

## The Arts

## Cool dude, Coleridge

## THEATRE

## Euphorium

Roundhouse Undercroft, NW1

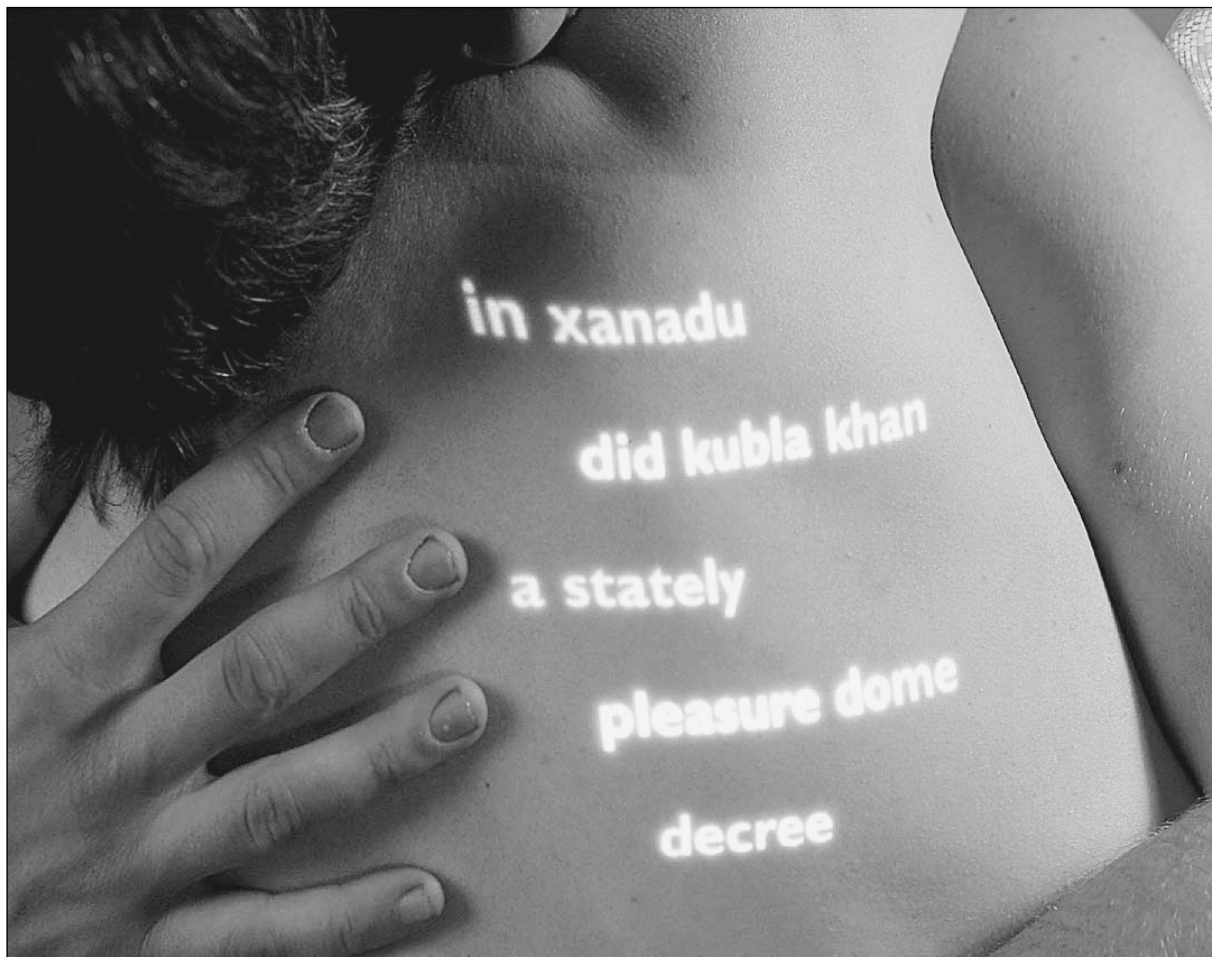
## Mark Cook

I'M not usually given to pursuing alluring young women down dark passages, but she did beckon. Suddenly, her long dark hair flicked as she turned, fixed me with her eyes and warned me that I was about to go on a journey of a hallucinogenic nature. Welcome to the pleasure dome from an "opium goddess".

All this in the name of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the poem Kubla Khan, which he scribbled down after an opium-induced dream in 1797, and published as a "fragment" at Byron's insistence 19 years later. Euphorium, by San Francisco's Antenna Theatre (in collaboration with Soho Theatre), aims to recreate that famous experience as individual punters embark on a guided, dream-like tour of the labyrinthine undercroft of the former Victorian train shed.

Donning a digital audio player and helmet (it feels like taking a dive under water) the "audient", as artistic director Chris Hardman likes to call each explorer, is guided through a sensory maze, with smells of incense and an audio collage of snippets from Coleridge's fantasia, disembodied voices — at one point in Chinese to denote Kubla Khan's dynastic battles — electronic music and something that sounds like a radio dial being turned through the frequencies.

Through the helmet, a series of figures — devils, brightly coloured figures of a hellish nature,



Welcome to the pleasure dome: Coleridge's poem is accompanied by semi-psychedelic images from California

subterranean creatures and exotic buildings — slide through one's vision, all blurred by kaleidoscopic patterns. Time does indeed seem to stand still in this tentative 30-minute shuffle through the darkness.

I might not have quite experienced

that legal high or euphoria — perhaps the visuals are a tad literal and don't quite match the fluidity and hypnotic nature of the soundtrack — but I certainly felt mellow on the Tube ride home (London Underground could learn

something here) after this California-meets-Kubla Khan collision. Hey, cool dude that Coleridge.

● Until 20 October. Box office: 020 7960 4242.

## Location is everything in images of Britain

## EXHIBITION

## Location UK

Gimpel Fils, W1

## Nick Hackworth

SUMMER is the silly season for London's commercial galleries, which generally resort to giving their unsold stock an airing in shows of lower-priced work. Location UK falls into that category but is one of the stronger group shows, bringing together some of Britain's best-known artists working with photography.

The title picks up on a favourite subject of contemporary-art practice and critical discourse: the idea that humans are malleable, formed by their environment. Hence the endless fine-art images that refer to gritty urban squalor. To be honest, the collection does not amount to a coherent visual justification of the point, but individual pieces stand out.

Bank, the guerrilla-art collective that has recently become a little more commercial-gallery friendly, presents an amusing tourist ad. The legend "Come to London", resplendent in naff Sixties-style typography, is emblazoned on to a shot of an anonymous Middle-Eastern city, which is funnier than it sounds.

One of the most arresting images is provided by one of the younger artists, Shez Dawood, whose work focuses, sometimes light-heartedly, on the assumptions that accompany ethnicity.

## Boulezian effect is tough but rewarding



## PROMS 2002

BBC SO/Boulez  
BT Scottish  
Ensemble/Gould

Royal Albert Hall

Barry Millington

THE Royal Albert Hall is far from a perfect concert venue and it is sometimes revealing to hear performances from there mediated by Radio 3's excellent microphones. There's no substitute for the full live experience, however — a point brought home by last night's pair of concerts.

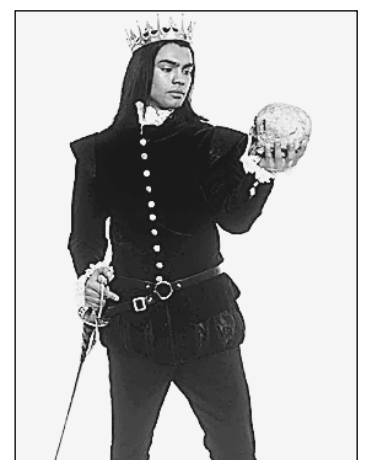
Pierre Boulez conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra in a crisp, splendidly strident account of Varèse's *Intégrales* followed by two works of his own: *Le visage nuptial* and *Le soleil des eaux*.

The resonances of René Char's surrealist poetry are projected in unpredictable ways, the women's chorus (BBC Singers) and two

soloists (Françoise Pollet and Susan Parry) all contributing to a uniquely refined Boulezian effect.

It was a tough but rewarding programme of the kind that would be even rarer without the BBC SO. As so often, though, one sensed that they were just getting by: one always wants them to be that much better. What a contrast with the combined forces of the Australian Chamber Orchestra and BT Scottish Ensemble an hour later. In the opening Elgar Introduction and Allegro, bodies were hurled into action and bows sent flying. With the charismatic Richard Tognetti leading the solo quartet, and the no less dynamic Clio Gould immediately behind him galvanising the main ensemble, it was an antipodean meeting of like minds.

In both the Elgar and Tippett's Corelli Fantasia, the result was electrifying. For Vaughan Williams's Tallis Fantasia, Gould led the nine-string "choir" from the far reaches of the stage — one of the advantages of the Albert Hall — in impeccably weighted dialogues with the main body of strings. And her own ensemble gave the first Proms performance of the Variations on an Elizabethan Theme (Sellinger's Round), a multi-composer tribute to a later Queen Elizabeth on her coronation co-ordinated by Benjamin Britten.



Tower Hamlet: a Whitechapel image

Dawood presents an image of the huge billboard that sits beside the mosque in Whitechapel Road. On it he has digitally inserted a number of "Asian Hamlets" — young men of Bangladeshi origin who stand in Shakespearean costume, skull in hand. Happily, as well as addressing the issues of how minority groups assume the culture of the majority, it is also an attractive picture.

● Until 7 September. Information: 020 7493 2488.

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