

## Rehearsal

Anne Ferran, **I Am The Rehearsal Master**, Australian Centre for  
Photography, Sydney  
February 1989

Imagine a total apparatus for observation, with its examinations, interrogations and experiments. Sigmund Freud learnt his trade at such a place. At the Salpêtrière Hospital, Freud's teacher Charcot would prompt hysterical symptoms in his patients in front of an assembled crowd of curious onlookers. The medical institution became a theatre of representation, its ritual crises carefully staged with the help of ether and amyl nitrate.

**I Am The Rehearsal Master** reactivates Charcot's psychiatric choreography. Young girls dutifully perform states of religious ecstasy and excitation in front of the camera. The installation is built around a set of critical tensions: between the geometric and the figurative, between Classical virtues of orderly beauty and the Gothic horror of the medical archive. These tensions are scored by dramatic shifts in scale and a precarious, high-key tonal balance.

Ferran poses contemporary questions of aesthetics within an historical frame. **I Am The Rehearsal Master** examines the elusive figure of creativity, by reversing photography's historical bid for the aura of high art. She declares the camera's prosaic flair for repetition and rehearsal to be a suitably ironic vehicle for critical inquiry.

The symptoms of hysteria are also characterised by repetition and rehearsal. These spasms and contortions are purely gestural, for they have no real physiological base. They are used here as an archetypal figure of representation itself.

This chaotic image of a convulsive, "feminine creativity" also recalls a point of representational crisis. There is a lack of clarity, an undercurrent of formlessness in these photographs, which collide against the utopian regulation of the Modernist grid. This pose of representation and its amorphous shadow thus unravels a residual Romantic theme of disruption and incompleteness which underpinned Modernist aesthetics and continues to beckon to us from the wings. Ferran questions these well-worn Modernist qualities with philosophical wit and poetic severity.

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