

The Ballroom

Icon of the city of Melbourne, the Flinders Street Station Ballroom has been closed to the public for 30 years.

The Ballroom exhibition will showcase the architectural features, the history and myths of the historic venue.



Entropy: the tendency for all matter and energy in the universe to evolve toward a state of inert uniformity.

A photographic exhibition by Yenny Huber and Géraud Boursin

Alliance Française of Melbourne, 31st January to 1st March 2008

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The Ballroom



Busy travellers are rushing through the gate of Flinders St Station. An expectant crowd is awaiting their rendezvous under the iconic clocks. The evening sun slowly takes its leave. The slumbering light of the full moon is now visible above the picturesque clock tower. As people walk along the French Renaissance style façade they hear music flowing out of the third floor windows.

Upstairs a vibrant excited crowd rushes through the art deco corridors, impatient to make their entrance into another Festive Ball. Stars sparkle on the vault of the metal-pressed ceiling and lights glitter on the parquet floor. The orchestra is performing with a knowing tempo, the audience dances with a certain delight.

Guests joyfully sip champagne beside the large window arches on either side of the room, indulging in animated conversation while gazing upon the evening city views.

The Flinders St Station Ballroom dreams of its own past splendours, of festive nights and elegant waltzes, because evenings such as this were once so common that it can know of nothing else.

Today, by contrast, the Ballroom is dark and empty. Silence, cracked walls, faded colours and dust-covered windows are its present reality.

Yet, beyond the dust and empty corridors, traces of past grandeur still radiate from the debris. The Ballroom may be asleep but it lives on in Melbourne's somnolent dreams, the myths revived.



The Ballroom



Discussion, agitation, planning and renovation - the Ballroom will once again come alive. Flinders St Station and its historically significant Ballroom will be brought back into the city's cultural and communal life.

Two Photographic Artists, **Geraud Boursin** and **Yenny Huber**, invite their audience to take a step back through time and memory. Viewers can actively explore the unknown, the hidden and the sub-conscious and can immerse themselves in a space where fiction and non-fiction meet without boundaries. By combining their European references from Paris and Vienna with their idiosyncratic experience of Melbourne, they have sought to capture the Ballroom's essence, its underlying dreams, its mysteries and charms.

The exhibition "*The Ballroom*" looks both behind and ahead – it looks back to the Ballroom's faded past and looks ahead to its more hopeful future. It places the myths of the Flinders Street Ballroom within the diverse and vibrant world of the Arts and the wider community, and challenges all of us to make this future vision not just a dream but a tangible reality.





The Ballroom



The Venue

The exhibition will be held at the Alliance Française gallery, Eildon Mansion, 51 Grey Street, Saint Kilda. It will open on 15th November for 3 weeks until 6th December 2007.



The Alliance Française Melbourne

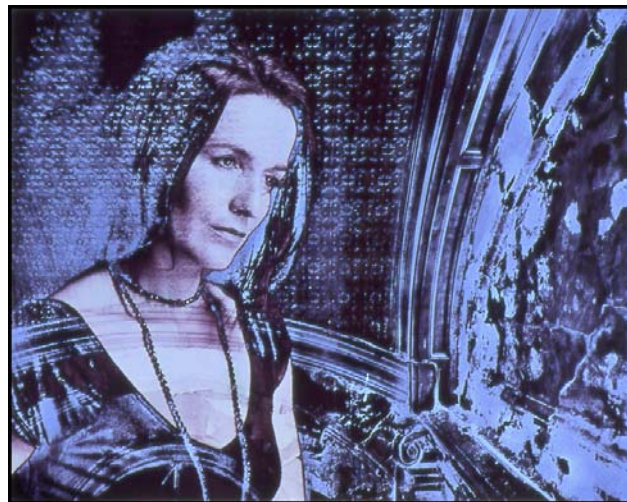
The Artwork

The exhibition will present approximately 35 prints by Géraud as well as a projection of images by Yenny on the façade and on the interior walls of the building.

All the photographic artworks have been shot in-situ, around the theme of the Flinders street station Ballroom.



Photograph by Yenny



Photograph by Géraud

Media and advertising

Kathryn Ross from Ballyhoo Publicity, specialising in art event communication, has been hired to manage public relations for the exhibition.

The exhibition will be promoted on tram and bus stop advertising posters.



The Ballroom



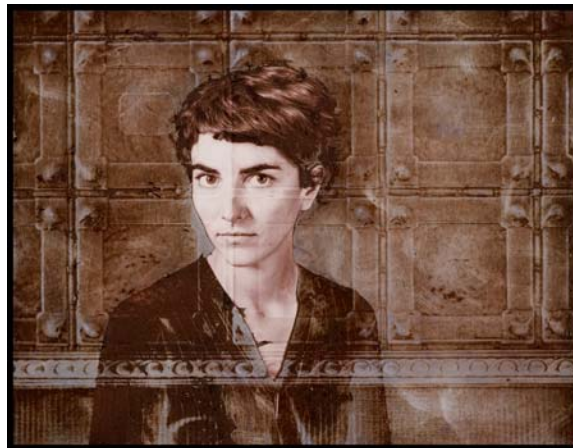
Negentropy - A photographic exhibition by Géraud Boursin

Entropy is the tendency for all matter and energy in the universe to evolve toward a state of inert uniformity. By contrast, 'negentropy', a concept introduced by the Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger, describes the physical mechanism through which life apparently negates the principle of entropy.

How do we respond to the damage of time? How can we place on film the eternal conflict between entropy on the one hand and the perpetual irruption of life on the other?

In the exhibition, the apparent deterioration of the Flinders street station ballroom over the past 30 years is emphasized by a rough acid bleaching technique. In addition to photographs of the architecture and details of the building, a series of adult female portraits are displayed in the foreground with details of the Ballroom (and other rooms in the same area of the building) in the background. The Ballroom's juxtaposition with the preserved portraits attempts to portray via a simple dualism the essential idea of negentropy – of life continually emerging from within a situation of stasis and decay.

Photography's capacity to extract a subject out of time as a piece of art is exemplified in an exhibition such as this. As Susan Sontag has written in *On Photography*, it is the camera's ability to both seize and freeze a particular moment that allows it to witness the incessant dissolution of things brought upon by the relentless march of time.



However, the juxtaposition of Ballroom details and human portraits also suggests that buildings and shared spaces still live on in the memories of those of us who once circulated within them, or who have heard the stories of those who once did.

Despite having been closed to the public for 30 years, there remains a large but latent repository of memories, expectations or fantasies about the Ballroom in Melbourne. This subterranean myth about the Ballroom – of its elegance and former grandeur, of its vaunted role in another, much simpler, era – suggests the Ballroom still fulfils a subconscious wish-fantasy role in contemporary Melbourne society, a role at variance with, but not negated by, its present material decline.



The Ballroom



A unique printing technique based on traditional black and white photography

The images are entirely made of traditional black and white photography techniques and materials that have been especially combined and fine tuned in a unique process for the exhibition. In particular, the acid bleaching process is inspired from an old technique that was invented in France and called Mordançage at the beginning of the 20th Century.

For this exhibition, medium format black and white negatives are shot separately in a studio for the portraits and in the ballroom for the backgrounds. Two negatives are superimposed in the enlarger and over-exposed in the dark room for the first step of the printed process.

The prints are then bleached in a mix of glacial acetic acid, hydrogen peroxide and copper chloride. This process dissolves the gelatine layer of the photographic paper in the darkest parts of the print that become unstable. With a very soft brush, the black parts of the image are progressively removed to reveal the details of the background. As a result, the background appears with a rough texture mimicking the decayed condition of the ballroom.

The bleached print is then toned back in a selenium bath that gives a deep brown tone and stabilises the image after drying. Finally, the prints are toned with iron for a secondary blue or green tone.



Géraud successfully integrates an artistic dimension into his corporate career. He is a senior executive in Veolia Transport and takes an active part in the Melbourne business community as the President of the French Australian Chamber of Commerce. Beyond a traditional science-oriented academic education, his influences include the extensive French artistic and cultural environment within which he finds his references in photography.

Originally from France, Géraud has been living in Australia for five years where he has developed his talent for photography through a two-year course at the ICPP in South Melbourne. Géraud had solo exhibitions in Melbourne and Sydney in 2006 and recently participated in a group exhibition at the Treasury Place, Melbourne.



The Ballroom



Footprints of Past Grandeur by Yenny

This photographic installation explores the remaining traces of what was once a great icon of Melbourne, the Flinders Street Ballroom.

30 years ago the doors were shut on half of the grand Flinders Street Station. A place that once was the city's most precious jewel – the room that presented a glamorous welcome to the Queen, where glorious Balls were staged and many other historic events and cultural activities were held - was closed down indefinitely. Many times it was expected to again re-open, but sadly the closed and forgotten part of the building is still waiting for its great return.

Through careless neglect, one of Melbourne's most mysterious icons, the Ballroom, has deteriorated over time. Severe damage to the inside of the building over the years is all too evident - layers of paint have peeled off the walls, the floors have cracked, windows have broken, tiles have been removed, letters have fallen off their signage, the ceiling is replete with holes and a thick layer of dust and dirt covers all the rooms.

Yet the building radiates with remnant traces of a past grandeur, like a slumbering castle waiting to be revived and brought back to its original state of beauty. Architectural features, handcrafted details, left and never removed artefacts - all are vivid reminders of its former splendid historic beauty.

Through my photographic installation I explore those traces of the past - the footprints of what was once present.

But I also look critically at the present day consequences of the long-term neglect of a building that represents a significant part of Melbourne's cultural heritage.

The images presented visualise the traces of its historic past while evoking the empty stillness that is the building's current state. They present no splendid grandeur but offer only glimpses of its underlying beauty, they may seem gloomy, nostalgic yet they remain full of hope for the building's return to its original state.

The images focus predominantly on the Ballroom yet also explore the various adjoining rooms and corridors, as well as the only part of the building where time has not stood still - the clock tower.

For the installation of this exhibition, the images of the old and deteriorated now become one with the fully restored beauty of another building of the same era, the Eildon Mansion in Grey Street, St Kilda.

Through larger than life projections, the images from the neglected Ballroom will appear on the façade and on the interior walls of the mansion forming several spaces for the viewer to step into and experience. Sound, Imagery and Space will all become one, stimulating all senses and hopefully invoking a new awareness and respect for the old and historical and for traditional values in contemporary life



The Ballroom



Yenny is a photographic artist who is passionate about the unique value of traditional camera techniques - and fusing them with images of the modern world. Having trained at RMIT and Melbourne School of Fashion Yenny has built on her education in Vienna where she studied Art Theory, Theatre and Video Production at the University of Vienna.

Yenny has exhibited widely, both in Australia and overseas. Most recently, her work was included in shows at the Treasury Place, Melbourne as well as the Centre for Photography Art, California and was acquired by the Warrnambool Art Gallery. Her work is currently publicly installed in the City of Ljubljana and she has further solo shows coming up in Ljubljana, Vienna and Melbourne by the end of the year.

As well as exhibiting her work, Yenny lectures at the International College of Creative Arts, Melbourne and conducts a photographic program for adults and children at Gasworks Arts Park. Currently Yenny is undertaking an artist residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, following her previous artist residency in Slovenia.