Wadsworth Atheneum
in cooperation with Real Art Ways
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Rachel Rosenthal / MATRIX 118
April 25 and 26, 1992

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filename: FUTURFAX
(1992)
Written and performed by Rachel Rosenthal
(A Rachel Rosenthal Company production)

Saturday, April 25, 1992, at 8:00 p.m.
and
Sunday, April 26, 1992, at 3:00 p.m.
Aetna Theater
Wadsworth Atheneum

Sound Design: Robbie Daniels
Lighting Design: Jack Carr
Objects: Angie Bray
Sound Tape Voices: Gospel of Western Civilization, Robert Litvak
FUTURFAX Voices: Christine Berry, Angie Bray, Robbie Daniels,
Adrienne Houle, Hae Kyung Lee, Jose Santana and Joan Spiter
Mixed at PACIFICA STUDIO, Glen Nishida, engineer

There will be no intermission.

Main Bibliography: Ishmael, Daniel Quinn; Biosphere Politics-
A New Consciousness for a New Century, Jeremy Rifkin; Earth in
the Balance-Ecology and the Human Spirit, Senator Albert Gore;
and A Brief History in Time-From the Big Bang to Black Holes,
Stephen W. Hawking

Very special thanks to Daniel Quinn.
Heartfelt thanks to Robert Litvak, Christine Berry, Angie Bray, Robbie
Daniels, Adrienne Houle, Hae Kyung Lee, Jose Santana, and Joan Spiter.
Twenty years ago, ecologists gave us forty years before the crash, unless we radically changed our ways. But our ways were not changed in any significant fashion, and it's twenty years later. Therefore, I project the Crash for around 2011 A.D.

So long as we continue believing the lie that has been indoctrinating us for about 10,000 years, we cannot change our ways, for it is the scaffold upon which we erected Western Civilization. We human beings have existed for almost 3 million years in harmony with the Earth as one species among countless others. In that span of time, nothing more spectacular happened than our slow evolution into Homo Sapiens Sapiens. When, however, we told ourselves a story which cast us as unique, separate and above all others, and when we, as a result of this scenario, took it upon ourselves to conquer, overwhelm, master and enslave our environment, civilization was born. The price we pay for this brilliant supernova explosion is that, in the tiny span of 10,000 years, we will have exterminated all life, along with ourselves. Was it worth it?

We live in a world of materialistic dominance. Nothing counts higher than our things. As the logical outcome of enacting our "Story," we suffer untold and unnamed misery deep in our souls. Drugs, violence, dominance by one gender over the other, addictions, wars, dishonesty, murderous competition, alienation from and enmity toward the community of life as well as from other humans, are all symptoms of a malady whose virus is a perniciously wrong-headed and hubristic world view.

Unless our beliefs can change, we are doomed. But because we have totally involved the environment in our "folie," we have doomed everything else along with us. In 2012, there will probably be around 7 billion humans on our poor Earth! With breeding never checked, no space to stand on, resources depleted, air and water fouled, land eroded, animals all but gone, climate wrecked, we will whimper toward the end. Unless we change the Story NOW!
Rachel Rosenthal/MATRIX 118

What gets us into trouble is not what we don't know, it's what we know for sure that just ain't so.

Yogi Berra, as quoted by Rachel Rosenthal in filename: FUTURFAX

Rachel Rosenthal brings intelligence, vigor, and a roguish grandeur to her interdisciplinary presentations. Her sonorous and passionate challenges to the blind canonical conceits that dominate public policy and personal actions have helped define the outer reaches of a newly developing genre commonly known as performance art. Rosenthal's presentations have been recognized widely as courageous, innovative acts of resistance. Her performances are, as she intends, "power-flowing," sending energy and inspiration out to her audiences.

Rosenthal was born to Russian parents in Paris, where she lived a privileged life in a vigorous intellectual and artistic environment. In her early years she studied ballet with the renowned ballet mistress, Olga Preobrayenskaya. Each year on her birthday, November 9, she would perform before hundreds of guests in her parent's Chagall- and Monet-lined salon. Vladimar Horowitz and Jascha Heifetz would perform at the Rosenthals' elegant, Cordon Bleu banquets. When the Germans invaded France in 1940, she and her family fled Paris to escape Nazi persecution. With only overnight bags, they left on foot to Spain and then Portugal, eventually obtaining passage on a boat to Brazil. In 1941, at the age of 13, she arrived in New York City where she enrolled at the High School of Music and Art. She studied dance with Merce Cunningham, theater with Jean-Louis Barrault, and art with Hans Hoffman. She moved to Los Angeles in 1955, where she still resides. She created the experimental "Instant Theatre" in 1956. (Tab Hunter and Tony Perkins attended her acting workshops.) Rosenthal began doing performance art pieces in 1975. An active Southern California feminist, her DbD (Doing by Doing) workshops have been widely attended. Her sometimes controversial works brought her to prominence in the 1980s, when she also shaved her head and routinely appeared in public in camouflage fatigues with her white pet rat, Tatti Wattles, on her shoulder.

For the past decade Rachel Rosenthal has been determined to speak for the Earth. She has implored us to see "The Big
Picture," to listen up or else. Evidence is overwhelming that few of us are really hearing the clarions of artists, scientists, or concerned citizens: our time to preserve the balance of life on this planet is running out. filename: FUTURFAX is Rosenthal's heartfelt, last-minute effort to illuminate for us the disastrous alternative," or else."

Preoccupied in her work with the growing ills of our environment, Rosenthal, now 65, has faced serious challenges to her own physical mobility in recent years. "I am dealing on a personal level with the realization that my body is disintegrating. I have to keep readjusting my work."\(^1\) In *Pangaean Dreams* (1990) she appears in a wheelchair with crutches nearby. Rosenthal's own growing vulnerability has added a poignancy to her magnetic performances, which are offered at the personal expense of considerable physical pain and further deterioration. Her zealous commitment to communicate her alarm, despite these conditions, underlines the urgency of our circumstances.
In filename: FUTURFAX, a solo dramatization of what looms as potentially the greatest tragedy in the history of humankind, Rosenthal invokes communications from the next century. She describes for her audiences some of the probable consequences of man's assumption that it is his destiny to rule the earth and attributes the impending environmental havoc to our tenaciously held belief that we are "separate from and superior to everything on the planet."

Western thinking, Rosenthal believes, has divided man from all other species on earth. She rants against such prototypically Western figures as René Descartes for defining "the whole Universe as a mechanism. That animals were machines... their screams were just the sounds of gears and springs..." and John Locke for his proposition, "The negation of Nature is the way to happiness." Even painter Francis Bacon is taken to task for "calling Nature 'this common harlot' which we had to 'subdue, overwhelm, conquer and enslave'." Later, when a message arrives onstage via FAX machine, it is a voice from still farther in the future. Describing the catastrophic fate of our own civilization, it observes, "They came to The Great Calamity through a great mistake in thinking."

filename: FUTURFAX opens with Rosenthal stationed on November 9th, 2012 A.D., the day of her 86th birthday. As a result of "the unravelling" of the environment, Rosenthal is seen leading a life of extreme loneliness and deprivation ("The last trees were logged ten years ago."). It is a portrait of pathos and despair. In the face of harsh circumstances, Rosenthal is determined to preserve at least a few tokens of dignity. Despite the severe scarcity of water, she strains to bathe small sections of her body on a rotating basis, re-uses the same ration to wash her underwear, and then delivers that water to a plant, "if I can find one." Rosenthal cherishes three limp carrots: ". . . six hours in line for these." She has saved a lone tea bag to enjoy on her birthday. But, as she prepares to heat a cup of water, she discovers that her little bottle of butane is empty. Rosenthal is gifted at expressing the implications of serious global issues in these small, personal details of daily life.

"I've got so much time on my hands. Like in affluent societies," says the bereft Rosenthal, speaking to us from 2012. Time is a recurring theme in FUTURFAX, which attempts to draw together past, present, and future. She opens the piece with a quote from Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead: "There's only one direction, and time is its only measure." On stage there are a metronome and a clock. Throughout the performance, Rosenthal expounds on Einstein,
time as space, time zones, and rotational versus revolutionary
time. Rosenthal is herself doing time, wearing stripes and with
prison bars projected on the set. "Please no more birthdays," she
implores.

When Rosenthal receives a FAX from the year AC81 (81 years
After the Calamity), we soon realize that Rosenthal's life as we
have witnessed it in 2012 is merely a painful prelude to The Great
Calamity of 2092. Initially, this communication reassures
Rosenthal: "A FAX from the future - so some people did make it!"
But these voices from SSC-16 (a Self Sustainable Community)
describe themselves, with programmed self-satisfaction, as a race
devoid of emotional complexity and happily residing in
hermetically sealed, artificial environments on an earth where
most of the natural world has been obliterated. . . "Our world is
wonderfully managed and controlled."

These obedient future citizens snicker at the existence of small
bands of so called "Deviants," one of whom is portrayed by

Rosenthal, who prefer to live as renegades outside the sterile
SSC's in order to maintain their bonds to the dying Earth.
Reflecting the best of humanity, these Deviants bravely keep a
deathwatch for our planet as we have been privileged to know it.

Andrea Miller-Keller
Curator of Contemporary Art

1 Breslaur, Jan. "Earth Mother, Rosenthal Tackles the
Environment, Censorship and Her own Aging," Los Angeles

2 Not coincidentally, in 1990, Rosenthal turned down an $11,250
grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in support of her
censored colleagues, The NEA Four (two of whom, Tim Miller and
John Fleck, had been students of hers). She refused to sign a
pledge promising not to make "obscene" art. When this
restriction, subsequently declared unconstitutional, was rescinded
in 1991, Rosenthal received the funds which she has shared in
part with a performance fund.
Rachel Rosenthal is an internationally acclaimed interdisciplinary artist. Since 1975, she has written and performed twenty-eight full-length pieces, receiving numerous grants and awards for her work, including two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, a J. Paul Getty Fellowship, an Obie Award for Rachel's Brain (1987) and a College Arts Association award for Pangaean Dreams (1990). Each piece also appeared as part of the Los Angeles Festival. She continues to tour Pangaean Dreams nationwide and internationally. Her current solo, filename: FUTURFAX (1992), was created this year as part of the Performance on 42nd / Performing Bodies and Smart Machines at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris.

Robbie Daniels (Sound Design) is a musician and performance artist who originates from Salt Lake City, Utah. Moving to Los Angeles in 1988, he simultaneously began a three-year apprenticeship with Rachel Rosenthal. Daniels has taught performance workshops at the Los Angeles Children's Museum, was personal assistant to the "Queen of Disco," Donna Summer, and has presented solo and group work throughout greater Los Angeles, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, and New York. His current work-in-progress is a full-length performance piece, Celestial Flowers. Soon to be released is his first recording project, The Fertile Boy, available on compact disc from Piece of Mind Records.

Jack Carr (Lighting Design) is a member of the Theater and Dance faculty at Wesleyan University. He has designed lighting for the Hartford Stage Company's Youth Theatre, The Folger Theatre Group, National Players, the Shubert Ensemble and scenery and lighting for the Boston Post Road Stage Company, and more than eighty theater and dance productions. Other dance designs include New York premieres of works by Wesleyan University choreographers. He was the lighting designer for Company One's production of Crushed Tomatoes.

Angie Bray (Objects) is primarily an installation artist working in the Los Angeles area for the past ten years. Her site specific works deal with the viewer's physical presence in, and perceptual distortion of, space. She has also studied and performed with Rachel Rosenthal for a number of years.
Selected Performances:

Replays, Orlando Gallery, Encino, CA '75; Thanks, Wilshire Plaza West, Los Angeles '75; Charm, Mount Saint Mary's College, Jose Drudis-Diada Art Gallery, Los Angeles '77; The Head of O.K., Institute for Dance and Experimental Art, Santa Monica, CA '77, The Center for Music Experiment, University of California at San Diego '77; Grand Canyon, California State University, Dominguez Hills Art Gallery, CA '78, Radio station KPKF, Los Angeles '78; The Death Show, Thanatopsis Series, Space Gallery, Los Angeles '78; The Arousing Shock, Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art '79, I.D.E.A., Santa Monica, CA '79, Claremont Graduate School, CA '79; Bonsoir, Doctor Scholl, Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art '80; My Brazil, I.D.E.A., Santa Monica, CA '80, Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, CA '80, University of California, Irvine '80; Leave Her In Naxos, University of California at Santa Barbara '81, The Downtown Gallery, Los Angeles '81; Soldier of Fortune, The Art Institute of Chicago, '81, Newport Harbor Art Museum, CA '81; Taboo Subjects, Espace DbD, Los Angeles '81, Sushi, San Diego, CA '81, Metromedia, Vancouver, Canada '81; Traps, Women in Focus, Vancouver, BC '81, Franklin Furnace, NYC '83, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, OH '83; Gaia (first version), Caught in the Act Series, University of California at Los Angeles '83; Gaia, Mon Amour, The House, Santa Monica, CA '83, Film in the Cities, St. Paul, MN '83, Boston Film & Video Foundation, Boston, MA '83, Hallwalls, Buffalo, NY '83; KabbaLAmobile, Carplays, Museum of Contemporary Art and Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles '84; The Others, Japan America Theatre, Los Angeles '84, Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, CA '85, University of North Carolina, Raleigh '86; L.O.W. in Gaia, The Kitchen, NYC '86, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI '86, Zagreb Theatre Festival, Yugoslavia '88, Belluard/Bollwerk Festival, Freiburg, Switzerland '90; Rachel's Brain, Festival de Théâtre des Amériques, Montreal, Canada '87, Documenta 8, Kassel, West Germany '87, Los Angeles Festival, Los Angeles '87, Dance Theater Workshop, NYC '88, Jacob's Pillow, Lee, MA '89, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN '89; Amazonia, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA '90; Pangaean Dreams, Los Angeles Festival, Santa Monica Museum of Art, CA '90, Kala Institute, Berkeley, CA '90, Lincoln Center, Serious Fun, NYC '91; filename: FUTURFAX, Cleveland Performance Art Festival, Cleveland, OH '92; Performance on 42nd / Performing Bodies and Smart Machines, Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, NYC '92.
Selected Bibliography about Rachel Rosenthal:


Steele, Mike. "Performance Art at its provocative, daring best," _Star Tribune_ Sunday, January 8, 1989, p. 4B.


