







**Published by the University of Tasmania, September 1992,
to accompany the exhibition "PSYCHOSOMA", held at the
Plimsoll Gallery, Centre for the Arts, Hunter St, Hobart,
18 September - 11 October, 1992.**

Copyright 1992

The artists, writers and the University of Tasmania.

ISBN 085901 515 7

psychoSOMA

psychoSOMA

Relations between mental states and bodily conditions are subtle and complex. Whether these relations are understood in terms of neurological phenomena, hormonal activity or humoral dispositions, that the body and mental states exert influences upon one another is taken for granted.

Art is produced at least in part as a response to or as a result of lived experience, and its capacity to convey this engagement to the viewer is not to be discounted. The experience of art and its ability to exert an influence on our lives involves to a perhaps indeterminate degree the psychosomatic nexus of sensation, emotion and feeling, just as much as the perceptual and intellectual activity of representation and signification.

The exhibited works and the accompanying texts are presented in a context that might allow their expressive and poetic powers to suggest the corporeal, sensory and involuntary aspects of experience, and that might encourage an appreciation of the manner in which art calls the existential actuality of embodied experience affectively to mind.

**SLEEPING AT THE WHEEL
ETCETERA**



**S L E E P I N G A T T H E W H E E L
E T C E T E R A**

M a y L a m

**Prevaricating between lanes on the highway, my car
testifies spectacularly to a generalised and unremitting
performance anxiety. This-car-is-my-body. Am I winning?**

**Night-driving is exhilarating for the short-sighted.
Short-sightedness impairs the perception of depth of
field, but for this disability drivers are compensated by
a glorious enhancement to driving in near-darkness: the
sustained perception of being about to plunge off the
edge of the world. The objectless-ness ahead renders
the short-sighted driver fearless; his inability to focus on
obstacles to his course is an incentive to accelerate
with impunity.**

**Once off the main road, away from the winking of
oncoming headlights and the sober rows of road-safety
red glowing on dirty white posts, the unbespectacled
driver, hurtling through moonless night, might also ex-
periment with the apprehension that he is about to
plunge off the rim of the world through a tunnel of light.**

It is not my policy to pick up hitchhikers. But I was surprised into stopping by the curious fact that the hitchhiker going my way in one direction was ten minutes later again going my way in the opposite direction. When he got into the car I realised he was blind. Provoked into charity, I volunteered to take him to his destination, but being new to the area was uncertain about how to proceed. My passenger seemed to understand this predicament, for without hesitation he asked me to describe our location. Only a few clues were required: the trees, the buildings, the shot tower in the centre of town. I related what I saw as I drove, he gave instructions, and we arrived within minutes.

By the time the sixth child arrived, we were four across in the back seat, one in the front between my parents and one on my mother's lap. We squirmed and whined like kids do. When dad was angry, one arm would come over from the front seat and flail around like a slapping machine gone berserk.

When Dad was in a good mood he drove no hands.

My Mother never drove. One night not long ago

when I was taking her home, she awoke from dozing, fluttered a tired arthritic hand behind her in the dark and said, "I can feel all your little ghosts back there."

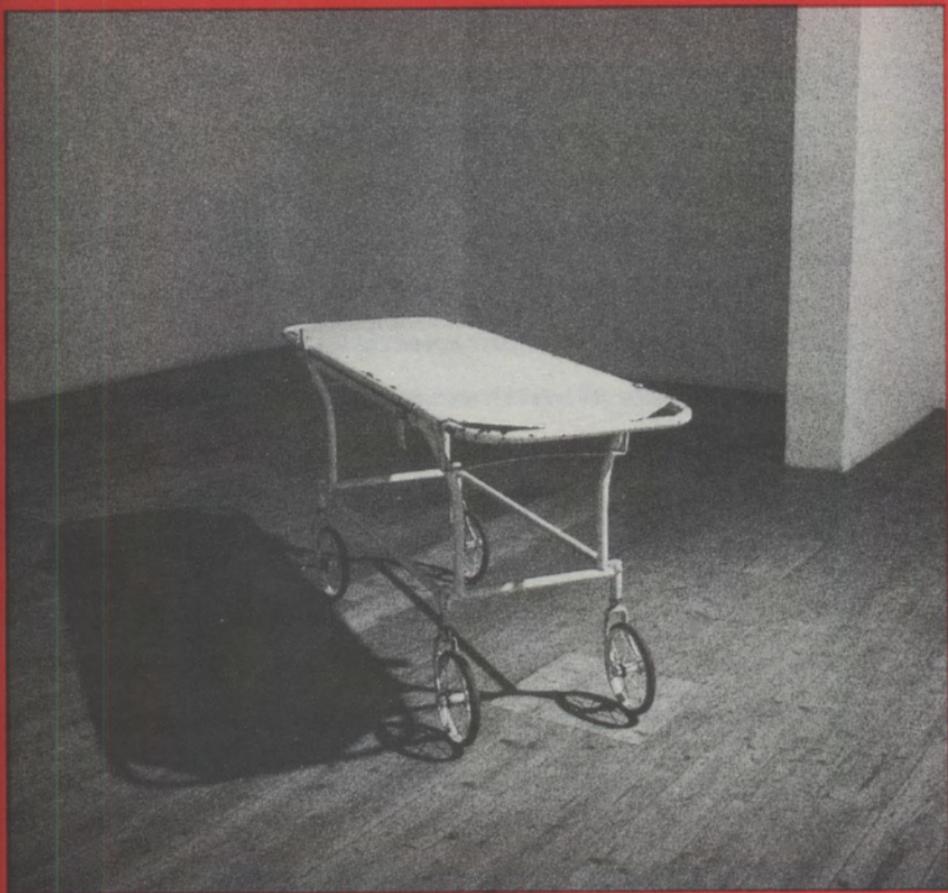
Running out of petrol on the road between A and B, I am reminded that place is not categorical but continuous. Sometimes it is the buzzing of flies that announces this, sometimes it is the distant barking of a dog; once it was the spectacle of a strange man mowing grass. The purpose of the journey, arbitrarily conceived in any case, is confounded. A feeling of ridiculousness ensues. A bush grows on the side of the road - not a native plant, surely, but it thrives just the same. The man with the mower turns a corner and heads off in the opposite direction. Something must be done.

Something must be done, but that is an observation only possible in retrospect. At that moment - a moment not of revelation but its opposite: a falling away of motion, will and purpose - one is incapable of formulating a response. A response could transpire only if a person realised he had gotten into some kind of predicament. But those pulled up short at the side of the road will have been reminded that a predicament is a cat-

egory of being just as the A of car travel is a category of place and the digital display on a clock one of time. Catapulted by speed into a viscid state of inertia, he will notice only the bush about to flower, the drone of flies or the way the man mowing grass neatly turns the corner.

My earliest nightmare: I am driving through a tunnel lined with grotesque faces, my car is out of control, the faces are laughing horribly; I clutch the wheel but cannot steer, I'm speeding, lurching wildly from side to side along the slippery walls of the tunnel. Why do I dream this when I have never taken the wheel of a car?

Borges speculates: a dreamer is blessed and cursed with the omniscient apprehension of eternity in a single instant. Might the curse of this omniscience in a nightmare be realised as the sudden illuminating truth that there is nothing and that the dreamer is and has nobody? Would this not be more nameless and frightful than the spectacle of a rearing snake, a goblin grinning in the dark, a tidal wave of filthy water? If so, these kinds of visions would be the material consequence of terror, not its cause. Investing his apprehension of disembodi-



Charles Anderson - From *The Anatomy Project*

ment with shape and name, the dreamer, restored to sight, might soothe himself by narrating his fright.

A snake-handler I met once told me that snakes never figured in his nightmares.

My driving nightmare was an ordinary one, its terror translated into the senses to become indeed sensible - a predicament related as an inability to drive. I can drive now. When I have nightmares these days, I tell a different story.

When I was a teenager, moony for love and crazy for experience, I hoped to take instruction from inner resources. Every now and then my waking life would be blessed with the ragged recollection of an erotic dream concocted by a delinquent but largely idle id. A few small sexual experiments, sometimes with persons known to me, were afforded by this means. But it was galling to concede that regardless of my degree of arousal, no penetration was ever accomplished, nor was likely to be, during these virgin years.

Can you believe what you read? The newspapers this week report that a snake handler, who chose his

career in order to overcome his phobia of snakes, was bitten by one of the very creatures he no longer feared. He died.

My analyst knew Borges. The first time I went to see him he lent me his paperback edition of *Seven Nights*. I only read the essay on nightmares before returning the book, an act calculated in recognition of the significance of *holding on* to the book. But I had read enough to understand why the analyst was not interested in the unfolding theatre of my dreams. He asked only how I felt.

How did I feel when I dreamed that a small tribe of us, including the analyst, found ourselves navigating the hilly terrain of some prehistoric jungle region? In my handbag I found some fruit, perhaps a few oranges, but certainly a banana. I *felt*, I *think*, an obscure satisfaction in being able to provide some sustenance for the group. I had, in fact, already given the analyst a present of violently-coloured flowers that I associated with South America: lilies, iris and orchids.

I have retrospectively forged a connection between that dream and the morning drive I regularly made



Pat Brassington - From *In my Father's House*

to attend the sessions. At a certain stage of my trip I drove beside a river. On one side of the road was a series of apartment buildings looking over the water and across to the city skyline. The apartments looked solid, comfortable and...expensive. Propertyless, I wondered habitually whether I was investing wisely in future happiness. On the other side of the road lay the river and a single cactus bush, a prickly pear I think. For the whole year I watched out for that cactus, prickly, ugly, evergreen and unchanging. When the cactus flowered at the end of a year I decided to terminate the analysis.

I can't remember what was said about the dream but now, of course, I imagine it meant that I might travel alone. South America, flowers, Borges, dreams on one side. On the other, me in my car and the satisfaction of being able to produce a banana from my bag. If I had not had to drive to the analysis, perhaps the dream would have meant something different.

The small but advanced country of Gania was forced into universal acknowledgment of the fact that no place looks the same when traversed in the opposite direction when the chief of police finally admitted that

more than half his force was occupied daily with assisting lost or disoriented travellers. At a summit convened to address this matter, the police chief demonstrated the problem to assembled government and business representatives with a pair of trousers. The problem, he explained, was the common perception that once a traveller passes through a place he imagines that he is familiar with it, much as anyone would anticipate that one leg of a pair of trousers will be matched by the other. By analogy, this might suggest that a small creature proceeding up one trouser leg will encounter exactly the same environment when he turns back the other way, whichever leg that creature chooses for the return journey. But we may look only in the direction in which we travel: thus, *being* in a place or passing through it, is not the same as *seeing* it from all points of view. The chief of police illustrated this argument by laying out the trousers with legs pointing in opposite directions. Travelling to and from a place, he concluded, means proceeding always in a single direction: not "to" and "from" as he confided later to the press, but "to" and "to".

A solution was readily found and the necessary legislation passed. Cars from that point were to be fitted

with a small video camera mounted to the rear window for the purpose of recording for future reference the scene traversed in retreat. A lost traveller might thus view his journey in rewind for an accurate account of how he should advance.

Due to protests about the installation of cameras on aesthetic grounds from foreign car manufacturers, imported cars were exempted from this requirement. This anomaly was resolved by the passing of legislation requiring owners of imported cars to pay an additional tax to the police for the luxury of disorientation.

Two adulterers, driven to deceit by the suspicious natures of their respective spouses, were forced to make trysts in her car under the pretext of environmentally responsible car pooling. Between work and home they had twenty five minutes together. Depending on the traffic circumstances, some time could be gained by speeding, in which instance the car swung off the road for five minutes beside the river in the early dark of winter afternoons. When summer came, the lovers found the journey exquisitely unbearable. Hurling along the freeway with their hands sweating and straining inside

each others' clothes, they spoke less and less. The temperature rose, the lovers exchanged caresses of increasing savagery, and this delirium continued into autumn. The winter dark brought tenderness but also an obscure sense of disappointment.

A pilot study commissioned by the Road Safety Council to monitor impediments to road safety has reported its preliminary findings on defects in driver concentration. Not all drivers who participated in the study reported all of the following; neither are distractions listed in order of statistical significance. (Of interest, though, is the high incidence of a condition described as reverie, the common subject of which is listed variously as "old loves", "the person I am having an affair with", and "erotic memories".)

Correlated with high level of boredom: observation of pedestrians; reading of advertisements; checking out number plates; a heightened perception, bordering on the hallucinogenic, of clothing and its degree of comfort, shoes and trousers in particular.

Correlated with low level of boredom: self-scrutiny in rear-view mirror; bursts of singing; flashes of rage

directed at other drivers; gazing at the firmament.

In addition, long distance drivers frequently reported the calculation of distances travelled and remaining, estimation of petrol consumption, and the unwrapping of food and cigarettes.

The study was commissioned as a follow-up to the "Drowsy Drivers Die" campaign. The Road Safety Council, surprised by the low incidence of fatigue and drowsiness at the wheel reported in the pilot study, has announced its intention to fund further research into the road safety implications of daydreaming.

The phenomenon of being jerked into consciousness while falling to sleep can be likened exactly to the shock of finding yourself awake at the wheel.

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

Edward Colless

1

The taxi driver tells me about the weather I've missed. He lazily swings the car onto the highway and the airport drops back behind at the end of its avenue of frozen trees. Snow's been falling, he says, coming down low on the mountain. Snow on the mountain, sleet and rain down on the city. But he likes it here, at the bottom end of the world. At this deep, southern latitude where there's nowhere further to go — except across an ocean to the Antarctic — a man has the room and the time to do things, he assures me. The sun has dropped below a distant chill ridge, way off right, and lets the sky thicken into grey smears. At the hill crest up ahead I catch the soft yellow and aqua glimmers of a bored silent city switching on its neon hoardings, regular as ever, lighting up its streets and empty parks, empty and sullen. I've come from the other side of the earth to the few rooms that for a few years I've said are home. The drizzle has lifted. The stains on the bitumen are turning into thin

slicks under prowling headlights. Outside my front door in the trough of the valley the air feels as if it slid down from the icy mountain slope and collected in one deep dull pool. I feel keys tight in my hand but I'm under the ground. I'm at the bottom of the silence and looking feebly up past the narrow rim of a mine hole, peering up at the cataract smut across the coal jet sky. A desert moon lit the steep alleys and minaret pinnacles of another city for me. It's no longer there.

2

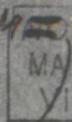
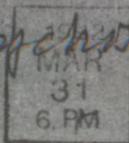
One morning I see spindly trees through the bedroom window make brittle webs against the pale clouds. They remind me of diagrams of the nervous system from school exercise books. Dirty filaments, grown out to fingertips or toes or along a penis and wound around the inner organs in knotted lumps. They dry on the page and set hard like threads of burnt sugar. The ground might freeze at night like a sleeping body, but it thaws into slush. Somewhere above the winter surface things stay stiff, no matter how much life pushes through them. But they break like bones. I don't want to picture the agony in this cracking up, I don't want to work out my delusion.

My mouth is sticky and won't clean out. There is a heavy feeling in my chest as I inhale. It stretches up through my neck and bruises the ears. Blunt pains nuzzle deep in each side of my lower back. I spend a day in bed, watching the spindly trees gently creaking in frosty light. I don't want to be like one of these things that branches, not a weave of strings or ducts. I try to focus it so this sickness makes my tissues all of one thick wave; one slumping thing which bulges or contracts internally where I say to myself it hurts. Pains that don't cut or twist. There should be just the surging or ebbing volume of matter: inseparable from the stuff that makes you gasp or stumble. It should be like a lover's heart ache; every breath and step repeats it in you. Time can be the only measure for it, by the undulations of intensity, the force of its rhythm (this is your life itself now, you'd say: with no image).

3

A week later in a taxi on the way to a pathology lab the late sun breaks over the dashboard and flares across a fogged windscreen. The car snakes down a narrow road toward the docks and I slip forward a fraction.

Thinking + Psychodrama



Domenico



a message from the Emperor

David McEwen
University of Tasmania, Arts Centre
Hunter St Hobart 7000
Tasmania

Domenico de Clario - Message

Things move with a simple precision: my body in the seat, the strip of sunlight. I try to compose it as a scene that's got me in there connected with every other part but the details drift in a no man's land between being awake and being asleep, where you don't really comprehend what you see and where you can't entertain what happens as a dream. It's not unfamiliar, but it doesn't get easier to handle.

Some time ago, when I tried to describe the sensation to him, my analyst told me it was called a fugue state. It is a certain kind of estrangement, not a fantasy. Some patients, he said, can find themselves suddenly in another city. Perhaps wearing clothes they can't remember buying and talking intimately to people they can no longer recognize. The dislocation is sickening. It's the effect, he might have said, of being a stranger to the world and not wanting to admit it. It cuts you apart. He was a strange man, himself. I found him once outside a shopping mall, busking. In mid-winter day he was dressed in a thin pair of pants from an old suit with a sports shirt and open leather sandals. He wore a lae around his neck and was playing an Hawaiian guitar. I dropped a coin in the straw hat at his feet and he nodded. We never spoke

about it in the sessions.

4

Dirty clouds pile together low beyond the hills to the south in the afternoon. They silhouette the nervous detailing a distant patchy tree line gives to the smooth swell of the terrain. The earth seems less than solid in this light, contoured by a kind of distension or disease and filigreed with a trembling hand. The clouds are drifting in sluggishly, full of water. Along their top sudsy edge the hesitant sun catches for a moment sheets of moisture that flare bright. It makes the frail blue atmosphere above look dense and grey. Two gulls sweep ahead of the rain as it slowly washes down into the gullies and thins out the rose and ochre jigsaw of chimneys and pitched roofs and numbs their outline. The sky drains off as the clouds advance, until it seems just a long shallow slur of light low overhead.

In this state the world has no shadows and no brightness, everything stays at the same distance from you, bleached and somnolent, half spoken. There is no source for what I see. I can't put myself anywhere in it.

In Frankfurt I stood at a hotel window late one afternoon

and watched the rain sweeping in over the city. It was summer rain carrying dust and smog onto the peak hour traffic below. I was ill then, too; still sick from the water in Morocco. After an airline confused its schedule I had a penthouse suite in a five star hotel. All that room to myself and nothing to do in it. But here at last I could drink the tap water. I could eat any food I chose, though my stomach couldn't take it. I used only a fraction of the sixty dollar voucher given to me for dinner and signed the rest to an Irish waitress who ran out and waved me goodbye in the lobby.

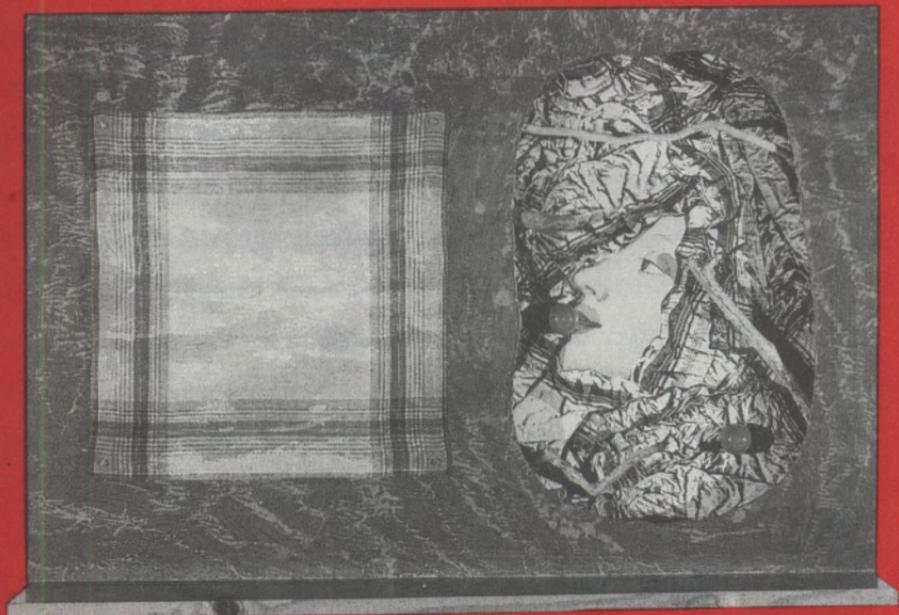
As the lift took me up I tried to picture myself inseparable from the chances and mistakes that had put me there. As if my destiny was identical to the motion of the world in all its simple incidents. But they couldn't add up as that kind of story. Somehow I would always lose the connection, even between the lift and my own delirium. Something will block out my redemption, a stupid kind of suffering. My view of Frankfurt passed away through a listless spread of evening. The black sky became steep and sheer. The world was already losing its definition. I had a blank envelope full of receipts from hotel rooms and apartments. In my shoulder bag was a stack of unwritten

postcards, and a hundred unaddressed scenes.

5

Up high on the hill of the Kasbah, the last sunlight glanced pink off a tower and then broke into haze and chalk mauve as it shed down the terraced flat roofs of the Medina below. The Tangier ferry was called *Ensha'llah*— If God Wills It. From my hotel room at night I could see down over the grimy port and across the Strait of Gibraltar, back toward Spain. The docks and the bars along the promenade emptied after nine and by ten thirty the hotel lights flickered and then blacked out. All of Tangier went under. I opened the window and leaned through into a salt breeze. A woman's voice called out a name. A few cars passed along the beach road and loomed shadows of palm trees over the resort hotels facing the bay. No one had an edge in this, I thought, they're all creeping along in it or trying to lean out through it. You can get closer to things this way. Later a series of shouts echoed from up behind me. Then someone shot a gun off.

6



Peter Ellis - *Veronica*

Tangier through the Riff Mountains where the eucalyptus gave way to Atlantic cedar, and where storks nested on the roofs of herdsmen's stone huts or circled over the plains beyond M'rirt, hot ochre plains spotted with black tents of the nomadic Berbers. I knew the water was bad. An English engineer living there even warned me against cleaning my teeth. But I was already nauseous, anyway. In Fez a guide took me through the tangled, dark, unmarked alleys of the old Medina, Fès el Bali. I shuffled down lanes no more than shoulder breadth wide past heavy cedar doors studded with iron bolts and strode across the gloom in the atrium of an abandoned theological school. I followed a donkey into the dusty courtyard of a decayed palace. The houses staggered upward storey on storey in precarious extensions, only a few feet across from each other at the top and barring the sun from the swarming beggars or peddlers.

The lanes and souks seem to plot out an amazing, undirected space that you can't figure out, but that's only in the abstract. Down there in the flesh all you get is the edge of things colliding, heaping up shreds of matter. Time in there is catastrophic. I suffer it fractured, pleated, splitting on itself with a geological vio-

lence. A fragment of the thirteenth century juts from a cleavage in the ninth, like a bone sticking through the soil wall in the corridor of a catacomb. You're an outsider, and that's worse than being a tourist. My pace through it was by interrupted movements which tore me in the legs and jerked the weight in my lungs. Whether barely shifting down a path or taking an abrupt corner, each step was a division in me that couldn't be named or healed. Each step broke me apart, piece by piece, until I lost any picture of myself as well as any destination.

7

At night I sat on the stone wall outside my hotel. Jorge was in his twenties and had been in the navy and was now studying law. He was from Spain and an *aficionado* of the bullfight. I told him that back in Sevilla at the Maestranza ring I'd seen an eighteen year old matador, Jesulino de Ubrique, receive the ears of the bull in honour and be embraced by the President of the bullfight. "He is not so great a *torero* yet," said Jorge thoughtfully. The next morning he was buckled up in pain: "Poison," he said, pointing to a plate of fruit, "...I am too much in Morocco." The next afternoon I was robbed

in the dusty light cutting through the canopies of wooden slats slung above one of the souks in the Medina called Fès el Jedid. My guide left me for an hour to let me shop: "You will not be lost," he said, stepping away, "I will be there at the end of the street waiting for you then." He turned his head back and added as a matter of course, "...*ensha'llah*." To trust the will of God, and to walk in a straight line: perhaps that was the mistake.

A knife blade flashed along the sleeve of a man's robe. Two merchants had hold of a teenage boy by the neck, and he arched his head back toward me and pleaded: "Monsieur, monsieur?" I was spun away from him toward a wall as a coarse whisper brushed close, "You recognize? This one thief?" A grinning boy with wiry hair and a dirty oversized Chanel T shirt shouted something in Arabic at the teenager. A short, black man swore and swung a kick at him and missed. His sandalled foot caught the hip of a young dusky woman in a soft blue veil and she was knocked sideways into an old card table with baskets tumbling from it. She bent forward heaving, trying to let go the breath that was locked in her in a spasm. The short man pushed his way over, leaned down and kissed the hem of her caftan. Her eyes glanced up

in the dusty light cutting through the canopies of wooden slats slung above one of the souks in the Medina called Fès el Jedid. My guide left me for an hour to let me shop: "You will not be lost," he said, stepping away, "I will be there at the end of the street waiting for you then." He turned his head back and added as a matter of course, "...*ensha'llah*." To trust the will of God, and to walk in a straight line: perhaps that was the mistake.

A knife blade flashed along the sleeve of a man's robe. Two merchants had hold of a teenage boy by the neck, and he arched his head back toward me and pleaded: "Monsieur, monsieur?" I was spun away from him toward a wall as a coarse whisper brushed close, "You recognize? This one thief?" A grinning boy with wiry hair and a dirty oversized Chanel T shirt shouted something in Arabic at the teenager. A short, black man swore and swung a kick at him and missed. His sandalled foot caught the hip of a young dusky woman in a soft blue veil and she was knocked sideways into an old card table with baskets tumbling from it. She bent forward heaving, trying to let go the breath that was locked in her in a spasm. The short man pushed his way over, leaned down and kissed the hem of her caftan. Her eyes glanced up



Graeme Hare - *Linear 8*

sidelong to me, deep brown and lined heavy with kohl. An arm locked under mine and jerked me out of it. "I would take you to the police," my guide said as we hustled our way back through the Jewish quarter, "but it will take many hours and all to no point. Anyway, I must pray and meet my wife."

I found some deutschmark left from Germany, several dollars worth, and I rationed them for mineral water. I kept going south. In Marrakech I was doubled up by poison like Jorge.

8

A middle-aged tourist from Bahia in Brazil gave me some tablets that clamped it down for a while. Fernando was a plastic surgeon and handed me his card: "When you feel better you can be my guest. At dinner, I mean." In a Marrakech nightclub inside the Medina surrounded by wealthy Moroccans, entertained by a Tuareg choir, we sat in a restored salon with a richly tiled dome and gilt lantern. Ormate chandeliers hung down low over us, like the Ottoman lamps in Turkish mosques. The great public architecture visited by shambling travellers like myself crumbles in the red dust outside, overrun with feral animals and beg-

gars; Moorish splendour in Morocco only survives in extravagant diversions. Fernando introduced me to Flavia, a young Brazilian studying psychoanalysis. She was a Freudian, interested in the difficult revisions of Freud developed by Jacques Lacan. "But in Bahia?" she shrugged rhetorically, "I have enough difficulties." She gave up on our conversation, the tedious half sentences we were managing in a broken language. I was lying across cushions spread on oriental carpets, at the naked feet of an Arab dancing girl. Her loose crimson culottes draped off her hips under a gold belt and were vented up the outer leg to reveal transparent black lace that clung to her from the ankles to the gold clasp around her neck. She was tall and elegant and danced for an hour.

9

In an alley at midnight I walked alone, unsteady, toward Place Jemaa el Fna where I had seen a cobra coiled on a mat swoop to bite the ankle of a snake charmer. This was the square in which James Stewart, the man who knew too much, witnessed a murder. It was burning in the night with a dozen bonfires and a hundred thousand people celebrating the Festival of the Three

Kings. Behind me a pale moon shined off the Koutoubia Minaret and through the stone arches of the city gates. South, beyond the High Atlas mountains, it fell onto the Sahara. I was leaving this behind me, piece by piece. By the time I reached Rabat, up on the Atlantic coast, I was in a black fever. Dripping sweat, I passed out in a tiny hotel lobby. When I came to, the bile was spilling out my mouth. I kicked open the toilet door and glimpsed myself in the mirror vomiting straight through the doorway, clear across the tiled floor.

10

It was a bare room, dilapidated but with "facilities", although I spent the afternoon and night in the bed burning and shivering. Only a single light worked. It was in the bathroom and threw eerie shadows along the wall off bad repair work done over the years. One ornamental fixture stuck prominently out from near a draped window. It was made of eight curved, silvery strips welded together to make an exploded hemisphere. There was a broken electrical fitting at the centre.

I kept my eyes on it through the night, calculating its weird geometry. In the delirium it became a grim mystery. I

hauled myself around the bed trying to see it more clearly, and each barely distinguishable aspect on it divided my mind by separate manic interpretations. Years ago I'd found a postcard in the window of a second-hand shop near a train station in Melbourne. It had a group of Chinese girls giggling at a miserable looking man who had fallen down, garish figures posed against an empty silver background. It was dog-eared and had something written on the back in a blotted, archaic italic hand which I didn't bother reading. I bought it for five dollars and gave it on impulse, a day or two later, to a Eurasian friend of mine. She stared at it, bewildered, trying to interpret the significance of the image, tilting it this way and that as if there was some part to a puzzle in it she couldn't see. I was embarrassed, I couldn't offer an explanation. She gave up and smiled an awkward thank you and then idly turned the card over. She shuddered. The date at the top of the letter was her own birthdate. I'd had no idea. As Koestler pointed out, coincidences are deciphered by the significance we give to them. But reason can't dispel the sly menace that comes with that inducement of meaning from a mere circumstance in the world. It comes suddenly, when you don't want it and you are left in shock that some incomprehensible fragment of an omen has been slipped

from the other side of life to you.

Around five in the morning I stopped trembling and felt the sweat on my naked skin turn cool and dry. Half an hour later the bedside telephone rang: "Yes, how do you do, I am José Martinez," said a gruff voice, "you remember. I asked about you, the sick Australian? But I think you are best not to stay here! You should take the six-thirty bus with me and my son." Land of *toreros*, of *corridos*, of the *cante jondo*! ...he'd shouted, as the ferry sailed out of Tangier in a brilliant dusk: land of the gipsy voice of Camarón de le Isla, of the great matador Espartaco!

11

I borrowed money for food in Sevilla, enough for a week in Turkey. I ate yogurt and dry bread in a cramped hotel room for two days in Istanbul. Strength returned to my legs. I was in the old part of the city on the peninsula between the Golden Horn to the north and the Sea of Marmara to the south, squeezed into a busy commercial area called Laleli. Outside Topkapı Palace one evening I talked to a young Russian student. Gregor had come from Moscow to find his girlfriend who had already been working in Istanbul for three months. He had the address

but as a street name only, no number for the house or apartment. "Do you know this street?" he asked. "I've seen it," I answered, "it's a long street and far from here. Which way did you come? You must have passed right by it." "Then I am lost," he said anxiously, "I cannot find her." Each day I sat in an outdoor cafe near Sancta Sophia, eavesdropping on conversations and watching the Turkish boys pick up stray European or American girls. They talked tourism fluently, and offered their service as a guide with gentlemanly ease. A young man sat nearby entertaining three pretty Japanese girls with stories of the harem, and with lessons in Islam. There was a polite dispute with a grinning waiter over the bill, and the girls blushed. "The waiter must smile," joked the young man, "it is government regulation that when a Turk cheats a tourist he must do it with a smile."

12

She'd studied English literature at Istanbul University: Wordsworth, Conrad. She was Islamic, and knew the belly dance: "In Turkey, girls are born knowing how to dance it." On the holy day Melda took me to a mosque that has the bones of Mohammed's standard-bearer. It



Helen Hopcroft - *3am Nightmare*

has a footprint of the Prophet. Topkapı Palace has a hair from his beard. It sits in a thin glass box, sticking up from a block of wax or resin which looks like a shred of raw white flesh. The mosque was crowded with boys dressed in blue and white satin capes, laughing and playing. It was a day of celebration for them, she explained, the day before circumcision. "They don't know what's coming," she added with a grin, "but who does?" In the Chora Church near the city walls she stared up at the ceiling mosaics illustrating the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary. The scenes are crowded with late Byzantine and Medieval period detail. Even with the less damaged panels it was difficult to identify more than an incidental fragment of any episode, and I couldn't recall the New Testament stories well enough to tie them together coherently. I couldn't remember the miracles or the stations. Despite my confusion she stood silently with a smile, absorbed in the imagery. "And God," she asked when we reached the end wall of the narthex, "in the story, He releases Jesus from pain at the point of death?" "Not at all," I answered, "it's crucial that Christ is forsaken when he suffers death." She looked back thoughtfully over the ceiling. "The rest of it I can follow,"

she said abruptly, halting at the doorway, "but this crucifixion business I can't figure out."

13

We strolled down the steep cobbled pathway from the hilltop called Pierre Loti, above the Eyüp Mosque near the tip of the Golden Horn. "Phew," Melda sighed, standing for a moment and fanning herself in the still heat. Old Muslim cemeteries flanked the path, their tall headstones leaning in all directions and overgrown. "I came to Istanbul looking for images from a film that I love," I said, "it was shot here thirty years ago but has scenes set in a graveyard that are very similar to this one. It tells a story about a man who is lost in Istanbul. He meets and becomes obsessed with a strange secretive woman whose name shifts between Leïla and Lâle." I was peering closely at the markings on the headstones. "Each one has an emblem carved on it," Melda pointed toward a blurred form, "which stands for the dead." She leaned back against one of the headstones. She told me that Leïla was a figure from an Arab romance which she'd learnt as child but couldn't remember very well. Leïla and her lover were from different nomadic tribes

and her father disapproved of the affair; overnight he moved his tents to separate them. Her lover searched for her, but got lost the desert. She could not recall how the story ended. "But Lâle," she said emphatically, "that just means tulip. There are tulips on gravestones, but they don't mean anything. They're just ornaments. What happens to the lovers in the film?" "Leïla dies," I said, "and her lover searches Istanbul for evidence of who she really was. Then he dies the way she does, in a car crash; but in the end she seems to be resurrected, standing on a ferry on the Bosphorous. She is fatal but immortal." "It sounds like a Christian story," she laughed, "I don't like the ending. If I was her I would want to marry a rich man and live in a villa on the Bosphorous." We picked up a taxi, and she dropped me off at my hotel as she made her way across town.

14

In the air over Turkey, the Golden Horn and Bosphorous are shrouded in thick haze. The mountains break through by midday. I am losing time as I close on the shadow line to the east. My flight veers south at the Caspian Sea and into the desolate reaches of Iran. The

light hangs clear along the ridges of the sand dunes, making cobweb tracks over the plain. A great pink and mauve dry lake skews through a waste-land. Shadows sink the desert sheets of rock under dirty olive and then the last contours of the earth run into mud, and I'm staring out blank at the sheer way of my own dilated vision through the night.

Acid pinks and glutinous whites streak over the pale sands as I turn through darkness to the other side of the world. At an unreal hour of this bright hemisphere, I drift into the vast flat stretches of the central desert and the pilot announces our arrival time. It seems too soon, the destination still too far from us. A land of dreaming spreads beneath sleepless eyes. The desert stretches out to the horizon around me and does not end.

Thanks to Clifford Davy and David McDowell for their editorial assistance with this story.



Lindy Lee - Detail from *Untitled Black*
(After Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres)

THE UP AND DOWN BOYS

THE UP AND DOWN BOYS

Peter Hill

Elevator surfing has had a lot of negative press recently on account of all the bad deaths that have been going down.

It's a pretty dumb sport when you think about it. Some of the downtown elevators shoot a thousand feet a minute. You're in a prison there, surrounded by cinderblock walls and metal cages. The surfer is half mountaineer, half lunatic. Some are loners; others hunt in packs. There could be anybody in there with you, it's not just the security guards you have to watch out for. Not all of the deaths have come from wrong-footing a moving car and breaking your spine on the garbage floor. They say, ...well they say a lot of things, but you know what kids are like, they don't listen.

No one's even sure how it all started. Most likely it's been goin' on in the projects for years. Not till it reached the campuses in Detroit, Phoenix, Bakersfield, and the rich kids started doin' it that the papers and style magazines made it an issue. But hey, who's complainin'? It makes good copy and pays the bills.

THE UP AND DOWN BOYS

Some style theorist out at Amherst been calling it 'a rite of recreational passage'. Can you dig that, a rite of recreational passage? Shit, it's elevator action, that's what it is. It's frightening, its dumb, and it's the quickest way to end up dead outside of walking around Los Angeles at night.

Notwithstanding all that, a crew from Brooklyn and one from Chicago had gotten together with a few assorted screwballs from the Mid-West who'd learned their trade in the giant, but slow, grain silos of the heartlands, to stage the first World Elevator Surfing Championships.

Chicago was the chosen venue and the Windy City had seldom blown a keener wind than that May evening when the Up and Down Boys flew in from the East.

There were four of them and they all squeezed into a cab at O'Hare Airport after a few minutes jivin' around on the forecourt trying to keep warm and to look older than their mean age of nineteen.

Driver was of Polish origin. Friendly guy called Bob. Bob Paderewski.

"You boys been here before? This your first time in Chicago? Tell ya, it's my kinda town. Good enough for

Fast Eddie and Al Capone, good enough for me. Then there was Bugsy Malone, yaheardahim?"...lifting onto the freeway, narrowly missing a stationwagon full of Hispanics and battered suitcases..."Then we had a mayor called Daley. He's dead now. Richard J. Daley. Boy, could he kick ass. But I tell ya, if ya can't make it in Chicago, where can you make it? Look at me". Overtaking fast on the inside, turning to the boys to ask directions. Boys a little tired and scared. Eight months working pizza concessions and MacDonaldis to pay for the trip, to earn a bit of respect from their only rivals, the Chicago Heights. Gotta have respect.

"We got newspapers in every language you can think of, and some you never heard of. We invented the blues for Chriss'ake. You gotta go downta the south side and hear the blues. Then we got the stockyards, you hearda them? Down Canaryville and Bridgeport. That's where old Mayor Daley comes from. That's where all the Irish politicians come from. They're turning it into parks and restaurants now and sending the Rapid Transit Authority down there. Loop-de-loop. Place to go. See the Chicago White Sox at Comiskey Park. Visit Chinatown."

Then they saw it in the distance. Only lights at

first, outlining the great structures underneath. The skyscrapers that could look down on New York. The lower teeth in the mouth of a wide-open city. Shit, the Boys thought collectively. All those fuckin' elevators...

"My father was Lithuanian, did I tell you that? My mother grew up in Warsaw. I been married four times. A Swede, a Japanese, and two Canadians, but not at the same time you understand. OK, so don't laugh. My father's father came here after World War One. Lived on Marquette Road, down near California Avenue. We moved out to Lemont. S'where I grew up. We always went to the Nativity on Sunday. Our Lady of Siluva. Never f'get the day the fucker started bleeding. Sorry boys, don't mean no disrespect if any of you got the faith."

Bob drove straight through Downtown, along Lake Shore Drive and up by Lincoln Park. He spoke of ball games and fishmarkets, blues bands and thrift shops. He gave the kids a tour, switching off his meter, talked about going for a beer later, on account of this being his last fare for the night and what the hell he was thirsty.

The Boys craned their heads against the cab windows trying to see the top of the great skyscrapers,

their lights reflected in the vast blackness of Lake Michigan on the other side.

All the great architects had built elevators here. Not forgetting the buildings that surrounded them. The boys had done their homework, leastways Freddie had. Excited now, sitting on the edge of his seat, the one closest to the window.

"The Sears Tower," he gulped. "World's tallest building. Shit, and the Amoco, look at the fucker. World's biggest marble clad building. They put a whole Italian quarry into that."

The others were a little tired of Freddie's knowledge but they let him rave on, rave on, past the John Hancock Centre, merely the world's third tallest building, according to Freddie, then the Greek frontage of Soldier Field, the home of the Chicago Bears, the Adler planetarium, the John G Shedd Aquarium, and the Field Museum of Natural History.

Stretching far into the lake were the double arms of the Navy Pier. They made old movies here. Edward G and James Cagney.

The Boys had booked into a Best Western for their

first night in the city. Later, they would sleep in the shafts.

Bob, their cab driver had finished his tour of the city by buying them a beer each which they drank in the back of the cab while he bored them with tales of his ex-wives.

They drank in silence. Each was lost in thoughts of tomorrow. They'd start early, grab breakfast somewhere, then head Downtown before the commuters arrived and after the cleaners had left. Eight o'clock would be fine.

They didn't sleep well partly on account of Freddie talking in his sleep, murmuring the names of all the great Chicago architects, over and over again in an excited mantra - Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, Dankmar Adler, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Helmut Jahn...

"I wish he'd shut the fuck up," grumbled Eel-Pike who lay closest to Freddie.

"Give him a kick," counselled Mr J who was Eel-Pike's younger brother. "Let's get some sleep."

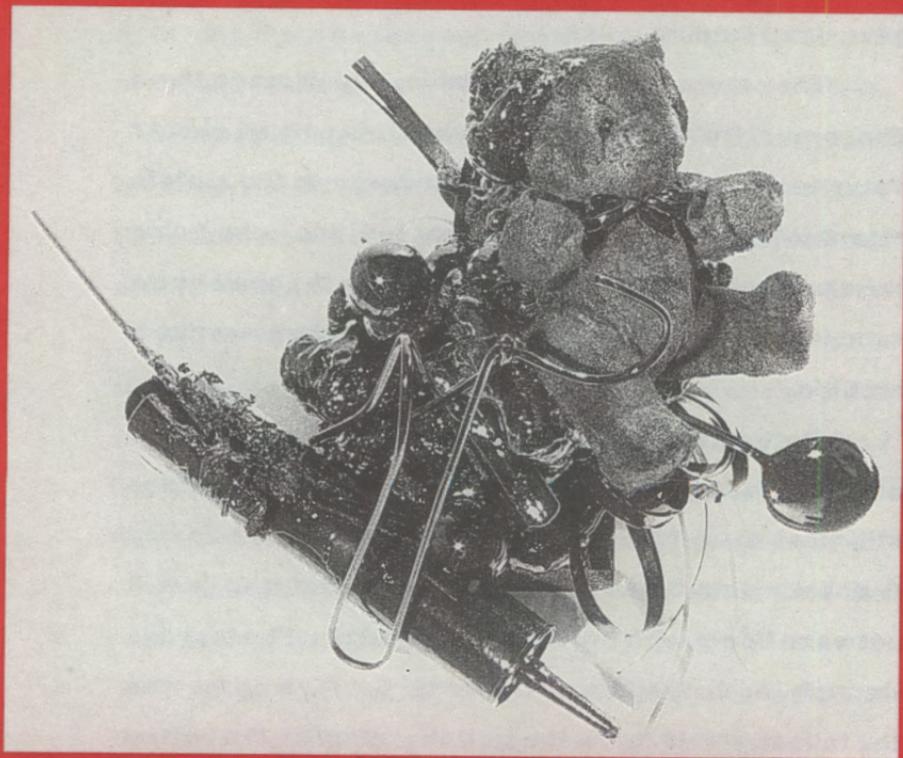
The Boys got too much sleep once Freddie had stopped raving. They were late. Had to miss breakfast and grab a cab downtown.

because it was the world's tallest. It also had seriously weird elevators which came in stacks one on top of the other, and therefore stopped at alternate floors. They gave good landing.

They were also unpredictable, which made them dangerous. But wasn't danger what this was all about? Travellers in one elevator (or meat-cargo as the surfers referred to them) didn't know what buttons were going to be pressed in the other, and the guys in the shaft knew even less. It might go up like a rocket or stammer like a hurt kid.

Getting into the building was easy enough, the hard part was getting an elevator to themselves. It was still quiet, even if they were running late. They would ride it down a few floors to the sub-basement and jam it between floors with the emergency button. The last one through the hatch, which would be Eel-Pike as he was the tallest, would throw the switch and punch the button for the top floor.

That was always the best part. Riding a virgin lift to the top, one you'd never jumped before. Sitting on the roof with the rest of your crew, fumbling for the controls on the hard hats with their miner's lamps. Beams flash-



Scott Redford - Detail from *Painting (Expanded Field)*

ing up and down, elevators passing on either side. Close to heaven. Like being in the body of a giant. Steel intestines rushing through a body with its head in the clouds and its bowels deep in the earth of the city.

Elevator surfers - the virus within the millennium city.

Above and below them the Up and Down Boys could see other lights cutting through the darkness and guessed the Chicago Heights had arrived. But there were a lot of lights.

They weren't the only out of town team. They didn't know it yet but Diva was there too - flown in from New York. She was a surf legend. Born to a rich family up near Flushing Meadow. She'd freaked out at her parents' excesses in the eighties and taken to the streets. One of the last graffiti artists with any real talent, she'd majored in graphics at the Parsons School of Art and Design before exchanging subway cars for elevator cars. Her grandfather had briefly been a famous artist back in the early sixties.

On her own she jumped naked except for her Sony Jogger and sometimes a camcorder. When there were teams around, and some of these guys were real sleazy,

she wore her airforce sky-diving suit and her Blundstone boots.

There were two other teams there. One from the mid-West called the Electric Silos. Can you believe that? Bad enough coming from nowhere, but at least give yourself a decent gimmick. The Electric Silos? Sounds like something Iggy Pop would shave with.

The last crew were a two-some. Identical twins from the West Coast. Called themselves Gravity's Angels. That was better. There was no part of Route 66 they hadn't hitched along. They'd been using their thurnbs for three days to get to Chicago in time for the meet. They were nascent computer hackers from Bakersfield, now studying at UCLA. They'd come through Vegas on Highway 15, getting that far on a Greyhound, a gamblers' special, and stopping off long enough at Caesar's Palace to try the elevators. Too slow and low, they left.

For the first hour it was like watching a tennis warm-up as they waited first for the Up and Down Boys to arrive, then for everyone to get acquainted with the interior spaces, strike macho poses or, in the case of Diva, disdainful ones.

Once inside, security guards would be the only problem. There would be complaints. Lots of them. Jumping from elevator to elevator may be pretty frightening for the surfer, but at least you know when you are going to do it. The poor hunks of meat inside the cars know nothing until they hear the sickening thud above them and the more fanciful recall tales of severed heads being banged against car roofs by killers on the loose. Others, when they feel the sway, remember they are over a thousand feet up without a safety net. Most complain as soon as they stop at a floor, and everyone gets out there whether it's their floor or not and climbs the fire stairs no matter how far.

But hey, you know what it's like trying to get an engineer out through peak hour traffic, and he'll only say there's some dumb kids in there surfing, and they call out the security guards who are ex-cops on the make with weight problems and if you push them they'll admit to vertigo as soon as you can say "get the fuckers outathere". So what do you do, if you're management? You arrange a meeting at the bank, delegate to your do-nothing subordinate, and spend the afternoon in Lincoln Park with a hoagie and a carton of French fries.

"Hey asshole. Yeah you, I'm talkin' to you." shouted Permafrost, acknowledged leader of the Chicago Heights. He was yellin' at Freddie as they approached each other from opposite directions astride parallel cars. All but one of the Heights attended the Chicago Art Institute, they weren't dumb kids from the projects like the Up and Down Boys. They liked to show they had got knowledge. They could do more than just surf.

"Yeah, you," Permafrost repeated **"Yahearda Duchamp? Marcel Duchamp? You know what he said when they asked him the diff'rence between sculpture and architecture?"**

"The fuck's he on about?" Freddie mouthed under his breath as the two cars passed each other.

"Elevators, my man, that's the diff'rence. Y'ever seen a sculpture with elevators?" Permafrost crowed. **"Thrill to the chill, my man, thrill to the chill."** And he leapt towards poor Freddie, just catching the roof of the elevator before it passed. Freddie curled into a ball expecting some severe action, but Permafrost melted away quick as he'd arrived. Playing one move ahead, his specialty, he'd seen a third car approach beyond

Freddie's. Some way off though, it was still a four storey jump, but he made it and was soon passing Freddie again on account of Freddie's elevator having stopped to pick up some cargo.

You see, elevator surfing can be either vertical or horizontal. A six storey drop is pretty cool, and most deaths occur around six. Icarus, a founder member of the Heights had gone into the black on five. Tripped on his own Reebok lace. They didn't come better than Icarus neither.

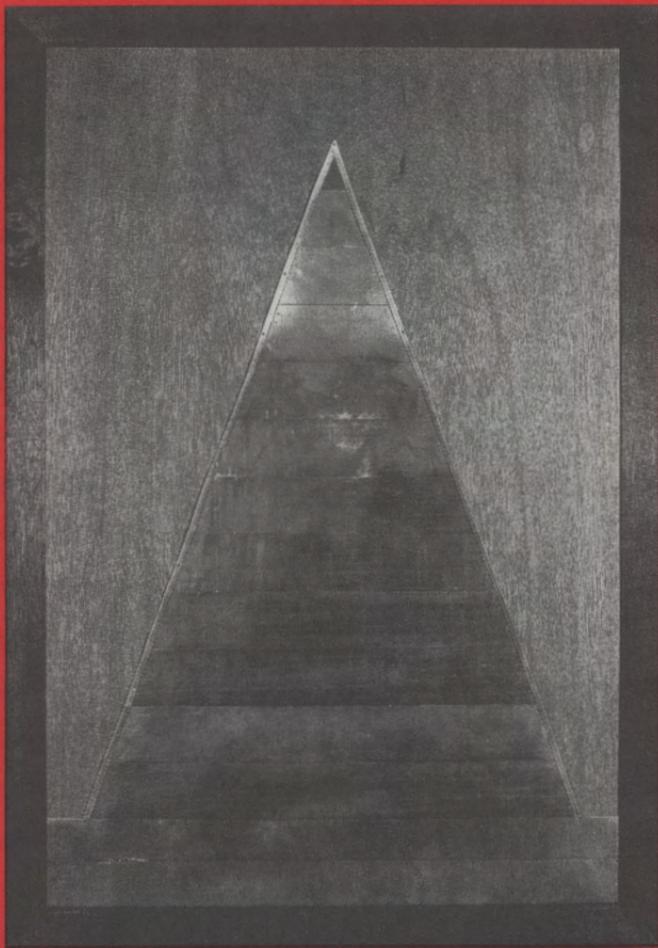
Then there's the horizontal. In some buildings you can get up to ten elevators in a line. It can take all day for that chance alignment. You could ride the surf from one side of the building to the other and perhaps take in a couple of verticals on the way.

During the championships no more than three or four maximum would ride the 'vators at any one time. The others took time out on the ledges and beams. Most of the older skyscrapers were built from the centre out and the central construction cranes later became the elevator shafts. Some of the mid-century hotels had bubble lifts on the exterior and it was fun to cruise beneath the stars, but real surfing called for enclosure.

No one knew this better than Diva. Her timing was immaculate, good as Charlie Chaplin's. Straight out of *Modern Times*. She specialised in the vertical drop. It reminded her of the drip paintings her grandfather used to do back in the fifties. Sort of abstract expressionist but cool. That sort of shit would be making a comeback, she thought, given that all these surfers seemed to be art students.

Those kids had a ball that weekend. Despite the abuse they gave each other. Freddie didn't want to leave. He was in heaven. Round midnight on the Saturday they crept out onto the street via the basement and a drainage cover. They partied at a blues club on the south side. The Chicago Heights served as guides to the others, glad to show off their city. Civic pride, that sort of shit.

Dawn's early light found them sneaking back in, arms full of food and beer from an all-night store, red-eyed like sewer rats. Diva had enjoyed herself too. Busted a couple of jaws on the corner of Pershing and Michigan. Guys didn't know what had hit them. Actually, it was the wooden handle of a claw hammer she kept in



Carole Roberts - Detail from *Duration of the Material, Tower*

the knee pocket of her jump-suit for just such occasions when she was shown disrespect.

Back in the shafts they slept till noon. Sunday was a slow day for surf, but the building was still in use and there was an art to weathering such conditions. Conditions that lent themselves to more graceful, elegant, jumps. Long slow rides, almost to the top. Don't want to go too far and get all tangled in that dangerous machinery on the roof. Quicksilver lost an arm that way and had to retire back in '91. Damn fine surfer too. Freddie's best friend.

Freddie was mesmerised by Diva and now wanted her as his best friend. He was sitting on a stationary wagon near the centre of the building. Hub of the Universe. She was alternating cars, jumping and diving with a grace none of the others could match. And she knew it.

"Shit, man," Freddie whispered, "a triple gain..."

These were the last words he ever spoke, as Diva performed her specialty act.

He did see the infra-red beams from the rifle's telescopic sights - twin beams, blood red, shooting through the darkness from three hundred feet above

him, straight in his eyes. But he never heard the shot that killed him. He couldn't. His head was blown off by the time the sound waves reached the place his ears should have been.

For a few sickening moments that were not without a touch of black humour, his headless body continued to stand upright, swaying slightly, before falling chest forward into the void.

The noise from the shot would have woken the deaf, but outside of the shafts it went unnoticed.

The other surfers froze. They had heard of surf snipers but this was their first introduction to the new breed of crazed ex-serviceman. Back from the Gulf, some had taken to living in elevator shafts. Apparently they felt they could only relate to moving bits of metal and needed that sense of enclosure they'd found in tanks and fighter bombers.

They resented the intrusion of these young kids, interrupting their solitary communion with darkness and technology.

Eel-Pike was the next to be blown away. Then Permafrost. Then Diva. One at a time. No hurry. Soon they were all picked off until all that was left was silence

and a dozen thin beams shining from a dozen smashed helmets a thousand feet below.

The surf sniper smiled, checked his hunting knife, and took an elevator down.





Bernhard Sachs - Detail from *(Photography) During Philosophy*

ARTISTS AND WRITERS

Charles Anderson is a Melbourne-based artist. As well as exhibiting individually he has been involved in several collaborative performance and installation pieces. His most recent project was a residency and installation in the Oncology Department, Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, Melbourne. He is represented by City Gallery, Melbourne.

Pat Brassington lives and works in Hobart. Throughout the eighties she has had several solo exhibitions and participated in numerous group exhibitions. Stimulus for her work comes from reading philosophical and critical literature, examination of experimental applications of photography and film, some aspects of feminism, and occasional conversations with taxi-drivers.

Edward Colless was born in Sydney. He still lives and works in exile as a lecturer at the Tasmanian School of Art at Hobart. He has made one short film and writes art criticism and fiction .

Domenico De Clario was born in Trieste and has lived in Australia since 1956. He has exhibited regularly since the earlier 1970s. He has received residencies at the Paretaio Studio, Tuscany in 1984 and the Visual Arts/Craft Board Greene St Studio, New York in 1990. His work was recently included in *Rediscovery*, an exhibition of Australian art sent to the Seville Expo 92.

Peter Ellis was born in Sydney and now lives and works in Melbourne. He has been producing paintings, drawings, prints, objects, multiples, books and installations since 1975.

Graeme Hare is a Melbourne-based artist who works in a range of photographic media. He is represented by City Gallery in Melbourne where his most recent solo exhibition was held in July, 1992.

ARTISTS AND WRITERS

Peter Hill is a Glasgow-born installation artist. He currently teaches at the Tasmanian School of Art at Hobart, where he seldom uses the elevator. His work is primarily concerned with fiction in a visual art context and forms part of an on-going installation project *The Museum of Contemporary Ideas*.

Helen Hopcroft decided she wished to be an artist while working one day as a kitchen hand, cleaning slime and slugs from lettuce. While performing this task she became aware of the preciousness that time acquires in its passing. And at this moment art presented itself to her as a means to make time painless.

May Lam drives a Honda Civic. She has had four minor accidents, of which two were her fault. Her car is just back on the road.

Lindy Lee is a Sydney-based painter who has exhibited widely. Her work has received much critical attention since the early eighties. She teaches at the Sydney College of the Arts.

Scott Redford was born on the Gold Coast and now lives and works in Sydney. He has exhibited regularly in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, and is represented by Mori Gallery, Sydney.

Carole Roberts is a Sydney-based artist who has exhibited throughout Australia. She was included in *Australian Perspecta* in 1991. Her most recent solo exhibition was *Survey, 1984 - 1990* held in Sydney at the annexe of Mori Gallery, by which she is represented.

Bernhard Sachs is a Melbourne-based artist. In 1990 he completed a residency at the Power Institute Studio, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris. His work was recently included in *Rediscovery*, an exhibition of Australian art sent to the Seville *Expo 92*.

"PSYCHOSOMA" is the second venture in a three part series. It was preceded by "LUST" in 1991.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The University of Tasmania's ongoing exhibitions programme receives generous funding from the Minister for Education and the Arts through Arts Tasmania. This project received exhibition development funds from N E T S Tasmania.

Curator and Editor - David McDowell

Publication design and artwork - Stephen Goddard

Printing - Monotone Art Printers

Typesetting - Stephen Goddard

Linotronics - Crystal Graphics

**Photography - Martin Walch,
Graeme Hare (page 41), courtesy *The Anatomy Project* (page 17), Pat Brassington (page 20)
Cover Image - David McDowell**

