

Time Out

London's weekly guide

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Richard Eyre

Risky business at the National

'Belle Epoque'

Spain's erotic Oscar-winner

Let them eat cake!

Our guide to Easter indulgence

theatre *bad habits*

Spanish performance artist **Albert Vidal** staged his own porn show last year at a nightclub in Madrid. All in the course of research, you understand. 'I was getting into the flesh,' he explains from his ninth-century house in the mountains near Barcelona, 'this is the only way you can talk about hell. I found it was very difficult to get an erection in front of the public. It needs the participation of the whole being; you can't fake this movement. I discovered the holiness of the erection - it was very beautiful.'

Albert Vidal has been exploring the boundaries of the mind and the body through theatrical performance for over 20 years. Describing himself as 'an

outsider' in Spain, he locked himself in a cage at London Zoo in 1985 and called it Urban Man. 'Everyone looked at me as an animal,' he says, 'and staying there eight hours at a time I found myself in contact with ancient memories in my cells.'

Performing as the Monk of Chaos at the ICA this Easter, Vidal will transform into the bug-eyed, madcap monk from hell who chants ritualistically over bones. It was meant to be the carcass of a bull - but at £25,000 a go, they proved too costly. He assures me that this performance is all part of a ten-year process which consists of working through his own Telluric vision.

'Telluric means coming from the earth,' he says. 'I'm exploring the ecst-

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asy and energy of each person. But it's not meditation. I've written a myth which deals with the path of the prince, that is the prince of the spirit and at the moment, I'm in hell.'

Another of Vidal's bizarre missions involved visiting a nomadic tribe in Niger where he gave them workshops on the energy of the lily flower. 'The Boro are very sensitive people where the men dress as women to get the women,' says Vidal. 'I get them to concentrate on the loving energy of the lily. It's a physical experience and has nothing to do with fashionable Buddhism.'

Across the years, Vidal has staged his own funeral, laid on a 'cannibalistic' feast where beef was moulded into the shape of a human being, then eaten; and appeared, god-like, sitting in the middle of an enormous advertisement hoarding. 'I constantly take risks,' he says. 'It makes me very alive and sensitive to everyone. I'm not afraid of anything. In the mountains where I live, I leave the door open day and night. I have a good spirit.' *Rose Rouse*
Vidal appears as the Monk of Chaos at the ICA from Friday.