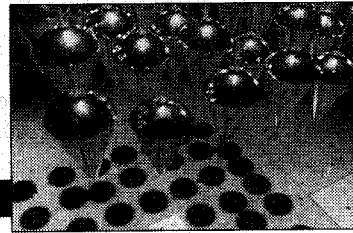
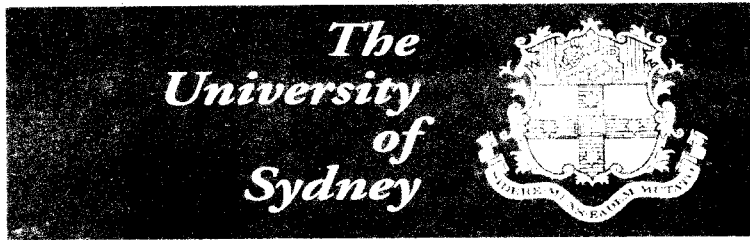


# News

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THE  
GRAVITY OF  
DANTE

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The Gravity of Dante included hanging 92 plumb-bobs.

PHOTO BY TRACEY SCHRAMM

## The full Gravity of Dante

BY ROS NOUGHER

**C**ENTRE FOR PERFORMANCE Studies summer artists-in-residence, Tess de Quincey and Stuart Lynch, are at it again, stretching artistic boundaries all over the place with their unique mix of dance, theatre and installation works.

About this time last year, they drove the monkeys at Taronga Zoo crazy by walking near the enclosure dressed in kimonos, trackpants and long wigs, as part of their "Compression 100" performance series, in which they took part in 169 different collaborative works around the city during May.

This time last month, they managed to convince Fisher Library to loan its entire Dante collection, comprising 1400 books either by or about the Italian writer, for an installation and performance piece

which was part of "From Compression to Dante", the ambitious "postscript" to Compression 100.

In keeping with the prolific writer's origins, the installation, *The Gravity of Dante*, faced Florence and also included hanging 92 plumb-bobs in a pattern around a single card which, incidentally, was a nine of hearts.

De Quincey and Lynch, co-directors of the Performance Union, usually spend six months a year in Sydney and six months a year in Europe, based in Scandinavia. They returned to the University in January this year to put together the Dante project, which will culminate with a six-hour performance installation at the Hyde Park Barracks on 29 April titled *Segments for an Inferno*.

The pair are post-modern choreographers in the Butoh style, which emanated from postwar Japan and

which, according to Tess de Quincey, is characterised by the portrayal of "slow, dark, existentialist works and the aesthetic of non-perfection".

"Within Butoh, imperfection is the point. It looks at the manipulation of the physical and body by life and experiences, as opposed to the control of either of these. The body is portrayed as a meeting of the inner and outer worlds, in deeper connection with the environment. A good analogy is the asymmetry of a withered tree," she said.

Both performers were members of Japan's Mai Juku Performance Company, under the directorship of Min Tanaka, a contemporary leader of the Butoh style.

After parts of Compression 100 were showcased at the 1996 Copenhagen Dance Festival under the title an *Epilogue to Compression*, the team realised they needed to give more attention to the huge amount of leftover creative subject matter which they hadn't explored.

"When we set out to do Compression 100, we wanted to know whether a city can be danced. Was it possible to gauge the physical and metaphysical character of a particular city as an environment, an arena, a stage, a mesh? The performer as a receiver and a transmitter, perhaps? Where were the cross-points that sparked? To what extent

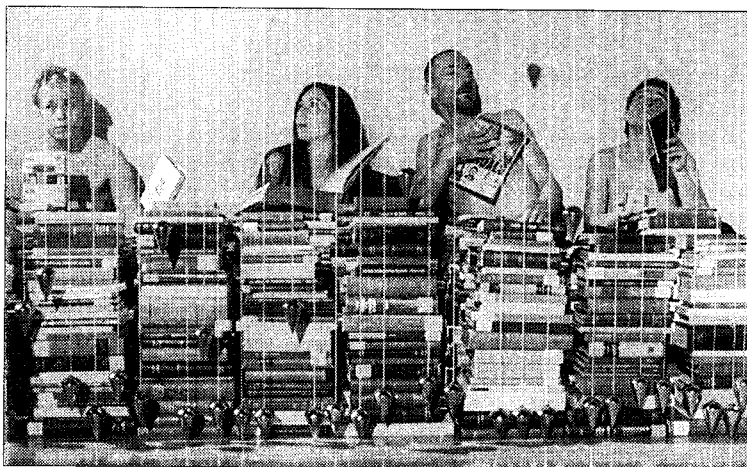
did artists form the shape, sound and feeling of a city," the pair said.

Dante's epic *Divine Comedy*, with its *Inferno*, *Paradiso* and *Purgatorio*, seemed like the ideal vehicle for the creation of performances conveying some of the breadth of Compression 100.

"Dante on a literary level gave the most obvious scope because he is so all embracing and encompassing. The *Divine Comedy*, particularly the *Inferno*, also sits well with the Butoh tradition," de Quincey said.

De Quincey and Lynch will be in Australia until May, but are planning their return to Europe in June for scheduled performances in Denmark from July to September.

*Segments for an Inferno* will be held at the Hyde Park Barracks in Macquarie St, Sydney, from 11am until 5pm on Tuesday, 29 April.



TRACEY SCHRAMM

The Gravity of Dante installation group (from left) Tess de Quincey, Carmen Olsson, Stuart Lynch and Heike Müller.