



**Excerpt:**

Recent work with older technologies has been largely derived from the Futurists, who idolised machines for their visible speed and for their ability to catalyse culture into a permanent state of market expansion. While the visual and audial effects of the new technologies are often spectacular, the technologies themselves are largely *invisible*. They offer no visual manifestation such as that which inspired the original Italian and Russian Futurists, yet they have still shown an ability to catalyse culture with a speed which would blind even Marinetti. This difference in visibility also effects performance. In many ways the purpose of performance no longer seems to be the valorisation of new technologies but rather their interrogation. Performance seems increasingly moved to educate its audiences back to a point where the new technologies become visible and accessible. In this way education about technology is inevitably going to destroy postmodern illusions about the lack of technology's limits, much as the sudden experience of World War One shattered a number of Futurist illusions. In this educative and interrogative project Laurie Anderson has been a brilliant pioneer. Derek Kreckler has also moved in similar ways, building bridges between blind faith or abjection in the technoscape and reinstating the remnants of a memory of a human culture in contact with the body and landscape.

Crucial to the work of these artists and indeed the project in general, has been the relationship between video and the body. When video becomes the basis for the structure of the whole performance (or when the performance is recorded and played back as a 'performance video', it is hard to see this project as 'performance' any longer. This is so, even though it may rely, as some recent French dance does, on the (cleverly edited) physicality of the performers. It may be 'Video Art' but the basis for its approach to bodies, objects and their interaction is not what we might call 'gravitational languages' but rather electronic languages, the signal and post production techniques. Yet some of the best performers have moved into video production during the last decade -...

Derek Kreckler's work in particular has integrated video, performance, and in the latest. "Interruptions". This work merits detailed attention as an example of the productive integration of various new technological elements with the live presence and force of performance and the performer. As usual with Kreckler's work. "Interruption" is deceptively simple in structure and ingredients. The performance begins with a large screen in front of which a woman arrives to deliver a lecture, ostensibly on James Joyce's Ulysses. Her mouth is half open to begin when she is interrupted by a 'worker' who makes a lot of noise with bits of tangled wire and bolts in a tin bucket (already the framework of language is being defeated by noise). After several, increasingly furious attempts to stop the interference, the lecturer suddenly becomes distracted, a little as if in a dream but more as if doped up to the eyeballs. The lights dim, she stares into space and simultaneously, a sampled soundtrack begins and video images are projected onto a huge screen. Underneath the screen sit fifteen performers lit by a blank slide from a slide projector.

The video images at this stage consist of personal pronouns run so quickly after each other that attention is chiefly drawn to the font in which they appear. At the same time, the performers repeat an initially audible word in a seemingly arbitrary, but actually carefully constructed, crescendo. The word is 'everyone'. This continues for about five minutes until the crescendo suddenly cuts. The performers freeze and the video projects chopped vignettes from American TV shows. These are both deliberately banal and also absolutely appropriate to the performance situation - two TV hostesses talk about the "nice audience" and a humdrum looking male talks about beauty and mediocrity. The performers then, suddenly turn to look at the 'dreamer' and begin their chant again, a chant which would almost be machine-like if it were not so arbitrary. Sampled music sounding a little like a carousel going three times its normal speed then comes in, with a sampled opera singer singing 'dream' over and over again. Amidst this organised cacophony, the last images on the screen are of a spinning globe and then static. The performers then go back to their seats, the 'worker' cleans up and finally the 'lecturer' leaves, embarrassed, often long after the audience has already applauded.

The beauty of this piece was that all of the separate elements were acknowledged within their own structural parameters, and yet, far from dominating each other, they contributed to a kind of mutual deconstruction. One did not merely experience the skill of the performances, which included elements of naturalism and blatant a-realism, video manipulation, audio sampling and composition and so forth. The audience was forced into realising that each element not only performed its duty well but had that duty reduced in the process to its most basic elements. The screen used in the performances for video projection was so huge that the spectator was forced to acknowledge the texture of the video image, its physical construction. The very process of acknowledging and positioning subjectivity (exemplified by the

personal pronouns) became also a questioning of the relation of computer styled fonts to that subjectivity. Language broke down to one word but gained its force as it lost its meaning in the crescendo. This word, 'everyone' was not an insignificant one to be pared down to the force it carried in that situation. A lecture - the dissemination of knowledge - about the quintessential modernist text no less - finishes in white noise, visual static and an embarrassed 'realist' performer who has been staring into space for five minutes. The whole performance of Interruptions is contextualised by the questioning of the relations between subjectivity and the media information technology that has enabled the performance to take place. And in the performance's original Australian context, the Americanness of the video quotes have a distinct cultural meaning. The piece does not just play with/ but reveals the fractal nature of our media experience and the effect it has on our subjectivities and their fantasies. Yet in some ways, through the process of rehearsal/ the performers were caught in the structures of repeatability that sampling and the other technologies demanded as a result of performing with them. The force and tension of the crescendo came from the subjugation of the performers to the edited constraints of the accompanying sights and sounds. The piece thereby ultimately returned to the very position it seemed to question.