

# It's written on the body

Tony Yap's physique displays his art in more ways than one, writes

**Harbant Gill**

**S**TRANGE marks appeared on Tony Yap's body when he performed a dance called *The Buddha My Body*.

The brown shapes on his chest and a heart-shaped one on his leg remained for two months and puzzled medical experts.

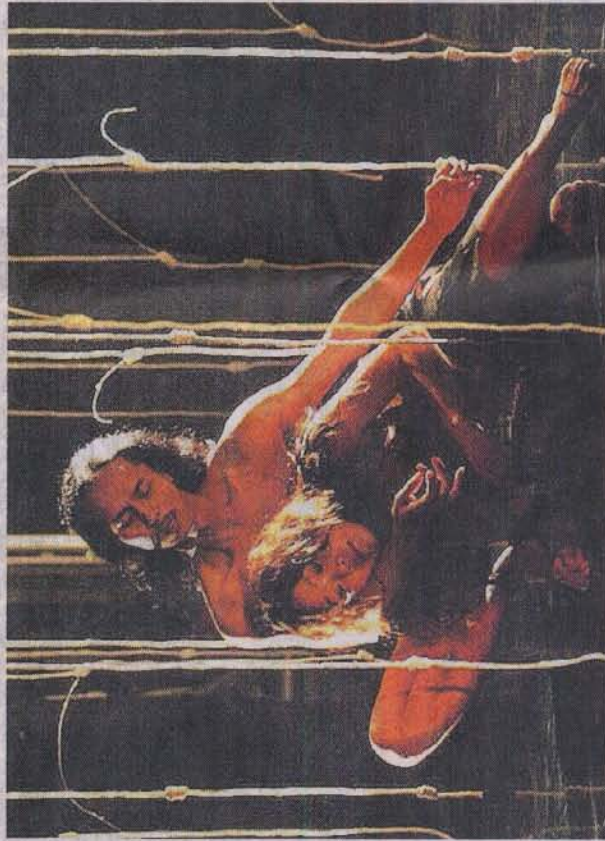
"They appeared out of nowhere. The day they disappeared was the first anniversary of my mother's death," the Melbourne dancer says.

"I did some research and it's not an unusual phenomenon that marks appear on your body when you go through a traumatic experience."

The dance was inspired by the event of Yap's mother's death a year earlier.

Consumed by the calm and emptiness around her death, and how time and space ceased to exist, Yap began to dance his feelings.

He worked with dancers from



**Attachment:** *The Buddha My Body* explores the emotions of loss.

South Korea and Indonesia, as well as musicians for the show he is bringing to Melbourne.

"I told the dancers, 'I want you to walk through a room full of mist and call your mother's name,'" he says.

"There's a sense of urgency,

otherwise she'd disappear forever."

The result is an hour-long performance which explores attachment, suffering and longing, and how it affects the body.

A work based on Yap's father's death, *Decay of the Angel*, won him a

Green Room Award in 2000.

Yap has spent six years exploring the work of shamans in Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and South Korea for a solo piece he plans to perform in Melbourne in April.

He has studied the movements of mediums going into trance and looked at how these are used in Western theatre as part of his two-year Australia Council dance fellowship.

Some of these movements appear in *The Buddha My Body*, which Yap and nine others performed in Yogyakarta and Seoul last year.

"It is dedicated to my mother," Yap says.

"My sister, who is a Buddhist, said the marks were rebirth marks. I always go into a trance when I perform."

**see >** *The Buddha My Body*, fortyfivedownstairs, 45 Flinders Lane, city until Sunday. Tickets: \$20/\$15. Bookings: 9662 9966.