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FRONT COVER STORY

Ed Koumans, Artland, acrylic, 2005 (detail). Dimensions not supplied. See page 27 for more story.

BACK PAGE COVER STORY

Alick Tipoti, Ulakal (Herd of Dugong), 2003, Linocut

I get my inspiration from the ancient artefacts of the Torres Strait Islands, which I have had the opportunity to see in universities and museums, and from the traditional stories handed down and recorded by my father and the recognised elders of the Torres Strait. My art is built on, and held together by, traditional Torres Strait designs, based on legends of the past. See page 16 for more story.

ARTS NEXUS IS MOVING. . .

We are no longer in Wharf Street Cairns. See page 22 for full story.

However, phones, fax, the internet and the website are unchanged, and all messages are getting through OK. Officers Eve Stafford and Melissa Robertson are part-time, and may be working on projects at other locations around the town, region or even interstate, so try us on the following numbers. You will require an appointment in advance if needing to engage in longer meetings.

Nexus Office T: 4051 4433 [leave message when unattended and we'll call back]

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Please add events directly onto the website

NEW FACES

Melissa Waters is Mareeba Shire's new multicultural officer. Her role is to work in the Mareeba and Dimbulah areas of the Shire to assist multicultural groups and individuals to access information and to link them to services. Melissa was previously multicultural officer in Mareeba between 1998-2000.

As an established visual artist, she comes with a strong background and networks within the arts. This includes the *Corresponding Latitudes* project, a cross-cultural collaborative



project between India and Australia, for which Melissa acted as coordinator and Australian curator. The first part of the project was an exhibition held in Jaipur, India in 2003 and the second stage was a joint exhibition at KickArts and a visit by some of the Indian artists to Cairns in December 2004.

Melissa is available at the Mareeba Shire Council [T: 4030 3933] or at the Dimbulah Community Centre from 10.00am-2.00pm Tuesdays [T: 4093 5444].

The position is part-time, supported by Multicultural Affairs Queensland under its Local Area Multicultural Program [LAMP]. Other LAMP officers in FNQ include Deevah Melendez at Cairns City Council [T: 4044 3012] and Lyndal Scobal within Johnstone Shire Council [T: 4030 2255].

EDITION DEADLINE

The deadline for contributions for the next Edition 58 of Arts Nexus magazine is 15 March 2006. And feedback, suggestions and/or ideas for longer articles should be discussed with the editor in advance. See page 2 for further clarification.

**Edition 58 covers the April - June 2006 quarter
Deadline 15 March 2006**

TRAVEL BUG

7-26 Jan 2006	www.sydneyfestival.org.au
10 Feb - 5 Mar	www.perthfestival.com.au
24 Feb -10 Mar	www.adelaidefringe.com.au
27 Feb -3 Mar	Australian Performing Arts Market www.performingartsmarket.com.au
3-19 Mar 2006	Adelaide Festival of Arts [biennial] www.adelaidefestival.com.au
10-12 Mar 2006	www.womadelaide.com.au
15-26 Mar 2006	Commonwealth Games Cultural Fest A once in a lifetime event for Australia 2500 artists and all events are free! www.melbourne2006.com.au

NEW FACES



Nat Trimarchi, the new Manager of the Cairns City Council's Tanks Arts Centre, was born and grew up in Babinda south of Cairns.

Nat's professional work in the arts started as an actor with the Popular Theatre Troupe in 1981 with whom he toured nationally. He continued to work in theatre and as a musician/songwriter through the 80s, then as a teacher, and later in management and policy at all three tiers of government: the Brisbane City Council, Bureau of Ethnic Affairs (Qld) and finally at the Australia Council.

In the last six years Nat has run his own creative industries consultancy, Rainwater Productions, which specialised in community cultural development and cultural tourism.

Highlights of his work in recent years include a Coral Sea Scholarship in 2000 to study cultural tourism in the USA; developing and publishing a model for community centred cultural tourism; an Australia Council Fellowship exploring cultural sustainability; and the national release of his debut album *Strange Country* in 2004.

Nat recently joined the Cairns City Council as Manager at the Tanks Art Centre where he looks forward to helping build this organisation and developing and promoting a range of program areas. Firstly, as a unique presenter organisation rapidly gaining a national and international reputation as a musician's venue of choice, Nat aims to build on this with an exciting program of artists.

In early 2006 Tanks will also bring on board a curator to establish a broader exhibitions program and a marketing officer to help develop new audiences.

Nat's extensive experience in community cultural development will be put to good use with an enhanced range of activities that will expand this work across the city and beyond. With the Council about to commence Stage 1 of the redevelopment of the Botanic Gardens/Tanks precinct, Nat hopes to use the opportunity to increase access to the Tanks by a wider diversity of audiences, including cultural tourists, and create new avenues to promote this region through what is an unusual and iconic venue.



Crackle, Snap, Pop

Three one-act plays written by Susan Prince, Michael Beresford and Kathryn Ash premiered 11 November 2005
JUTE Theatre at CoCA

Review by Glyn Davies

Like the breakfast cereal whose advertising slogan is evoked by the title JUTE has given to its current trilogy of short plays, *Crackle, Snap, Pop* makes a very good first impression. Noisy, excited, restless action keeps going off all over the place in all three plays. Unlike the cereal, the plays do not turn mushy as time wears on – but they do start to make demands on the patience of the consumer. The snap and crackle wears a bit thin at times as the plots start to develop arcane complexities (particularly in *Snap*), or take on a succession of zany diversions that seem to swamp the original premise of the text (as in *Pop*). Even so, the verve and versatility of the three actors create superb entertainment and that does not wear thin.

In the first play of the trilogy, *Crackle*, three characters are visible on stage at any given time – Irene, Macka and Trevor – but there are actually four characters. The initial premise is that Irene's Darwin donga is haunted. Her lover, Macka, is away at the time and Trevor, a "hippie" exorcist, is called in. Half-way through the exorcism Macka, returning from his fishing trip, catches Irene and Trevor in what looks like – but isn't – a compromising position. From there on, Macka, ever the "ocker" sceptic sets out to biff the ghost-buster (there's a clever pun here on "shaman"/ (Jimmy "Sharman"). Amid considerable mayhem, the point is reached where Trevor, his psychedelic hippie clothes ruined in a brawl, goes offstage only to return dressed in the T-shirt and stubbles of the dead Johnno. The poltergeist has materialised as Macka's mate and now Macka has to choose between Johnno and Irene, marriage and mateship, life and death. This was the most lucid of the three plays.

Snap, the second play, makes clever use of the dual meaning of its title – signifying both photograph and card game. Iris and her epileptic son, Brian, open the play looking at family snaps and reminiscing; the snaps give the delicate Brian a sense of his identity within what turns out to be a very dysfunctional family. As time wears on, the snaps become less and less like those in the average family album and more and more disturbing. As Brian recovers offstage from an epileptic fit, his long-absent father, Neil, returns and starts to claim what are politely termed conjugal rights from

Iris, who is both willing and yet strangely loathe to comply; she eventually sends Neil off to see his son, from whom he seeks similar solace. We know, because the shadow-play on the screen leaves little to the imagination. Thereafter, the game turns more and more vicious as memories are traded and appear to the audience as projected photos on a distorted screen. The winner of this increasingly vicious game, as always, turns out to be the player who has the trump card.

After interval, *Pop* begins and ends as a glimpse of the "tree-change" generation's desire to downsize and simplify their lifestyles by moving to somewhere in the "jungle". However, the play very quickly turns into a series of parodic episodes of lifestyle shows, mostly centred on a TV cook, Imogen, and her use of clichés and half-truths. The play's zany, aptly called Bullet because he continually shoots everything down, acidly describes her show (and other so-called pieces of "reality" television) as "weapons of mass distraction". Shades of T.S. Eliot here, describing popular culture as "distraction from distraction by distraction" and telling us that "Human kind / Cannot bear very much reality". The play takes a good swipe at contemporary politics and, let it be said, the vacuousness of the minds of some "aspirational" Australians.

Dominic Hooper's set design is simple – circus-like yet functional, in the manner of German expressionist art of the 'thirties, and nicely in tune with it is John Robertson's background music, reminiscent of the Berlin cabaret we know so well from the musical of that name. Indeed, one could detect the influence of this kind of theatre, not only in the design, the lighting and the music, but also in the expressionistic, surreal and frenetic acting style so effectively maintained by all three actors throughout the evening. Suellen Maunder's choice of Brechtian expressionism as the dominant method of presentation serves to unify the three texts into a coherent evening's entertainment, whilst at the same time giving Cairns audiences a rare theatrical experience.

The three actors, Robert Jarman, Susan Prince [pictured] and Nicholas Skubij all show considerable talent, endurance and experience in recreating at least three (and in Nick Skubij's case five) different characters on stage within the space of two hours. While Robert Jarman is thrust into the "bad and ugly" role in all three plays, he does manage to extract a certain amount of singularity from the first two and plays the commedia dell'arte "zany" role with telling satiric effect in *Pop*. Susan Prince is more convincing as the downtrodden wives of the first two plays than as the TV show host in the third – where the stereotyping called for in the script tends to make her performance somewhat static. Nicholas Skubij, on the other hand, never ceases to amaze the audience with his subtle reworking of character traits, hairstyles and expressions, and his sheer physicality. His is the dominant performance of the evening – a hard feat to accomplish, given the strong competition.

Theatrically innovative, arresting performances, direction and design make *Crackle, Snap, Pop* a stimulating theatrical event. The fact that it also showcases the talents of three North Queensland playwrights makes it doubly interesting. This is the kind of theatre that not only entertained its enthusiastic first-night audience, though it did that very well: it also has an extra dimension. It challenges, and even shocks on occasion. It is, in short, the most interesting kind of theatre.

Glyn Davies

Glyn Davies is a North Queensland by adoption, living in Yungaburra in preference to the bustling south-east where he was, until 1994, a Senior Lecturer at Griffith University. Not that the North is unfamiliar territory. He began his teaching career at Cairns High School in 1960, was a member of Cairns Little Theatre, and had four glorious years of misspent youth in FNQ in the early sixties. Between leaving FNQ in 1964 and returning for good in 1994, he married, raised three children and further developed his keen interests in singing, acting, teaching and, of course, writing. He was President of Playlab Inc. during most of the 1980s and has more recently directed and acted with Villanova Players in Brisbane and with Malanda Theatre Co. His most recent play was Lorna Bol's But I'm Still Here, which he directed for the inaugural Festival Malanda in March, 2004.