

SYLVIA SCHWENK

PROJECT CONCEPT STATEMENT

Ground Control is a work of participatory performance art that will be presented in two stages.

The first stage will be a live performance that will take place at night-time by everyday-people-cum-performers dressed in black, performing with torches to a sound-scape 'conducted' by the audience.

For this performance a large group of people from different demographics will be invited to cross over and become performers. The work will preferably be performed on a dark cloudy night starting with a rehearsal. Over the course of the rehearsal and performance, people who have no prior training in or generally no prior connection with performance will transform themselves from a group of individuals into a unified group of performers who will experience something new together. The performers will start to work together, communicate with one another, help each other, and implicitly trust each other to present the performance that will be choreographed and directed by the Sydney and Cologne-based, German-born artist Sylvia Schwenk.

The live performance will start immediately after the rehearsal. The work will begin in total darkness, except for five coloured buttons illuminated on a *ground control* console marked, which the audience will use to determine the sequence of the performance. The performers will be in a grid formation with their torches switched off and their heads bowed forward waiting for a member of the audience to press one of the buttons. Each button will be programmed to play a different piece of music with a unique choreography. The music will be dramatic instrumental works interspersed with haunting sound-scapes written and pre-recorded by Australian musician and composer Barry Evans, especially for this performance. When the audience presses a button, music will start playing through loud speakers and the performers will move in a choreographed manner to create an illuminated stellar shape. For example, when the red button is pressed, the performers will individually walk away from the group with their torches turned off to a new space, where they will add to the growing shape of a 'moon' created by the performers bodies who will switch on their torches once in place. In this way, a moon will slowly be illuminated – one torch at a time – as each performer arrives. Once all the performers have migrated from the earlier shape to the new shape, the performers will begin light writing, and they will write words, phrases and create images in the air with their illuminated torches. The performance will be captured on video and photographs, and the light writing will be relayed real time to a LCD television to show the words and/or images the performers have written in light. When the music stops playing the performers will stand in the new shape until the audience presses another button. The performers will then begin to move into the new shape.

The second part of the work will be the re-presentation of the live performance for the remainder of the project, as an interactive video work screened on the LCD television and speakers used in the performance. The video will be linked to the *ground control* console that was used during the live performance and the audience will choose the video and music that will be played by pressing one of the coloured illuminated buttons. In between selections, a video will screen the light writings created by the performance.