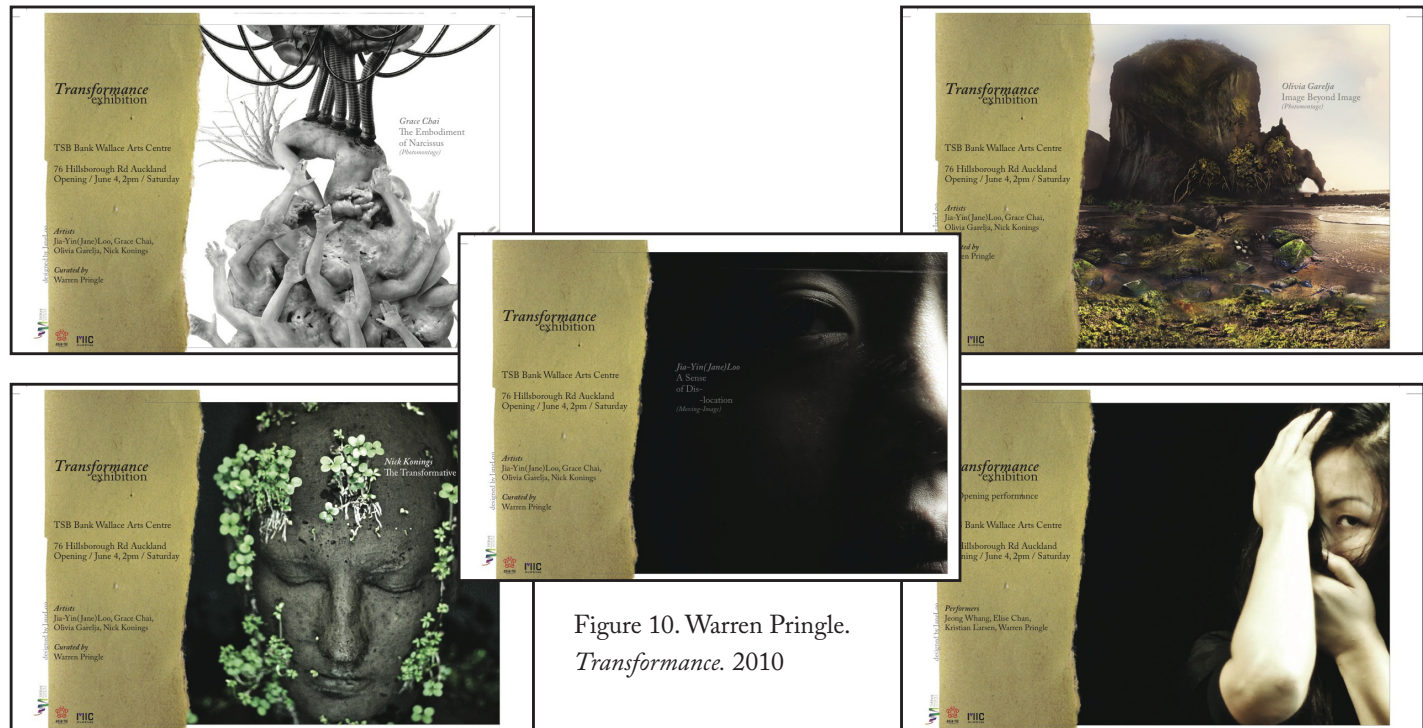


Figure 10. Warren Pringle.
Transformance. 2010

Artists' Talks⁶

When curating the exhibition I structured a series of artists' talks that were conducted over three consecutive weekends during the exhibition in the exhibition rooms containing the artists' works. I introduced and then 'interviewed' each artist. The talks explored not just the making, meaning and outcomes of the artists completed works but also the potentials of their ongoing practices. They were conducted in a way that explored each individual artists motivations, influences and work processes and allowed them to speak publicly about the content and the underlying themes their work. The talks also enabled a gallery frequenting public an opportunity to ask questions, discuss with and give their responses to the artists' works.

Sourcing material from their written exegeses and from discussions held with each artist I formatted a series of questions tailored to each talk which I then emailed to the artists and discussed with them the day before each talk. This allowed the artists a degree of confidence in "performing" to the public. Each artist talk was videoed for both the artists and the hosting gallery's archiving purposes.

⁶ See appendices for Artists' talks notes and questions

Artists'Talks Images



Figure 11-16. Warren Pringle. *Transformance* Artist's talks.
2010

Artists' Talks Video

Transformance - The exhibition

My group show Critique

Jia-yin (Jane) Loo - *A Sense of Dislocation*

“Look, listen, read, hear
Paying attention, being aware.”⁷

Loo’s video project “documents and examines personal experiences as narrative”, showing parallels “to larger cultural issues of intolerance” (including the use of language). “Through expressing the personal meaning of small narratives, ... communicating struggle and social disconnection ... the project sheds light on cultural values that may otherwise be hidden by an inherent hegemony.” (Loo 2010).

Loo uses personal narrative as a tool for communicating the struggles of new Asian migrants and in doing so highlights an aligned sense of social disconnection. Public exhibition of the work has creatively introduced these struggles to a social and collective consciousness. They have become pluralised. ‘Others’ viewing the work also identify their oppressions.

⁷ Loo poetically stating in interview the action she sought from viewers of her work.



Figure 17. Jane Loo. *A Sense of Dislocation*. 2010

During the artists talk conducted with Loo an audience member, a docent from the Wallace Arts Centre, informed us that the work had instilled in her a sense of the humiliation that the experiences in the narratives portrayed and that she had subsequently herself felt humiliated. Another audience member offered that “we need your art Jane”, as a counter to the antagonistic behaviours that causes such humiliation.

In a study of portraiture and addressing topical cultural issues Loo uses still images of the face as her creative mechanism. Using different angles shots, from wide shot to extreme close-up, she explores the aesthetic form of that most exposed and personal part of the human body. Looking at her images and their sparse revelation of sadness we sense that the face really is like a mirror to the soul. The effect of that sadness is enhanced by the patterns and the textures of sound effects. Transition between the three different narratives is distinct but the use of blurring effects leads the viewers' eyes and emotions into each new segment as if in a change of mood.

The aural imagery in its variation from old-fashioned typewriter to the sound of rain promotes the sense of 'storytelling' and making of hand drawn corrections to the digital text font provides a humourous touch. The bi-lingual nature of the work is introduced in the first segment with Mandarin hieroglyphs juxtaposed in the background behind the English text which gives voice to the characters portrayed.

In describing personal experiences in the use of English as a second language the forging of a narrative connection is sought with viewers.



Figure 18. *A Sense of Dislocation*. Moving-image. Loo, J. 2010

One could say that Loo's process in the creation of her work is similar to that of writer Kathy Acker of whom Robert Gluck has written "takes revenge on power by displaying what it has done; she speaks truth to power by going where the power differential is greatest, to a community of the outcast, the disregarded", those who according to Judith Malina Julian Beck deemed of the most need. (Beck 1986 p.x). "The power imbalance itself causes a reversal that confers authority, not to identity – these characters are merely quick sketches – but to the quality of oppression, loss,

and degradation. If hegemony defines itself by what it tries to exclude, then the excluded merely need to describe themselves in order to describe hegemony”(Gluck 2006, p.48) Loo alerts us to the fact that although actions in themselves are irreversible, which in her subsequent artists talk she reiterated, via a “theatrical” process, being the creation and public display of her video, the emotion, the mark that lingers, can be sublimated and made repeatable – a link here back to Artaud who Esslin (1976) states referred to in *The Theatre and its Double* when describing “the irreversibility of the actions in reality which (the) theatre, however by sublimating the emotion can make repeatable” (p.118). In responding to a question about empowerment during her artists talk Loo stated that her experience of humiliation was a reality and making the work was just the process of its making, feelings of empowerment were not necessarily evident during the making process and even after completion of the making of the work, looking back, there was still a sense of the humiliation suffered; the ‘reality’ of the situation.

Loo’s work is located in a discussion of the effects on those who live in our society for whom

English is a second language. Although often viewed negatively there is a positive performative inherent in the communication processes of English as second language users. In their use of English they turn a *major* language into a *minor* language described by Deleuze in *One Less Manifesto*, a critique on theatre director/actor Carmelo Bene as “ (a) language(s) of continuous variability”(Deleuze 1979, p.244); language from which creative activity is more likely to arise. Like a lot of English as a second language speakers Loo, in live discussion, uses a lot of repetition, repeating phrases to arrive at a final dialogue. As a ‘theatre’ of language this vocal repetition can also assist clarity of intended meaning for other participants in any spoken communication. To further Deleuze’s meaning one might claim that this is being bilingual “*but* in a single language, in a unique language To be a foreigner, *but* in one’s own (adopted) tongue ... To stammer, *but* as a stammerer of language itself, not only of speech” (ibid p.245). This could see the development of a minor language and give to its users “ ... the authority of perpetual variation in contrast to the power or despotism of the invariant ... the authority of the stammerer who has acquired the

right to stammer in contrast to the “well-spoken” majority” (ibid p.254). Deleuze suggests that variation “must travel through new and always unexpected routes” (ibid). An interesting study could be made on the compacting of language in texting processes used in message sending on digital phones and the spill over of that into email by users of English as second language. “(F)or Acker (feminist) transformation or change must necessarily occur on symbolic and linguistic levels. As Laure from Acker’s *My Mother: Demonology* so aptly puts it, “ ‘No new world without a new language’”(Hardin 2004 p. 224).



Figure 19. *A Sense of Dislocation*. Moving-image. Loo, J. 2010

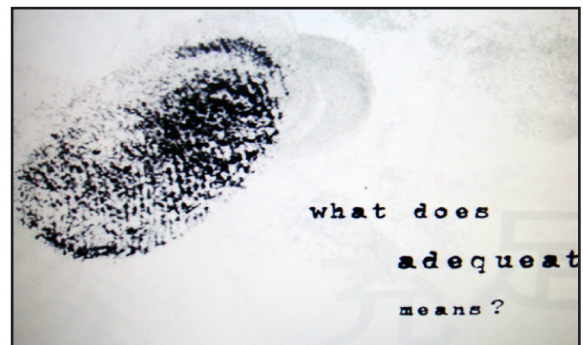


Figure 20. *A Sense of Dislocation*. Moving-image. Loo, J. 2010

Grace Chai – *The Embodiment of Narcissus*

Chai (2010) has written that her project “investigates ways in which the myth of Narcissus operates as a metaphor for male dysmorphic disorder as expressed through cosmetic surgical procedures” thereby questioning the ethics of fashion and the manipulated self. After researching and drawing inspiration from art and discourse portraying or describing notions of worship, male beauty, organic and mechanical fusion, emasculation and loss of identity, and with the intention of stimulating discourse on male identity and body re-construction and the search for a perceived male ideal she has created a series of digitally manipulated photographic images.

Chai has described the significant influence of artists Gustave Dore, Peter Witkin and H.R. Giger on her project. As was her intention referencing artist Gustave Dore’s 1892 illustrations of twisted, suffering and contorted bodies in hell from Dante’s *Divine Comedy* has lead her to create compositions depicting alteration, deformity and anxiety; referencing photographer Peter Witkin’s use of mythology through which to describe the abject, the alluring

and the profound her digital manipulations convey a distinct sensuality and eroticism and in referencing artist H.R. Giger fetishistic paintings integrating machine and body Chai has similarly achieved the depiction of disturbing futuristic biomechanical entities.

The amorphous mass out of which the emasculated figures arise in Chai’s images resonate with Artauds “hellish trampling of organs” from his 1947 proclamation:

“The mental world was never anything but that which remains from a hellish trampling of organs while the man who wore them is no more” (Artaud 1995, p247).

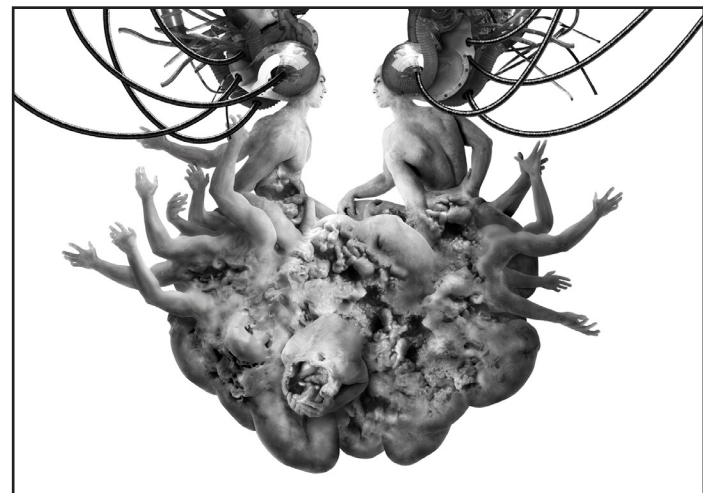


Figure 21. *Embryo of Narcissus*. Chai, G. 2010

This conjures up both a sense of emasculation and a loss of identity. The male dysmorphic who imagines defects in his physical appearance, Chai suggests, wishes to recreate through body surgery an imagined ideal and in so doing replicate the mythic metaphor of the divine illusory beauty of Narcissus. He is assisted in this task by the dictates of fashion in our consumerist world where the body as image has become a commodity that can be forever perfected, a shadow of itself upon which illusions can be built. This fashionable idea extends beyond ideals of bodily beauty to the realms of physicality and endurance especially in sport where bio-mechanic bodily enhancement is considered a norm. For classical Greeks, of course, notions of beauty were not just the aesthetic but also the functional.

In a review of the *Transformance* exhibition on her blogspot, Chinglish⁸, Renee Liang stated that “(u)nlike Loo, there is nothing directly “Asian” about her (Chai’s) work, but perhaps her background pushes her to look more closely at the myths of “body” and “appearance” and how this limited view is restrictive, creating monsters of us all. Her work is more subliminal, challenging

⁸ <http://chinglish-renee.blogspot.com/2011/06/transformance-comment-on-exhibition-at.html>

how we perceive, market and respond to images of flesh: perhaps she is asking why we would judge one thing as beautiful and another as ugly? (or for that matter, how do we choose what is art and what is just artifact?)”.

Chai’s *The Embodiment of Narcissus* could be also be interpreted as a series of threshold images; liminal, performative spaces through and from which dystopic males are being reconstructed and projected into a realm of perfected illusion.

“What you seek is nowhere; but turn yourself away, and the object (of your love) will be no more. That which you behold is but the shadow of a reflected form and has no substance of its own” (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.433).

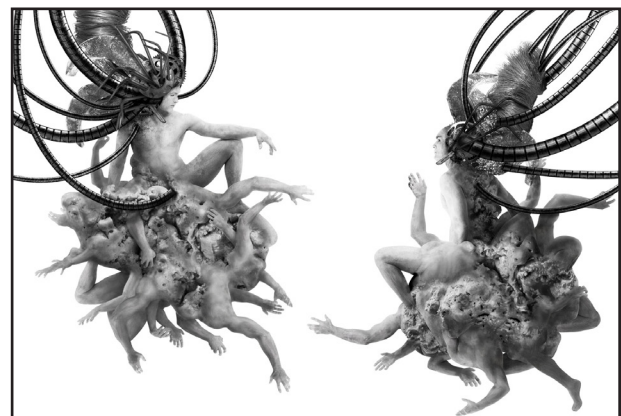


Figure 22. *Creation of Narcissus*. Chai, G. 2010

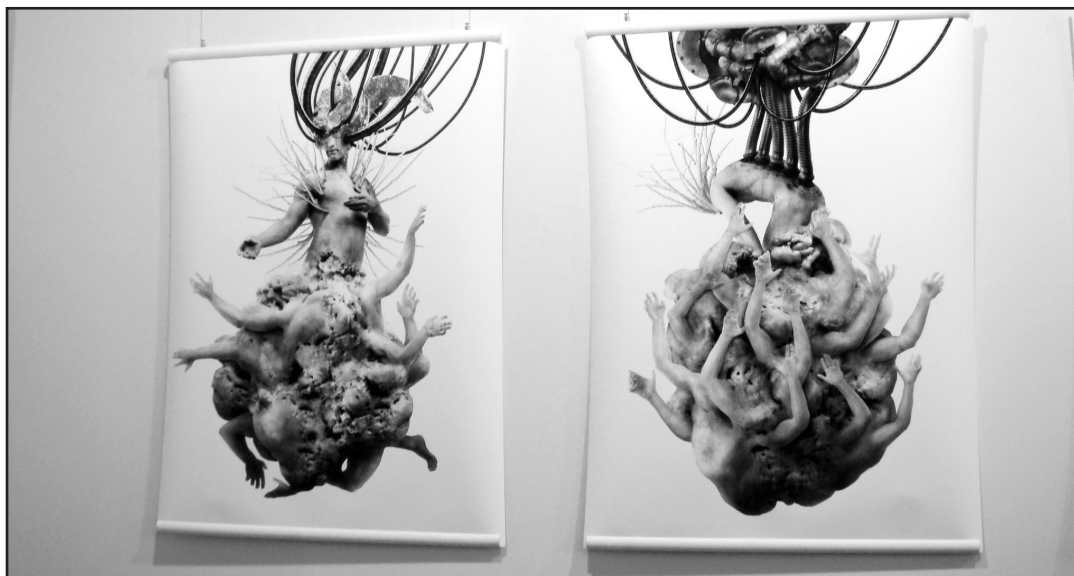


Figure 23. *Embodiment of Narcissus*. Chai, G. 2010



Figure 24. *Embodiment of Narcissus*. Chai, G. 2010

Olivia Garelja – *Image Beyond Image*

A photographic exploration of Nature through augmented imagery.

“Lend me your mind and I can change what you see”(Garelja 2010 p.7).

Using augmented digital imagery with a deliberate focus of portraying both nature’s micro and macro elements Garelja has constructed imaginary landscapes which are “persuasive alternative worlds that are ‘nowhere’ but ‘somewhere’” (ibid) seemingly impossible worlds in which the boundaries between geography, geology and biology have been breached. In a project designed to push the parameters of nature photography in order to change the way



Figure 25. *Land Dunes*. Garelja, O. 2010

in which we traditionally view nature Garelja writes that in the invention of her landscapes the use of Photoshop software enabled her to focus “on creating symmetry by reflecting images and merging them with their reflections” (ibid) creating multiple imaginary worlds formed by combining fragments of the ‘real world’ with augmented imagery tricking our perceptual understanding of what is effectively understood to be the ‘real world’ - a deceptive aspect creatively played up to achieve layers of ‘mystery’ and ‘hyperreal’ atmospheres utilizing techniques of erasure and montage composition. “Matter as revelation” in an Artaudian sense. Primordial and transformative and for some heralding an unpredictable reality; one that reveals “states of an acuteness so intense” that an “underlying menace and chaos” is sensed and for others an enhancement of the senses verging towards an ecstatic “rapture”. An endless mirroring perhaps; a *Transformance*.

The work puts one in mind, as with Chai’s work as previously mentioned and with Konings work as described below, of a threshold space, a liminal space. In Garelja’s instance a place where boundaries seem to dissolve and looking at the

images, one has a sense of being consciously transported across physical and temporal zones into a vision of the future. Somewhat disorienting and unsettling the movement seems both trans-geographical and across time; a space of transformation between phases of decay and growth, and depending on your point of view either a utopian or dystopian separation and reincorporation, or a space indeed where division between the sacred and the profane dissolves. One is reminded of Walter Benjamin's description of the "magical value" of photography where the "space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious". In writing about the making of her work Garelja has described a digital tweaking process that she designed to extend the reality of the images. Watching these digital transformations she realized "that the ultimate objective of her project was to transform views of an external world into an internal landscape", an "inscape" that would inspire viewers "to journey in their imaginations to places where the physical body could not go" - to a virtual reality derived from 'somewhere in reality', yet physically 'nowhere' - the result of a process outcome. Pushing this concept she

further understood that in creating the inkjet prints of these representations of imaginary landscapes they become visible, they become real as artifacts giving physical properties to fictitious landscapes. As Garelja quoting Heidegger relates "making the strange, familiar and the familiar, strange".



Figure 26. *Lowtide*. Garelja, O. 2010

Nick Konings -
The Transformative Mirror;

contemplating the self as an emergent being through active reflection.

Originally a solo exhibition *The Transformative Mirror* included not only artefacts and a telematic installation but also a live interactive audience component. In *Transformance* at the Wallace Arts Centre it was exhibited as part of the group show and because of a lack of available space the interactive audience component was prerecorded, those participating photographed as one of the exhibited artefacts.

An audio-visual study Konings project, framed as an active reflection of self-transformation, could be seen as a “transgressive mixture(s) of biology,

technology and code” (Turkle 1995).

In his exegesis Konings (2010) has written that he used the metaphor of the mirror as a structural device to develop his telematic installation; translating the universal aspects of a personal journey into an inter-subjective experience creating a being whose identity is constructed through the reflected gaze of others, a reflected self. Central to the philosophy of the project, which he writes focuses on the process of self-transformation, is that perspective which apprehends identity as emerging from a constantly transforming interplay of forces external and internal to an impermanent body; the emergent being, or emergent self.

Digitally we see on a large screen a playful looping labyrinth of text that coils into and onto a body and then uncoils from that body, torrents of text, textuality, dissolving and coagulating, in an act of performativity. Text as silent signs, symbols, gestures, gestures of creation, DNA as text, the body woven as text, the body writing itself into identity, a frame in constant transformation. Avatars of emergent beings. The body as Heideggers “house of language”; those who are living are also those who are dying.

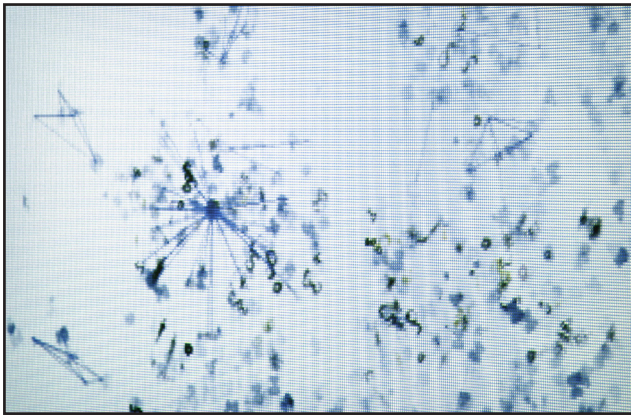


Figure 27. *Screen shot.* Konings, N. 2010

As a personalized visual investigation Konings watched and recorded the transformation of a biodegradable sculpture he made of his head, a self-portrait, acting as host-garden to cycles of vegetable and insect life. Using the metaphor of the garden the results of this conceptual study assisted him in the design of the telematic environment seen in the exhibition. This he anticipated would encourage viewers and participants to engage in their own process of active reflection.

Konings reminds us that whether as onlookers, participants or readers of visual textual information we project our selves into texts, into avatars, that shape and constitute our being. In his work the self has become the subject of a random process, a digital outline, a flow of information, Deleuze and Guattari's interpretation of Artaud's "body without organs" no less and yet less assured by the presence of a fixed identity but like coded DNA circling the body, a flow of biological material. And as with Artaud's description of cinema as "the human skin of things, the derm of reality" "from this mere game of appearances, this sort of trans-substantiation of elements, is born

an inorganic language which moves the mind by osmosis and with no sort of transposition in words creating situations which emerge from the simple collision of objects, forms, repulsions and attractions. It does not separate itself from life but returns to the primitive order of things" (Artaud 1999 p.21).

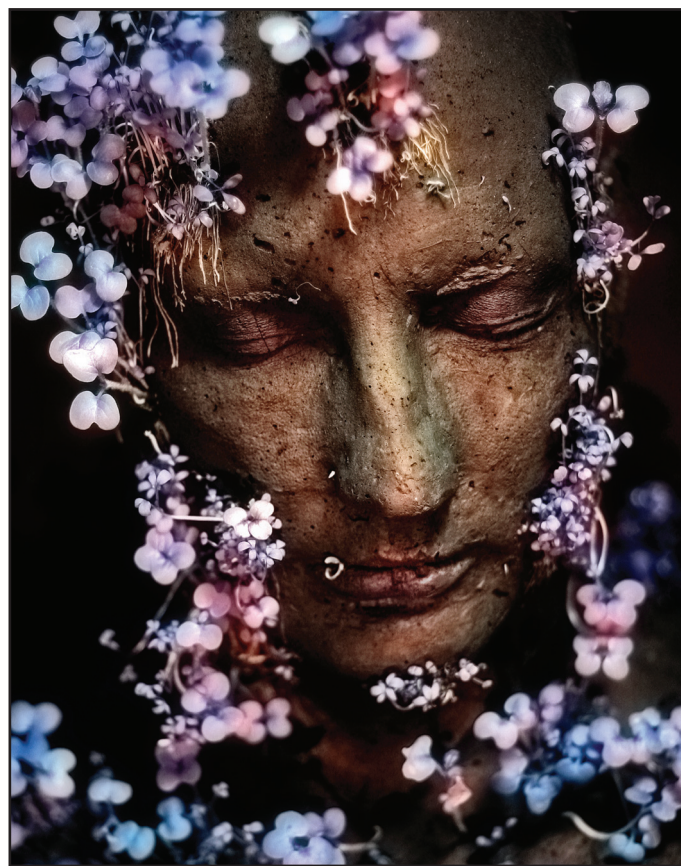


Figure 28. *Final design in early stages of life*. Konings, N. 2010

3) *A Sense of Dislocation* – the performance artwork

During the development of the *Transformance* concept and selection of artists for the exhibition I meet participating artist Jane Loo⁹ whose digital media artwork *A Sense of Dislocation*, as previously stated “documents and examines personal experiences (including the use of language) as narrative”, showing parallels “to larger cultural issues of intolerance. Through expressing the personal meaning of small narratives, ... communicating struggle and social disconnection ... the project sheds light on cultural values that may otherwise be hidden by



Figure 29. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

an inherent hegemony” (Loo 2010).

On first viewing an early edition of the work¹⁰ I was struck by the performative nature of not only the methodology of its creation but also of its potential to inform a meditative performance artwork on the subject of the humiliation; that being the mark which I viewed as the trace of experience that Loo was intending to impart in her work. The work itself is based on the Loo’s public experience of once being told, when working in the hospitality industry, to “learn good English before speaking to people” - an abusive experience that humiliated and shocked her deeply.

Boal (1979, p.53) stated that “(a)ccording to Aristotle, as well as Hegel or Marx, art, in any of its modes, genres, or styles, always constitutes a sensorial way of transmitting certain kinds of knowledge – subjective or objective, individual or social, particular or general, abstract or concrete, super- or infrastructural”, knowledge revealed (added Marx) however, “according to the perspective of the social sector” within which

9 Originally from Malaysia Loo came to New Zealand with her family in 2000.

10 In its original formation the work described an experience of one character only; that of the artist Loo.

the artist is located and that “the dominant art will always be that of the dominant class, since it is the only class that possesses the means to disseminate it” (ibid). In her foreword in Julian Beck’s autobiographical theatre handbook Judith Malina wrote that Beck believed that “the highest art shall be best understood by the most oppressed; because of their need.”(Beck 1986 x)

Humiliation is a word derived from the Latin *humilis*; low, lowly, from *humus*; ground. To humiliate is to disgrace, literally “to reduce to dirt”. In life and in performance emotions are often experienced and described as somatic. Misery is a physical thing – a taste in one’s mouth, a presence twisting one’s guts, anger a pneuma rising in one’s body like steam. Artaud (1974) believed that “(t)he actor is a heart athlete” ..and that in order “(t)o use his emotions in the same way as a boxer uses his muscles, he must consider a human being as a Double, like the Kha of Egyptian mummies, like an eternal ghost radiating affective powers” (p100). An actor, he says “thinks with his heart” and “must become conscious of the emotional world, not by attributing imaginary merits to it, but those with concrete meaning ... the soul

can be physiologically summarised as a maze of vibrations ... (b)elief in the soul’s flowing substantiality is essential to the actor’s craft ... (to) know that an emotion is substantial, subject to the plastic vicissitudes of matter, gives him control over his passions, extending our sovereign command” (ibid). Knapp (1980) furthers “(s)uch a material concept makes it possible through “mathematical analogies” to penetrate a whole new realm: time and space in which the actor succeeds not only in linking himself with the character he is portraying, but of associating him with the forces of the cosmos” (p.95).



Figure 30. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

In making the performance artwork my intention was to transform our roles from that of actors on a 'stage' to that of individuals in the 'world' who every morning on awakening 'put on' a 'face' to present to the 'world'. This 'face' changes dynamically throughout the day as we interdependently react to and interact with 'others' and 'objects'. 'Selves' changing 'selves' both animate and inanimate. Change, transference, occurs when the psyche of the artifact, in this instance the performer, and the performance disturbs the psyche of the onlooker, the viewer. The psyche that is that has etymological and causal links with blood and breath.

In making our performance public, we turn the art of theatre into the art of life, taking away the need to make the hierarchical distinction between stage and auditorium. If life is theater its stage is that place in which we stand.

To quote Artaud:

"Theatre is an art of space and it is by emphasizing the cardinal points of space that it has a chance of touching life itself.

It is in the space haunted by the theatre that things find their countenances, and under these countenances the sound of life" (Sellin 1975 p.23).

In constructing the performance artwork my initial intention was to take a "community" as in shared approach to the development of both the workshops and the ensuing performance. This entailed the concept of allowing each participant to input ideas and methodologies as the workshops progressed. However, both Elise Chan and Jeong Whang were looking more towards a traditional dance/theatre approach in that they would be directed into their roles. Consequently I found myself in the position of experimenting with them the gestural mood of the performance and an aligned spatial shaping but it wasn't until the arrival of choreographer Kristian Larsen, in the final two workshops, that a specific choreographed plan of those moods and shapes was confirmed.

Over the duration of the workshop programme and my attendance at coinciding course reading groups the workshops were increasingly informed

by Artaud's writings and their theoretical interpretation by the French philosophers Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari.

Two key readings influenced the progress of the workshops and my general focus relating to the whole *Transformance* project. The first was a reading from Deleuze and Gattuari's 1972 *Anti-Oedipus*, the second an Alan Read chapter entitled Speech Sites from Architecturally Speaking (Read 2000, pp.119-127). Read's chapter relates to Kelmscott House, once the residence of William Morris, which is located on the Thames River adjacent to Hammersmith Bridge in London. This reading sparked for me a memory of writer Kathy Acker whom I had met when I was employed, 1983 -1986, as a literature programmer, at Riverside Studios an arts centre not far from Kelmscott House on the Hammersmith River. Acker lived across the Hammersmith Bridge, a ten minutes walk from Riverside Studios. This lead me to researching Acker's later work *Pussy*, *King of the Pirates* which I discovered was informed by Artaud and other analysers of his work, including Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari.

The reading from Deleuze and Gattuari's *Anti-Oedipus* inspired me to select texts from Artaud's writings focusing on the philosophical and practical interpretations of his ideas including the *body without organs*, the "BwO" to read as a supporting background 'script' during the performance artwork.

Although focused on aspects of humiliation inherent in Loo's work the performance also commented on the reflective, liminal and deconstructive elements of the works of the three other artists participating in the *Transformance* exhibition; Grace Chai, Olivia Garelja and Nick Konings. The sound environment I commissioned from sound artist Jed Town specifically for the performance art work unexpectedly had a mood similar to the sound environment used in Konings exhibited work.



Figure 31. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010



Figure 32. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010



Figure 33. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

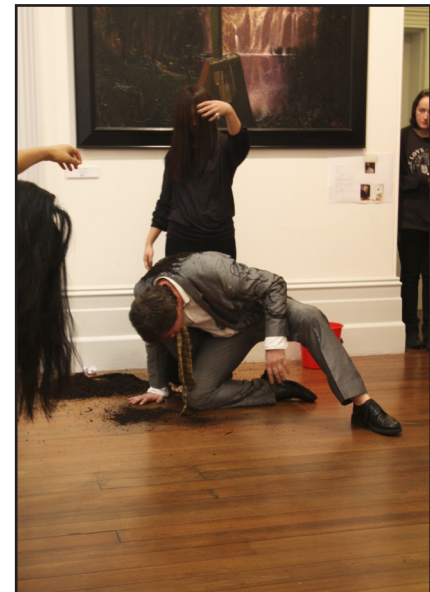


Figure 33a. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

A Sense of Dislocation – making the performance artwork

The performance workshops¹¹

After securing weekend access to the dance studios at the AUT Sports Fitness Centre in Northcote I began a series of eight two-hour weekly workshops conducted on Saturdays during April and May 2011. I had discussed workshop ideas and elements of the performers participation with artist Jane Loo who assisted in the rehearsal process, taking still photos and video imagery at each rehearsal and during the performance.

In creating the workshop programme I researched processes that I envisaged would bring to the project, given its short timeline, a satisfactory opening performance. My readings of the performance work of Jerzy Grotowski in his book *Towards a Poor Theatre* and from the *Grotowski Sourcebook* (Schechner 1997) informed an interpretation of the workshop, rehearsal space as production oriented, as a production tool, and a space where disciplined sincerity is maintained. Within this ‘sanctified’ space we explored different ideas, working with specific exercises, sharing specific techniques and developing a structured performance artwork.

The workshops were progressed with the intention of bringing to the attention of the performers the differing processes and disciplines of Western and Eastern live theatre. A ‘work-in-progress’ the workshops utilized techniques worked on by ensemble groups often over a period of many years. Areas covered included specific techniques in body and mental training initiated by Artaud, Grotowski, Eugeno Barba, Jean-Luis Barrault, Julian Beck and the Living Theatre, Tadashi Suzuki, Richard Schnechner and Kristian Linklater and interpretations of their work on both Eastern, including Kathakali, Butoh and Kabuki, and Western theatrical methodology. For each of the workshops I interpreted, from my research readings, different texts as guiding documents, adapting from and utilizing other dance theatre practitioners’ processes. The programme included:

- an introductory lecture on Artaud’s philosophy of breath, body and emotion adapted from an interpretation of Artaud’s concept of the *ternary of the cabalah*¹² detailed in the text *An Affective Atheleticism* (Artaud 1974 p.100) subsequently entitled *The Alchemy of the*

¹¹ See Appendices for Workshop summaries and my tutors notes

Human Body in his interpretation by Jean-Louis Barrault (Barrault 1974, pp.84-88). Barrault was a contemporary and had also worked with Artaud.

- two workshops dedicated to core aspects of working with the breath and voice. Entitled VoiceWork these were adapted from the work of voice therapist Kristian Linklater (Linklater 2006, pp.31-61).
- a workshop deconstructing the text from artist Jane Loo's original work *A Sense of Dislocation*.
- a workshop uncovering aspects of the emotion humiliation; locating them in a spatial environment and a workshop of movement and gesture exercises; adapted from the December 1978 edition of the Drama Review edited by Michael Kirby, specifically Abstract Spaces and the Suzuki Method (Cole 1978 pp.27-54).
- and a workshop copying sound, movement and text to a spatial alignment.

I constructed the workshop programme with the idea that we were following a recipe and presenting the emotion of humiliation, consciously constructing and objectively managing through artistic media the sense of that emotion so that the partakers, the audience, could *taste* it as an experience. Working with the other performers my intention was to find a way, in the workshop process, in which we could utilize the body to make emotionally and symbolically real, through



Figure 34. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

12 and perhaps Gurdjieff's Holy-Affirming, Holy-Denying, Holy-Reconciling second fundamental cosmic law as described in his Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson.

movement, gesture and static pose, the idea of humiliation and further to explore the source, the spiritual reality, behind these gestures and thereby elaborate on and showcase attitudes and emotions as universal spiritual forces and not as personal characteristics. Coupled with this process was my intention to make performative links to both the *Transformance* concept and to the artworks of the artists selected for the *Transformance* exhibition.



Figure 35. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

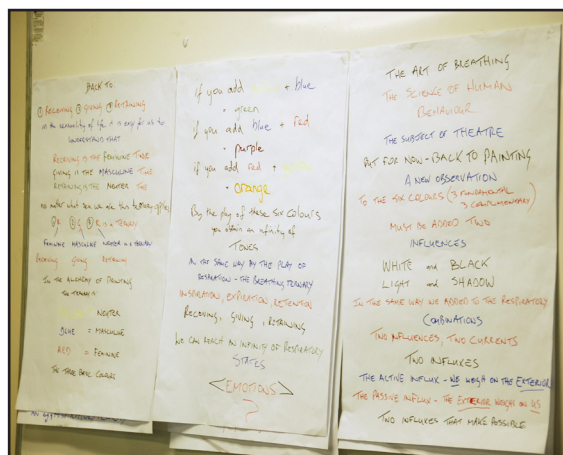


Figure 36. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

A Sense of Dislocation – the performance art work

An Analysis

“Theatrical representation is finite, and leaves behind it, behind its actual presence, no trace, no object to carry it off. It is neither a book nor a work, *but an energy*, and in this sense it is the only art of life” (Derrida 1997, p.56).

As an ontological performance document and to capture the *energy* inherent in the performance I have created a short movie; *A Sense of Dislocation* from film footage shot during the performance from three different video cameras; two stationary and one hand-held. As a performative action this aligns *A Sense of Dislocation*, the performance, to another focus of my research; the performative nature of the curating process. Edited by participating ‘roaming’ cameraman Eason Lin, who is seen as a reflective image in the first few frames and is fleetingly captured at other instances by the ‘fixed’ cameras, the movie is a performative action in itself both as a document to be viewed by a later audience and as a purposeful link to a new work, *Strife’s MomoLog*, that I am currently developing.



Figure 37. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

Performance Video

The performance began with my pouring dirt from a red bucket onto the pristine floor of the upstairs gallery lobby where most of the performance would take place. The mirror strapped to my back served the purpose of engaging onlookers in the performance, making them participants. I was also performing a further curation of the exhibition by engaging the presence of those onlookers there specifically for the opening and others who were not, and bringing them, their being, and their self-reflected energy into the action of the performance work *A Sense of Dislocation*. And in so doing creating the *Transformance* space; one shared by “artists”, audience, “objects”, all in a “becoming” as participants; those present and not wanting to continue with engaging, however, being free to move away from the performing action.

Performance art moves “to release rather than repress the subliminal energies of the body, [...it moves] not merely to make present and visible but more essentially to activate[...] representational absence and Otherness” (Hardin 2004, p235).

I then began the Artaud’s syllable word incantation;

o dedi o dada orzoura
o dou zoura a dada skizi
o kaya o kaya pontoura
o ponoura a pena poni

This I considered a key part of the performance, a transitional phrase, a space intended to showcase what Artaud believed to be the “living powers in what is called poetry” (Artaud 1974).

As with Grotowski’s *Art as Vehicle* a key part of my performance research is in isolating “the process of energy transformation that can occur within the doer performing with and around (ancient) vibratory songs” (Schechner 1997, p.127).

This research process continues outside the confines of the institution into the public arena where in performance the work itself becomes ever present as a work-in-progress.

In proclaiming the incantation, taking it into myself as a performance of myself, I became the chant, an aural/visual intervention/transgression planned to ‘upset’ the normative of ‘allowable’

behaviour inside the institutional gallery space. Going down in the lift and pacing my way around the sparsely peopled ground-floor gallery rooms I became aware of the power of the chant, at one stage looking out of a window across the veranda across the park towards the Maungakiekie (One Tree Hill) and experiencing momentarily a trance like sensation, a gathering of 'spiritual' forces, an intense experience of being in the moment, the echo of the incantation filling the room and its resonance being audible in the upstairs lobby where my fellow performers were beginning their choreographed movements. I was aware of 'other' presences, possible portals to other dimensions; a realisation of the potential of initiatory 'rites'; elements of a 'pagan' heritage that we in our 'civilising' of social norms have largely removed from our lives, and an element for exploration in further performance work.

Artaud first included his 'syllable-words' in a 1943 letter to Gaston Ferdiere, the head psychiatrist at the Rodez asylum in which he was incarcerated, describing the work of the poet Ronsard (Artaud 1976, p.424). Artaud interpreted 'syllable-words' as being a means to transcendental initiation in

imitation of Ronsard's mission "to translate into a language that speaks to the heart the wealth of things of the Infinite, which are magical and mysterious in their essence" (ibid p.427). Artaud's inclusion of these "sound blocks appear, in his own work, to be very carefully worked out" (Artaud 1995, p.335). Sellin suggests "one can only read them in cadence, based on a rhythm which the reader himself must find in order to comprehend and to think" (Sellin 1975, p.89). That rhythm I eventually found while rehearsing the script after a comment by choreographer Kristian Larsen that a pop "ditty" like insertion would be a good counterpoint.

Esslin defines theatre as theorised by Artaud in his work *The Theatre and its Double*:

"as an assembly of human beings striving to establish contact with the profound mainsprings of their being, the dark forces of physical emotion which lie beyond the trivialities of their everyday existence. The theatre enables them to experience the full reality of these emotions without involving them in irreversible real life situations in which alone experiences of such shattering

power could otherwise be lived through. And by making the full force of a full emotional life, the whole gamut of human suffering and joy again active in multitudes of human beings, *the theatre could change their basic attitude to life and institutions, their ways of thinking, their entire consciousness and thus transform society and the world* (Esslin 1976, p.83). (Italics added).

I view this quote as a description, a template, for the work that I wish to realise in my performative exploration of the *Transformance* concept.

A Sense of Dislocation the first performative interpretation of the concept I consider, as curator/director, a success. The engagement of onlookers in the process of the work's enactment was in the words of critic Renee Liang "earthy and quite discomfoting" capturing the essence of the energy that I hoped to impart. The performers, I felt, through gesture and movement succeeded in portraying both as an abstract and a reality the traces of humiliation evident in Loo's exhibition piece and in doing so gave access to a threshold through which the works of the other exhibitors

in the *Transformance* exhibition were introduced. To quote Esslin again quoting Artaud:

"we are aiming at no less than to go back to the human or inhuman sources of theatre and to revive it totally. Everything which forms part of the opacity and magnetic fascination of dreams, all this, these dark layers of consciousness We want to see it triumph on the stage, *at the risk of losing ourselves and exposing ourselves to the ridicule of complete failure* (Esslin 1976, p.79). (Italics added).



Figure 38. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010



Figure 39. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

Conclusion

In their artwork, the exhibiting artists displayed differing modes of transformation; portraying reflective ideas of human physical, linguistic, psychological or environmental adaptation and change. Working in digital media, they explored transformative themes of self-creation, alternate identities and locations. In recognition of the parallel and collegial aesthetic motivations of Chai, Loo and Garelja's works I mounted a group display of their work in one room of the gallery exhibition space. Koning's work, being of a more interactive nature, I exhibited in an adjacent room. The two exhibition rooms, each containing a variety of media, were transformed into engaging multi-media performance sites.

The performance artwork, that became the opening event of the exhibition and the core curatorial component of the project, was performed in both the large lobby space that connected the two exhibition rooms and the stairwell and downstairs galleries. This performance was central to the whole exhibition of multiple creative spaces, an enactment in actions which referenced the themes and ideas portrayed in the artworks of all the exhibiting

artists. From a personal point of view, my own experience of a 'transcendental moment' was made real in the form of my incantation, the focus of the performance artwork. The staging of the *Transformance* exhibition and performance artwork has confirmed my belief that as a mode of creative communicative display the *Transformance* concept has potential for both further personal and collaborative development.

Through the overarching curatorial process and the development of the performance artwork a platform was provided on which all of the contributing artists could perform and exhibit. This enabled creative community building during which a collaborative process was promoted and consolidated. Artists' interactions and connections were both further confirmed with the participating exhibiting artists and newly created with the performance artists. Viewer participation at the exhibition and audience interaction through the well-attended artists' talks highlighted responses and reactions that furthered the potential of both the artworks and that of community building.

It was evidenced during the artists' talks and later

on, through communications with gallery docents and curators, that audience engagement with the artworks was generally responsive, positive and empathetic. The topicality of the both Loo's and Chai's artworks encouraged enthusiastic responses and the innovative use of digital technology in both Garelja's and Koning's work and their creation of seemingly alternate beings and worlds was met with both wonder and trepidation. The sense of wonderment, evident in all the exhibiting works in the *Transformance* exhibition, including the performance artwork, assisted in provoking in a phenomenological manner, questions on and interpretations of consciousness and meaning. Both the performance artwork and the exhibited artworks required concentrated engagement on the part of the viewers. Those who took the time to 'perform' with and to 'look' at the artworks were, as I had hoped, justly rewarded.

In furthering the *Transformance* research project and turning my life's work into artwork, I am continuing my transformative work in an exploration of how voice, body and emotions interact in the creation of consciousness. In an extension of the *Transformance* project in its broadest aspects, as an exploration of my

thanatological, thanatographical journey of self-re(dis)covery, I am developing two new performance artworks; *Stife's MomoLog* and *Loving Luce's Lips*.¹³

I take the notion of thanatos forward, not in a Freudian sense of the death wish but as in a rhetorical journey of my life towards that place called death, and a return and mapping of that journey via the mediums of performance art, digital animation and film.

13 Referencing Antonin Artaud and Luce Irigaray.

References:

- Artaud, A. (1965). *Artaud Anthology*, (Ed.), Jack Hirschmasn, San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books.
- Artaud, A. (1974). *Collected Works Vol. 4*: Trans. Victor Corti, London, England: Calder & Boyars.
- Artaud, A. (1976). *Selected Writings*, (Ed.), Susan Sontag, New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Artaud, A. (1995). *Watchfiends & Rack Screams: Works From the Final Period* by Antonin Artaud. Boston, MA: Exact Change.
- Artaud, A. (1999). *Collected Works Vol 3*: Trans. Alastair Hamilton, London, England: John Calder Publishers.
- Barrault, J-L. (1974). *Memories for Tomorrow*, The Memoirs of Jean-Louis Barrault London, England: Thames and Hudson Ltd.
- Beck, J. (1986). *The Life of the Theatre*, New York, NY: Proscenium Publishers.
- Bell, E. (2008). *Theories of Performance*: Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications
- Bell, J. (2006). *Philosophy at the Edge of Chaos*: Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Boal, A. (1979). *Theatre of the Oppressed*, London, England: Pluto Press.
- Bousiou, P. (2008). *The Nomads of Mykonos: performing liminalities in a 'queer' space*: Oxford, England: Berghahn Books.
- Cirlot, J. E. (1987). *A Dictionary of Symbols*: London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Chai, G. (2010). *The Embodiment of Narcissus* Bachelor of Art & Design Honours exegesis.
- Cole, D., Brandon, R, (1978). The Drama Review – Workshop Issue, 22(4), (T80), New York, N.Y: New York University.
- Conrad, P. (1999). *Modern Times Modern Places; Life and Art in the 20th Century*. London, England Thames and Hudson.

- Cull, L. (2009). *How Do You Make a Theatre without Organs*; Deleuze, Artaud and the Concept of Differential Presence. London, England, Theatre Research International Vol 35.
- Derrida, J. (1997). *The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation* Trans. Timothy Murray and Elaine dal Molin in Murray, T. (Ed.), *Mimesis, Masochism and Mime* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1979). *One Less Manifesto* Trans. Timothy Murray and Elaine dal Molin in Murray T. (Ed.), *Mimesis, Masochism and Mime* (1997) Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F. (1972). *Anti-Oedipus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia*: New York, N.Y: Viking Press.
- Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F. (1980). *A Thousand Plateaus*: London, England: Continuum.
- Esslin, M. (1976). *Antonin Artaud; The man and his work*; London, England: John Calder.
- Esslin, M. (1987). *The Field of Drama: How the Signs of Drama Create Meaning on Stage and Screen*; London, England: Methuen.
- Garelja, O. (2010). *Image Beyond Image* Bachelor of Art & Design Honours exegesis.
- Gluck, R. (2006). *The Greatness of Kathy Acker* in Scholder, A. Harryman, C., Ronell, A., (Eds.), *Lust for Life: On the Writings of Kathy Acker*. London, England: Verso.
- Grotowski, J., Barba, E. (Eds) (1968). *Towards a Poor Theatre*; London, England: Routledge.
- Hames, P., (Ed). (1995). *Dark Alchemy*; The Films of Jan Svankmajer. Westport, CN: Greenwood Press.
- Hardin, M., (Ed.) (2004). *Devouring Institutions: The Life Work of Kathy Acker*, San Diego, CA: San Diego State University Press.
- Hayman, R., (1977). *Artaud and After*, London, England: Oxford University Press.
- Innes, C., (1984). *Holy Theatre*; Ritual and the Avant Garde. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Konings, N., (2010). *The Transformative Mirror*; contemplating the self as an emergent being through active reflection. Master of Art + Design Exegesis.

- Knapp, B. L. (1980). *Antonin Artaud: Man of Vision*. Chicago, I.L: Ohio University Press/ Swallow Press.
- Linklater, K. (2006). *Freeing the Natural Voice; Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language*. London, England: Nick Hern.
- Loo, J. (2010). *A Sense of Dislocation*; AUT Bachelor of Design (Honours) Exegesis.
- McDonald. C. (1988). *Ear of the other: otobiography, transference, translation : texts and discussions with Jacques Derrida* Trans. Peggy Kamuf of the French edition Claude Levesque and Christie McDonald (Eds.): Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press.
- McKenna, T., Approaching Timewave Zero, from Magical Blend Magazine Issue 44 Nov 1994.
- McKenzie, J. (2001). *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*; London, England: Routledge.
- Read. A. (Ed) (2000). *Architecturally Speaking: Practices of Art, Architecture and the Everyday*, New York, NY, Routledge.
- Sellin, E. (1975). *The Dramatic Concepts of Antonin Artaud*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Porter, M.C. (1968). *Through Parisian Eyes; Reflections on Contemporary French Arts and Culture*, New York, N.Y. Oxford University Press.
- Sellin, E. (1975). *The Dramatic Concepts of Antonin Artaud*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Shattuck, R. (1984). *The Innocent Eye: On Modern Literature and the Arts*; New York, NY. Farrar Straus and Giroux.
- Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York, NY: Simon and Shuster.
- Wallen, P. (2006). *Kathy Acker*. In Scholder, A., Harryman, C., Ronell, A. (Eds.), *Lust for Life: On the Writings of Kathy Acker*; London, England: Verso.
- Wolford, L. Schnechner, R., (Eds). (1997). *The Grotowski Sourcebook*; London, England: Routledge.

Appendices

A Sense of Dislocation – the Performance Artwork

Workshop Timetable and Programme

Participants:

Jia-Yin (Jane) Loo
Jeong Whang
Elise Chan
Kristian Larsen
Warren Pringle

AUT SPORTS FITNESS CENTRE,
90 Akoranga Drive, Northcote

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Saturday April 9 th the Body | Alchemy of Human |
| Saturday April 16 th | VoiceWork 1 Physical Awareness |
| Saturday April 23 rd | VoiceWork 2 Breathing Awareness |



Figure 40. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Saturday April 30 th | Workshopping the Text |
| Saturday May 7 th | Humiliation The Abstract Space |
| Saturday May 14 th | The Gesture |
| Sunday May 22 nd | Introducing the Choreographer |
| Sunday May 29 th | Choreographing the Work |
| Friday June 3 rd 5pm | Wallace Arts Centre Rehearsal |
| Saturday June 4 th 2pm | Wallace Arts Centre Exhibition opens |



Figure 41. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

The Workshops

A documented workshop manual

Workshop 1

The Alchemy of the Human Body

Formatted as lecture/talk/discussion on the relationship of gesture, sound, and breathing with the emotions and the art of theatre as theorised by Antonin Artaud and interpreted by Jean-Louis Barrault and subsequently explored and experimented with by many theatre directors and practitioners this introductory workshop allowed me to formally introduce the *Transformance* concept and project to the performers Elise Chan and Jeon Whang.

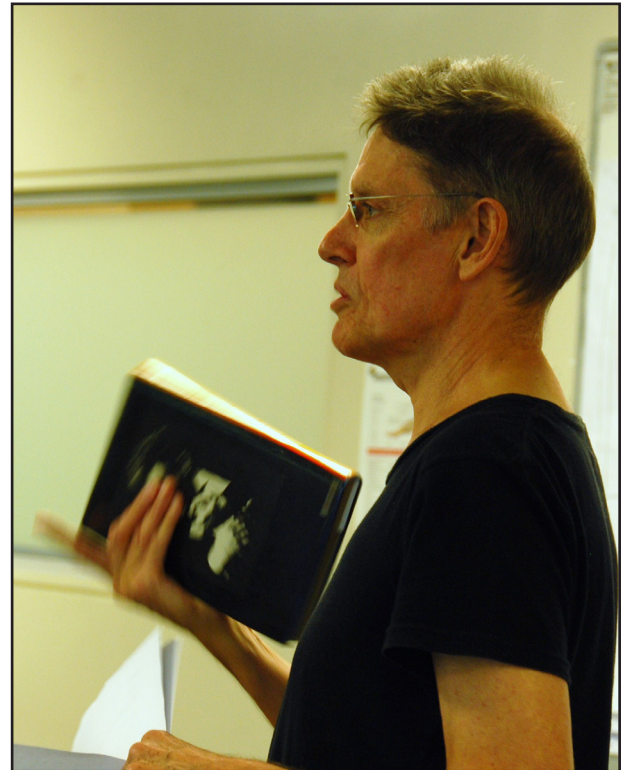


Figure 42. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

The ALCHEMY of the HUMAN BODY ¹

....“and if there is one truly infernal and damned thing left today, it is our artistic dallying with forms, instead of being like those tortured at the stake, signalling through the flames” ²

SPACE is MOVEMENT (and Stillness and Repetition)
 a slow irresistible
 MARCH

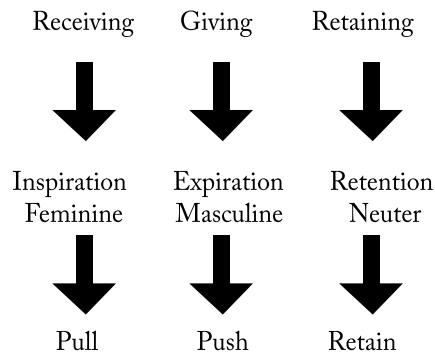
molecules meet rub up against each
OTHER

COLLIDE

ASSOCIATE
establishing

EXCHANGES
in accordance with a certain
RHYTHM
a tempo !

SPACE is MOVEMENT, EXCHANGE, RHYTHM



¹ Adapted from: Barrault, J-L., (1974). Memories for Tomorrow; The Memoirs of Jean-Louis Barrault. London, England: Thames and Hudson Ltd. (pp. 84 – 88).

² Artaud, A., (1974). Antonin Artaud: Collected Works. Vol.4. London, England: Calder and Boyars Ltd. (p. 6).

MOVEMENT

EXCHANGE

RHYTHM

Theatre Staging:
is a Language in Space and Movement, a Language of Signs and Hieroglyphs³

MOVEMENT

EXCHANGE

RHYTHM



The Spine



The Lungs



The Heart



a Whip
a Snake



The Bellows
Being/The Universe
Exterior/The Self



The Beat
Iamb
Iambics
1 Short/1 Long



MOVEMENT



SOUND



TEXT

INSPIRATION

EXPIRATION
The Ternary of Breathing

RETENTION

as our being is DOUBLE:
we have an UNCONSCIOUS life
we have a CONSCIOUS life

UNCONSCIOUS breathing is Biological/Generic
The Passive – keeps ‘the self’ alive
CONSCIOUS breathing is Personal – the person – the one who contacts others
the Active – as ‘individuals’ connecting

³ Bermel, A. (1977). Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. New York. N.Y.: Taplinger Publishing Co., Inc. (p20)

the nature of our conscious breathing can change
being in a certain state comes naturally
if we are angry our breathing changes
if we are fearful our breathing changes

this is RASAESTHETICS – Respiratory Alchemy
back to

Receiving Giving Retaining

in the sensuality of life it is easy for us to understand that
Receiving is the Feminine Time
Giving is the Masculine Time
Retaining is the Neuter Time

no matter what sex we are this ternary applies

Receiving, Giving, Retaining is a Ternary

Feminine, Masculine, Neuter is a Ternary

Receiving Giving Retaining
In the Alchemy of Painting the Ternary is:

Yellow = Neuter
Blue = Masculine
Red = Feminine

the three basic colours

if you add yellow and blue = green
if you add blue and red = purple
if you add red and yellow = orange

the three complimentary colours

By the play of these six colours you obtain an infinity of tones

In the same way by the play of the Breathing Ternary – Respiration

Inspiration Expiration Retention

Receiving Giving Retaining

We can reach an infinity of respiratory states;
EMOTIONS

the art of breathing
the science of human behaviour
the subject of theatre
but for now – back to painting – a new observation;

TO THE SIX COLOURS
(3 fundamental, 3 complimentary)
must be added

TWO INFLUENCES;

WHITE and BLACK
LIGHT and SHADOW

in the same way we added to the RESPIRATORY combinations

TWO INFLUENCES, TWO CURRENTS
TWO INFLUXES
the ACTIVE influx – we weigh on the exterior
the PASSIVE INFLUX – the exterior weighs on us
two influxes that make possible
AN INFINITY OF BROKEN TONES

Although it might seem to be a difficult task to get ‘inside’ these perceptions

WE WILL

Theatre is, after all, a LAB of LIVING

Back to breathing

if we are forced, that is the exterior forces us,

against our will, to breath in, this is
PASSIVE INSPIRATION

it could just as well be an idea, or a talk on a Saturday afternoon,
when we can no longer stand it, we assemble our wills
and with all our energy we expel by
ACTIVE EXPIRATION

that which is being imposed on us

THEN WE SHUT DOWN
but soon, on pain of asphyxiation,
air comes in against our will!

Repeated activity of this sort results in a state of ANGER
an example of Respiratory Alchemy
EMOTION

Now to GESTURE

Gesture as it reveals inner man, not as pantomime, but rather as “symbolic evocations of nature’s aspects –
signs of both inner and outer activities made on stage to act upon the spectators imagination”

THE SPINAL COLUMN
with the aid of the HEAD, the NECK, the TORSO and the LIMBS
commands and designs our

GESTURES

SAME TERNARY

Pull Push Retention

Receive Give Retain

Feminine Masculine Neuter

same COMBINATIONS same INFLUENCES

ACTIVE and PASSIVE

same INFINITY of BROKEN TONES

same richly resourceful language

THE HUMAN BODY

thus possesses

a LANGUAGE of BREATHING

and

a LANGUAGE of GESTURE

The rudimentary GRAMMAR of GESTURE is once again a TERNARY

SUBJECT, VERB, OBJECT

in mime these are called

ATTITUDE MOVEMENT INDICATION

Now to SPEECH

which results from a combination of:

a MUSCULAR CONTRACTION and a BREATH

the more or less frequency of the contraction of our diaphragms

sends air into the more or less closely moulded cavity of our

MOUTHS

where the VOWELS take form and as air passes we carve CONSONANTS with the

muscular contractions of our LIPS and TONGUES

a syllable is created and a WORD appears

THE WORD

is a little bag into which we put

an IDEA or an IMAGE

which we send off into the air where it bursts and the IDEA or IMAGE falls out

(but not words that have become habits, clichés, “sloughed-off skins of ideas” but words that are “active and anarchic” words spoken in varied ways divorced from habitual utterance so that their “sonority” carries associations for the listener/ the spectator)

SPEECH is the PANTOMINE of the MOUTH

There is no break of continuity between a GESTURE and a WORD both are part of the same CREATION

the result of a MUSCULAR CONTRACTION and a RESPIRATION

the MAGIC of LIFE

THE ALCHEMY of the HUMAN BODY

the object of RITUAL; the BODY

the ORIGIN of it all, LOVE:

LOVE’S BODY

THE PEOPLE



Kristen, Elise, Warren, Jeong, Jane

Workshop 2

VoiceWork 1

The Performers Voice - from Linklater, K. (2006).
*Freeing the Natural Voice*⁶

Talking to our bones, perceiving our breathing habits and neuromuscular behaviour.

Registering not what we are doing but how we are doing it. In this workshop I introduced the need for an awareness of the skeletal structure of the human body and the importance of the spine and the promotion of muscular relaxation, especially in the region of the torso, to enable the development of a breathing mechanism that is conducive to the expression of both gesture and sound.

My Tutors notes

Physical Awareness: the Spine – the support of all our breathing

This first exercise is about talking to your bones, and freeing up and relaxing your muscles.

- Concentrating on an increased physical awareness of the spine
- And getting acquainted with your skeleton and its layers of muscles

The exercise also helps to develop a physical and mental ability to perceive habits of breathing, good and bad and to register new experiences.

The perception of these habits must eventually be refined to an extreme subtlety in order to observe the minutiae of neuromuscular behaviour that serve our need to communicate.

Beginning with relatively large, simple images and exercises and we will progress toward the more subtle economy, the fine psychophysical awareness, with which the natural voice works best.

With all the exercises it is not what you are doing that is important, but how you are doing it. Our conscious minds have an alarming capacity for subverting new experiences, either confusing them with things that are familiar and safe, or leaping ahead to the result and by-passing the process.

The aim of this first exercise; the physical awareness of the spine, is to develop that awareness through specific relaxation and allowing that relaxation to generate energy.

As knots of tension undo, they release trapped energy into the body, creating a lively state of awareness and potential mobility.

A strong, flexible, and well-aligned spine is an essential starting point for free breathing and for a free voice.

Much of this work is done with your eyes closed. This helps to clarify the picture of the inner workings of your body.

6 Linklater, K. (2006). *Freeing the Natural Voice*, Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language. London, England: Nick Hern Books.

Workshop 3

VoiceWork 2

The Performers Voice - from Linklater, K. (2006). *Freeing the Natural Voice*⁷

This workshop explored ways in which breath and breathing exercises can effect a change in the production of vocal sound from being muscle bound to being impulse bound.

My Tutors notes

Breathing Awareness: Freeing the Breath, the source of sound; the air

As well as the source of your life your breath is also the source of your vocal sound.

As performers we wish to transform ourselves into other characters, other entities.

This means transforming our ways of behaving, ways of thinking, ways of feeling, ways of breathing into the ways of the character, the entity you are creating.

To do so we must be able to let go of our deeply ingrained breathing patterns.

If we are to truly enter into another character, and make that character believable and his or her voice authentic, we must enter into that characters breathing process.

The exercises that follow are a guide to the

psychophysical geography of breathing. They are not rules for correct breathing. There is no one way to breathe that is correct for all purposes. Swimmers are different from Opera singers who are different from Yoga devotees. What we are looking for is a consciously crafted pursuit of spontaneity. Our breathing musculature must be able to pick up rapidly shifting thoughts and feelings engendered by an imaginatively created state of being. If we are to value truthful expression our breathing control must be diverted from muscle to impulse - diverted from muscle to impulse. The ultimate controls are imagination and emotion. Undertake the next exercises in an opened minded state of pleasurable expectation. Take each step slowly, for its own sake, and allow yourself to be entertained by your experience. Develop the ability to observe without controlling. Our aim is to remove habitual muscular controls and allow involuntary processes, involuntary breathing muscles that are subtle, complex, powerful and deep inside our bodies, to take over.

Natural breathing is reflexive, and to restore its reflexive potential we must remove restrictive tensions and provide a diversity of stimuli than can provoke subtler, deeper, and eventually stronger reflex actions. Our breathing muscles will then become responsive instruments of the art of speaking.

Both VoiceWork 1 and VoiceWork 2 brought attention to the performers the work of voice therapist Kristian Linklater whom I had read in Nick Kaye's *Art into Theatre* as being a key influence on Richard Schnecher's physical theatre work.⁷ Touching on a mere sampling of the exercises in Linklater's book⁸ the purpose of these workshops was to highlight the depth of study that is required to truly develop "imagery and art in the practice of voice and language."⁹ Because of copyright constraints publishing of the specific exercises on the artslabtoo blog, which on advice I set up as a discussion and communication forum for the project was not possible.

Interestingly there were no copyright constraints on the exercises adapted for the workshop on movement and gesture adapted from the December 1978 Drama Review dedicated to workshop techniques. This highlights differing institutional uses of texts and the codification of information.

7 Kaye, N. (1996) *Art into Theatre*, Performance Interviews and Documents.. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers p157

8 Linklater, K. (2006). *Freeing the Natural Voice*, Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language. London, England: Nick Hern Books.

9 *ibid* - title page

Workshop 4

Workshopping the text - *A Sense of Dislocation* – its archaeology.

On first seeing the Sense of Dislocation video I was immediately conscious of the poetic nature of the structure of the text that appears as fragments, subtitles, phrases progressing beside and on top of the close-up still photo images of the character's face throughout the sequence of the work. The text creates an illusion that the image being viewed is a moving image as if in a live video recording.

My research lead me to a Malay literary art form called Pantun that dates from the 15th Century and which structures two to sixteen line poems of a description of everyday events with a punch-line descriptive of deeper emotions and cultural values.

Although unaware of this connection to Pantun the fact of her being Malay Chinese gave resonance to Loo of the earlier artform. A case, I thought, of cultural memory writ large.

The workshop examined the spatial and geographical elements of the text, and the sentiments and emotional reactions, judgements or identifications affected on the performers. A discussion on the nature of verbal abuse and is

propensity to cause harm and humiliation ensued. In allowing ourselves to be hurt by external actions which are in themselves harmless it was agreed that a counteraction was an affirmation of positive behaviours.

My Tutors notes

Read “The Text”¹¹ and discuss.

My name is Jia-Yin. I was born in Malaysia
Knowing English is my 2nd language,
I do not have the
confidence
in speaking

At one time, I was working in a café in Auckland,
I was, humiliated
 humiliated by a local lady. She said
that I should
learn good English before speaking to people
I was shock
 but I
 kept quiet

• We noted that in the discipline of Semantics there is a tendency for modern literary criticism to conceive of structures of words as being “spaces”.

• Every individual text constitutes a unique “space”. To enter that unique “space” is to find ourselves moving to its peculiar structure and demands.

What is unique about this text?

What are its main points?

• It names characters, qualifications of those characters and some of their specific characteristics.

• It names locations; there is distance between and within these locations.

Where and how do you locate yourself in this “space” of this text?

Are you sympathetic with any of its sentiments?

How might we enact these sentiments in gesture and sound?

What is your emotional reaction to the text?

¹¹ The text from Loo’s exhibition work *A Sense of Dislocation*.

How do you identify with the characters, what is your reaction to them?

The local lady?

- What is the Judgement inherent in her statement?
- What is it that makes the hearer retreat?
- Semantics looks at definitions which lay down boundaries; e.g. what is the definition of money; money is a medium that can be exchanged for goods and services.
- Semantics looks at synonyms; synonyms are different words with almost identical or similar meanings. They might be close e.g. a close synonym of money would be cash or coins or they might be distant e.g. a distant synonym of money might be dough or moola. Semantics is also about locating the nuances of a word.

Let's now look at Humiliation:

its Semantic Space:

Definition: To humiliate is to cause (a person) a painful loss of pride, self-respect, or dignity; mortify.

Humiliation:

From Latin humilis; low, lowly, from humus; ground

Literally "reducing to dirt"

You have been insulted, your ego is bruised, your pride is hurt

You feel diminished, disrespected

degraded, dis'd, disgraced, debased

You feel hurt, ridiculed

You feel powerless, rejected

Scorned, slighted, slurred, shamed.

All Synonyms:

It is in the area of personal, emotional issues that the incentive to spatialize is strongest.

So how do we put abstract thought-processes, in touch with the life of the body and turn these metaphorical spaces into actual spaces; that is into playing areas into which we might enter, move through, function in.

How do we "get through" a time of difficulty, find "the next move", make clear "a sense of direction", over-come a feeling of "nowhere to turn".

OK – let's do it!

To end let's do an exercise in the exploration of the "inner space" of memory.

I want you to recall a time in your lives when you felt you had been humiliated and had “no next move,” “no clear sense of direction,” “nowhere to turn;”

Your dignity has been insulted.

Unlike humility, a strength, humiliation is hurtful. A common tool of oppression people in power use humiliation as a form of social control.

The fear of humiliation is a powerful motivating force.

We will further this enquiry at the next workshop.



Figure 43. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

Workshop 5 Workshopping the Spatial

Humiliation - an Abstract Space

This workshop explored how abstractions of conceptual thought and emotion can become actual physical experiences and how one makes these abstractions available both as a subject matter and as a source of energy.

We looked at how we use metaphors of space for many concepts that are not in themselves spatial, for example categories like Emotional Space, Harmonic Space, Social Space, Semantic Space. A discussion on the semantic space of humiliation ensued followed by a physical translation of an experience of humiliation into the workshop performance space and a working through of that experience. A link was also made towards the possible realisation of the diagrammatic template I had previously drawn, taking as my cue the spatial details of Gallery 2 at MIC, onto which I anticipated I would map the choreography and use as the plan for the final work. Because of the change of venue from the MIC to the Wallace Arts Centre this specific mapping work was made redundant.

Together we explored the portraying of positive emotion as an uplifting experience

incorporating movement utilising the triangle as our predominant spatial signifier and then similarly exploring negative emotion within the 'repressive' spatial environment of a cube. It was envisaged that on entering each specific geometric environment we would adopt, dissolve into, the particular emotional state being workshopped.

I also introduced the idea that our overall movement structure would be based on a large circle within which figure of eight movements could be progressed acknowledging the significance of the number 8 in the Chinese cosmology and its signification as a symbol for infinity in Western philosophy.

Two other elements were introduced at this workshop;

Soundscape presented.

I had also been aware of the significance and influence of a soundscape within which I could envelope the work. To progress this I contacted and met with sound artist Jed Town with whom I have been creatively connected for some thirty years. Knowing that Town would understand my creative thinking relating to both the performance piece and the Transformance concept and

exhibition together we structured a template for the soundscape; a series of four seamlessly joined two minute sound progressions portraying cyclic fluxes of emotional states on a continual swirling spiral gyre loop. This referenced the poet W.B. Yeats' concept of *Spiritus Mundi*, the soul of the universe, and was aligned to the choreographic structure onto which I wanted the performance mapped also gyre like with repeated circles and figures of eight.

Performance "script" presented.¹²

In developing the Artaud sourced text that I would read/perform during the A Sense of Dislocation event I found a refrain of "syllable words" at the beginning of *Artaud the Momo* a work Artaud had written in 1946 and partially performed early 1947. This work described a period of 'death' that Artaud had experienced whilst in a coma following one of his electroshock treatments.

¹² See Appendix 2

o dedi o dada orzoura
o dou zoura a dada skizi
o kaya o kaya pontoura
o ponoura a pena poni

In my rehearsing of these syllable words, each line nine syllables in length, I found a chant like rhythm that rendered them into an incantation that in repetition transported and supported the rest of the text. Nine also references Terpsichore the ancient muse of dance.

My Tutors notes

Workshopping the Spatial

Encountering the Spatial; the Abstract Space, the Emotional Space

Humiliation – an Emotional Space¹³

How do we make the abstractions of conceptual and emotional thought available as physical experiences, make abstraction available to performance both as subject matter and as a source of energy?

We use metaphors of space for many concepts that are not in themselves spatial.

Emotional Space¹⁴ : is that mental and emotional

boundary or comfort zone, the violation of which makes one feel mentally and emotionally threatened and uncomfortable. Whereas Personal Space is that physical benchmark of ones comfort zone, Emotional Space is the mental benchmark of comfort.

Musicians speak of Harmonic Space: where harmonies live or where tones and timbres hang out.

What about Social Space: can be both an abstract mental space: say where anthropologists work on kinship concepts and in current parlance a physical space: the Social Space; where we hang out in public.

Similarly Therapeutic Space: can also be both a physical space: where physiotherapists work and an abstract mental space: where psychiatrists mentally encounter their patients.

Literary critics speak of and work in Semantic Space: Semantics is that branch of linguistics and logic concerned with meaning. Semantics is also the meaning of a word, phrase, sentence, or text: Semantics is the means of or pertaining to meaning, especially language; which is very important as regards our project: *A Sense of Dislocation* – using English as a second language.

So Semantic Space: is a space worked in by literary critics.

Semantics also conceives of structures of words as “spaces”.

Imagine this difficult period, this difficult “interval”, when you felt you had been humiliated and had “no next move,” “no clear sense of direction,” “nowhere to turn” and spatialize it as a highly specific kind of space;

Now identify this imagined space with a stretch of this rehearsal room now lying at our feet.

What are the physical characteristics of your imagined space; is it flat or sloping, broad or narrow, sharply lit or dim (and of course it might change as you move across it as you recall the different elements of the difficult time)

- Re-appraise the experience in a way that acknowledges your strength and ability to cope. Our objective is to find a way through, and on out of, the space;
- to discover the constraints and opportunities of the space;
- to find ways of escaping or transforming the space; that is to discover “moves,” “turns,” and “directions,” that had not been apparent at the time, but might be “glimpsed” with the difficult “interval”, the difficult time now there before you in the form of a physical space; we have a lot of space each to play with across the studio, think out the implications of a particular posture or movement in the space;
- is the floor a “memory surface”;

13 Detail for this workshop have been sourced from: <http://www.emotionalcompetency.com/humiliation.htm> and The Drama Review – Workshop Issue Vol 22 No. 4 (T80) December 1978 New York University, New York, N.Y.

14 <http://www.prophet666.com/2010/03/emotional-space.html>

- what am I doing when I flatten myself out on it, move evasively over it, stride across it etc.

This is in essence the basic method of the workshop:

- to take a spatial metaphor for an intellectual or emotional situation literally

- to lay it out as an actual space, a playing-area; Then to fulfil the wish reflected in the metaphor – that all our experience might have the character of bodily movement in space – by moving bodily into that play-area.

This makes it possible for us to enter physically mental structures which otherwise would only exist for us on the level of thought and fantasy.

You might find a sound/chant/song, a physical expression, a facial mask, a movement within yourself that represents humiliation.

Addendum

locating its energy within the body

and with your full attention

let it radiate up and out

as a living entity

if it's a sound

departing it leaves a visible trace

a body without organs

like a dream of awakening

an inner energy of potential

if a movement, an expression, a mask

rather than acting the emotion

you are locating and 'doing' the emotion

or the emotion is do(p)ing you

Workshop 6

The Gesture

In order to structure an element of the importance of gesture in Eastern theatre this workshop featured concentrated work on exercises practiced by Tadashi Suzuki and his Waseda Little Theatre company whom I had seen perform in London in 1985. Suzuki believed that consciousness of the body is the source of theatre. His exercises are geared towards using the form, the shape of the body in order to create a picture that 'speaks'. In essence 'playing' with the body, exploring its performance potential, and uncovering a physical and emotional presence. Suzuki was one of the first theatrical performer/directors to highlight the difference in Western and Eastern theatre techniques; the West being (orally performing the) script based, the East being physical skill (from singer to acrobat) based. Grotowski and his Laboratory Theatre Company had also used training adapted in the 1960's from oriental techniques in order to assist in the 'ripening' of his actors "psychic and bodily powers which emerge from the most intimate layers of his being and instinct, springing forth in a sort of "translumination".¹⁵ Specific Noh and Kabuki Theatre postures/movements were workshopped with music.

Costumes; I gave a black silk smock to Elise Chan and suggested Jeon Whang would wear either black or red.

I would be wearing a large mirror on my back
On my first viewing of the lobby and stairwell into which I would locate the performance I had initially thought that I would line the walls on the upper side of the lobby with reflective mirror boards. On costing however this proved to be beyond budget. A resolution to this issue arrived at my attendance of a cohort reading group - a critique and showing of Cocteau's film *Orpheus* by Pritika Lal. In this film characters pass between the world of life and death by walking through mirrors. In the scene of the first passing through a glazier appears in the film carrying glass on a backpack type structure. This inspired me to attach a small easel to a backpack onto which I placed a mirror to 'wear' on my back as part of my performance costume. Reflection, looking at ourselves, self-creation and the creation of alternate identities and locations were significant themes in the artworks of the other *Transformation* exhibitors.

MyTutors notes

Gesture as it reveals inner man, not as pantomime, but rather as “symbolic evocations of nature’s aspects – signs of both inner and outer activities made on stage to act upon the spectators imagination”¹⁶

Adapted from:

The Suzuki Method of Tadashi Suzuki, Waseda Little Theatre as interpreted by James R. Brandon.¹⁷

Suzuki believed that consciousness of the body is the source of theatre. Without a consciousness of our bodies we can never expressively gesture or speak. Also that verbal expression is linked to our bodily sense.

Our task is to make the performing body speak, but not as in “body language” where the body unconsciously reveals inner emotion. What we are looking for is the opposite of that where we deliberately use our bodies to speak through proportion, line, and movement, through the form of our bodies. The body creates a picture!

Mie and roppo are two Kabuki poses/postures/movements.

The mie (mee-eh) pose is “cut” when a character’s emotions are at their peak, a very powerful momentarily static pose, eyes are opened as wide

as possible, crossed if the character is agitated or angry, downcast if humiliated perhaps.

Roppo is an exaggerated exit. Both mie and roppo can speak as clearly as words!

It is more important that the performer discovers the possibilities of the body and expresses that than it is to interpret dialogue through character. The performer must enjoy the play of the body – play as in exploring the body’s performance potential.

Theatre in Europe has followed the development of script (as in the art of acting being understood as the realising, in plastic terms on the stage, of an already existing script).

Theatre in the East, Japan especially, originated in the development of a single performers skill; as a singer, dancer, juggler, or later when words were added to make a play, as an actor. The actor’s physical presence being basic to theatre making.

15 Grotowski, J., Barba, E., ed (1968) *Towards a Poor Theatre*, London, England: Routledge p16.

16 Knapp, B. L. (1980). *Antonin Artaud: Man of Vision*. Chicago. I.L. Ohio University Press/Swallow Press.

17 The Drama Review Vol.22 No.4 (T80) December, 1978 School of Arts New York University, NY.

Discipline #1. Basic body posture

In Kabuki and Noh posture is fundamental. There are two basic postures (in the walking and stamping exercises either can be used):

1. Pelvis tucked out behind

Taken from Noh it lifts the chest forward and gives a feeling of inquisitiveness, even aggression, but is the harder of the two to move from.

Bend forward at the hips until the torso is parallel with the floor, then raise the head and torso, keeping the hips immobile.

2. Pelvis tucked forward

Taken from Kabuki it allows for fluid but powerful movement as the spine becomes straight and the weight of the body centres directly over the hips, the lower abdomen and hips become a stable platform, a fulcrum of movement. Legs move easily, and weight can be shifted rapidly forward, backward and to the side while emphasizing the chest, giving the whole body a prepared retiring defensive look.

Bend the knees slightly while tilting the pelvis forward, taking care not to push forward the spine itself.

For our purposes we will work with posture no. 2.

Discipline #2. Stamping

Torso is held upright, straight, firmed in a solid block

Arms are held down or arched away from the sides, the fingers curved into a light fist.

Knees are turned out and sharply bent into a trapezoidal, or “box” position.

Music with a driving beat. Track 6 Folk Music of Japan start 55 secs in then repeat over to Silence
Knees deeply flexed, circle the room, stamping in time to the music.

Flat feet strike directly under the centre of the body.

Let the legs and feet become a pile-driver.

With fierce concentration keep the rest of the body motionless.

Run music for three minutes.

Silence.

Then fall to the floor like puppets with your string cut.

Play flute music. Track 3 Duet 5min in.

Rise from the floor in a single movement and move to the front here as if in a single movement. Don't jerk. Let the music move you.

Don't let up your concentration. It requires strength and ingenuity to rise, turn and move to the front.

Discipline #3. Walking

Circle the room moving in unison to the music.

1. The sliding step

Knees are held together, toes pointed in (female style), with feet overlapping. While the knees are held tightly together the foot slides flat on the floor.

A combination of the Noh sliding step and the Kabuki female walk

2. Walking on the outside of the feet

Knees are bent sharply outward and the foot is held perpendicular to the line of the lower leg. A leg is cocked high and then stamped directly under the body, weight on the outside of the foot (like the Kathakali foot position).

3. Walking on the inside of the foot

Feet are splayed out, with the knees in. The foot kicks out sideways and is then brought down hard on the floor with an inward sweeping motion.

A difficult, awkward movement as the hips have a tendency to gyrate and the torso tries to balance the kick with a compensatory movement to the other side.

4. Walking on tiptoe

Arms held straight at the sides, rise as high as possible on the toes. The body is as nearly like a stick as possible. The steps are tiny.

Glide. Float. Like a string is attached to your belly button. Don't bounce.

Only the ankles and knees move. Straight! Look straight ahead. No up and down movement! Float! Float!

5. Walking to a mood (humiliation).

Be extreme! Do something powerful! Concentrate!



Figure 44. Warren Pringle. *Transformance*. 2010

Workshop 7

Introducing the Choreographer

Kristian Larsen joined the group to participate and assist with the choreographic construction of the work. A summary of the previous six workshops was undertaken. Using fragments only of a scenario (see below) I had adapted for the workshop from Artaud's description of a Mexican Indian peyote dance, Kristian workshopped movement shapes and structures with Elise Chan. For Jeong Whang we agreed on a physical portrayal of humiliation as developed during the previous workshops.

My Tutors notes

Choreographing *A Sense of Dislocation*

Introduce Kristian to rehearsal process to date.

The realities of theatre in the two halves of the globe;

- 1) Occidental/Western where theatrical reality resides in "appearances", "show", "façade" external things
- 2) Oriental/Eastern where theatrical reality resides in the world "within", the Westerners "dream" (inhuman or divine) world
- 3) Two different sources for theatre (see previous workshop)

Humiliation = reducing to dirt.

Scenario

Kristian dancing the history of the world, squeezed between two suns, the rising and the setting.

Enter slowly from the setting sun the west side of the landing as if cradling evil, spinning round and round left to right, slowly entering the circle, then moving headlong around the circle with a sort of hideous courage, in a rhythm which transcends Dance but seems graphic of Disease and Shame and Fear (sometimes as if on crutches, others times as if decapitated), round and around the circle; then several times back and forth as if on a beam on the horizontal east to west and back, spinning very slowly around and around left to right then back to the circle slowly around and around; counting your steps and then bowing, but like a man on crutches, and crossing yourself with the Christian cross at the apex east side of the circle.

Vocal could include the howl of a dog/screech of a cat, like a death cry, then turning to face west walk abjectly to the central station in the middle

of the figure 8¹⁸ performing the qabalistic cross then bowing like a decapitated man dropping to the floor and falling asleep

Jeong in black smock holding black silk scarf and Elise in red smock with red silk scarf covering her face. Following Kristian in from the west side alight on to the figure of 8 configuration, slowing traverse the imaginary line around and around, around and around, left to right, with expression and movements of humiliation;

you are being reduced to dirt, you have been insulted, your ego is bruised, your pride is hurt, you feel diminished, disrespected, degraded, dis'ed, disgraced, debased.

You feel hurt, ridiculed, you feel powerless, rejected, scorned, slighted, slurred, shamed, you are fearful, you are in shock.

Create shapes and movement and at times needing the support of one another.

Continue the figure of eight dialogue until Kristian reaches the apex of the east side if the circle and makes the Christian cross

Work on gestures and masks of humiliation look whole body and facial, and movement.

18 Adapted from Peyote Dance; *Artaud Anthology* pps 77/78
Antonin Artaud Selected Writings p 382

Workshop 8

Choreographing the work

Following the programme of workshops a choreographed rehearsal of the performance was conducted onsite at the Wallace Art Gallery, Friday June 3rd at 5pm, the day before the exhibition opened on Saturday June 4th.

I viewed the gallery as a liminal, liturgical space (from the original Greek; leit as in “people” plus ergon as in “work”), a place where artists work is exhibited, a people’s workspace, a place in which in the spirit of the Transformance concept the performance work would take place.

The Blog

I also created a blog:

<http://artslabtoo.wordpress.com/>

on which details about Transformance were posted. Although initially created as a tool to assist in the facilitation of the workshops for the performance piece usage by the workshop participants was minimal. Email connection and texting being the preferred communication process. Because of this and the time needed to keep the site up to date meant that information available on the blog was minimal and not constant. However the blog remains live and available for my use as a digital laboratory and a place for discursive dialogue in the future.

Appendix 2

A Sense of Dislocation -Text/Script ¹

o dedi o dada orzoura
o dou zoura a dada skizi
o kaya o kaya pontoura
o ponoura a pena poni
Hmmm, life, energy, ideas
Ideas don't come without limbs, and so these are
no longer ideas but limbs,
limbs fighting among themselves
The mental world was never anything but that
which remains from a hellish,
a hellish trampling of organs
While the man who wore them, these limbs and
organs, is no more.
It is thought from below which leads,
there is no criterion of spirit, of judgement,
spirit is no longer anything but an adventitious
memory,
the more a body is a body, the further it is from
spirit and from its consciousness,
and the more the life of the body proper prevents
it from differentiating itself
against value and quality, between value and
quality

¹ Adapted from the writings of Antonin Artaud

and drives to despair the quality of existing;
and the more the body radiates wholly in the
oblivion of intrinsic value,
and of the spirit of quality,
the more it radiates and becomes concrete,
solidified
in that the body wants to squeeze itself out, in
order to become wholly body,
in a hatred of spirituality.
o dedi o dada orzoura
o dou zoura a dada skizi
o kaya o kaya pontoura
o ponoura a pena poni
A principle of union is based on the eternal
happiness of swallowing
the pain of others.
What body is is the emaciation of the matter of
oneself,
the emaciation of the matter of oneself, achieved
by oneself;
what has not been achieved in the pain of the self
falls at the hour of death, upon becoming pure
spirit,
and a part of the body becomes the evil matter
of pure spirit,
That anchored spirit, screwed into me by the
psycho-lubricious thrust of the sky

in the one who thinks every temptation,
thinks every desire, thinks every inhibition
Thus perish the spirits of all those who have
never wanted
to take the trouble of having a body, and want in
spite of everything
to have the freedom of the city under the reign of
truly solidified bodies.
For nothing bestializes a being like the taste for
eternal happiness,
the search for eternal happiness at any price,
and miss Lucifer is that whore who never wanted
to leave eternal happiness.
But now the old cosmic prospection of god will
no longer occur.
The famous total dimension is to become as a
simple man
as strong as all infinity.

o dedi o dada orzoura
o dou zoura a dada skizi
o kaya o kaya pontoura
o ponoura a pena poni
Which raises the question of ...
What is it?
What is serious is that we know

that after the order of this world
there is another.
And which is it?
We do not know.
The number and order of possible suppositions in
this domain is precisely infinity!
And what is infinity?
We do not exactly know!
It is a word we employ to indicate the opening
of our consciousness towards an immeasurable
possibility, indefatigable and immeasurable
And what exactly is consciousness?
It is nothingness, it is nothingness
A nothingness we employ to indicate when we
do not know something,
from what side we do not know it
and then we say consciousness,
from the side of consciousness,
but there are hundreds of thousands of other
sides exactement an infinity
So what
So it seems that consciousness is in us linked
to sexual desire and hunger;
but it could very well not be linked to them,
it could well not be linked
It is said, it can be said,

there are those who say that consciousness
is an appetite for life,
and alongside this appetite for life,
it is the appetite for food
which comes immediately to mind
So what?
So the space of possibility was given me one day,
the space of possibility
like a loud fart that;
but neither the space nor the possibility,
I didn't know exactly what they were,
And I didn't feel the need to think about it,
they were words invented to define things which
existed
or did not exist when confronted by the pressing
urgency of a need:
that of abolishing the idea, the idea and its myth,
and of enthroning in its place the thundering
manifestation
of this explosive necessity:
to dilate the body of my internal night,
of the eternal nothingness of my self which is
night,
nothingness, irreflection
and the explosive assertion that there is something
to make way for:

my body, of the idea of body and of being a body
a body in need of one last autopsy
in order to remake its anatomy
Man is sick because he is badly constructed.
We must scratch out the animalcule which makes
him itch to death,
God, and with god his organs.
For tie me down if you want to,
But there is nothing more useless than an organ.
When you have given him a body without organs,
then you will have delivered him from all his
automatisms
and restored him to his true liberty.
That glacial reality where alluvions,
sedimentations, coagulations, foldings
and recoilings occur
Then you will teach him again to dance inside
out
and that inside out will be his true side out
that inside out will be his true side out, his true
side out, his true side out

o dedi o dada orzoura
o dou zoura a dada skizi
o kaya o kaya pontoura
o ponoura a pena poni

Appendix 3 Artist's Talks Notes

A Sense of Dislocation

Artist: Jia-Yin (Jane) Loo

Artist's talk Saturday June 11th 1.00pm

Introduction.

A Sense of Dislocation

Jia-Yin Loo's project "documents and examines personal experiences as narrative", showing parallels "to larger cultural issues of intolerance" (including the use of language). "Through expressing the personal meaning of small narratives, ... communicating struggle and social disconnection ... the project sheds light on cultural values that may otherwise be hidden by an inherent hegemony."

Throwing light on cultural values.

In viewing your work others will also identify their oppressions.

They have become pluralised in that the showcasing of personalised experiences and creating your film, showing it here at Pah Homestead has introduced them to a social and collective consciousness.

Personal narrative as a tool for communicating the struggles of new migrants and an aligned the sense of social disconnection.

Use of the face as one of your creative mechanisms.

You have spoken about drawing inspiration from the work of French music video directors Jul and Mat who work with primary materials in the creation of their videos and use cut up pasteboard glued together After Effects. Their videos "are for sharing, are accessible to everyone and go beyond any language barrier". They have also explored the aesthetic form of "the human face, the most exposed and personal part of the human body".

The face is like the mirror to the soul. It reveals who we are what we stand for.

When we die we lose our faces, we become faceless at the same instant that we lose our life, our vital force, our *élan vital* departs, the soul leaves the body.

You use still portraiture to address topical cultural issues.

Use of different angles of shots from wide shot to extreme close-up.

Bi lingual nature of the Yee Jin segment.

Mandarin hieroglyphs juxtaposed in the background behind the English text.

What about the sound links to the imagery
Patterns/texture of rain sound like story-telling
Sadness of the sound effects leading to the emotions you feel - a dark place.

Transition of moods with blurring effects
Use of making corrections in analogue (hand drawn) as against digital font.
The inspiration for the performance work?
Look, listen, read, hear, paying attention, being aware.

“In describing a personal experience of the use of English as a second language the forging of a narrative connection is sought with viewers. Although the sociological issue of racial equality in relation to the dominant language is raised a discussion of this issue is outside the parameters the project, which while commenting on racial equality focuses instead on the work as framed by creative-practice based research.”

Immigration laws; immigrants have to be proficient in ESOL. Courses, conducted by the

British Council in Malaya, are compulsory for intending immigrants. In order to qualify for Permanent Resident status you have to pass different listening, reading and writing tests; academic study immigrants have to score 6.5, business immigrants related 5.0.

Society is heterogeneous – people of differing ethnicities.

Not homogeneous where everyone is the same.

The Embodiment of Narcissus

Artist: Grace Chai

Artist's talk Saturday June 18th 1.00pm

Introduction.

The Embodiment of Narcissus

"What you seek is nowhere; but turn yourself away, and the object of your love will be no more. That which you behold is but the shadow of a reflected form and has no substance of its own" (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.433).

Plotinus: "Strive to bring back the god in yourselves to the divine in the universe".

Grace's photography project investigates ways in which the myth of Narcissus operates as a metaphor for male dysmorphic disorder as expressed through cosmetic surgical procedures. It draws into discourse notions of worship, organic and mechanical fusion, loss of identity, and a promulgated ideal.

Through the generation of manipulated imagery the intention of the project is to communicate thinking around notions of male re-construction and identity.

Three artists have been of significant influence; Joel Peter Witkin's photography, Gustave Dore's interpretation of Dante's vision of hell, and H.R Giger's surrealist paintings.

Ideas, metaphors and contexts related to the development of images:

- 1) The metaphor of Narcissus and its relation to the practice of body alteration.
- 2) The concept of worship, its relationship to ideals of male beauty and emasculation.
- 3) The interface between the non-organic (implants and machinery) and the process and format of re-constructed body.

The metaphor of Narcissus and its relation to the practice of body alteration.

- Notion of divine beauty/ aspiration for a perfect ideal
- Loss of identity
- Body reconstruction

"Surgery temporarily gratifies the hole in your narcissism that requires attention some place, and why not start on the surface if you can't locate the "interior" unconscious origin of the demand for repair. (Blum *Flesh Wounds* 2003).

Artaud's notion that: "Man is sick because he is badly constructed".

The concept of worship, its relationship to ideals of male beauty and emasculation.

"At a time of widespread disillusionment with the culture of mass technology, the possibility of the 'improvement' of the body renders it subject to the dictates of fashion, popular images and exploitative commercialism so that the body itself becomes a mere commodity, an object of mass consumerism." (Dutton *The Perfectible Body*, 1995).

Dutton suggests that the body becomes a consumable ideal. It is an object divorced from the 'self' and sold back to the self.

- Not just beauty but also physicality, bio-mechanic perfection in sports
- And of course Greek notions of beauty included not just the aesthetic but also functioning ability in the sports arena

Emasculation

- As well as being the removal of genitalia can also be interpreted as:

To make a male feel less of a man by humiliation and

To deprive of spirit, vigour and strength

The interface between the non-organic (implants and machinery) and the process and format of re-constructed body.

- Another artist looking at the issue of narcissism: Orlan who has self-mutilated and has said that: "Narcissism is important, as long as one doesn't get lost in one's own reflection".

She has surgical implants in her forehead to make her look like da Vinci's Mona Lisa.

Her idea is to bring difference and the acceptance of difference.

She created a photo of herself giving birth to an androgynous mannequin entitled "Orlan gives birth to her beloved self".

You say your "photographs are manipulations responding to the subject of re-construction with a performance of re-construction – that they "question the issue of male body re-construction, not as a medical consideration but as a consideration of a manipulated self" and cause us "to think beyond the surface of fashionable appearance".

How far do you think you have been successful in this regard?

Image Beyond Image

Artist: Olivia Garelja
Artist's talk Saturday June 18th 1.30pm

Introduction.

Image Beyond Image

Olivia has written that her project is designed to push the parameters of nature photography in order to change the way in which we traditionally view nature.

And as we can see she has succeeded brilliantly in doing just that.

With a deliberate focus of portraying both nature's micro and macro elements and using augmented digital imagery she has constructed imaginary landscapes which again in her words are: "persuasive alternative worlds that are 'nowhere' but 'somewhere'" – seemingly impossible worlds in which the boundaries between geography, geology and biology have been breached. "Matter as revelation" in an Artaudian sense. Primordial and transformative and for some heralding an unpredictable reality; one that reveals "states of an acuteness so intense" that an "underlying menace and chaos" is sensed.

"Lend me your mind and I can change what you see".

Looking at your work puts me into what psychologists call a "liminal space," a place where boundaries dissolve a little and standing there, on the threshold, I'm getting ready to move myself across the limits of where we are now into where we might soon be.

- A trans-geographical space
- A trans-cultural space
- A space of transformation between phases of separation and reincorporation
- A space where I am reminded of the division between the sacred and the profane.

In the making of your work you have described a digital tweaking process that you designed to extend the reality of the images. Watching these digital transformations, you have written, you realized that the ultimate objective of your project was to transform views of an external world into an internal landscape, an "inscape" that would inspire viewers to journey in their imaginations to places where the physical body could not go

- to a virtual reality derived from 'somewhere in reality', yet physically 'nowhere' - the result of a process outcome. Pushing this concept further you understood that in creating inkjet prints of these representations of imaginary landscapes they become visible and real - as artefacts.

Or again as you have said; "making the strange, familiar and the familiar, strange".

"Lend me your mind and I can change what you see".

That which I would call a *Transformance*.

Olivia to talk about:

- 1) The tracing of an internal journey of childhood experiences grounded in West Auckland's Waitakere Ranges.
- 2) Exploring and portraying nature's micro and macro worlds.
- 3) The process of cognitive play based on mirroring and repetition, symmetry and asymmetry.
- 4) The reframing of landscapes to be 'nowhere' but 'somewhere' - utopia (no place) and nature's geometry.

5) Creatively generating atmospheres based on your intuitive understanding of nature throughout stages of the day and influence of Max Ernst's augmentation of nature through the technique of frottage on your process.

6) Working with Photoshop to create multiple imaginary worlds that are formed by combining fragments of the real world in augmented photographs which trick our perceptual understanding of what is effectively understood to be the 'real world' - a deceptive aspect creatively played up to achieve layers of mystery and 'hyperreal' atmospheres utilizing techniques of erasure and montage composition - (another Ernst influence perhaps!).

7) Benjamin's description of the "magical value" created through photography as the "space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious".

8) Works displayed as printed archival artefacts, rather than as transitory digital forms. Printing works instead of having them purely digital gives physical properties to fictitious landscapes.

9).... And anything else you want to talk about.

The Transformative Mirror:

Artist: Nick Konings

Artist's talk Saturday June 25th 1.00pm

Introduction.

The Transformative Mirror

Nicks project is framed as an active reflection on the process of self-transformation.

- a personal investigation into the concepts of the self as an emergent and reflected being.

When originally mounted at AUT's Gallery 3 end of last year the exhibition was staged differently. It included not only artefacts and a telematic installation but also an interactive audience component.

Discussion points.

1. The change in focus and impact.
2. Specific processes used to build the project.
3. Other creative disciplines and practitioner influencing the project.
4. The metaphor of the mirror;
 - The metaphor of the mirror acts as a structural device to develop a telematic installation which translates the universal aspects of a personal journey into an inter-subjective experience.
 - the reflected being, or reflected self; identity constructed through the reflected gaze of others

The metaphor of the garden;

- the transformation of a biodegradable self-portrait acting as host-garden to cycles of vegetable and insect life recorded and used as a conceptual study for the design of the telematic environment (your personalised visual investigation.)

5. Translating the above into a multimedia experience that encourages participants to engage in their own process of active reflection.

6. The emergent being, or emergent self;

- A second perspective of the project which apprehends identity as emerging from a constantly transforming interplay of forces external and internal to an impermanent body he emergent being, or emergent self.
- This perspective is central to the philosophy of the project, which focuses on the process of self-transformation.

7. Using this synthetic model, the potentials for collaborative transformation of a participant's self-image, observed from the reflected point of view of the 'Other', are tested to investigate the idea of the self as an emergent being.

For further information and descriptions of the exhibition see following webpages.

Wallace Arts Centre Transformance Webpage

<http://tsbbankwallaceartscentre.org.nz/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/transformance>

Chinglish Webpage

<http://chinglish-renee.blogspot.com/>

Artslabtoo Blog page

<https://artslabtoo.wordpress.com/>