An internationally acclaimed film by Danish-born, New York-based artist Joachim Koester will be continuously screened in its Australian premiere at the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne.

*Tarantism* (2007) is a contemporary re-enactment of the historical phenomenon of the tarantella, a dance originally developed as cure for victims of the bite of the tarantula spider. It features dancers enacting frenzied and convulsive movements in a choreographed exploration of the tarantella.

Emerging in the Middle Ages in Taranto, Salento, in southern Italy, the tarantella was a ritualistic dance through which victims of tarantula bite would attempt to exorcise the spider’s poison. Victims would move to a band of percussionists, in a frenzied, trance-like state, often for days on end. *Tarantism* is the outcome of Koester’s research into the phenomenon and history of the tarantella which, despite its origins in peasantry, was eventually practiced by doctors and nobility and even for a time absorbed by the Catholic Church.

Koester’s main interest lies in the cathartic, empowering function of the tarantella.

The 6:31 minute film was shot in black & white on 16mm film in a studio in Brussels.

Curator, Bala Starr, says the film installation provides a mesmerizing visual and aural experience.

“*Tarantism* explores the language of the human body and boundaries of rationality. Through their convulsive movements, Koester’s individually choreographed dancers appear to liberate themselves from self-control, accessing unconscious dimensions,” Ms Starr said.

ENDS
About the artist:

Born in Copenhagen in 1962, Joachim Koester studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Art. He has held over fifty solo exhibitions in Europe, South America, Asia, the US and the UK. Koester has presented projects at major international art museums and events including the 51st Venice Biennale (2005) and documenta X in Kassel (1997), and has participated in exhibitions at venues including, recently, the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; the Tate Britain, London; and MIT List Visual Art Centre, Boston. In twenty years of artistic practice Koester has re-enacted and represented unorthodox figures, narrative, cults and pre-scientific knowledge through photography, film and text.

View part of the work: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q uz-YnauM

Image caption:
Joachim Koester
Tarantism, 2007
16 mm black & white film installation
duration: 6:31 minutes
edition of 5 with 2 artist's proofs
© Courtesy the artist and Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen

Contact:
Kara Cutajar, MediaLink Productions. T: 03 9663 3222 M: 0406 173 993
kara@medialinkproductions.com

Katrina Raymond, MediaLink Productions. T: 03 9663 3222 M: 0417 303158
katrina@medialinkproductions.com

Images available upon request

The Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne, Swanston Street
(betw Elgin & Faraday sts), Parkville, T: 03 8344 5148 W: www.art-museum.unimelb.edu.au

Hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am - 5pm: Saturday and Sunday 12 - 5pm