



Theatre from the cracks in the psyche of culture



Acting Artaud images on video

[this and more info on Artaud is available here](#)

Dead French playwright, Antonin Artaud's curse on America and Western values echoes chilling cries in a theatre production that resembles more of a cultural exorcism than a traditional play. Anyone can still hear Artaud's terrifying howl, a metaphysical scream. But his prophetic ravings have now been incorporated into a cohesive theatrical statement. **ACTING ARTAUD** was presented by extreme theatre company Shadow House PITS at The Seymour Centre December 14 to 18 2004.

ACTING ARTAUD is not for the feint hearted. "Theatre of Cruelty" is Artaud's legacy to theatre. The Shadow House PITS company has been exploring Artaud's suggested approaches for a year to create this work, having presented an earlier version at The Street Theatre in Canberra in April. Since beginning in January, a number of world events have given additional force to the original texts (1925 and 1947). The horrifying disclosures about Abu Ghraib blur the distinctions about who is good and who is bad on the world political spectrum. Artaud's contradictory writings about the nature of human kind and its choices for something basic and barbarous or for something higher beyond the confines of biology and emotions becomes the focus for this timely presentation.

The main feature of the program is Artaud's 1947 radio play TO HAVE DONE WITH THE JUDGEMENT OF GOD. Banned for nearly twenty years, it is now being adapted and presented as theatre for perhaps the first time anywhere in the globe. When watching it, one has to be reminded that it was written over fifty years ago. The supporting piece is one of Artaud's first plays, THE SPURT OF BLOOD. This has been performed many times, though made famous by Peter Brook's production in the 1960s.

Artaud spent most of his last ten years incarcerated in insane asylums. How ironic then that Artaud's work has had great influence on theatre of the last half century! It calls for replacing religious ceremonies with a new and revitalized form of theatre through his contradictory "theatre of cruelty". Through this, he challenged some of the very core foundations of Western philosophy as evidenced by the later works of Derrida and Foucault.

"Acting Artaud spans the whole spectrum of emotion: the cruel and the beautiful. It is all the more potent for its variations and total emersion into darkness and light."

Joe Woodward (Director: Acting Artaud)

The **Canberra Times** Critic had this to say:

"Much mentioned, much studied, rarely performed, Antonin Artaud's work deserves the outing the Shadow House PITS ensemble gives it in this production."

She goes on to say: " The whole show is like a rather beautiful dream, with occasionally disturbing moments. Ritual, sexuality and banality are quietly blended on a spare set."

And most significantly: "There's a surprising sense of warmth about the whole event that the theatre history books do not suggest about Artaud. If your only exposure has been a couple of sentences about "Theatre of Cruelty" and the French playwright who ended up in a lunatic asylum then this should cause a desire to discover more."

For more information about the Shadow House PITS production, please see our scream articles:

[Acting Artaud \(SCREAM February 2004\)](#)

[Workshop Information](#)

[Training Information on The Four States Of Artaud](#)

