

## The Arts

# India's virtual reality

COLLIDING cultures is a favourite theme of Shobana Jeyasingh. The India-born, Southwark-based dance maker is fascinated by ideas of home and migration, of the tensions in urban life, and how we crave rural peace and quiet while revelling in the city mix. Virtual space is a related idea, and one Jeyasingh explores in the new and curiously titled [h]Interland.

Made for the Art Deco splendours of Greenwich's Borough Hall, [h]Interland is an ambitious collaboration that connects London to Bangalore, and includes chromatically-modified film, a live video link, saturation lighting, two vocalists and three dancers, two in London and one on the lush roof terrace

### DANCE

**Shobana Jeyasingh**  
Borough Hall, SE10

**Sarah Frater**

of Bangalore's Park Hotel. There was also a live webcast.

It begins with a 12-minute light-and-film prelude, with the Gothically inclined Stephanie Buttrich and Kristina Fuchs performing a sensational sound sculpture. Then comes the Anglo-Indian video link, with vividly coloured film and Indian-inspired dancing from Mavin Khoo, Sowmya Gopalan and Chitra Srishailan, the latter's image relayed from Bangalore.

The use of two separate times zones is ingenious. It enables us to travel in time and transplant space, with visual echoes between the two locations enhancing the effect. It also taps ideas of memory and displacement, and allows Jeyasingh to play with scale — Mavin Khoo looks tiny dancing alongside the massively magnified Chitra Srishailan, a sort of Bangalorean Queen Kong.

[h]Interland is technically assured, but amid all the technodazzle Jeyasingh has neglected the choreography. Truth is, there's not enough, and what there is appears dilute and harried. [h]Interland is visually stunning, the dancing less so.

● *Tonight and tomorrow. Borough Hall box office: 020 8293 9741.*



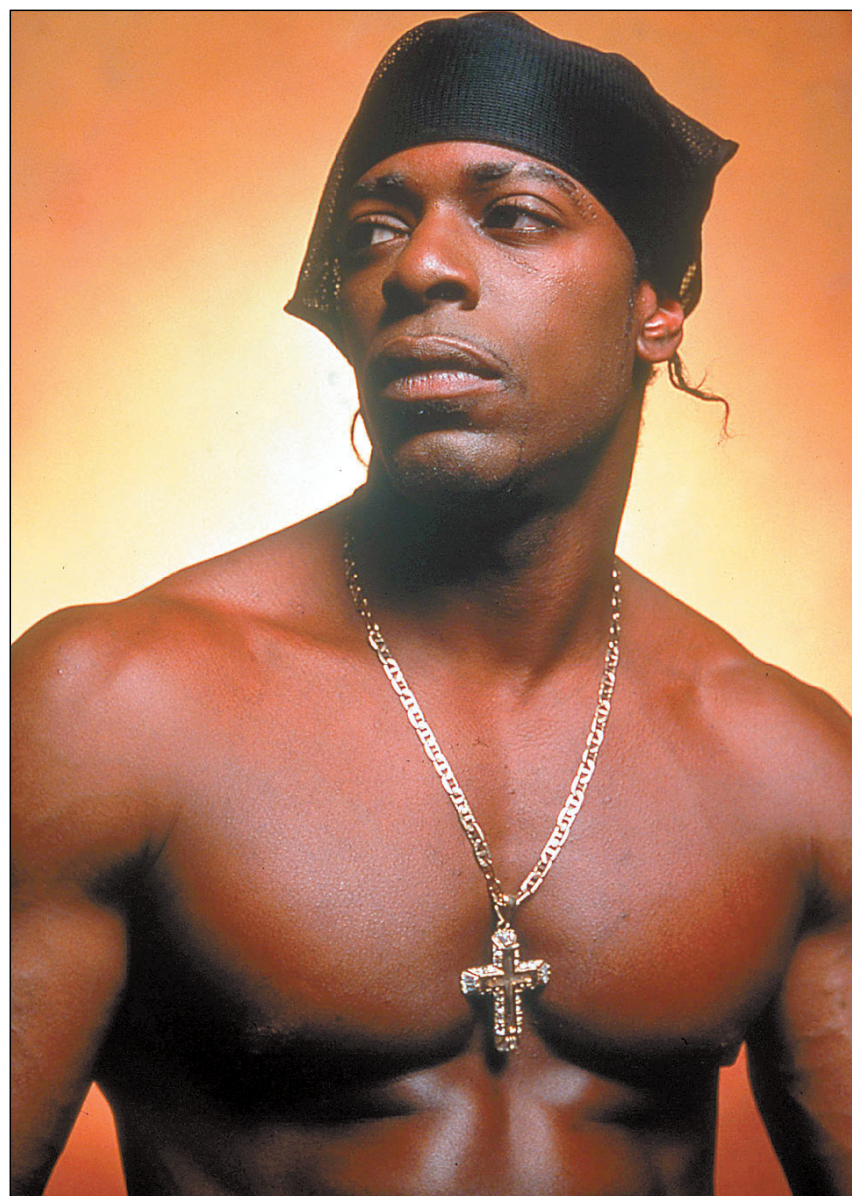
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Lawrence Artis, Performer (above): one of Andreas Serrano's images of America

## One man's US

IT is now well over a decade since American artist Andreas Serrano was accused in the US Senate of dishonouring God and the American people with his work, *Piss Christ* — a photograph of a plastic crucifix suspended in a vat of turbulent and frothy urine.

Since then, Serrano, now in his early fifties, has continued to attract the condemnation of the morally sensitive with his photographs of profane, macabre, sinister and taboo subjects.

Those hoping for a fresh dose of fleshy and Gothic shocks, however will be disappointed. America, Serrano's new body of work which has not been seen in Britain before, is an ongoing series of upbeat, photographic portraits of contemporary individual Americans inspired, inevitably, by 9.11.

It hopes, rather grandly, when taken as a whole, to amount to the portrait of a still proud and vibrant nation.

Forty-nine portraits have been produced so far, of which, alas, only 15 are on show here — but there is scarcely room for more.

Presented as large prints, roughly 5ft by 4ft, the images themselves are simple head-and-shoulders studio shots that feature neutral

### EXHIBITION

**America – Andreas Serrano**  
Gimpel Fils, W1

**Nick Hackworth**

backdrops and spots of dramatic lighting.

The subjects are, as one might expect, representative of the diverse melting-pot that America prides itself on being; a wholesome boy scout, a Hassidic Jew, a New York cop, a Chinese cook, a Muslim woman, a Rodeo Queen, a black dancer, a soldier and so on.

A couple of celebrities, in the form of rapper Snoop Dogg and the actress Chloe Sevigny, are also present, which seems entirely fitting for a nation that is the *fons et origo* of the Western world's unreal popular culture.

Though inspired by a tedious sentiment, Serrano's America is

effective. It is a reminder that America, despite the weight of the words and images published about the terrorist attacks and the country's bellicose response to them, resonates with associations forged in the country's youth — expansiveness, diversity and hope — long before the caffeinated neuroses set in. That it works is due largely to the simplicity of both the idea and the execution of the portraits.

Serrano is indeed well attuned to the dominant aesthetic of our age, that of the advertising image, and produces bold and striking photographs with strong, instant and yet lasting impact.

Moreover, the power of these works, like Nan Goldin's, grow in significance when they are seen en masse expressing, as they do — and as Serrano intended — the sociological and historical tenor of our time.

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