

I Am the Rehearsal Master, Part II

Photographs by Anne Ferran

Street Level Gallery: March 9-26, 1989

Although described in the title as "Part II", this show is actually the Rehearsal Master's third appearance. I began this work during a 6-month residency in Paris in 1987-88 and its very first showing was in a rehearsal room at the Cite Internationale des Arts. That first exhibition was titled "C'est moi le repetiteur"; in English "I Am the Rehearsal Master".

The work, of which there are now many pieces and more being made, begins with the restaging for the camera of the "classic" repertoire of the hysterical crisis. All the photographs in the exhibition are inspired by C19 ones made under the direction of J.M. Charcot, famed as a pioneer neuropathologist and one-time professor of Freud. His photographs portrayed the female hysterical patients who were under his care. At the time they served a purpose that was partly scientific, partly educational. With the passing of time their scientific value has decreased but they have lost none of their aesthetic value; rather it has been enhanced.

I began in Paris by photographing my daughter who has figured, in various guises, in nearly all my work made during the last 5 years. During a residency in the Visual Arts department of Nepean College last year I began working for the first time with "strangers", students of both visual arts and theatre. The present exhibition is an outcome of that fruitful collaboration.

My concern in producing the finished work has been to effect a kind of balance between the quality of the imagery (convulsive, excessive, uncontrolled) and its formal presentation (regulated, orderly, pristine). The aim is to achieve a condition where the two elements are held together, but lightly, as if in a state of suspension.

This show follows on immediately from one at the Australian Centre for Photography (Feb 1-26, 1989) and will be followed by others interstate. There is an overlap between the ACP show and the present one but there are also significant differences. The Street Level show is smaller, more intimate; perhaps closer to the Paris one in spirit, if not in place.