Eugen Bacon
“Real Life Vignettes”

9:53am

I am sitting in a city-bound tram. It sighs and whistles towards its next destination, stop number 14 – the Art Centre. I gaze out the window this balmy afternoon and see the taut buttocks of a grey hammer thrower. He wears rippled muscles trapped in time on a lone island in Queen Victoria Gardens. Off-balance in this frozen second, the athlete is unmindful of me, of the majestic gaze of Edward VII on his sculpted horse in Anzac Garden not far away, of pedestrians striding with headphones on the way to Flinders Street Train Station, of cars, cyclists in tights and wind cheaters, of St Kilda Road trams, and his nakedness. A tiny pond, an inconspicuous flowerbed and a manicured lawn surround him. As the tram hums further away from Melbourne’s supreme legacy of London-born artist John Robinson’s genius, I wonder about balance and motion, and why The Pathfinder is so damn skinny.
The Black Box <> White Cube exhibition at The Victorian Arts Centre illuminates a vivid intersection of performance theatre and contemporary art.

Ingenious artwork from a medley of Martian and renowned artists captures jaw-dropping vitality. Brazen images present a hybrid form of art. Participating artists, counting Mike Parr, Jill Orr, Rose Farrell, George Parkin, Magda Matwiejew, Polixeni Papapetrou and Alexia Sinclair, entwine the nature of performance, art and photography to confront.

Parr’s visceral crimsons, ghostly whites and blood-soaked vomit fashion believable distortion of violence and death. One could almost touch the drip of blood from artwork on their fingers. A display features the image of Parr and his misshapen arm, while the good hand cradles a cast of his head.

Orr’s landscape performance dazes to the core. Dead bodies (mouths agape) lie sprawled and partially buried in golden sand. Not far away, a backdrop of images of The Kingpins in drag metal video – gharry hair, freaky costumes and choreographed dance - lulls visitors to the exhibition into a discomfiting juxtaposition of 70s concert and the world of death.

Farrell and Parkin’s The Silk Weaver (2007) imbues enigmatic layers of illusion. Light and shade in intricate photographic construction and staging work to engage visitors, leaving them wondering what is real and what is delusion.

In Matwiejew’s Pretty Ballerina, a porcelain-skinned girl in chains, partially enshrouded in a cloud of white and darkness, exposes beauty and pain... perfection and distortion. A crouching girl in a leotard, deep in contemplation of herself on a mirrored floor, neighbours the tragic ballerina, further amplifying the concept of splendour and the macabre.
Papapetrou’s photo-based art ‘Between Worlds’ imprisons grotesque (often fantastical) heads in the bodies of children, as witnessed in *The Wanderer, The Philosopher, Elizabeth 1* and *Court Beauty*.

From Sinclair, performance photography objectifies models as European monarchs against regal backdrops. Digital montage adds spectacle, emphasising colour, light, opulence and beauty in a fusion of past and present. *Elizabeth I – The Virgin Queen* sits regal with big, uncharacteristic hair, crimson painted lips and a virgin white gown. *Isabella of Spain – The Catholic* looks ornate in contemplative stillness. Prolific colours and a puffed-up gown cloak *Marie Antoinette – The Extravagant*, while *Catherine the Great – The Enlightened Empress* exposes spectacular beauty in a mauve, bejewelled costume.

The Black Box <> White Cube exhibition, disquieting for its shock factor, leaves visitors with evocative visions of something rare and remarkable.

3:30pm

*Image sourced from IMDb.com.Inc*

“Such a pleasure to see such unique beauty,” says Madam Clara (Rachael Blake) to young university student Lucy (Emily Browning), who will be the subject in an uncanny trial, anything for money. “Let me tell you how things should proceed. I’ll describe the job and, then, if you are interested, I will describe the particulars.”

The particulars are preposterous to the audience. But not to very beautiful, very talented Lucy, whose vulnerability and apathy are unveiled in a passive yet enigmatic way. Lucy is juggling jobs to manage rent. Her girlish expression and casualness toward sex are as confronting as her emergent coldness.
Sleeping Beauty is dark, complex and controversial. One can view with melancholy or intrigue Lucy’s dissociation with her body and the world she finds herself in. Language and setting are satiric, and the act of sex comes with sensory deprivation, not arousal.

With its implied but extreme sex, the drama stays liberal and disturbing. The audience encounters men in their weakest states: senility, helplessness, spitefulness and degradation.

There is no explanation of Lucy - she just is. While she needs money, it is not her complete motivator. She is unmoved, except by what happens in a haunting subplot to chronic alcoholic and suicidal Birdmann (Ewen Leslie).

Technical elegance and fine cinematography augment the way characters move, stand, pose... The movie is artistic in Pre-Raphaelite tones. Softness or boldness of light or colour and unimposing music composition lift the film to memorable contemporary performance bordering on the bizarre and shocking for the prudish.

Directed and written by Julia Leigh; Produced by Jessica Brentnall, Timothy White, Sasha Burrows, Jamie Hilton; Screenplay by Julia Leigh; Music by Ben Frost

WITH: Emily Browning, Rachel Blake, Ewen Leslie, Michael Dorman, Mirrah Foulkes, Hugh Keays-Byrne, Joel Tobeck, Tammy McIntosh, Henry Nixon, Chris Haywood, Les Chantery

Running Time: 104 min.

Genre: Erotic Drama

7:28pm

Gotye (featuring Kimbra)

Image by Davidaarong, sourced from Audiodrums.com

Gotye’s Somebody That I Used To Know is part of Making Mirrors album, and captures in endearing duet the anguish of lovers’ breakup.

Mystery, seduction, sadness and beauty reside dominant in the song’s video clip, where body paint, facial expression, movement and lyrical sync play out something needy and bare.
Belgian-born Australian artist Gotye (Wally De Backer) uses specific instrument sound, technological sync and simple vocals in the duo with New Zealand singer/songwriter Kimbra to tell an artful and symbolic story. The melding of video animation, colour points and time lapse technique camouflages the artists into a wall, bringing out an eerie recap of sullied love, and the way individuals lose track of people and the special things they loved about them.

Muted paint strips on and off the artists in the ambitious music clip directed by Natasha Pincus. Spectacular alignment of artwork leaves Gotye and Kimbra naked to bare their souls direct to camera in a chilly retelling of a love tale.

By the end, as the woman becomes uncamouflaged and the man fades into the background, the audience is reminded how modern music rarely comes alone but is a syncretism of multiple art forms contributing to a mood or social theme.

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