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ART & TEXT

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The inherently ephemeral nature of performance and theatre does not readily allow for their being re-wound, re-viewed or re-read, although they may of course be reconsidered. This presents special difficulties to the writer, who is often reduced to a series of syntactical stills. Performance is not an object distinct from ourselves, but is an experience, an event that includes the observer. Roland Barthes has described the "regenerative potential of the event" but it must be admitted that often, too often, performance frustrates more than it regenerates.

The Sydney Festival is a case in point, though I will remark on it only briefly before moving on to more interesting matters. The Festival continues to exist not in spite of, but because of its dullness, its blandness, its complete lack of cognizance of the multiple communities it might inform, amuse or (god forbid!) entertain.

Fortunately this less than auspicious start to 1990 was challenged in early February when powerful Butoh performer, Tess de Quincey, performed her second solo work, *Another Dust*, at The Performance Space. De Quincey's performance sought to "examine the fields that lie within division; the area and the charged particles between the poles. It is an attempt to implode perspective, to turn the perspective on internal and external boundaries/spaces inside out: to expose extremities of the body in simple existence." Rigorously anti-humanistic in conception, de Quincy presented an alien body, the body as phenomena. The performer moving in space appears as a dynamic web of inseparable energy patterns. The act of performance, the experience, becomes primary. This chameleon body, perceived and rendered as a site of desire, displacement and fluctuation, has nothing to do with the morbid psychologising tendencies of mainstage dance and drama.

De Quincey, herself a member of the Mai-Juku Performance Company in Japan, quotes its director, Min Tanaka: "The world, the external environment and the body, the internal environment, both try to establish a style when they encounter each other on the basis of their respective traditions. The tradition of the body is constantly exposed to the will for transformation, and it dances the eternal time; awkward, twisted and suffering ... It is a will to struggle so that the self remains open-ended in its relation to the world" (from the catalogue).



Tess De Quincey, *Another Dust*

Through a complex interaction with light, sound and the manipulation of space, the body is made conspicuous. The spectator too is required to relinquish his or her everyday mode of interpreting experience, for the performance, through its rejection of representation and logical sequences in favour of the sensorial body and of a perceptual space, arouses and brings into view that which we commonly do not see. "We live with our bodies and perceive the world by keeping the eyes of our bodies open" (Min Tanaka).