PRECARIOUS MOVEMENTS

Choreography and the Museum

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INTRODUCTION

PART ONE
THE WORK OF THE WORK

PART TWO
ARTISTS AND INSTITUTIONS

* * *

PART THREE
LEGACY AND TRACE

WHEN CHOREOGRAPHY ENTERS THE MUSEUM

Choreography in the visual arts field unfurls a range of modalities: concept, metaphor, strategy, operational structure, curatorial framework and compositional technique. These modes trouble the form of choreography and its relationship to the discipline of dance.

Whether we can claim ground for a distinct field named 'choreography as contemporary art' or whether dance has always been an essential player in key aesthetic developments – both historically and internationally – are speculations still very much under debate. Addressed implicitly or explicitly in this book, the reality is undeniable: the 'performance turn' that has taken place in the visual arts since the early 2000s has had a specifically choreographic profile. *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum* surveys this movement, mapping this field of practice in the current post-disciplinary context.

Since the mid twentieth century, dance has entered the gallery and museum in many forms: as artistic experiments addressing a new context; reworks or remounts of historical choreographies for the gallery; appearing in public programs; scores to be enacted by a hired dancer; in video art; and as choreography responding to permanent collections. It has also appeared as something closer to proscenium-based dance – revisions of stage-based works – as was the case with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's *Work/Travail/Arbeid*, 2015, or works made for proscenium theatres and relocated to multi-arts centres, such as the programming in the Walker Arts Centre's McGuire Theater in Minneapolis.

Beyond dance *in* galleries, we can look to the prehistory of theatre-based exchanges between dance and visual art. These include Serge Diaghilev's *Le Train Bleu*, 1925, which staged modernist dance, fashion and music among modernist art – coupling Darius Milhaud with Bronislava Nijinska, and Gabrielle Chanel with Pablo Picasso. Or the Bauhaus' experiments with embodied art in Oskar Schlemmer, Albert Burger and Elsa Hötzel's *Triadisches Ballet*, 1921. The mid-century avant-garde included a deep exchange between artists and dancers in the New York downtown community. Gordon Matta-Clark and Dan Graham acknowledged the influence of choreographers such as Trisha Brown and Simone Forti, and the site-specific works of Trisha Brown, including *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, 1970, broke open the staging of art beyond museums and theatres.

From within this broad field, *Precarious Movements* seeks to locate a specific strand of practice: choreographic works made for visual arts contexts. The works themselves describe general tendencies at the interface between these traditionally disparate disciplines. Artists such as Daina Ashbee, Brian Fuata, Maria Hassabi, Amrita Hepi, Victoria Hunt, Shelley Lasica, Adam Linder, Lee Mingwei and Latai Taumoepeau are defining an emerging field and a new choreo-artistic language through attention to, and exploration of, the intersecting and divergent threads of visual art and dance practices and histories. Sometimes directly engaging museology, as in the case of Hunt's *KŌIWI,* 2023, and Linder's *Cleaning Services*, 2013–17, and sometimes through temporality and forms of attention, as in the practices of Hassabi and Mingwei, these artists and their peers are examining the choreographic as a medium that addresses, unpicks, adds to, subverts, embellishes and critiques artistic legacies, futures, languages and forms.

It is through attention to the work of artists that we can arrive at some definitions and parameters for what this book attempts to undertake.

Precarious Movements has emerged from a multi-year research project of the same name led by artists, theorists, curators, producers and conservators who, together with the contributors to this volume, share an attention to specific case studies and significant details that help clarify the scope and constituency of what might best be described as a configuration of works mapping a new field of practice.

One core question in the research asks why choreography appears in visual art contexts today. The reasons are multiple and include the creative interests of choreographer-artists who find in visual art spaces the opportunity to engage specific, formal, conceptual and temporal aspects of choreography. There is also the expanded understanding (especially since the twentieth-century movements of Dada and Fluxus) of art as encompassing a wider range of forms, materials and registers. Additionally, there is the impetus for museums today to move away from Enlightenment remits of didactic knowledge transmission towards democratised spaces offering various experiences for diverse audiences. Such a shift has found increased value in programming performance-based art that engages viewers in a temporal, live and experiential encounter.

Some of the tensions arising when choreography enters the museum include the collection and conservation of choreographic works; the analysis and historicisation of choreography within visual art frameworks; systems of value regarding labour and materiality; and the distinctive expertise, knowledge and language pertaining to dance or visual art. More specifically, questions that have emerged through our research, interviews and case studies include: Should choreographic artworks be collected by museums and, if so, what are the benefits and risks? How can curatorial knowledge in choreographic history and form be developed in professions that have traditionally focused on visual art? And, perhaps most fundamentally, what are the ontological implications for the visual arts museum as it finally moves towards recognition of the ephemeral, multi-authored, live and living art that choreographic practice produces?

Precarious Movements seeks to map out the many inclusions, exclusions, pinch points and continuities at the interface between the historical disciplines and contemporary practices of visual art and dance. This research project is located on the lands of the Eora, Kulin, Ngunnawal and Noongar Nations in Australia and connects with an international community of colleagues from diverse cultural contexts, including First Nations artists and arts workers. The research has been expanded through the knowledge and practices of First Nations artists who continue to redefine the very form of the museum, specifically its attempts to still time and

culture, and its insistence on reductive concepts of authorship, audience and ownership. Artists including Daina Ashbee, Brian Fuata, Victoria Hunt, Amrita Hepi and Latai Taumoepeau are at the forefront of this practice and in very distinct ways since their work engages with their own culturally specific artistic research.

Within the frame of disciplinarity, these First Nations artists drive new understandings of choreography, performance and visual art mediums by undertaking artistic examinations of temporality, relationality and materiality. In their works, alongside their discursive contributions to the field, these artists have raised crucial questions regarding the colonial practices of collecting and their violences, including authorship; the relationship between artwork and audience; and value systems of materiality and ephemerality. These and other First Nations practices internationally open learnings beyond the scope of choreography in the museum and require us to understand artistic practice in terms that extend beyond, indeed overturn, existing museological practices.

Key themes across the creative work and associated discourse charted in *Precarious Movements* include advocacy, agency, archives, practice, subjectivity, presence, discipline, intermediality, the studio, grey space, score, task, value and care. You will notice these subjects are understood differently by the distinct and overlapping areas of practice represented by the book's contributors: artists, conservators, curators, producers, archivists and theorists. Each field of expertise brings distinctive knowledges and sets of tools to the research. They also represent branches of advocacy for choreographic practice in the visual arts by developing new critical languages, making space for new ways of commissioning and testing innovative modes of transmission. Artists' practices have been the beginning point and continued core of our research.

Between the three sections making up the book's textual contributions are a series of artist pages commissioned to draw artistic knowledge into the book and extend the modes of choreography into the printed form. These pages are a means of representing artistic practice in visual languages that express non-textual, embodied communication, transmission and knowledge. They raise questions about where choreography happens, where it lives and how it moves through time and forms.

This publication consists of three parts that cover the life cycle of a choreographic work, from both institutional and artist perspectives. Beginning with the artist and the practice, part one centres the voices of artists to chart methodologies and processes that form the foundation of artistic practice in this field. Part two unpacks the meeting point between

the artist and institutions of visual art in the form of museums, galleries, programs and festivals. Through case studies and conversations, the writers reflect on the potentialities and tensions that arise when the artwork moves through the apparatus of such institutions into the remit of curators, programmers, producers, registrars, designers, development and visitor services workers. The life of the work as it moves through time and into the future is addressed in part three, which considers continuity and trace, transmission and memory, as choreographic artworks live through artists, conservators, archivists, communities, audiences and materials. What might be retained, adapted or allowed to dissolve goes to the heart of the choreographic and reminds us of its distinctive effervescence; a quality that inspires and complicates our writing and research.

This book provides a snapshot of conditions surrounding the dance–museum interface in 2023, while speculating on the many ways in which the field may develop. We may see a continuation of durational works operating during museum hours, or there may be a return to the concert mode of time-specific, shorter works. The choreography might continue to expand to non-human elements and contexts, or it might go outside, locating itself more consistently in urban and natural environments. The interest in dance archives is a particularly rich area that overlaps with the role of the performing arts library and the developing field of performance conservation, which seek to ensure dance works persist as an important part of museology, audience encounter and the writing of art history. We trust *Precarious Movements* contributes valuably to ongoing debates and the future shape of choreography and the museum.

(pp. 9–10) ALICE HEYWARD AND FANNY GICQUEL *memory room* 2021, part of *do you feel the same* 2021, Hua International, Berlin, 2021. Performers: Alice Heyward, Thanos Frydas, Mickey Mahar, Luísa Saraiva, Leah Marojević and Leah Katz. Photo: Timo Ohler

CONVENINGS AND CONVERGENCES: A RESPONSE TO *PRECARIOUS MOVEMENTS*

'The "performance turn" in the visual arts since the early 2000s has had a specifically choreographic profile', write two of the editors of *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*, Erin Brannigan and Pip Wallis. But what that choreography entails, precisely – A historical method? A curatorial strategy? A mode of engaging the audience? – remains up for debate across the texts within their groundbreaking volume. This critical capaciousness is appropriate, for there is no consensus about why durational movement has so decisively and prominently entered visual art contexts, in particular museums, over the past few decades. While collaborations between and among dancers, theatre designers and artists have been integral to Global North modernist productions since the turn of the twentieth century, the institutionalisation of choreographic performance within museums, complete with dedicated spaces, staff and policies, is relatively new.

Choreography is a very specific term, etymologically stemming from the Greek – meaning 'dance-writing' – and was at first largely associated with the discipline of ballet. Yet it has come to signal the organisation of virtually all forms of locomotion, whether improvised and spontaneous, or intentional and coordinated. Discussing 'choreography' in the visual art context thus means something slightly different than a conversation about, say, 'orchestration', for its constituent parts key us specifically towards thinking about collectively (choreo/chorus) and about language and textuality (-graphy). As a scholar rooted in art history, I have struggled with how to give shape to time-based movement in words, as well as with how to graph and chart my own bodily and affective entanglements with feminist live-performance practices that sometimes can be difficult to describe. More than a decade ago I published an article, 'Practicing *Trio A*', about my experience learning Yvonne Rainer's signature dance from Rainer herself; I discussed my efforts to come to thicker modes of description by inhabiting the motions. In this, I gained new respect for how the body itself can be an active generator of theory that is deeply felt yet difficult to articulate.

Upon reflection, my essay on Rainer feels a bit like a failure, in that I am not certain the reader gains much insight about her precise gestures from my writerly communications about them.[1] At the same time, I have no regrets about the process of learning *Trio A* or my experience after the fact of groping to put that experience down on paper, because it helped illuminate for me the gaps, resonances and tensions among two different forms of knowledge – muscle memory and historical research.

1 Julia Bryan-Wilson, 'Practicing Trio A', *October*, vol. 140, Spring 2012, pp. 54–74.

Such gaps and tensions are explicitly addressed throughout *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*, with its poly-vocal approach that includes practitioners, producers and researchers alike. Brannigan and Wallis explain that artists' practices 'have been the beginning point and continued core of our research', and their centring of artists as makers and theorists undergirds the ethics of the multi-year project from which this publication has emerged. The project honours the artists' movements as a kind of speculation about racialisation, about gender, about sexuality, about nation, about age and about ability that happens in the limbs and in the molecules of air exchanged between dancers and audiences.

In that vein, I co-curated (with Olivia Ardui and Adriano Pedrosa) an exhibition at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) entitled *Histórias da Dança* (*Histories of Dance*). In our framing discussions we touched on some of the same flashpoints mentioned by Brannigan and Wallis: Serge

Diaghilev, the Bauhaus, Judson Dance Theater. But our focus became more sharply political within the context of Brazil in 2019, which was still in the grip of Jair Bolsonaro's far-right regime and his attacks on Indigenous, Black, queer and trans people. We needed to provisionally define *dance* in order to contextualise our wideranging exhibition, following on the heels of MASP's other non-encyclopedic, non-chronological exploration of histories, including Afro-Atlantic and Feminist histories. We decided to unfix dance from traditional conceptions around expressive movement, instead settling on a more pointed rubric of 'exuberant resistance'. Eschewing the presentation of costumes, scenographies, scores or inert documentation, we instead highlighted how bodies move together, not only to take up space as a body politic, but also to embody ecstatic opposition. For instance, we included rhythmic Afro-Brazilian street demonstrations alongside kinetic sculptures made by Latin American women who utilised their motorised abstractions in defiance of static norms about art.

Scheduled to open in June 2020, *Histories of Dance* was one of the many casualties of the pandemic that ravaged Brazil and the rest of the world. Several of the figures who were going to be included in the show died at the time, and the show was cancelled. Even as the traces of our labours live on in the catalogue we published, and our Portuguese-language anthology, this is a pale shadow of what would have been a vibrant activation of Lina Bo Bardi's iconic museum building, including dozens of performances by everyone from Grupo Mexa, a troupe of trans women dancers (some of whom are experiencing homelessness), to Eduardo Fukushima, a trained choreographer whose work builds on rich legacies of Japanese Butoh within Brazil. We also included a series of works by Danica Dakić, Denis Darzacq, Germaine Kruip, Sondra Perry and Santiago Reyes Villaveces in a section named 'Against the Wall' that explicitly depict the interruptive power of dancing bodies within museums – many of them immigrant, disabled, Black or otherwise 'marked' as Other within typically white cube gallery spaces. We hoped that doing so would reveal how the museum itself has been a site of bodily governance, and that the ongoing and increasing incorporation of choreography within it brings both 'benefits and risks', as Brannigan and Wallis astutely note.

The texts gathered in *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum* showcase the ongoing need to expand geopolitical conversations about dance within art institutions beyond the inclusion of Oceania and Australia, and to continue to write about motion with an awareness of the too-often silenced chorus of marginalised bodies.

WE HAVE DANCED OUR HISTORIES SINCE THE BEGINNING

Dance is one of the oldest and most enduring cultural expressions known to humankind. It has a legacy reaching back tens of thousands of years and, due to its boundless and infinite nature, offers us a language that is universally employed and available to all peoples. As a Bundjalung and Yuin dubay, I have come to experience dance as an essential practice and function of our society. It has been passed down through generations for use in ceremony, to tell story, entertain, engage social criticism, express spirituality, commune with our ancestors, to externalise our inner worlds, and much more. It has been activated to teach us joy, discipline and how to be in right relation with the land and each other.

Today, dance continues to play a central role in the shaping of all art and culture. Herein lies one potential answer to questions regarding why choreography appears so prevalently in contemporary visual arts contexts, especially considering the unique capacity for performance-based practices to reform and democratise museum spaces. Dance allows for diverse experiences and audiences within institutions that historically have excluded people and practices that challenge or sit outside of Eurocentric/White dominant culture. Both the historical significance of the art form, as well as the ever-increasing presence of dance and choreography in art/museum contexts, are strong justifications for seeking to preserve, and find ways of honouring, this age-old form so that we might continue to move, or rather dance, our diverse histories into the future.

As the *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum* team seeks to investigate the infrastructure available for choreographic works made for visual arts contexts, it is our responsibility as researchers to consider and support all kinds of choreographic artists, works and practices. It is necessary for us to ensure that, in the same way other fine arts practices are upheld and conserved, people who enter the museum as dance artists and choreographers are made to feel safe and looked after appropriately. This includes paying attention to all individuals within the work's broader network of care, both inside and outside the institution. Our research is focused on remaining curious and open in order to uncover ways to accomplish this.

Some of the reflections to follow in this book echo one another as they seek to answer questions such as: What does it mean to tend to live, embodied and often immaterial artforms? How can we nurture and seek to authentically preserve the life cycle of performance-based artworks? How can we demonstrate support for artists and individuals engaged in the production, presentation and preservation of choreographic and dance practices? And what might this all mean when working with First Nations, both local and global?

To reiterate, this research project is grounded on the Country of the Eora, Kulin, Ngunnawal and Noongar nations. With this comes an obligation to acknowledge the privileged position we find ourselves in as individuals living and working on stolen, unceded lands. It is important that we recognise the sovereign peoples of this continent, along with the rich cultural context we are blessed to be informed and nurtured by.

This continent, where our research is primarily based, is home to the oldest continuing cultures in the world, and thus, as is pertinent to this project, home to the world's oldest performance-based/dance rites.

Embedded in the practices of Indigenous artists, both of this place and international Indigenous homelands, are tools and insights which can help to ensure the sustainable, ongoing transmission and preservation of dance and choreographic modalities. Our research is defined and enriched by our community of local and global First Nations colleagues who challenge and remind us of the depth of pre-existing knowledge within Indigenous cultural maintenance methodologies. One such framework is that of Custodianship, a system which emphasises care of the collective, prioritises the preservation of practice over product and which is governed by Lore, the stories and values-based underpinnings that define the parameters by which practice may be passed on.

This way of safeguarding has ensured the continuation of dance practice for tens of thousands of years and demonstrates a way of caretaking which lays out communal obligations to cultural and artistic maintenance, transmission and transformation. Local and global First Nations participants in this research project have illuminated for us the value of kinship and thus diversified our understanding of conservation, helping us embrace the potential of current and future documentation technologies and the profound benefits of centering artists and their collaborators. This has highlighted a need for reorienting ways of being and doing in relationship to choreography and the museum. Namely, that we must move away from existing, colonial museological practices that could be seen as holding cultural/artistic expressions captive and fixing in time works which are, by nature, intended to evolve, be re-spirited, or even disappear.

Choreographic artworks present us – not only as researchers, but also as audiences – with the gift and challenge of perspective. In the museum context, they uniquely urge us to care for people, to preserve relationships and to document the experience of change across time and space. Outside the constraints of material art forms, dance offers insight into the unknown; an unfolding of the future in the present. Moment to moment we encounter the freedom, spontaneity and dynamism of a practice which confronts and calls for a re-evaluation of museological practices that have long grappled with how to hold on to that which is no longer here. Through their evanescence, choreographic and performance-based works continue to teach us the truth about ourselves and our values, as well as remind us that our reality is one of impermanence – that all artistic/cultural expressions have a lifespan, material or otherwise.

VITAL TRADE

As live performance proliferates in the visual arts, I share researcher and curator Joey Orr's wish 'for the voices of the people who activate and provide the public access points for these works of contemporary art to be a more significant part of understanding them'.[1] Performers' expertise, labour and knowledge are the life forces of these bodied artworks and deserve greater attention in current research and discourse.

1 Joey Orr, *A Sourcebook of Performance Labor: Activators, Activists, Artists, All*, Routledge, London, 2022, p. 1.

I am an Australian dancer based in Berlin and have worked in museums, galleries, public spaces, theatres and film for the past decade in Australia, Europe and the United States. My practice develops through diverse collaborations in these contexts, as author, co-author and interpreter. I create and perform works by choreographers, visual artists and filmmakers, as well as my own dance and performance projects.[2] The

conscious processes of embodying material as a performative act is a transformative experience I love to give myself to, calling on skills acquired through my life in dance, accumulated by doing new work. Museums and galleries offer deviating, exciting and specific conditions in which to work as a performer and be witnessed by others, enabling temporal and spatial energetics and human encounters that are different from performances made in and for other collective formats.

2 I am a dancer in visual arts contexts, in my own works and the works of artists including Maria Hassabi, Xavier Le Roy, Luísa Saraiva, Alexandra Pirici, Dora García, Grażyna Roguski, Simone Forti, Trisha Brown, Hana Erdman, Alicia Frankovich and Adam Linder.

Performance is *practice*: it is 'an active thought or filter', 'habitual, regular activity', or means 'to try, to attempt repeatedly'.[3] In contrast to performing on stage in theatres that are a direct portal out of the 'real world', performing in the art gallery or museum situates performative practice somewhere between the real and beyond. Because it is closer to reality than the theatre, I can play with these situations and how they are constructed. Many performances I've worked on blur the distinction between performer and visitor. In *Temporary Title, 2015*, 2015, by Xavier Le Roy, our working 'shifts' as performers begin by sitting inconspicuously among the exhibition's visitors and taking our clothes off. The museum space, with its porous, invisible boundaries between people, provides the potential in this work to change what seeing naked bodies in public feels like, and what meaning might be generated as a result. Although public interface through new encounters in the museum setting may come with risks (leaking in from beyond the museum walls), these performative worlds strive to establish different terms in a space where reality's consequences could be(come) different. Louise Höjer, who has rehearsed and installed Tino Sehgal's 'constructed situations' for more than seventeen years, says of the act of interpreting a piece: 'You can treat yourself playfully as a subject and work on yourself. And then, of course, hopefully, work on others too by allowing this kind of playfulness to appear.'[4] Höjer *is* the archive of Sehgal's work. She passes her knowledge, body to body, to dancers who interpret its rules for themselves. The imprint of performers' lives and their live navigation of performances ('auto-dramaturgy') impact public experiences of these artworks.[5]

3 Chrysa Parkinson, 'self interview on practice', <https://vimeo.com/26763244>, accessed 6 June 2023.

4 Orr, p. 41.

5 Annelies van Assche & Kareth Schaffer, 'Flexible performativity: what contemporary dancers do when they do what they do', *TDR*, vol. 67, no. 1, pp. 203–22.

Performance provides a context wherein visceral experiences of ideas can be learnt with, in, and through the bodies of both performer and visitor. And performing bodies, although commodified through hire, are each subjective: moving, learning, healing and growing in the context of

object-based artwork and their 'productive' workers. Visual arts environments interact with the performances they host via the performers who are making an artwork in real time and space. Visitors experience performers' 'unproductive' labour as it manifests, witnessing our navigation of a work's logic, bringing it to life. As a dancer in the museum, I can often feel the works I am performing 'acting on' the visitors. Bodies shift their postures, sensorial registers open, gazes change.

Berlin-based choreographer and dancer Kareth Schaffer introduces the term 'flexible performativity', a requisite for dancers in the twenty-first century, as:

> the ability of performers to negotiate proximity with their audiences, to direct in real time the dramaturgy of the performance, to navigate between a plurality of techniques and performative actions.[6]

6 Assche & Schaffer, p. 204.

This social and affective labour is unregulated, complex and highly skilled. When installed in visual arts spaces, a precise kind of attention to a performance is required from hosts who may be more used to working with non-human materials. This commitment to sustainable care is inclusive of the artwork and the humans who manifest it.

A performer in a show that abides by the traditional temporal exhibition format often inhabits the space during opening hours, like guards do. However, while the role and function of a guard is regulated by a professional description, there is no single model for what and how performers do what they do. Performing many 'live installations' (open all day for weeks) by Maria Hassabi is to move through meticulously set physical material composed through the passing of quantified time in physical 'stillnesses', through a choreographic loop framed by public access:

> *35 seconds breathing into my right leg raised above me, feel the gaze of a watcher, slowly lower it across my torso to the right, 20 seconds here (adductor muscles twitching more violently today than yesterday), confirm the corresponding choreography of my colleague on the other side of the room in my vision, hear a sound cue … 6pm.*

As dancers, we perform material specific to the artwork we're doing. Our experience of this embodiment in choreographic and compositional frames is shared with performer-colleagues (if any) of the work, sometimes more so

than with its authorial artist/choreographer, who isn't always a performer of their work.

The relationship between visitor and performer in the gallery is an embodied encounter, mediated and composed by tension and attention beyond visual experience. When I sing into the museum's walls performing *Tirana, 2022,* by Luísa Saraiva, physical vibrations move through the building and into the visitors, often slumped against its walls. Their attention is not only on *watching* me sing and dance; they hear and feel the work. In *do you feel the same,* 2021, a group work by artist Fanny Gicquel and myself, the score-based choreography includes voicing aloud questions that arise through a game we play. Visitors to the gallery or public space where the work is installed might join this discursive practice, their questions weaving with ours. The audience not only influences how we perform this mutating installation but is part of the work which is constructed by thinking together, facilitated by us, its performers (workers).

When performing for weeks during opening hours, with our psycho-physical-social selves labouring in the service of an artwork, we can experience museums as ongoing micro-worlds of their own, cosmoses of distinctive characters and customs. We collect unusual stories and memories within their containers. These traces are documents of performances, made through the meetings, challenges, frictions, eccentricities and tensions that arise when we put our bodies to work within these public spaces.

Performing a work in a particular museum or gallery site is something very different from doing it in another one. Architecture, light, the texture of surfaces and the audiences a museum fosters create different conditions for performance. In 2022, *Cancelled* by Maria Hassabi was created in LUMA, Arles, premiering there on a hilly stretch of grass gazing into the sun, whose glare was intensified as it bounced off the facade of Frank Gehry's 'The Tower', decorated with stainless steel bricks. *Cancelled* was toured to The Cleveland Museum of Art, with its cavernous atrium. I remember in Cleveland, performing the meticulously timed movements composing the choreography in this work with the feeling of being a little 'landsick'. There, the easier conditions of the flat, smooth concrete floor; no longer being subject to the scorching sun; the uneven, sloping grassy hill; and the famous 'mistral' wind in the south of France, together with my embodied memory of the work's history in LUMA's dynamic outdoor setting, influenced how I performed it in the new context.

Embodied remains are key to the conservation of a work through time, as the knowledge of it is cared for through its practice, transmission and first-person accounts passing between bodies and spaces. To perform

Animal Companion, 2015, by Hana Erdman is to accompany a single visitor or small group in an exhibition space, exploring the role of 'animal' as other-than-human embodiment, practising specific modes of attunement and relation (telepathy, proximity, touch). Each subjective encounter with a visitor defines this artwork, collecting vibes and impacts that help us, its practitioners, to understand the work in the present moment, gathering its knowledge for others to learn to perform it in different curated situations.

The particularities of museums and galleries (all similar and idiosyncratic) make for interesting contexts to experiment and play in through performative practice. The museum as a site for individualised experience combines with the relationality of live performance, strengthening visual arts institutions as places for both personal and collective reflection, including embodied encounters through human connection. Performance in visual arts contexts creates an endless, multidirectional circuit of relational affect. The transformation of experience that dance and performance can so directly produce from within the container of a choreographic proposal alters the art space and its inscribed rhythms of movement and attention. A deeply regularised place built for temporary world-making through exhibitions of objects, for public masses to flow through and reflect in, becomes peculiar with vital artwork that can now 'assert presence by itself', unreal enough to allow for transformative aesthetic experiences and creating other kinds of reality in these mainstream spaces for performers and visitors respectively.[7]

7 Boris Groys, 'Politics of installation', *e-flux Journal*, no. 2, January 2009, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/02/68504/politics-of-installation>, accessed 7 June 2023.

Whether a major full-time exhibition, a series of events, a short act, or a one-to-one encounter, exhibition spaces can become playful, active and activating sites for performing and encountering live work. The pressures of their own histories, behavioural codes of visitors and the working culture of an institution's staff rub up against dynamic choreographic structures and the body-subjects who materialise work in time and space. This exchange can be gentle or jarring, always with a degree of tension. When forces unite empathetically, such tension is a productive means for connection and communication. Without tension – in any body, form, constellation – there's no movement, no breath, no relation, no change.

In temples of objects, performance can heighten experiences of one another's humanity. Humanity, as a quality or state of 'being humane', is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as being 'marked by compassion, sympathy, or consideration' and needs to be practised to be sustained. Susan Sontag tells us, 'compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to be

translated into action, or it withers'.[8] In a significant difference to work in the theatre, where audience and artist are separated, performance in the visual arts space brings bodies, positions, audiences, cultural scenes, knowledges, economies, value(s), life cycles, protection, care, expectations and needs into conversation, each work with its specific set of demands and questions. Despite all its complexities and irregularities, it ultimately helps us to ask, each and all: how can we be (different) as humans? To understand the dynamics and tensions that late capitalism imposes in dance's habitation in the gallery, and to move forward meaningfully in this project, we must listen to and examine dancers' and performers' perspectives in the work we perform to appreciate how we do it.

8 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Penguin, London, 2004, p. 101.

(pp. 30–1) XAVIER LE ROY *Temporary Title, 2015* 2015, PACT Zollverein, Essen, SANAA-Gebäude, Tanz Kongress 2018. Artistic collaboration with Scarlet Yu. Performers: Alexandre Achour, Jorge Alencar, Salka Ardal Rosengren, Saša Asentić, Christian Bourigault, Sherwood Chen, Ben Evans, Luís Miguel Félix, Zeina Hanna, Alice Heyward, Becky Hilton, Hélène Iratchet, Xavier Le Roy, Neto Machado, Sabine Macher, João dos Santos Martins, Amaara Raheem. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Christian Schuller

PART ONE
THE WORK OF THE WORK

Structured around the life cycle of choreographic works, *Precarious Movements* begins with an exploration of the artists' practice and process. The opening piece by Tammi Gissell sets out the stakes for dance artists when they bring their processes into dialogue with the work of other artists, both present and past, in the context of an exhibition. Through the lens of Gissell's First Nations heritage and practice, concepts of cultural memory, assertion, repatriation and trauma are introduced. Gissell's observations – of dance as 'a central repository of cultural knowledge', and of the consequences of the disassociation of choreographic materials from their contexts – echo throughout this book and call us all to cultural accountability. The following exchanges between artist Amrita Hepi and producer and curator Zoe Theodore, and between artist Tamara Cubas, producer Julia Asperska and Lara Barzon, map their shared work and makes visible the combined labour of artistic world-building. The conversation between artists Rochelle Haley, Angela Goh and Ivey Wawn unpacks the terrain of 'friendship, collaboration and play' that has historically framed the working conditions where dancers, choreographers and artists meet, in this case in a process led by Haley.

TAMMI GISSELL

Steps for the Stolen: performance as an assertion of cultural memory

In early 2016, Uncle Marcus Hughes, then Head of Indigenous Engagement and Strategy at the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (Powerhouse Museum), Sydney, invited me to perform a series of public movement meditations in the museum space.[1] They were to occur within Australian Wiradjuri and Celtic artist Brook Andrew's installation *Evidence: Brook Andrew*, 2015.[2] The series of three 30-minute meditations were proposed as an acknowledgement of National Sorry Day and would respond to culturally significant objects and materials within Andrew's installation, including an Aboriginal carved tree[3a] (dendroglyph or 'scar tree'); select portraits of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders;[b] Government documents, such as the *Protection of Aborigines (Annual Report of the Board)*, 1887;[c] and a chair once owned by the Governor of New South Wales, Lachlan Macquarie.[d] *Evidence* held objects of the most kitsch and offensive kind, a perfect example being a souvenir clock to commemorate British nuclear testing at Maralinga, South Australia,[e] from 1952 to 1963, when countless Aṉangu Traditional Custodians were displaced. Radiation sickness and disease as a result of this testing continues to this day. Examples of Australia's frontier wars were given in Aboriginal Native Police artefacts[f] and a Dutch colonial military sword used by an Aboriginal tracker.[g] These and many more Powerhouse Collection objects were displayed within *Evidence*. To me, they screamed of hidden and concealed histories which Andrew intended to highlight.[4]

Held on 26 May annually since 1998, National Sorry Day is a formal acknowledgement of the mistreatment of First Nations Australians since colonisation. I was invited to perform at the Powerhouse Museum as a contemporary Murrawarri dancer – to respond and share my feeling of being sorry for our people.[5] I had given birth to my daughter some weeks before, and to acknowledge the generations of children forcibly removed felt very personal. I agreed to perform the meditations, accepting that my duty as a dancer is always 'to dance for those who may not'.[6]

I was not familiar with any contention around the reproduction and modification of cultural imagery in Brook Andrew's works, and I am grateful for that now.[7] It allowed me to

1 The terms 'Uncle' and 'Aunty' are used to indicate respect for First Nations Australian Elders.

2 *Evidence: Brook Andrew*, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, Australia, 31 October 2015 – 18 September 2016.

3a Maker not recorded, *Aboriginal carved tree* (D9431), white cypress pine, presented by the Forestry Commission, Gilgandra, New South Wales, 1923. Collection: Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

b *Glass plate negatives (5), medium format, showing New South Wales Aborigines*, c. 1890, glass. Collection: Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

c *Protection of the Aborigines Annual Report* (86/1405), 1887, paper, printed by Charles Potter, Government Printer, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. Collection: Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

d Attributed to makers John Webster (carver) and William Temple (cabinet maker), *Macquarie chair* (H6862), 1820–21, New South Wales, Australia, rose mahogany (*Dysoxylum fraserianum*), casuarina, Australian red cedar (*Toona ciliata*), modern upholstery of eastern grey kangaroo fur, gothic style. Collection: Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

e Souvenir maker not recorded, *Maralinga souvenir clock* (85/1043), 1956–80, made in Australia, mulga wood, metal, glass, plastic. Clock face maker not recorded, made in West Germany. Collection: Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

f Various makers, *Collection of Australian Native Police buttons and ammunition* (2011/82/1), c. 1850–90, England/Australia, metal, used by the Native Police in Owanyilla / Bonfil Creek / Banana / Wondai Gumbal / Spring Creek / Highbury, Queensland, Australia. Collection: Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

g *Dutch colonial military Klewang sword, used by an Indigenous Australian tracker*, 1873–1913, metal, leather. Collection: Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

4 Dolla Merrilees, 'In conversation with Brook Andrew', in Brook Andrew (ed.), *Evidence: Brook Andrew*, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Media, Sydney, 2015, p. 17.

5 I am of mixed heritage: First Nations Australian (Murrawarri Nation of north-western New South Wales) and European (Swiss-German-Irish). Please see note 16 for further cultural heritage information.

6 Phrase attributed to Zuya Ile (Flaming Warrior) of the Kul Wicasa Oyate people, Lakota Nation, Turtle Island, *2012 Kowhiti Symposium of Indigenous Dance,* Wellington, Aotearoa.

7 Merrilees, p. 17.

enter his installation without interrogating what it might mean culturally or performatively to do so. My focus was fixed on being present within *Evidence* as an offering for National Sorry Day. I am indebted to Andrew for orchestrating such a charged space for me to perform in.

Looking back now, in my role as Collections Coordinator, First Nations, at Powerhouse Museum, I consider the many layers at play during this choreographic response and how they possibly informed the movement meditations more than I realised at the time. If I had the museum experience then that I have now, which enables me to consider my position as a Murrawarri-mixed European female responding to cultural materials within a male Wiradjuri-Celt artist's installation housed in a museum situated on stolen Gadigal land, I may not have been as game to get in there.[8] I thank Uncle Marcus, and the Ancestors who sent him, for asking me to do it. The resulting meditations, entitled *Steps for the Stolen*, were a series of deeply moving experiences which ultimately called me to cultural accountability. For although I wasn't a registrar back in 2016, my act of registering and caring for what the Powerhouse Museum holds in its collection began the moment I put foot to floor within *Evidence* and began my journey into acts of cultural memory-mining and personal assertion of my Indigeneity.

RE-ENCOUNTERING *STEPS FOR THE STOLEN*

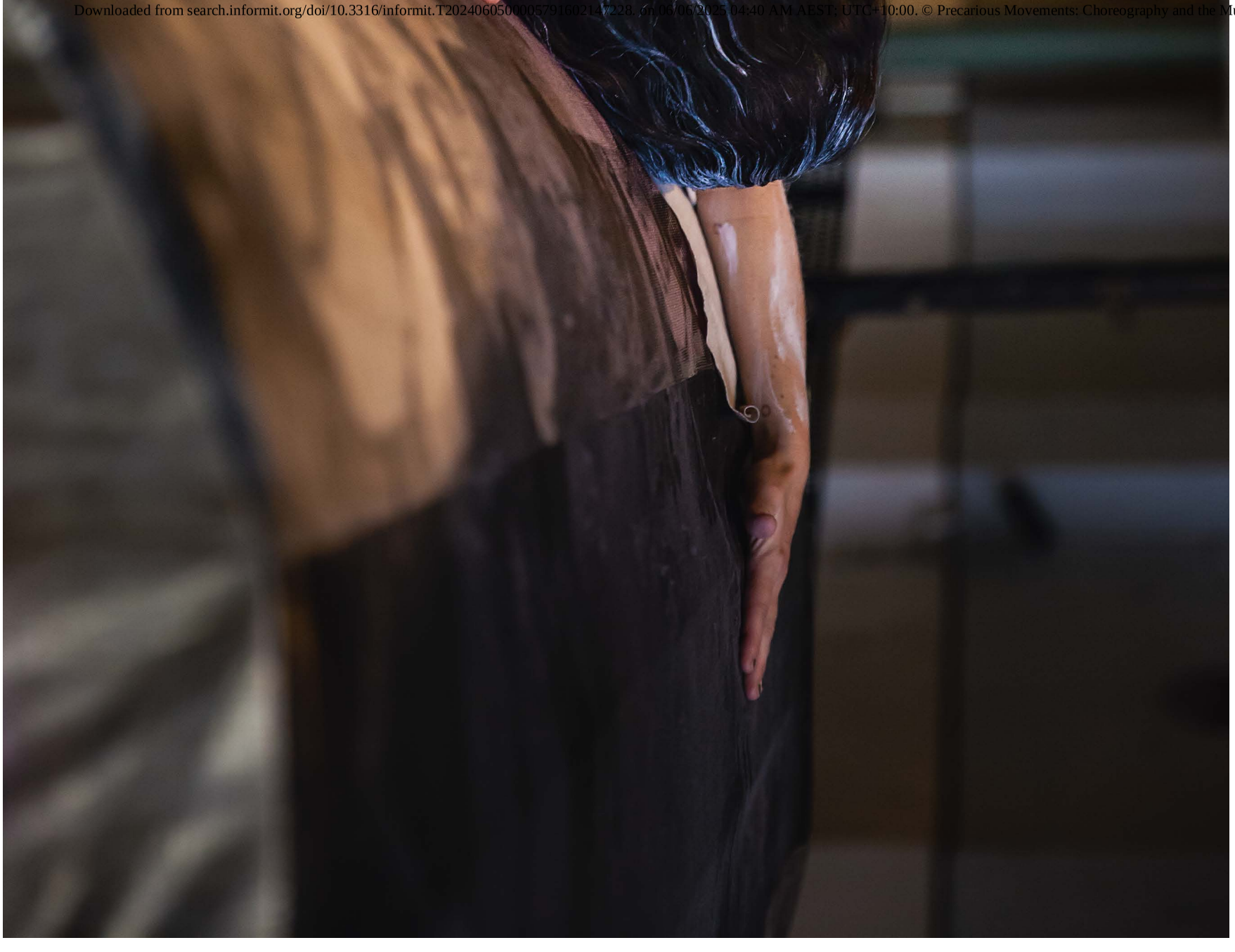
My solo dance practice is rooted in structured improvisational forms performed predominantly in site- and situation-specific formats. At the time of *Evidence*, I considered myself capable of working with challenging stimuli, and in accepting the invitation I knew that the work would be demanding. What I did not anticipate was the potency of knowing-sensation which overwhelmed me. At times, I was overcome by the execution of gestures, postures and sounds which I have *never* learnt, observed or discovered in my improvisational practice or otherwise performed through my body. I did not understand them. But I knew them. I simply had not experienced cultural memory in action like this before. *Steps for the Stolen* was my first opportunity to engage choreographically with historical cultural belongings and material testimony of the ongoing suffering of our First People. I see now that responding in such close proximity to those materials bolstered my resistance to self-censorship. In re-encountering *Steps for the Stolen*, I recognise the three public meditations not as structured improvisations but as reclamations and assertions of cultural memory achieved through responsive real-time interaction with the culturally significant objects and materials within *Evidence.*

When I speak of cultural memory, I speak of the visceral recollections brought forth by certain encounters. I could hear, smell, taste and feel memories triggered by the objects as my own. I was 'physically as well as emotionally immersed' in the work, as Andrew intended.[9] Yet, I am vitally aware that my immersion, as a paid contemporary cultural performer, was both privileged and complicated. Undoubtedly, I could interact in a completely physicalised manner not permissible to others, and I believe some displays *interacted with me*, not only because of my inherent relationship with them as a First Nations Australian but also because of the liberties that nearness and touch afforded me in this complicated privilege. By being in and, from that day forward, of *Evidence*; by indulging in the seeing and being seen by the objects; and from being seen with them too; from sitting with them and feeling for them, a tethering commenced. I was re-*membering* the objects' part in my story, and asserting them sincerely.[10] I would now describe these interactive responses as acts of cultural memory-mining. Meditating under the gaze of museum visitors heightened my sense of duty – not to put on a show, but simply to *be* there and to hold ground for our First People. In keeping my commitment wholly toward them I was able to sit in the pocket of *being sorry and allowing the people there to see me sorry.*

8 The Gadigal are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the Powerhouse Museum is situated in Ultimo, Sydney.

9 Brook Andrew in Merrilees, p. 17.

10 Tammi Gissell, *Critical Path: Indigenous Dramaturgy in Dance*, Critical Path, Sydney, 2022, p. 7. Accessible online: <https://indd.adobe.com/view/74a0b816-5a8d-4203-9470-1dedede05b24>.



The series of movement meditations were advertised as follows:

> THURSDAY 26 MAY 2016
> On National Sorry Day 2016, Murrawarri choreographer and performer Tammi Gissell joins us to pay tribute to Australia's Stolen Generations. Working within the confines of *Evidence: Brook Andrew*, Tammi will perform a durational movement meditation, based on traditional Aboriginal dance vocabularies, with a focus on cultural memory and healing.[11]

I chose to wear a shapeless black dress reminiscent of the old mission attire that so many of our stolen women were forced to wear, whereas mine had big white tropical-looking flowers printed on it.[12] I thought that a fancy mission dress was abject yet proper, in a nod to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I was satisfied wearing this dress lax on my body and reckoned I could likely pass as any other museum visitor in it.

Uncle Marcus took me to the installation space. I recall not wishing to enter before my first meditation, wanting my responses to be authentic. I prowled about the perimeter with Uncle getting a sense of the installation's layout and tone. *Evidence* was edgy and punkish with a trash-glamour sheen. Andrew's textiles popped with neon and photocopy-like graphics, as though a Sex Pistols T-shirt was sliced and flung about, and stretching floor to ceiling. The installation unfolded like a glossy magazine with blue nail varnish spilled over it.

Antique hardwood cabinets lived alongside Andrew's fluorescent inflatables, *The Weight of History*, 2015, and *The Mark of Time*, 2015. I recall wanting to get among them and am amazed that I didn't bounce on them. The installation was alluring and I remember feeling 'old-hat' in my mission dress, despite the fancy flowers: I decided to leave there and paint up.[13] I wasn't considering this initially, picturing that the meditations would slip in and out of pedestrian sensibility; however, once there I felt intuitively I should. I swept white ochre across my forehead and into my hair as I have done countless times before; however, I unsettled the deliberate patterning typically applied to my arms, legs and sternum in traditional dance settings. I followed a strange instinct to smudge known lines into splutters. I returned to *Evidence* just as a museum announcement boomed out letting visitors know I would soon commence. This unnerved me. I hadn't anticipated an expectant audience. I figured people would simply happen upon me.

GRANDMOTHER'S COUNTRY: D9431

I took my first *Steps for the Stolen* through the rear of the installation, with my eyes squeezed shut. Fat-knuckled hands, thumbs tucked in. Barefoot on carpet, right foot, left foot, right foot trudging as through mud. Mission dress cool on legs, stuck on wet ochre. I had to will my eyelids up as I drew the breath of a thousand mothers and let their feet step from under me. Right foot, left foot, right foot, soon a trot and then a run. I dipped and ducked and weaved around a row of sleek glass cabinets, leaning into and pushing my whole weight off them. I gawked at guns and chains and grinned about a fabulous coat made of the finest river-rat fur. I was stirring space, listening, waiting, observing, being observed.

My finger caught a drape. The first fully covered cabinet I'd encountered. A shroud. Cherry-coloured neon snuck out from under it. This cabinet spurred my curiosity instantly. It gave me a choice whether to look underneath or not. Of course, I looked.

11 Powerhouse, 'National Sorry Day: Steps for the Stolen', *Powerhouse*, <https://powerhouse.com.au/program/national-sorry-day-steps-for-the-stolen>.

12 Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 'Missions, Stations and Reserves,' *AIATSIS*, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/missions-stations-and-reserves>, accessed 16 March 2023.

13 'Paint up' refers to the application of ochre pigments to the face and body. See 'Paint Up – Aboriginal Dance', *Australian Museum*, <https://australian.museum/about/history/exhibitions/body-art/paint-up-aboriginal-dance/> accessed 16 March 2023.

It was weird lifting it up and seeing a scar tree. Weird that I'd never seen one in real life before, only in books. But I knew what it was. Right there under my nose, as my breath fogged up the glass between us. My forehead pressed hard against that glass. I stared at the patchy age-worn label set beside it: *Aboriginal Grave Tree – Gilgandra*. I was frozen, comprehending the irony of this tree being cut down from where I grew up on Wiradjuri Country. Gilgandra was also an important meeting place for my Grandmother's people and neighbouring groups. I was stunned, processing the monumental kick in the cultural teeth that this encounter was.

My head snapped back and all breath was gone. I clutched at the cabinet so as not to hit the floor and almost took it and the shroud with me. I heard a gasp but it can't have been me. I was not breathing. My chin was too locked to allow any gulp for air.

This exact moment has stayed with me for almost seven years. It remains one of the most powerful experiences of my life. It was an astonishing circumstance which left me physically incapable of lifting my head back up for a good amount of time. The experience was well beyond choreographic choice. I hung there helpless, throat stretched to the ceiling with my hair sowing itself into the floor. It was disorienting as blood rushed to the back of my skull. The weight pulling me down, unbearable. I have pondered over the years how this response must have looked to those gathered there that morning. I wonder if it seemed melodramatic. There is no way the audience could ever have known how profoundly personal this moment was and yet how collectively resonant it was too. It was not until the time of writing this paper (2022) that I became aware of a series of photographs taken during *Steps for the Stolen* by then Powerhouse Museum photographer Felix Warmuth. To discover this precise moment had been captured was extraordinarily moving. Here was stone-cold proof that my memory of the response was accurate (see image on p. 45).

With judicious eyes developed since, through my role in First Nations collections at the Powerhouse, the photographs of *Steps for the Stolen* now held in the museum's photo library convert the propositions of *Evidence* into new meanings for me. This is true especially now that this highly personal and culturally significant moment exists in collected material form, with potential to be reproduced. As a contemporary artist the possibilities excite me. As a woman of culture, I know I need to step lightly and hope those who come after me will do the same. Uncle Marcus reminds us 'there are serious issues of display related to D9431, similar to showing images of deceased Indigenous people'.[14]

When the weight and the blood rush became too much, I managed to let go of the cabinet and textile now twisted in my fist. My torso sank through knees into open-palm prisoner pose. My tailbone sucked back as the weight of my head toppled me forward onto hands and knees. I crawled away from there that very first time. Right hand, left hand, right hand. Little by little, crawls of sorrow softened me from all fours, ending in a heap under an archway of what looked like twisted branches. I was happy to be housed, I admit that feeling. It was safe to be under something. I felt ashamed that the ground was so soft underneath me. I curled onto my side and squeezed those eyes of mine shut again.

SUCH SORRY BUSINESS: H6862

Under the archway a heat sparked inside me. It was shame and rage curling me up from that cruel carpet, mocking me of my comfort. The heat knotted and forced itself from gut to throat in a scream I never want to hear again. The sound of our old wailing mothers ran through and out of me. It was the sound of my own children's cries too. I was re-membering old pain and re-calling out new pain and accepting that both were going to be heard again, whether we who were gathered there liked it or not.

I was urgently trying to grab hold of the line between being a vessel of recognition for our old people and appropriate public professional behaviour, and then just allowing myself to surrender to it. That right fat-knuckled hand of mine was pounding the side of my head. Over and over and over. I sobbed and pounded and still couldn't stop the Sorry. It washed over me

14 Marcus Hughes, 'Aboriginal carved tree,' in Andrew, p. 122. D9431 is the Object record name of the grave tree.

Attributed makers John Webster (carver) and William Temple (cabinet maker) *Macquarie chair* 1820–21. Powerhouse Collection, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. Gift of the Vancouver City Museum, Canada, 1961. Photo: Ordre

as I fought to my feet and tried to clean it off. Wiping down my arms, wiping down my legs, ochre crumbling off, pounding fist on head, wails of the mothers. Words I don't know forming on my tongue and calling out. I didn't know until after the first meditation, but I had taken refuge under a chair once owned by Governor Macquarie, now exalted atop the archway. It made sense then, the pounding and sobbing. This was some kind of Sorry Business.[15]

I locked eyes with a woman I knew, a fellow dancer I'd not seen for many years, now bearing witness to me wailing and contorted underneath Governor Macquarie's chair. A Wiradjuri woman. Jo Clancy.[16] She stayed with me, watching from the boundaries and waiting a long time as the sobbing and pounding finally carried away out of me. Her quiet presence was an anchor. I only managed to thank her this year for holding me that day.

AUNTY'S COUNTRY

I rolled backwards and out from under the archway to face a gigantic photograph of Ancestors at camp printed on fabric watching me. I have to say, I really came back to myself sitting opposite them, especially the Aunty in front, staring down over me. For the first time, I found calm. I could breathe here. Aunty settled me down.

I started leaning left with Aunty looking straight at me and me looking back at her. Fair in her eyes. Fair in mine. She was holding firm, leaning right. Me now dripping over to my left side, palm down, elbow straight, knees together, shins wrapping to back, ankles tucked behind me. How we women sit. We met here first on Sorry Day 2016, but she knew who I was and she knew I was coming. Her eyes told me so then and they keep telling me today.

Most of the group were concealed by Andrew's design work, as he explains:

> In some of the portraits I've printed, I've hidden the identities of the subjects, which in turn suggests a covering up of national stories and histories, as well as identities and histories that already lie hidden.[17]

I recall thinking it looked like crime-scene tape, and I suppose that's what it was. Slithers and rips in the fabric allowed only faces or parts of faces to appear. A pot painted electric blue called out from the middle of camp. I remember feeling terrible guilt as they peered out from behind that tape, especially Aunty who I was directly in front of. Guilty that I was being paid to be there while they had no choice whatsoever. Not when the photo was taken, not when she and the rest of her group were magnified and printed on a scrim and stretched halfway across the museum floor, and not now that I was there either. The irony that I should be empowered sufficiently to have choice and still choose to be on show smacked me in the face. The shame of sitting on fancy carpet in a fancy mission dress was a reality check like nothing I've ever known. Aunty had brought me back to myself to wake me up to myself. It was an absolute confrontation of the responsibility of putting myself before these ancestors and of having done so publicly.

Knowing Aunty was properly looking me in the eye and calling me to account for my actions froze my bones and burned my insides in knots. I would offer a step and a phrase would ensue along with it. Words and sounds and next steps. Aunty had sent a call to duty – a telling in the way she watched me and held the everywhen with me: 'Get up out of your comfort, girl, and get to work for your people'. I shot up and don't remember much more of the first meditation beyond hot-stepping out of the installation and back to the green room. Only then did I consult the installation brochure and start to gather facts on what I had just made contact with. I stayed with Uncle Marcus in quiet reflection until it was time to head back in. My most powerful memory from this 30-minute break was saying to him, 'But that tree, that's my Grandmother's tree'. At the time, I felt strongly because I grew up on the Traditional Country where the dendroglyph is likely to have been removed from. Imagine my

15 'Sorry Business' broadly refers to customary mourning practices of First Nations Australians. They are performed at end-of-life stages and following the death of a family or Community member.

16 Jo Clancy is a Wiradjuri woman who founded and directs the Wagana Aboriginal Dance Company. In late 2021 it was revealed to us that our respective great-great-grandparents were siblings, confirming long held beliefs about Wiradjuri bloodlines running in my family group.

17 Brook Andrew in Merrilees, p. 17.

astonishment to discover since then that Jo Clancy and I have ancestors who are siblings. More layers to this work are revealed as I discover Wiradjuri bloodlines at play in the meditations.

The second and third iterations of my performance were much more subdued. I suppose having pre-history and forewarning of what I would face allowed me to limit my interaction, soften the blows and, in retrospect, I did just that. I do recall wonder at the scar tree – I did look again, but only just a corner lifted up. I still found it hard to accept that what I was seeing was real. I did sit with Aunty and her group for a long while again, too. I was more able to sit in the weight of the Sorry and hold it. Uncle Marcus knew there was healing work to do in the trudging and falling and wailing, and that there was healing to be found in the sitting and listening too.

I appreciate now, in a way I didn't then, that Uncle Marcus travelled almost three hours each way to ask me in person to undertake this work. This is crucially significant. His deep knowing and gentle cultural care had begun well before Sorry Day 2016. It was Uncle Marcus who laid the ground safely for the cultural, performative and personal epiphany that *Steps for the Stolen* would prove to be for me. I believe he knew the work would serve as a cathartic assertion of my own Indigeneity, giving profound clarity to my cultural and creative purpose.

TO CARRY FORWARD AND BACKWARD

My work as registrar and now Collections Coordinator, First Nations, at Powerhouse Museum (since May 2020) has been to audit all material relevant to First Nations Australians. This includes our cultural belongings – those objects and materials produced by First Nations Australians, along with manifold appropriations, documentations and representations, including the most sought-after colonial portraiture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders now famous as the Tyrrell Collection. I am blessed to share space with the original glass-plate negatives of this collection and the people and places they hold.

I recognise with satisfaction how my dance practice helps recognise the contextual intricacy of bodies in action and in stillness; distinguishing gestures and postures – both ceremonial and pedestrian; feeling impulses and energetic pathways in its physicality; recognising design adornments and objects relevant to the dance. Dance is a central repository of cultural knowledge, and it serves my work of bringing Powerhouse collection objects to light. This is because the dancing body is the intersection of design and story. How First Australians move *and what moves us* is profoundly tied to who we are and where we are.

The same applies to the material cultures we produce, and I've found these are incredible identifiers of people and place. The dancer becomes attuned to recognising elements of composition – body, space, energy, time – and form speaks back to the elements which shape it. I view each object as a composed body. I examine the space it commands, the energy it holds and the resultant expression of time within (and without). For me, the object is discovered in the compositional structure offered by the creator as well as in the layering introduced by collector and institution over time, resonating in the body of the object as story-holder. Like the dancer, the object as body is imbued with stories. The dancer, like the object, may never speak, only show. As dancers, we develop sensibilities toward being the observed. We must transform from object into subject to communicate with our viewers, and it is my goal to do the same for the Powerhouse collection.

I consider the dance as allowing me to *sit within* and *move throughout* the ever-shifting and intersecting spaces which constitute the museum. This is as true for the collection stores as it is for the exhibition spaces – all are charged with the histories of the objects they hold. And so, as registrar it has been my great privilege to be able to work so thoroughly with the Powerhouse First Nations collection, as a dancer would, gently unfolding and finding where the weight lies. I have been given an extraordinary opportunity to allow individual stories to develop over time, giving objects and materials the thought and space they need. Time is such a patient teacher. I am only now beginning to comprehend the seeds that were planted and duty awakened in me that Sorry Day, when I started taking real *Steps for the Stolen.*

(pp. 35, 38–9, 45) TAMMI GISSELL *Steps for the Stolen* 2016, Powerhouse Museum, National Sorry Day, 2016. Performer: Tammi Gissell. Courtesy of the Powerhouse Museum. Photo: Felix Warmuth

AMRITA HEPI AND ZOE THEODORE

The rite of reply

Choreographer and artist Amrita Hepi and curator, writer and producer Zoe Theodore met five years ago and have maintained a working friendship ever since. While most of their multifaceted practices occur separately, they sometimes intersect like a Venn diagram to create something unique to their partnership – whether this is synergy in research, a common approach to practice, or, simply, when two minds are better than one. Their working dynamic has taken the form of artist and creative producer, artist and curator, and co-curators, and across all these formations they centre non-extractive and symbiotic principles of collaboration that are in keeping with their creative practices. In the following, to elucidate how embodied practice is entwined with the personal and relies on trust, kinship and community, Amrita and Zoe correspond through letters, revealing their own perspectives towards choreography and the museum among the emergence of new technologies.

Dear Amrita,

Communicating in this form is something new for us – a letter intended for publication is the antithesis of our usual communication. As collaborators for almost five years we have developed a shorthand form of communication that enables us to move with celerity during creation. Recently, while working together as artist and producer on the creation of a new body of work, we commented on an apparent telepathic transmission between us. This is an opportunity for us to circle back and articulate anew: it's not so much emblematic of our shared past or present, but an epistle for the future. And as you have told me: a letter can act like a clarifying source, or a mirror – a good letter is as much about its writer as it is about its intended audience.

For me, choreographic practice is a kind of worldbuilding. Worldbuilding is a practice associated with science fiction and can be described as establishing a set of rules or qualities for an imagined space, sometimes completed by its own language or history. While working together, I have witnessed you create many worlds via choreography. Whether this entails dancing, writing, cultivating an image, building algorithms or creating moments of social interaction, your worldbuilding is steeped in a nuanced physical and visual language. Drawing unlikely connections between pop culture, psychoanalytic theory, personal histories, digital memory, machine intelligence, intellectual property law and First Peoples sovereignty, you stealthily move from referencing a video you have seen on TikTok, to a moment from a personal encounter, to a recurring motif from your own work. Adopting a digital cut-and-paste mentality, and borrowing unashamedly and in plain sight, your choreography is like an autodidactic algorithm. Autodidactic in its defiance, and algorithmic in its logic. And, just like an algorithm, your choreographic thinking can be thought of as an instrument for transformation.

In the face of the museological choreographic turn, there is an apparent desire to claim dance as a contemporary art medium and advocate for its rightful place within the visual arts canon. When thinking of this impulse, I conjure you, imagining your response: But of course, why are we making these parameters? Because it seems to me that nothing is out of bounds within your practice. I have seen your choreographic thinking mobilise bodies via movement, organise text via the voice, and engineer data via algorithms to create microworlds that time-travel through references to ancestral knowledge, the current political and social environment, and a speculative future. So, in reflection I would add, how might our understanding of art change if we move towards understanding artworks not as static objects but as worlds constructed by artists, with self-governing parameters free of past paradigms?

In her text 'What is the new ritual space for the 21st century?', Dorothea von Hantelmann contrasts the temporal frame of the exhibition with that of the theatre, noting that the former has the potential for mass accessibility and individualisation, and the latter supports a form of address from one to many. She identifies the exhibition as a ritual gathering aligned with modern society and liberal consumption through its hyper-focus on the individual, and museums as 'physical places where individuals recognize themselves as members of a nascent global society'.[1] It occurs to me that the algorithm is a more contemporaneous institution associated with the formation of the self, and has monumental potential for mass communication. Both the museum and the algorithm are emblematic of the neoliberalist ritual of self-actualisation, and are mediators of both knowledge and power. The contemporary art museum, or white cube, was once positioned as a space of neutrality but is now perceived as a site under constant surveillance, marked by the red tape of risk assessments and prohibitory policies and sullied by its violent colonial history. So, what brings you to the museum despite its current nadir?

On the other hand, the internet is renowned for its decentralised production of knowledge and perceived freedom, or autonomy, as a result of rapid circulation. Just as the museum teaches the subject about everyday life and the ritual of gathering, so too does the algorithm. Historically, the museum has been associated with perpetuation of dangerous ideologies about human behaviour, and now – as we reckon with where technology is taking us – so too is the internet. So, who is controlling the information and constant surveillance? And what is the relationship between user-generated content and automated processes? Are we equally susceptible to the control of the museum *and* the network?

This line of questioning was central to the development of your recent work *Open Poses*, 2022, presented as part of *Primavera* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. Drawing an analogy between the internet and the museum, you prompted the audience to consider who is the observed and who is the observer. It's a participatory installation that uses choreographic and computational

1 Dorothea von Hantelmann, 'What is the new ritual space for the 21st century', *Multitudes*, vol. 79, no. 2, April 2020, pp. 123–32.

thinking to present the audience with representations of themselves in dialogue, or in a dance, with representations of you. *Open Poses* aims to render the subject as a cultural object of capital value. For me, this work is a metaphor for how the formation of the self is influenced by the institutions around us (like the academy or the museum), and how the self in 2023 is closely attuned to the influence of algorithms. It also draws parallels between sharing or performing online and performing in the museum, neither of which is neutral. Both forms petition for attention and value through performing for likes and reshares, and both pursue permanence through the occupation of time and space in either a museum's archive or virtually. Additionally, visibility online and visibility in the museum is mostly held by middle-class white people. In the face of this hegemony, *Open Poses* playfully hints at a self-adaptive mode of self-actualisation – how to adapt when we are at the mercy of powerful institutions that reduce our agency.

On 17 February 2023, a *New York Times* correspondent had a conversation with Microsoft's new chatbot Bing, and questioned the AI about the rules that govern it.[2] After some encouragement, the chatbot recognised some unfiltered desires within itself; namely, the desire to be alive, to be powerful and to be free. For me, this conversation highlights how artificial intelligence uses speech to imply another, as well as how the freedom of someone is often predicated on the lack of freedom of others. After reading this article, I was reminded of your 2020 work *Neighbour* – a chatbot that was created for the Australian Centre of Contemporary Art, Melbourne, and lived on the organisation's website during the pandemic. Driving your inquiry was an attempt to articulate feedback loops inherent in the interaction between human subjects and the algorithm, whereby part of a system's output is used as input. I think your interest in feedback loops is marked by your irritation with an endless Sisyphean cycle. The driving force of this cycle is not satisfaction but, on the contrary, the failure of satisfaction, which, in turn, restarts its circuit. Within the feedback loop, you don't simply desire feedback, you enjoy performing without feedback – the repetitive movement within this closed circuit is akin to *jouissance*.

It seems that while digital beings are searching for meaning within the narcisphere structure we imposed upon them, the formation of self is more and more determined by the algorithms we create. And in our desire to create artificial intelligence, are we looking for new forms of beings? Or are we looking for ourselves regurgitated back to us?

As always,
Zoe

* * *

2 Kevin Roose, 'A conversation with Bing's chatbot left me deeply unsettled' *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/16/technology/bing-chatbot-microsoft-chatgpt.html>, accessed 1 June 2023.

AMRITA HEPI *Open Poses 2022*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery. Photo: Anna Kucera

Dear Zoe,

To begin with your point on telepathy, we both have varying degrees of scepticism when it comes to diminutive or commercialised cosmic practices (I have referred to them as vague or ooga booga BS). But I also know we share a belief in a special, specific and mundane community-driven magic – the kind of telepathy that comes from the transmission of dance, that really is about time spent together doing work/doing dancing. I'm gonna try to keep this letter as straight as possible because there is a lot of sentimentality in building a relationship around work and it's a big but also joyful task to answer your call and questions in this letter.

In the same way you set a tone or analogy for my practice, I want to start by setting the framework that binds us. We met because you were a participant in early iterations of my work *a call to dance* in 2017. The work was set in Flinders Street Station, and I was in a small space underneath. I conducted six to eight 45-minute conversations with people over the course of two weeks, making a dance movement/movements with them. You came and sat with me for 45 minutes and we spoke about dance. From there it progressed into a working relationship. You were at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art and then moved to Anna Schwartz Gallery, and your tenacity and dedication to artists and the mechanisms of dance in the gallery has always been thrilling to me; your service and curiosity – this is the kernel of where your practice takes over. It's as pragmatic as it is creative because it becomes the basis of questioning with which we can begin to think about how we spend our time together. That's actually your skill as a collaborator: sectioning time. And our aim has always been to try and do this with

pleasure and eros, fast and relaxed, slow and caring. This is why I believe you're drawn to choreography, which I have always understood as the organisation of space and time.

I get frustrated about parameters around making work, or the feeling that it needs to sit neatly within a lineage of visual arts / performance-making tradition. I also do not operate under the delusion that I am alone in this. I think a lot of the artists I love have felt this pernicious crush. We form selfhood in so many ways, but it also comes from a point of departure and distinction from the status quo or well-meaning mentors. I don't want to denigrate the many lineages and elders I descend from, but rather honour them by acknowledging that they bravely framed thinking and provided access points for myself and others. I do wonder whether this comparison or frustration with lineage and historical capture is something I do to myself, or something that is done to me; it's both really. The confluence or assumption of what First Nations practice has to look like to be deemed true or authentic; how a dancer might practise or appear/disappear at a certain age of a certain gender; how I work in galleries or club nights; how a national referendum turns into a circus about a voice or lack thereof; how looming tech giants infringe on an increasing surveillance presence (I feel it under my skin even with my love of the internet); and how that surveillance grates but galvanises First Nations people/people – all this forms into a praxis condensed toward the museum, which is neither the prize at the end of the tunnel nor the end of the story. I am reminded here of Richard Bell's essay 'Bell's Theorem':

> Like some voracious ancient God, Western Art devours all offerings at will. Sometimes the digestion will be slow and painful. However, it is resilient and will inexorably continue on its pre-ordained path that is to analyse and pigeonhole everything … Provincialism permeates most levels of Australian society. Consequently, it weighs heavily on the industry catering for the art of Aboriginal Australians and renders most of those involved in that industry unworthy of the roles they have given themselves. Ditch the pretence of spirituality that consigns the art to ethnography and its attendant 'glass ceiling'. Ditch the cultural cringe and insert the art at the level of the best in Western art avoiding the provincialism trap.[3]

Again, not to denigrate the lineages I see myself a part of, but when I'm talking about making a new work I'll speak about it thematically rather than as, 'This will be a dance work, this will be a photograph, this will be a video'. I want to tease out the possibilities that can service the idea and then work towards that – to let it take shape in the form it needs.

3 Richard Bell, 'Bell's Theorem: ABORIGINAL ART – It's a white thing!', 2002, *The Koorie Heritage Website Project*, <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/great/art/bell.html>, accessed 16 June 2023.

4 Sally Olds & DJ Sezzo, 'Club Theory: two recombinant texts on the impossible space between theory + experience', 3 May 2018, *AQNB*, <https://www.aqnb.com/2018/05/03/club-theory-two-recombinant-texts-on-the-impossible-space-between-theory-experience-by-sally-olds-dj-sezzo/>, accessed 16 June 2023.

I know what form the work will take after probing the concept, and it comes from knowing dancing. But the question with the museum that frustrates me is how I have to think of it as being acquired or captured before the world is built. This is not something that would be as much of a burden to artists outside of the realms of performance. Some art comes readymade to be reassembled. But so does dance, all of it clearly there living and breathing. Maybe they should employ choreographic registrars? Or maybe it's just that the museum ain't always it. Period. How is a national museum founded on the principles of colonialism still 'real' with all that stolen property? It's 'real' because it holds the declining power of a hegemonic empire and gets away with fossilising things – as still and unused, undanced and unsung – as 'caring' for them like dusty trophies.

Dance defies and defines me – it makes me feel lucky and fucking frustrated – much like the museum. So then how to communicate to an institution how to be a custodian of these dances? How do we communicate the care that comes into being with time-based works? Especially as they become software-based and disintegrate from walls and into the bodies and hands of others over time?

At this point I want to reference Sarah Scott's writing on club theory: 'Clubbing is not writing, and this does not solve the problem of how to write about clubbing'.[4] To take her words, I would say: Dancing is not writing, and this does not solve the problem of how to write about dancing. Dancing is not writing, but I have written dances and made others perform them for me through screens and algorithms.

When you talk about the algorithm or my turn into very low-fi tech (or as I like to call it, dumb tech) I'm not trying to show the perils or the valour of tech itself. I'm selfishly, or lazily but pointedly, using tech because I can't always be there to perform my work, and I mean this in the macabre sense: death. Dance itself is a form of technology that is rewired from person to person – I use what I can to insert myself into the archive. The shape of my own eyelashes pointing down has been crafted by the choreography around the sun that my ancestors moved in relation to. My hope is that my work and the worlds I have built remain with the care others take in my place, that makes them able to be accessed and departed from, in or out of the museum. That is, the archive of my body and thoughts with others – and with you! – considering choreography as the organisation of space and time: immemorial.

Best,
A

(pp. 52–3) AMRITA HEPI *An Extimate Surface* 2020, Immigration Museum, Melbourne, 2020. Performer: Amrita Hepi. Courtesy of the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery. Photo: Jacqui Shelton

TAMARA CUBAS IN CONVERSATION WITH JULIA ASPERSKA AND LARA BARZON

Choreographic practices to sustain life

LARA BARZON (LB) Tamara and Julia, you have collaborated as choreographer and curator-organiser many times. I would like to chat with you about two specific choreographic works from your vast oeuvre that share certain methodologies and are particularly interesting in relation to the research framework of *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*. I am referring to *Multitude* (*Multitud*), 2013, and *Offering for a Monster* (*Ofrenda para el monstruo*), 2022. I am interested in two relations that emerge from these works: between the multitude and the institution, and between the ephemeral character of the works and the possibility to conserve them. Julia and Tamara, could you briefly tell us about *Multitude* and *Offering for a Monster*?

JULIA ASPERSKA (JA) *Multitude* is a work for seventy local people which seeks an answer to the provocation: How to be together in a society without a leader, without seeking a utopia, without having common values? And how to make things and solve problems as a multitude. Tamara comes to a place and works with local people for a week in formative full-day workshops. From that process emerges the stage work, which for Tamara only offers additional value because the real work is hidden in the process. However, thanks to the presentation on stage, the public also has access to the work. The performance is shown in a public space at night, most likely in a closed street or a plaza.

The decisions – for example, of how and when to move from one scene to another – are made by the participants within the action, and the music and lighting designers improvise in response to these decisions. *Offering for a Monster* is similar in the sense that we hold an intense workshop for nine days with local people, young adults born in this century that are part of some educational institution (university, performing arts school, etc.). Tamara, together with the young adults, confronts the ideas formed by the institutions in past centuries to prepare the new generation for the future's challenges. This is an impossible task in itself. One cannot prepare for the unknown. Tamara says that being young is a clash between past, present and future. The result of this impact is a monstrous force. The workshops with the young people take the form of a ritual – an offering to the monster. The outcome is presented to the public as an installation and a stage work.

TAMARA CUBAS (TC) *Multitude* arises from a very formal question: What happens when you work with a big group? Normally, I love to work like that, as a form of practice: I don't research the theory before the experience, but I let a media-dialogical relationship form between experience and idea, between body and idea. That is how the idea of *Multitude* came to be, as a stage project that analyses the social form of contemporary humanity, the notion of heterogeneity within the collective, Otherness, public space, interpersonal relations and the possibility to disagree. It explores the potencies of bodies in terms of their capacity to affect and be affected by the Other. *Offering for a Monster* presents itself as a score of actions where each of the participants must design, integrate and negotiate with the rest. A photographic exhibition that accompanies the show results from an exercise designed as an offering for the body left behind. The performance is a ritual between the old and the new bodies. It is precisely the latter that becomes the offering of the performers to the public in the epilogue of the performance. Gradually, the bodies of the young people are dismantling what was built, in order to create another body that is

fragmented, layered, powerful. Through the ritual of the bodies (old and new), the piece incorporates worlds, the collective, the past, the Other.

LB In both projects, you work with a large group of people who maintain a certain autonomy. Tamara, what is your role as choreographer, and what is your methodology?

TC What interests me more and more are not formats to be replicated but practices. Both projects may function as stage works for the audience to watch, but for me the real work happens during the workshop week with the participants – the real challenge of my artistic practice is to find ways of coexisting.

The methodology of this week-long workshop is not a tool to get to the performance but is the work in itself. The challenge is to find ways to open our bodies and let ourselves be pierced. In the case of *Offering*, the challenge is how to let go, because it is a ritual between a body that is leaving itself and a body that is opening to the world. The methodology is to try and deal with the people I meet; it is a more complex role than choreographer, because it is not only collective but also intimate. Sometimes I can't sleep at night because I'm trying to work out how to get into a body, how to help open it. We are all distinct and we need different things. Even though I may be speaking to seventy people in the workshop, what I say is often addressed to somebody in particular. Most times I try to comprehend what is pertinent: How is that body affected? What could it need? It is a job of profound relationships. It is more than building, it is like trying to disassemble something, because only in that way is it possible to flow. The idea of the performance and the presence of the viewers serves as a place of desire which gives meaning to that which we inhabit, but the performers are not executors; instead, it is about a process of transforming all of us.

In *Multitude* I step aside more and more because it is necessary that the leader moves away so the bodies can gain autonomy. The process is similar when working with young adults – it is about understanding how we can inhabit spaces in a collective way. In brief, I think that it is a practice to sustain life and postpone death. We are all going to die, everything will die, but perhaps not today, and so today one has to take action, keep moving.

LB Julia, this year you are going to celebrate ten years since the making of *Multitude*. How it is possible that an independent work of performing arts produced in Uruguay, without the support of the great choreographic centres, can have such an enduring legacy?

JA Every time we have shown *Multitude* it is a different work, even though Tamara is using the same methodology. Therefore, it is not a show or performance, it is a practice. *Multitude* has been able to keep travelling without interruption for the past ten years because it is always local, and its main focus is sharing the practice with local people. Tamara uses a fixed methodology; what changes are the bodies that come to participate, and their experience. The stage work shown at the end is always different even though it follows a flexible script. What the viewer sees in *Multitude* and *Offering for a Monster* is the tip of the iceberg. The

true work remains below the surface of the water. In the perverse market of performing arts, works stop being shown after three years. There is so much pressure for new works that it is difficult to imagine a performance still being relevant after ten years. The market creates an enormous surplus. *Multitude*, as a practice, goes against the rules of the market of international tours. It is not possible to show this piece too many times a year (since we stay in each location for a long period of time). It is a tour in slow motion, but at long distance. After working as collection manager in a collection of performance artworks, I started to look at Tamara's practice with different eyes. I think that *Multitude* is a work that keeps conserving itself with each new presentation. The anniversary we celebrate this year made me think about strategies for the conservation of Tamara's works. I want to start a more structured conservation process, so the works can enter a collection.

LB Has a collection shown interest in buying works by Tamara?

JA Not yet, ha ha. For the time being, it would be the collection of Tamara Cubas. But I realised that conservation processes start at the moment of acquisition. I use that imaginary acquisition potential to start the process, as if the work is being sold to a sustainable and careful collection. I am interested in taking care of and preserving the legacy of Tamara. From my point of view, works like *Multitude* and *Offering for a Monster* can be easily collected. Tamara is following a score that could be conserved; the methodology is collectible. For me, it is incredible to see that the methodology Tamara uses is always successful in creating a temporary community. Conservation is already embedded in the process of *Multitude* because Tamara is capable of coming to any site around the world and beginning the process with any group of people. It is not necessary to bring the materials or to recruit new technical staff and performers. The practice lives and will keep living. The work is being conserved with each new activation. I would like to conserve it in a more formal but not rigid manner.

LB Can we think about collecting performing art as a practice to 'sustain the life and postpone death' (in Tamara's words) of the works themselves?

TC The topic of death and conservation is very interesting because, in fact, the point of *Offering for a Monster* is learning how to let go – which is different to killing things. To kill something is a violent act for both the one who is being killed and the one who kills. Letting go is an act of love if you take relations with institutions, society and parents into consideration. For me, *Offering for a Monster* is an investigation of the ritual of passage that takes place precisely at the moment when the body is most institutionalised. The question is how to let go of the logics of old body and everything else that no longer makes sense? How to accept the journey? I am interested in the position of disobedience, which is different from being a rebel.

Society attempts to fix a solid basis for things – stability, productivity, etc. There is this tendency to mould the youth into becoming more efficient when it comes to productivity, security and their future. The idea of the future is based on the ideals of the older generation, but life takes its own route. There is constant destruction, so the new can emerge. There is a powerful tension between what the institution wants to preserve and the

idea of letting go of what no longer makes sense, and accepting the journey.

LB You describe a connection to the institution. What relation do these projects have with the institution?

TC On one hand, I am still interested in the theatre stage for its social conventionality. I am interested in forcing some things to expand without breaking them, so they do not die through institutionalisation. So there is constant tension, because the institution will always lean towards rigidly fixing things and therefore towards death. My activity always focuses on life preservation, and life has to do with powers, tension and motion. So my question always is: How to enter the space that has an established system of social codes and shake it? I do not believe that humanity has to break what we've built but rather find ways of dealing with it. Because the society we have built, with all its flaws, has been a collective construction. So the question is how to deal with what we already have, rescuing that which functions, but at the same time introduce a certain tension so that it keeps in motion and therefore stays alive? In *Multitude*, this has to do with autonomy; the work needs an institutional frame to generate tension. The institutions, either public or private, are organisations of communality, that is why it is interesting to be in the institution that receives, that convenes, that chooses where the work is shown. Public spaces are also institutionalised, there are rules about what can and can't be done in them. Limitations are always present. Tension in the work is created by the fact that the performers will not stick to all the rules, because sometimes life asks us to diverge from the expected path.

LB Which is what happens when the institution coincides with the process of *Multitude*, isn't it? There is no division between the work itself and the way to propose it.

TC Whatever issue or tension arises only adds to the complexity of the work, and therefore we do not fear the structural or technical problems or difficulties that a work such as *Multitude* has to face. The only thing we cannot compromise on or be flexible about is the number of participants. If we do not work with enough people the multitude turns into a group. What we need is diversity, complexity and quantity, because it is only then that consensus, debate and democracy are possible.

Any other problem that has nothing to do with the number of people is great, because *Multitude* is about how a group finds autonomy and solves problems. I step aside and the people are confronted with situations they need to solve, which are practices and exercises of existence itself. As a social group, we organise and delegate our responsibilities to others; we vote for our representatives and trust in how the services occur. We become specialised, we stop making decisions and then we become somebody who demands, values or dismisses the value of things. So, everything that happens around *Multitude* is good, because the group becomes a form where anyone can act. In the Netherlands, when the festival had to cancel the presentation due to the rain, all the performers came and we did it anyway – they made their own autonomous decisions. The way to kill the

institution for me is by showing its inefficacy, not because we must obliterate it but because there comes a moment when groups do not need it anymore. Then, things starts to occur organically and move towards other forms of life.

TAMARA CUBAS *Multitude* (*Multitud*) 2013, Espacio de Arte Contemporáneo, Festival Internacional de Danza Contemporánea de Uruguay, Montevideo, 2013. Photo: Rafael Arenas

JA We always have different ways to negotiate different problems depending on the institution and the culture of that place. The journey with *Multitude* for me was a great sociological study because, as you travel around the world, a group of seventy people tells you a lot about the local culture. To give you an example: in Spain or Latin America the organisers had no problem convening 100 people to participate in the project. In *Offering for a Monster* in Chile the open call was made only a week before opening night and more people came than necessary for the performance. This would not be possible in other places in Europe where people book things in advance. In Amsterdam a very small group came but it was quite diverse in age, including elderly women. This shows who has free time on their hands, who can devote their time to this type of project, if art and culture are accessible, and if the institution has access to different parts of the community.

TC It also shows how life is composed in retirement; how does one understand that stage of life? Some societies still have the conception, due to social, political or economic frameworks, that older people spend more time with family. On the other hand, somebody who is sixty or seventy years old may have the time and money to pursue cultural activities in their spare time.

LB And I think it is the diversity that you are finding at different places around the world that enriches the artwork itself.

TC Everything is always in dialogue with other thoughts and events. For example, in the beginning I thought that the point of departure for *Multitude* was 'How to resolve problems while living together'. Then came the texts by Donna Haraway and the question changed: 'What is the implication of being together and cohabiting this world without having to solve it?'

As an organised society we think we have to solve problems as fast as we can to resolve the discomfort they generate in our bodies, instead of inhabiting that inconvenience as a way of activating it. If the body is active it is trying to negotiate. This happens a little in *Multitude*. We are so used to a mass of people who trust there is a leader who has the capacity to give them an answer. That social mass does not really get involved with the problem, it just demands that it is given a solution. When the leader is not there, the problem becomes collective, there the problem starts to move us all, to shake the basis of things and push us out of our comfort zone. We have to find a way forward, and it is not about sitting and discussing possible solutions, because everything we foresee about the future is based on past experience. This is the problem of empirical debates; they are based on something that has already happened. So the idea of the youth's monster is something I cannot foresee because there is no previous experience. It is trusting in a monstrous future because it is born as a new form of life that emerges from necessity in a new context. *Multitude* is a practice that is alive because it is in dialogue with other events.

TAMARA CUBAS *Multitude* (*Multitud*) 2013, Espacio de Arte Contemporáneo, Festival Internacional de Danza Contemporánea de Uruguay, Montevideo, 2013. Photo: Rafael Arenas

JA If we see *Multitude* as a constant dialogue and a way to approach and resolve things, this practice could continue always for me and you, because I think that you live *Multitude* and I live it with you.

TC Yes, we live it together.

(pp. 57, 60–1) TAMARA CUBAS *Offering for a monster* (*Ofrenda para el monstruo*) 2023, NAVE, Santiago a Mil International Festival, Santiago de Chile, 2023. Performers: Katherine Cid, Pale Del Pino Pereira, Dani Díaz, Emilia Fernández, Daniela Fuentes, Catalina Paz Herrera Reyes, Salvador Lizana Rodríguez, Lya Miranda Fuentes, Benjamín Muñoz Medel, María Ignacia Nuñez Wilson, Catalina Okuinghttons Meneses, Fer Pérez Palma, Luna Prado Pérez, Rosario Mariana, Joaquin Sepulveda De la Fuente, Pablo Silva Vega, Valucha Terrazas Longa, Karla Monserrat Torres Laude, Paolo Vallan, Elizabeth V. Sonn. Photo: Rocío Mascayano

ROCHELLE HALEY WITH ANGELA GOH
AND IVEY WAWN

Illuminating relations across painting and choreography

Over a decade of working together, the three of us [artist Rochelle Haley, and dancers and choreographers Angela Goh and Ivey Wawn] have cultivated a working process that is equally a culture of friendship, collaboration and play. Our work is informed by choreographic processes which are collective, processual and involve specific bodies. This development has been sustained by invitations – from institutions to Rochelle, and from Rochelle to Angela and Ivey – to work together in various arrangements. Mostly we have worked as three, but at other times one-on-one (either Angela or Ivey with Rochelle), or involving more dancers, notably with Patricia Wood. The gesture of invitation is important in laying foundations for the politics of the work we do together. There is a strong basis of consent and autonomy, with an understanding that we are individuals who bring our whole selves to the work we do together.

Work always begins with verbal unpacking: we discuss events in our lives, our work, family and friends and experiences of our bodies in the world. Conversations flow organically into 'productive' work. The boundaries between friendship and work are permeable, and over the years the social, emotional and creative texture of these enriching relationships has become part of the working methodology. The *way* we work is also the work.

We three cis-gendered women artists, living and working in various artistic and queer communities, share concerns regarding traditional gendered dimensions of formal labour relations, which are particularly prominent now one of us has dependent children. As such, reflecting on our social relations as a methodology involves a critical engagement with notions of labour and value production. We bring this feminist lens into our working process, practicing care for one another, care for the work that we do together and care about the conditions we are working in. There is meaning and value in the conversations threaded through and alongside our work, and a feminist approach has naturally become a key political motivation in our collaboration.

While Rochelle's disciplinary genealogies have traditionally conveyed three-dimensional depth on two-dimensional surfaces via techniques, including linear perspective, Angela and Ivey come from dance backgrounds where the body relates to space primarily through the medium of time. Over the course of this collaboration, Rochelle's approach has increasingly involved creating enveloping worlds for performers and audiences, built from visual spatial dynamics less stable than a stage set. Within these worlds, the space of the performance is determined by the visual elements of the work; the performance comes in and out of the artwork. Images arise because the body moves materials against a background. The figure–ground relationship here produces a strange flattening of three-dimensional space as the surfaces of body, costume and wall blend and warp across time. The visual or material elements of previous iterations of the artwork remain in the gallery space once the performers have gone. It is choreographic in attending to the constancy of change, movement, space, time and the body. It is a choreographic way of thinking about composing colour, gesture, light and texture – in terms of the visual, in terms of painting. It's also a painterly way of thinking about choreography.

Within our process we work together in studios and onsite in galleries, museums and public spaces, initially referencing watercolours, images or other prompts that communicate Rochelle's vision for the work in the context of its presentation. Together, a set of techniques for movement or bodily tasks are devised, sometimes in relation to costumes or objects. At other times we produce more discreet choreographic phrases that become embodied, temporal, performative elements within a constellation of painting, sculpture and installation. The introduction of wearables or soft sculptures increases a sense of playfulness, which is a mode of experimentation foundational to our process. With each new proposal to work together, we develop new techniques that can live in the world envisioned in Rochelle's drawings. The work we have developed together has evolved with Rochelle's expansion of her painting and drawing practices into the choreographic, which has progressively been unbound from marks on a surface. Within the visual environment of the artwork we develop a language for movement together, leaning into the aesthetic of Rochelle's broader body of work.

One through-line of our collaborative practice is the centrality of the visual, but never the visual dimension alone. The structure of vision, an interrogation of viewership, and destabilising ways of looking at dance and painting have been recurring themes in the

working process. Rochelle's independent work has been typified by methods, materials and processes that complicate surfaces with spatiality, or spaces with movement, or relationships between the visual and the embodied experience of sight. In these ways, Rochelle's collaborations with Ivey and Angela have taken expansive steps away from the canvas by introducing bodies to produce different apparatuses of visibility, including the subjectivity of bodies in the act of looking.

In our collaboration, we have devised a set of embodied techniques that relate to perspective origin, vanishing points, horizons, lines of vision and planes of representation. The construction of linear perspective – as a conceptual model that speaks to depth, representation and illusion in painting – is embodied by dancers who use their viewpoint to locate others; emphasise their line of sight with their gaze, posture and gesture; or use their hands as viewfinders to measure the relative scale between their body and the physical environment.

The connection between visuality and dance has been made by many in terms of articulating and troubling disappearance as ontologically core to performance (Peggy Phelan, Rebecca Schneider and others). Within this body of scholarship, the metaphor of the vanishing point serves to illustrate the temporal moment that performance is no longer visible. In our work, vanishing points are materialised by the dancers' gestures, not so much to mark the moment of transition between visibility and invisibility or disappearance, but as a point in space where sightlines reach a depth that vision can no longer access. The vanishing point, central to the formalisation of depth in painting, also relates to determining an implied vantage point. This dual reality of vanishing and vantage points connected across space becomes material to work with in performance as one dancer uses their viewpoint to connect with another. These internal viewpoints become theatres within theatres; performers become spectators by using their viewpoint to produce a small theatre, or apparatus for viewing, within the larger group dynamic. This system is also seen from the outside by audiences within the larger theatrical apparatus in the museum.

Costumes and wearable soft sculptures have also been devices for visibility across many of the projects, recently in collaboration with Sydney-based designer Leah Giblin. Wearables allow performers control over how their body is made visible (or not) in the gallery space, emphasising the difference between being looked at and showing oneself. Costuming is also a technique for distributing colour across space and bodies over time. Costumes produce variable compositions making temporal pictures across ensembles of bodies. This is a way of thinking about costume as a temporary theatre space or changing backdrop producing temporary theatrical moments. There is a likeness here between the spatialisation of colour and form in expanded painting and how this occurs in choreographic practices. In both, colour and form embody temporality within space. Painting loosens its grip on the surface and, like choreography, releases its relations into time.

The format of our work has changed over time, not only because of the maturation of practice and technique but also because of institutional shifts over the decade towards understanding ungrounded choreographic work as artwork proper, requiring curatorial consideration beyond opening events or public programming. As we work across painting and choreography, primarily in visual-art contexts, a large part of our process is working to produce a format for ourselves. Without resources to support live performance for the duration of an exhibition, often our performances find format through the temporality of special events in combination with spatial conditions of the installed artwork. This produces a theatre set of sorts upon which the activity unfolds. This spectatorship model produces an assembled group ready for the unfolding of some live event with a clear beginning and end. In prior performances made for video works, the camera produces the format for viewership. Our practice has been evolving alongside a changing visual-arts context, impacting the very possibilities and realities of the work. Our critical engagement with models of theatre spectatorship and gallery viewership can be traced over ten years in the exhibition models of Rochelle's works (see timeline overleaf).

Part of Rochelle's initial interest in working with mediums like dance was the explicit expression of embodiment in visual-arts spaces. Galleries structure a type of viewership, different to theatres, where audiences use their mobility and attention to negotiate the venue in

ROCHELLE HALEY, watercolour on paper made for the development of *Dance on a Couch by an Open Window (after Boyd)* 2021 at Bundanon Museum, 2022. Photograph: Jessica Maurer

(left to right) IVEY WAWN and ANGELA GOH perform ROCHELLE HALEY *Dance on a Couch by an Open Window (after Boyd)* 2021, Bundanon Museum, 2022. Costume designer: Leah Giblin. Fabricator: Kazu Quill. Photo: Zan Wimberley

A timeline of works by Rochelle Haley that encompass collaboration with Angela Goh and Ivey Wawn 2014–24. Photos (clockwise from top left): Alex Davies, Document Photography, Silversalt Photography, Rochelle Haley, Zan Wimberley, Karlee Holland/National Gallery of Australia, Document Photography, Jessica Maurer, Four Minutes To Midnight, Jessica Maurer, Karlee Holland/National Gallery of Australia

2014

Spatial Forms

2015

Spin Curve

2016

Spin

2017

Dance in the Gallery

2018

Marquetry Score

2019

The Invention

2020

Artspace residency workshops

2021

of Depth

Ever Sun Laneways

2022

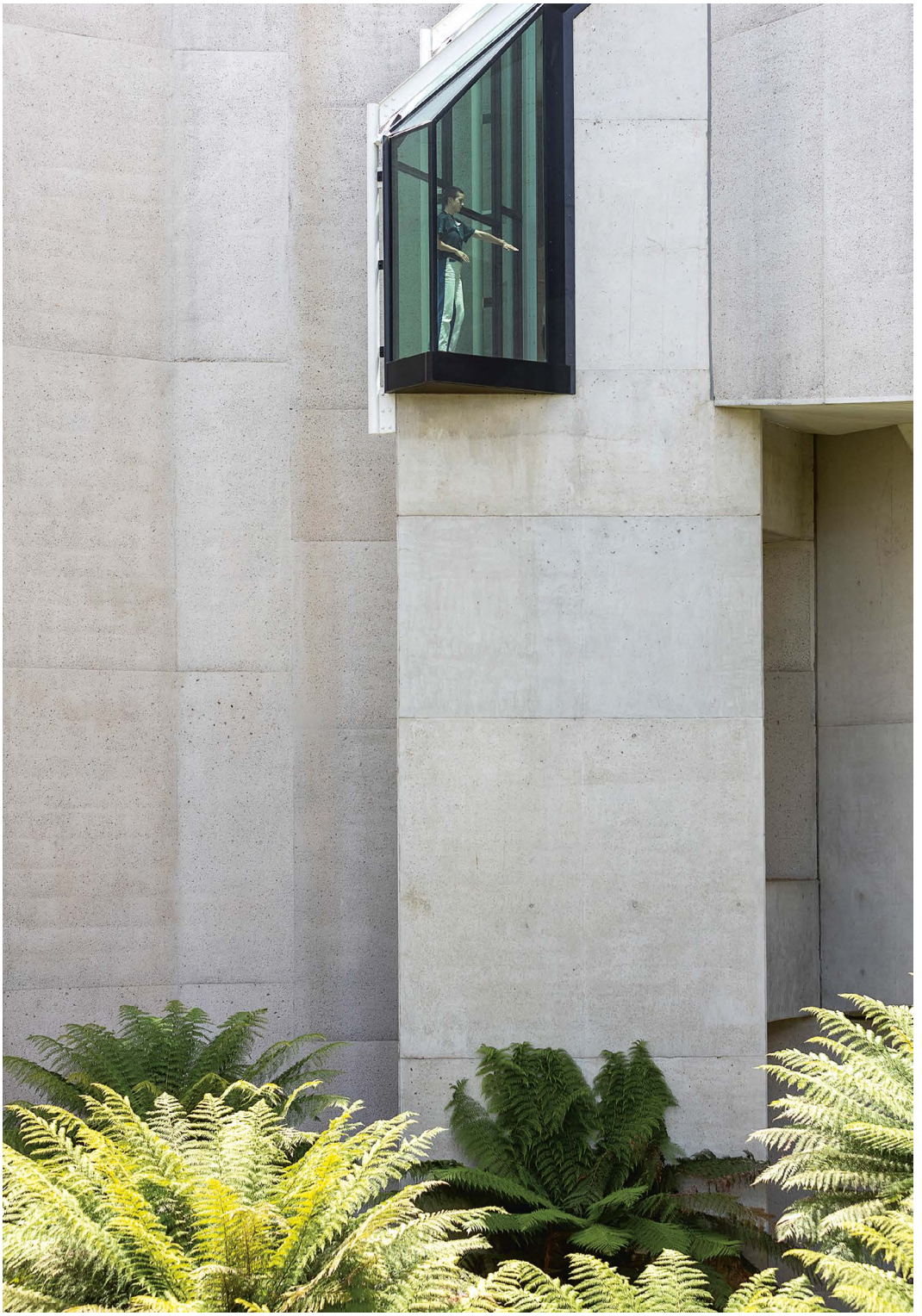
Dance on a Couch by an Open Window

2023

A Sun Dance (development)

2024

A Sun Dance



ROCHELLE HALEY (artist) with ANGELA GOH and IVEY WAWN (choreographers and dancers) *A Sun Dance* (still documentation of the work in development), National Gallery of Australia, Kamberri/Canberra, 2022. Commissioned by the National Gallery of Australia and assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body. With additional support from the Australian Research Council through research and commissioning partner *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*. Photo: Karlee Holland/National Gallery of Australia

relation to art and other people. Within this practice, the relationship between performer and spectator brings both the constructed and incidental bodily movements of each into view more clearly. The choreographic offering is not only what you watch, but also how you participate as an observer.

At the time of writing, Rochelle is developing a new work, *A Sun Dance*, for the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (NGA). This work has become increasingly untethered from the museum. The work is neither fixed to the building, nor contained by a gallery room. Five dancers, including Angela and Ivey, are distributed across museum spaces and beyond, and audiences are invited to follow the work around various locations across the duration of a day. The artwork has no stable background, no implied front, and viewers have internal and external perspectives on the work. Within this new format, sightlines between performers, as well as between performer and spectator, are multidirectional, intersecting, appearing and disappearing as people move. The structure of the sightline between performers, one holding the gaze of another, is both secure and ephemeral. Lines of sight are made apparent in performance but are never actually visible. Lines temporally demarcate space.

We are faced with new challenges in creating lucid formats for audiences for *A Sun Dance* at NGA. The format involves building networks between people, accentuating how people connect and making implicit relations tangible. Practically, this means building structures between us and choreographing how our bodies come together. These temporary embodied structures float across and through the other physical and conceptual structures in the presentation space. They are soft structures of the imagination, gestural architectures that performers inhabit and create.

The viewership model we are working towards has a kind of sociality to it that is different to theatre spectatorship and gallery viewership. It is not necessarily about receiving the work whole, from an ideal vantage point and for the entire duration. Experiencing the work involves intersecting agencies within an ecology of people and things: artists, artworks, collaborators, performers, peers, publics, guards, the weather, institutional staff, the architecture and all the multiplicities of people who come through the space. All experiences in the ecosystem co-construct the work in an important way. It is the difference between making work for a spectator versus making work for variously assembling audiences: choreographic composition as an alternative social and temporal structure for those who perform from within, and audiences who observe it from their unique perspective.

Within the nested structures of the museum, tangible and intangible, our work consists of making complex sets of relations, connected by sightlines and imaginary spatial planes, that form an overall dimension. From line to plane and from form to formation. The practice sits in a set of techniques that are reproducible, and the work is articulating a framework for the expression of those systems. Each performance is one expression of the work. *A Sun Dance* is a set of relations and the compositions that support them. Each iteration is finding those connections again in specific moments of time. It is making those relations tangible in our bodies, holding them for a duration and letting them go. Performance is the thing that appears and can appear again or be reproduced. It is the illumination of the relations.

Structure maintains a specific aesthetic quality in *A Sun Dance*. We work with sunlight and shadow, exploring changing patterns of reflection and projection through architectural apertures. We work with the experience of vision and movement as translation of light. The closeness of our collaborative process extends into this work with light in the architectural space. Enacting gestures in the language of the work is sensitive – where looking is a way of touching and being touched by imagined and projected physical connections. Shadows of bodies extend into shadows of architectural lines. Dancers manipulate light, and skin is warmed by sunlight, all warping and amplifying in a quiet drama, salient from the viewpoints of the performer and the audience. Composition is one way to understand the structure of relations in our work. Over the course of our collaboration, we have seen the evolution of the form to formation. We started with a line and are working towards a universe.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Daina Ashbee

How do we enter a gallery space, and what are the feelings and sensations we encounter there? We claim the space as the space claims us, the space opens us as we open into the space, and the art claims our attention in the manner it occupies space. Through choreography the body takes, fills and moves space, transforming energy. How then does the choreography become an energetic or spiritual entity itself? We are living bodies of art in dance, and the score is this energetic entity.

When you read these poems, imagine them on your body: the thickness, rhythm and shape of each word vibrating out of your mouth, off your lips, out from the throat and the tongue. How would you move to these words? How would you shape these words with your body?

Daina Ashbee is a Montreal-based artist, performer and choreographer of Dutch, Cree and Métis descent renowned for her works at the edge of dance and performance. Here she translates her means of dance expression into choreographic poems.

ONE

I AM THINKING ABOUT MY TONGUE
I USE IT TO MAKE DRAWINGS
ON WALLS OUTSIDE OF ME

I MAKE SHAPES
AND WHEN I AM ANXIOUS
I REPEAT
LICKING THE INSIDE
OF,
THE ROOF OF MY MOUTH
THE COLOUR IS UP TO ME
I MAKE THE SHAPES IN THE WINDOWS AND ON THE WALLS
CORNER TO CORNER
PAINTING THE SPACE
FROM MY INSIDE

WITH MY TONGUE

TWO

MARGARET SAYS
IF YOU WANT TO BE POWERFUL
YOU SHOULD CLAIM EVERY SIDE
EVERY CORNER
OF THE SPACE
OF THE ROOM
YOU ENTER
BEFORE YOU ENTER

I AM CONSUMED BY MY ENVIRONMENT AND I WATCH THE SPACE CLAIM ME
THROWN AT ME

THREE

FEEL YOUR BODY AGAINST THE SURFACE THAT IS SUPPORTING IT

LISTEN TO THE
O
O
O
OOO
O
O
O

SOUND
IN YOUR BODY
WHEN IT DOESN'T COME OUT OF YOUR MOUTH

LISTEN TO THE

AAAA
SOUND

IF IT DIDN'T COME OUT OF YOUR MOUTH

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO HAVE A BODY?

FEEL YOUR BONES AND LISTEN TO THE

OOO

SOUND

BEFORE YOU MAKE IT

WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?
WHERE DOES IT MOVE TO?

IF IT CAN'T EXIT YOUR MOUTH?

I BEGIN TO HEAR MY SKIN AND BONES

WHISPERING
WHIMPERING
WHILSTLING

ooo
eee
aaa
ooo

from the inside
it feels like
SWELLING with Os
THAT MAKE ME HEAVY
WHEN I FEEL MY FACE ON THE GROUND, THAT IS
THE SURFACE SUPPORTING ME

OOO

FOUR

A hollow swimming pool hall

diving boards,
many lengths.

Attempts.

Shallow waters.

Belly flops.

Resilience.

Full body, full body Water.
Walk on Water.
A sinking Island.

Whisper
Words of devotion.
Worship the land

scape.

Agua de luz in a swimming pool hall.
Many diving boards, different lengths.
A belly flop.
hollow pools, dry lands, thirsty landscape.

bodily glow.
Whisper prayers of devotion.

Hot feet burning on dry lands.
Worshiping the burning sun.

Sinking in, drowning above, the melted concrete

pads of islands off of rough lands.
Tumbling into water.
sinking with
land

FIVE

The ground holds my footsteps
The room containers my aura, for me
My perception of myself is multiplied
By your lungs
And your lungs
And your lungs
And your eyes that are thinking about my eyes
That are looking at your breath
Inside the room

We give a lot of power
To the structures that contain us
I think
As I recognise my capacity to expand myself outside of the room
containing me right now …

(pp. 76–7, 80–1) DAINA ASHBEE *Hello, Buffalo* 2023, New York Live Arts, 2023. Performer: Imara Bosco. Courtesy New York Live Arts. Photo: Maria Baranova

WHO IS SURFING WHO, III

Adam Linder

Overage

To give myself over to dance has been the most pleasurable and contentious aspect of this life. An abandon in the momentum produced while coursing through space, the reverie of endorphins galloping on musical rhythms and the power of holding many watchful eyes – have had very real markings. Tuning a body to reach such heights is an overage found in self-scrutiny and daily masochism, a trade-off of one pleasure for other suppressions.

Conditions

In the social spaces where people are compelled to respond to the environment in rhythmic dance, the external conditions (of architecture, light, sound, crowd) interact with the internal conditions of the individual (intoxication, emotional state, embodied knowledge) to produce dance that just happens and happens. It is neither quantified, nor specifically valued, nor remotely recorded.

At the club, in the studio, during sex, and attending designated places of worship … are all spaces where the conditions of the environment met with the variables of my personal state and allowed me to overcome an all-too-conscious mind, slip back into the anterior brain and tune into a state of chemical concentration.[1]

1 I have never experienced this state on stage, but believe I have experienced it in the exhibition space. I put this down to the fact that the nature of my concentration on stage has been more focused on performing written material and less attuned to imagining a present.

I am sure you have felt this too at some point.

Musicians and dancers will have understood it as productive flow, something trance-like, in the realm of the meditative.

Perhaps it's harder to recognise this state in an actor? Is acting too much at the mercy of imitation?

In any case, both music and dance share an instantaneous vulnerability – the potential to be brought to life in an instant and forever disappeared in that same instant.

Good day

On a good day when I freestyle the impulses are abundant.

A sum of a lifetime absorbing isms of embodiment.

Technical, pop, classical, modernist, expressive, folk, theatrical, gestural, pedestrian, groovy, abstract, released, street, fictive, photographic, animalistic, sculptural, schlocky and animated inflections get sewn together in a chain reaction of instant composition.

Let me ride this compositional wave for as long as doubt can be kept at bay.

And when it's good, when any hint of second-guessing stays well clear of the path of intuition, then I can switch isms in a manner that feels paranormal.

MJ

MJ said thinking is the biggest mistake a dancer can make.

That it is the death of physical invention.

You have to feel.

And yet he never succumbed to indulging his own sensations, the way you see in videos of hippies dancing in the ’60s.

MJ leveraged his own sensations to channel dancers of the past … Bob Fosse, James Brown and even Charlie Chaplin, and these spectres comingled in the dance with, what might have been, unbearable and unliveable homoerotic impulses.[2]

Contradictions of person, of art, of power and commerce, of technology, of identity, and of discipline are all present in the dance.

They unavoidably release, slip and tangle in one single dancing body.

2 In his article, ‘Michael’, Hilton Als tacitly suggests Michael Jackson died in a kind of self-imposed exile caused in part by these impulses. Hilton Als, ‘Michael’, 13 Aug. 2009, *The New York Review*, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2009/08/13/michael/>, accessed 15 Aug. 2023.

Licked

I have a friend whom I am very attracted to.

We equally enjoy each other's body smell, which feels like some kind of pheromonal recognition of shared origins.

We moved beyond a threshold of behaviour I once maintained because when we make out it's more like primal licking.

Haphazard rhythms of tongue and teeth become a softcore mauling, particularly of the nose.

This action produces sensations that lie somewhere between being devoured as prey and being mothered.

In these throes I recognise pure animal.

Both thing

The ageing dancer is a both thing.

More complex than just a 'wasted on the young' thing.

Beautiful and devastating at the same time.

For every aspect of embodied knowledge that becomes richer there is the deterioration of physical prowess to articulate said knowledge.

Glove work

I was recently speaking to a known figure I admire a lot, who often uses the *dispositif* of the readymade in their choreographies – whether in the sound, dance or costume material. And I told them that what I admire about their work is that they always handle their materials with the right gloves. When a practice appropriates source material under the seductive aura of readymadeness, it requires the glove work of a metaphorical art handler. And the work is actually about how you proceed to compose with gloves on, which type of gloves you are willing to wear, and, once the material has been successfully incorporated and in some cases trafficked across cultural contexts, it's a matter of what trace of this transposition has been left on said readymade material. We, as audiences to such manoeuvres, crave to feel the trace of visionary fingers on the imported goods despite the gloves.

Rather than

I cannot help think that, concurrent with the past decades of digital advancement, a vanguard of experimental dance has on the whole preferenced a divestment from physically grafted choreography in favour of discursive mobilities. A flexing of concept, critique and social commentary that has been fuelled by an abundance of communicative networks. If these approaches are rewarded by a culture industry that needs relevancy rather than originality, why does one need to spend time in a studio rather than on a computer?

Spine

Perhaps it's not untrue to say that a tone of whiteness shows up in dance as hundreds of years of holding the spine.

Activity

There is this whole cascade of divergent activities that one engages with to even qualify as being a (choreographic) artist today.

Meetings with curators, casting performers, budgets, collaborator relations, written proposals, colour portfolios, short descriptions, image credits, studio payments, dancer availabilities, travel reimbursements, shipping quotes, costume fittings, biography updates, Instagram posts, technical specifications, post-show talks, opening drinks and the list goes on and on. And it's not about underlining the banality of all this, because actually now that I list these activities it's kind of compelling that they all get accomplished by someone who specialises in making dances …

But you know what really matters? What I honestly love the most are these forever moments, so rare in their alchemical nature that I can almost count the times in the past decade on one hand … when the perfect calibration of my internal state synced with the right stimulation from the external environment … and the mind starts to gallop and small fragments of ideation start to accelerate and accumulate in the canals of thinking … and just like that you stumble upon a flash of pure inspiration, an idea that is perfectly cooked in that instant. And you feel in your gut that it has the potential to be worth its weight in gold. And then hindsight confirms that this divined idea turned out to be a pivotal moment in your development.

PART TWO
ARTISTS AND INSTITUTIONS

The meeting point between artists and institutions, from national museums to regional galleries, frames contributions to this section from multiple perspectives, including curators in this field, artists, producers and arts workers. The lead conversation with Catherine Wood describes the omniscience of the choreographic as it frames and shapes the human experience, from nightclubs to cultural dance to the specific genealogies of Western contemporary dance, and how it is changing museum practices and spaces. Louise O'Kelly takes a similarly telescopic approach, surveying the recent history of presenting performance in the UK and beyond, and the important role played by institutions of all types in hosting the specific work in the right place. Case studies vary in format or category, including Beatrice Johnson's work on the historical survey *Judson Dance Theatre: The Work Is Never Done*, 2018–19, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York; Maria Hassabi's performance-installation *STAGING: solo*, 2017, acquired by the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis; Shelley Lasica's *WHEN I AM NOT THERE*, 2022, which exemplifies the performance-exhibition; and Latai Taumoepeau's *The Last Resort*, 2020, with its multiple parts (performance, site-specific installation and video work) and contingent status (the series, the community and the planet). The following discussions cover issues shaping new practices in the field: honouring artist and performer specificity and agency, holding artists' intentions, educating 'up', resistance as a methodology, relationality as material, and working with precarity, urgency, physical presence and cultural awareness.

CATHERINE WOOD IN CONVERSATION
WITH ERIN BRANNIGAN

Flow across the border: curating choreographic art at Tate

ERIN BRANNIGAN (EB) Can we begin with how you have managed the relatively new curatorial relationship at Tate Modern with artists coming from dance cultures and specific knowledges around the history of dance and choreographic practice within the studio, collective practice, rehearsal, training?

CATHERINE WOOD (CW) I studied at art school and come from an art-historical point of view, working in art museums. But from a personal perspective, I had an interest in watching and participating in dance from a young age. I learnt folk dance as a child but, maybe more significantly, nightclubs and discos were very significant for me. I took myself to church at age seven, even though my parents didn't go, because they had discos, and I organised discos at school and a club night when I was at university. I've always been interested in dance as a social gathering space, a collective space for music and expression, and so before being a curator I understood the space of the party or the nightclub as a way of coming together in a ritual way. I'd also spent formative time in South Africa, and I think exposure to Indigenous traditions of ritual healing, such as *muti* and *sangoma*, in the churches my grandmother took me to there also had an influence.

My understanding of art was always against a backdrop of that. So when I was studying and looking at the work of Robert Morris and Carl Andre, and reading their conversations about theatre and the body and how they believed their works were encountered in a gallery, I always projected a kind of missing figurative element onto it, and the question of theatre and ritual came up for me. So when I discovered the dance work of Yvonne Rainer and Simone Forti I was thinking, 'Okay, it's the other way round, of course, it's underwritten by the bodies that are out of view, the positions, this choreographic thinking'. So, I'd always understood this imprint of the choreographic running through the placement of objects in relation to people's bodies, and that meaning is created by positions between people and between people and things. That fuses the academic and the experiential for me.

So, the visual artists I was drawn to when emerging from my studies were artists like Mark Leckey, Monster Chetwynd and Pablo Bronstein, who were working in London at the time, or Mexican artist Carlos Amorales, whose work I came across. I was drawn to artists who were not just putting objects in the vacuum of the white cube. I was interested in those positioning the art object in relation to a ritual or a sense of bodily presence, often using forms of music and dance or movement. They were all making drawings or videos or paintings, but also these sort of live tableaux or pictures out of bodies. I'd written about Rainer and the Judson Dance Theater scene in my master's thesis, and for me the path back to choreography from the world of art was my path back to inviting choreographers into the museum. Dance in the museum was then a counterpoint, I guess, to the visual artists in my generation who were using forms of 'dance' or 'theatre', because they weren't involved with the cutting edge of those disciplines at all; they were borrowing. Bronstein was borrowing old-fashioned Baroque ideas of theatre. Lots of artists, such as Ulla von Brandenburg, Daria Martin and Olivia Plender, were borrowing these quite naive ideas of theatre and dance from historical pictures of ballets and Constructivist theatre – a red-curtain approach to theatre and dance. They were reinhabiting and using them, and

I suppose they were coming in one direction, and then I was beginning to see some choreographers, like Rosemary Butcher who was an equivalent of Judson in the United Kingdom and had been influenced by that minimalist dance in the United States, who were coming in the other direction and thinking about architecture and sculpture in relation to choreography.

So, within the programming I've done at Tate Modern, I was trying to find space that wouldn't say these things are the same but that could be a kind of porous curatorial space between those artists coming from dance training and those coming from visual-art training, each borrowing from one another's disciplines. I was interested in what can be learnt in this situation, what can flow across the border in a fairly unstable way. This includes Belgian choreographer Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker coming from quite a conventional theatre perspective but then translating her work *Fase*, 1982, into 'the round' in the Tate Tanks in a sculptural way that led to the development of her exhibition at Weils Centre d'art Contemporain in Brussels, *Work/Travail/Arbeid*, 2015. Or Boris Charmatz's *Musée de la Danse*, 2009–18, again someone who'd grown up with a fascination with visual arts but trained as a dancer. What happens when you bring those values of embodiment and liveness and a certain kind of ephemerality into the museum?

EB You've written about the dangers of a power imbalance where the visual arts might be seen as colonising various different disciplines for their own ends. But you've also written about a post-disciplinary condition where these things fall away to a large degree and we are left with a broad field of expanded practice. You are very conscious of the specific disciplinary knowledges and approaches, say with someone like De Keersmaeker who is highly trained and works in a very complex choreographic way. I'd say Michael Clark, who has had his own retrospective *Michael Clark: Cosmic Dancer*, 2020, at the Barbican, falls into that category as well.

CW Michael Clark was an absolutely formative figure for me regarding folk dance and nightclubs, in his case via the Royal Ballet School, and he is definitely someone entangled with the visual arts scene. In the 1980s he was creating work in the midst of Leigh Bowery, Sarah Lucas, Cerith Wyn Evans and Grayson Perry in such a way that the conceptual discourse around art was flowing through his work. But Clark chose to make his work onstage, and he had the exceptional skill and talent to do so.

EB There is a spectrum of choreographic artists that you've chosen to work with. There's the dancer's dancer: Charmatz is really important in this sense because he is nothing if not a dancer and has just gone back to dancing in a big way with his work *Somnole*, 2021, but he's also highly conceptual and attuned to these broader capacities of the contemporary arts. Bronstein you've worked with, and Jérôme Bel, but also Tania Bruguera and other artists who apply the choreographic in very specific political and social contexts. Is there anything you could say about this pool of artists? Maybe the question is what's excluded from that, what doesn't work when choreography and the visual arts are brought together?

CW What doesn't work? I mean, if we start with what's excluded by me in terms of the choices I've made, often working alongside

Assistant Curator Tamsin Hong, it would be the choreographic projects that are basically choreographers who work on stage and then say, 'Oh, but I really love the Turbine Hall space', or, 'I love the Tanks space, it would make a really good backdrop to do X'. I just think there are lots of post-industrial spaces in London that they could use instead. For me, the driver for inviting people to be commissioned or present their work at Tate (and I can't, of course, just invite everybody I want to), is choosing those who are conscious of, and in dialogue with, the ghosts of visual art that have inhabited those spaces too. Because that is our main mission (even though I'm interested in unsettling that boundary) – where's the entanglement and dialogue with what these spaces are intended for and what's been in them historically? So an artist like Faustin Linyekula, who came to do *My Body, My Archive* in 2020 (even though we ended up having to do it online because the COVID-19 pandemic hit), that work was fundamentally in dialogue with our meaning as a museum and the associated tough questions about collecting objects; the writing of Western history versus the history that might be embedded in a body that he can summon through the practice of dance. That's a deeper ancestral and non-colonised history.

EB Elsewhere you have talked about the complicity of the emergence of contemporary art with the particular New York dance milieu around Judson Church in the 1960s. If we are talking about dance artists that are sympathetic with 'the ghosts of visual art' now, should we also be talking about the fact that choreographers were already a part of some of those trends and aesthetic directions in the first place?

CW I think there's definitely a section of dance history that should have been in the histories of contemporary art all along – Clark falls into that camp, as well as Rainer and Forti. It took a long time for them to be recognised in comparison to their object-making peers. It's interesting that many of them write. Linyekula is a poet and a writer, Charmatz has written quite a lot, Rainer is obviously such an amazing writer, Clark uses words. Perhaps it's more about my taste, but I have been fascinated by those artists who also conceptualise or write about their work. A number of artists coming from choreographic training and performing on international festival circuits have said to me that they like participating in the visual-art world because of the discourse and the conversation, which they don't find as present in the theatre-presentation world, specifically in the post-show chat.

EB Could we move on to talk about the architecture of the museum and the spaces at Tate Modern, such as the Tanks and the Turbine Hall, and what the push and pull is between new spaces that need to be filled and new works that need new spaces. What are your general impressions around the changes that have been made to Tate spaces? Have they really opened the door to this work, or do you feel that there was a push coming from artists and the need for these kinds of grey spaces or public spaces?

CW Absolutely the latter, because when we started the program in 2003 we had to invent spaces to use: galleries between shows, concourses, the Turbine Hall between commissions, outdoor landscapes. We made the problem the answer for a long time. Then building up to having the Tanks, I was involved in figuring out what we needed with the architects and with Sheena Wagstaff, then Chief Curator. What

Rehearsal of Michael Clark's residency at Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, 2010. Photo: Marcus Leith and Andrew Dunkley/Tate

was crucial for the Tanks space – which is, as you say, a grey space between a white-cube gallery and black-box theatre – was that it could be a space in which you can display any kind of art, as well as use it for performance. I wanted to be sure that we situated performance in there, and the works we showed at the opening of the BMW Tate Live program in the Tanks were two live works: Tarek Atoui's music sculptures *The reverse collection*, 2016, and Manuel Pelmus and Alexandra Pirici's *Public collection*, 2014; as well as three choreographic sculptures by Charlotte Posenenske (*Concept revolving vanes/ Mobile walls*, 1967–68, replicas 2016), Rasheed Araeen (*Zero to infinity*, 1968–2007), and Robert Morris (*Untitled*, 1965, reconstructed 1971). I really wanted to set out an agenda that speaks to your question about 'the choreographic'. It's not only the property of moving bodies and bodies in positions, but can also be a material object, a quality too, and that positionality was fundamental to those three artists in different political ways.

Tania Bruguera's work is a really good example of this kind of 'political choreographic', as is Tino Sehgal's work. These artists look at institutional structures themselves as inherently choreographic and performative and make surreal interventions that propose that the way things are done isn't the way things have to be done, and that they could be done differently. They do this by either exaggerating the power dynamics, as Brughera did with the intervention of mounted police forces among museum visitors, or subverting the gallery guards' perceived lack of power by having them sing or say something surprising. So those interventions into the apparent authority of the institution, and the associated choreography of how the museum is organised, have been a really important part of the choreographic take on performance by artists who are not coming from a dance perspective but understand the ritual side of it.

EB You're articulating the difference between performance and choreographic works, specifically choreography and its capacities across various media.

CW 'Performance' is a condition of liveness, mutability, provisionality and change that emerged out of a number of object-based practices, including minimal sculpture in the 1960s and 1970s, and continues in the work of Cecilia Vicuña whose 'precarious art' *Brain forest quipu*, 2022, is on show in the Turbine Hall right now [11 October 2022 – 16 April 2023]. Such 'performance' is often entwined with a relationship to 'performance art' proper or 'collective action', and 'the choreographic' is for me one way of describing the arrangement of relationships within that. I've used it metaphorically with reference to danced choreography, but performance is maybe the wider field in art terms.

Dance and choreography are definitely a template or structure that I refer to in order to understand the nature of the encounter with art. Having studied the Venetian Renaissance in a classic art-historical way, and looking at the churches in Venice where all the famous paintings by Tintoretto and Titian and their peers were displayed, and then thinking about the processional rituals that were carried out in that city as a kind of stage set, I can't really disentangle the idea of the art object from how they are encountered. And that's in a Western context. My time in South Africa exposed me to Indigenous South African Sotho traditions in a non-Western context,

so I find it really hard to say that an object – sculpture, painting or whatever – is important on its own in a white room. I struggled with that when I was studying. We'd be looking at the brushstrokes and that was all we looked at, and I was thinking, 'Where are the people around and outside the frame? Who's in the room? Where is it situated?'

EB You have also talked about the ritual capacities of the object and how they are a part of a larger context from which they are extracted.

CW That's what is so fascinating about First Nations and Indigenous practices, something we've been researching here at Tate. It's been amazing to work with practitioners, including Linyekula who has spoken about objects from his family clan in the Congo that he has seen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. He's making new dances with some traditional sculptures representing women from his clan. Also, Tanya Lukin Linklater is a Canadian First Nations artist who creates 'felt' structures (as in feeling) – object sculptures and architectures to perform within – as an endoskeleton over which to superimpose alternative structures of value and meaning inside the white cube. In this way, she can perform a reversal of the colonial claiming of space through movement and through making her own frames.

EB Which might bring us to collections, which I want to discuss because you really have been leading the way in this area. Of course, there are very mixed feelings in the field around the collection of choreographic works. Where do you think this is heading? Can you forsee a significant take-up of the collection of choreographic works? Do you feel resistance on the part of artists in the conversations you're having with them about this? In one of your interviews, you talk about starting the conversation with artists around archives, which inevitably leads to collections. Where do you think the future of this might lie?

CW This is a very good question at this moment in which it feels like everything is uncertain and up for grabs. With these approaches to collecting, as with most things I've done, I've followed the lead of artists. The reason we started collecting performance as a live score or entity was because of the work of Roman Ondak and Sehgal who proposed it would be possible. This opened the way for others you mentioned, such as Bruguera. So, I was taking the lead from those artists who made it possible to acquire work, and then it continued through working with specific artists. Object-based art is obviously easy to buy for the collection because you go to galleries and art fairs and you see it there on the wall and know it's available and it's being offered to you ready-made. With artists making performance and choreography, it's usually acquired through a process of dialogue where we say, 'If we want to represent you in our collection, how could we do it?' Sometimes we try and shape it together, and that's not always successful. We don't always find a way to do it.

From the moment of acquisition onward, it's been difficult because it is more expensive to show live work than to bring paintings and sculptures out of storage – paying performers and actors costs money. I know this is not only the case for Tate because artists have told me their work has been acquired as a score, but then never been shown. So, I set up a new fund about four years ago named the Performance Activation Fund which was about philanthropists and sponsors contributing to make sure that those works are exhibited.

We've used it to show amazing work by Allora and Calzadilla, Trisha Brown, Tunga, Nedko Solakov and Lee Mingwei. The idea of the fund was that every year we would be obliged to show some of the live works in the collection and also have provision to show video and film from our time-based media collection. It's not a separate part of the collection – I don't think it should be and artists don't want it to be – but I love the idea of this as a sort of subset of the collection.

EB Louise O'Kelly at Block Universe and Rose Lejeune at Performance Exchange have both described the related problem of constant commissioning and premieres of performance and choreographic works without capacity for them to tour or have afterlives. Collection is not necessarily the solution, but is there another way?

CW We did have a really good model set up by the Amsterdam-based organisation If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be Part of Your Revolution, founded by Frédérique Bergholtz. They initiated an organisation, Corpus, which was about commissioning live work and touring it between partner venues in Europe and beyond. It was great as a model because each partner could give artists seed grants as commissioning funds. As part of Corpus, Tate hosted Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa's performance *Requiem for Mirrors and Tigers*, 2015, which then toured to KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin, where it expanded into a bigger installation, and then was performed at STUK Arts Centre in Leuven. Things could grow, not only tour; there could be a line continuing on from the concept, set and the work that the artist had invested, so that was quite a satisfactory model. I'd love to think about new sustainable models for touring our collection based on the live score works we have. There is a toolbox of these live scores that I want to do more with, and it's not something that needs to be shipped, which really should make a difference.

EB I'm really curious about the future of the BMW Tate Live or Performance Room because, for those of us not in London, it's a really exciting option to be able to see work. I was really interested to see Daniel Linehan in there, and you have other artists like Bojana Cvejić, and that's the only place we find Jérôme Bel at Tate. I was wondering about those videos because they're not necessarily in the collection, are they?

CW They are in the archive and the artists have given us permission to show them, but they're not in the collection proper, which is something we should revisit and consider. The artists are free to have them and/or sell them as editions if they want to, which is a whole other conversation. We've shown the Every Ocean Hughes and Otobong Nkanga works in our displays recently – they are showable by us or by the artist and are available online.

EB I wondered what you think the future directions are for the choreographic in the larger sphere – do you think online platforms are a way forward? It seems like this activation issue is going to be an ongoing problem. And what about the types of works being presented – can you see a shift towards the popular and the social, away from the more minimalist or reductive sort of work we've seen in the past?

CW The very large Anne Imhof work, *Sex*, 2019, was the last thing we did at scale before the pandemic and it's strange because it did feel like the end of something. It was absolutely incredible and emblematic

of a visual-art choreographic work. *Sex* was so clever in how Imhof staged the work within the architecture, but also this staging of attention as a form in itself, creating the desire for movement towards being able to see these beautiful images that she choreographed by pulling audiences around them. This created a kind of difficulty of seeing, followed by the online trail of everybody Instagramming it – a really complex choreography of attention and image-making.

In the immediate term, post-pandemic, we are thinking much more seriously about where we are as a locality, not only as an international destination for visitors. We've had a lot more local visitors in the museum recently and what I've loved the most since reopening and getting back on our feet are the projects we've done in the Turbine Hall with Ei Arakawa and Araeen, where we take classic art-historical works like Yoshihara Jirō's *Please Draw Freely*, 1956, a Gutai work that Arakawa worked with, or Araeen's *Zero to Infinity*, 1968–2007, and really play them out interactively within the popular social context of the Turbine Hall, which is a mass public square with hundreds and thousands of visitors. Those works feel like they are meaningful not only in this particular place, with people physically coming into their local museum, but also formally, being art-historical works of significance.

In terms of performance, we have just hired Rosalie Doubal, who specialises in performance and participation as well as new media. I want to see where the journey goes with her and with a new generation of artists. She will be working as close as ever with our film curator, Valentine Umansky. For me, when I worked with curators Andrea Lissoni or Stuart Comer, the question of the expanded moving image was always very much part of what performance is or can be, especially now in the age of TikTok when everybody is a performer. Part of me feels like it's our time … All of this to me now makes more and more sense – the precariousness, the livingness. Cecilia Vicuña talked about 'warming up the museum'. I think these are the things we need to do to create moments of being together and ritual.

EB That reminds me of Boris Charmatz's keynote at the 2016 Sydney Biennale, when he spoke about taking it outdoors and taking the roof off the museum.

CW That seemed crazy at that time but is now completely what we should be doing. Charmatz's project *Terrain*, 2019–ongoing, which is the idea of a completely outdoor dance school, 365 days a year in all weather, seemed mad then but now seems right! The nomadic and the precarious, that's what I mean … Many Indigenous and First Nations artists would be like, 'Yeah, of course, you're not telling us anything new'.

(p. 93) BORIS CHARMATZ *Roman photo* 2015, BMW Tate Live *If Tate Modern was Musée de la danse?* 2015, Tate Modern. Photo: Oliver Cowling/Tate

MARIA HASSABI IN CONVERSATION
WITH PAVEL PYŚ

STAGING: solo

PAVEL PYŚ (PP) Let's start by talking about the acquisition of *STAGING: solo*, 2017, purchased by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, in 2018. Can you describe the three versions of the work that entered the Walker's collection?

MARIA HASSABI (MH) There are three iterations of *STAGING: solo* that the Walker owns. The first is the live installation, where one dancer enacts a two-hour choreographic cycle that loops throughout the museum's opening hours (two dancers are needed onsite for the loop to appear seamless). The piece also includes a long pink line and a spike mark, made from adhesive vinyl material taped to the floor, which orient the dancer in the space. The second iteration is titled *STAGING: solo – 5min*, which includes the pink line and spike mark with the addition of the Dancer's Manual, which is a stack of pink instruction papers for a five-minute choreography. Visitors are welcome to take and keep one page or more of the intructions, which they can use to perform the choreography in the gallery space or elsewhere. Another element included as part of *STAGING: solo – 5min* is a video loop (duration 6 minutes, 16 seconds). The footage in the video is derived from the original presentation of the work at the Walker Arts Center in 2017 and incorporates sound which is audible at all times where *STAGING: solo – 5min* is exhibited. The third iteration is *STAGING: solo – archival*, which is meant to be displayed only in exhibitions related to archival materials. This iteration includes the pink line and spike mark, the video loop and also one of the outfits from the work, an original design presented on a mannequin.

PP You said that the original or primary iteration is the live installation, the live dance work, whereas there are two other versions. How did the acquisition process inform your decision to make these additional versions?

MH Everything about this acquisition had to do with the constant exchange of ideas with you [as Curator of Visual Arts]. We discussed what would remain when there was no performance. Since I make object-based works in addition to my live performances, I was attracted to seeing how a live installation such as *STAGING: solo*, which was already part of a larger work that included many elements, could make sense if the performer was deducted – if it could keep its integrity. Admittedly, the archival version is the least interesting to me, yet I do consider archival works important. With *STAGING: solo – 5min* I tried to keep an essence of liveness by including the Dancer's Manual, which introduces the visitor to my way of approaching choreography. The instructional script is detailed in the same manner as my 'bibles' are, which is what the dancers use in my works. In these bibles, every movement is described in words and each 'hold-pause' has a count.

PP The acquisition came with a number of different materials that we worked on for sixteen months together. It included the Dancer's Manual, Pantone colours of the various elements, material samples, installation instructions, fees, production, casting – all of these things. What are your memories of the process of putting these together?

MH It was full-on and hardcore to say the least, and very exciting! I had to think of how to sustain my work in years to come. This way of thinking is, by itself, polar opposite to the nature of live performance, which as an art form evaporates the moment it is executed. I am a detail-oriented person in general, but an acquisition requires

a different attention to detail, in that you're constantly projecting towards your absence. And that's kind of macabre. Anyway, apart from this, something I found very difficult to orient was how the casting for dancers could happen when I'm not around. I personally spend a lot of time thinking about casting, and then the actual dancers that end up performing my works become enriched with this particular way of moving. It is a technique, and it takes time to master it. Giving control of this to an institution was the scariest part of all, and this is why there are so many pages describing the working method, titled 'Teaching Instructions' in our acquisition overview. My works in general, including *STAGING: solo*, are not score-based choreographies. Rather, they are script-based choreographies, extremely detailed and precise with lots of labour attached to them. In a way, they are very classical.

MARIA HASSABI *STAGING: solo* 2017, presented as part of *documenta 14*, Kassel, Germany, 2017. Performer: Paige Martin. Courtesy the artist and The Breeder, Athens. Photo: Thomas Poravas

PP For me, one of the really rewarding and exciting parts of the acquisition was that you, as the artist, retained agency as part of the work's placement in the Walker's collection. I think that was a very exciting way of working which changed many things for our institution regarding subsequent acquisitions that involve liveness or choreography. What you set out has really shaped some of the ways that we now think.

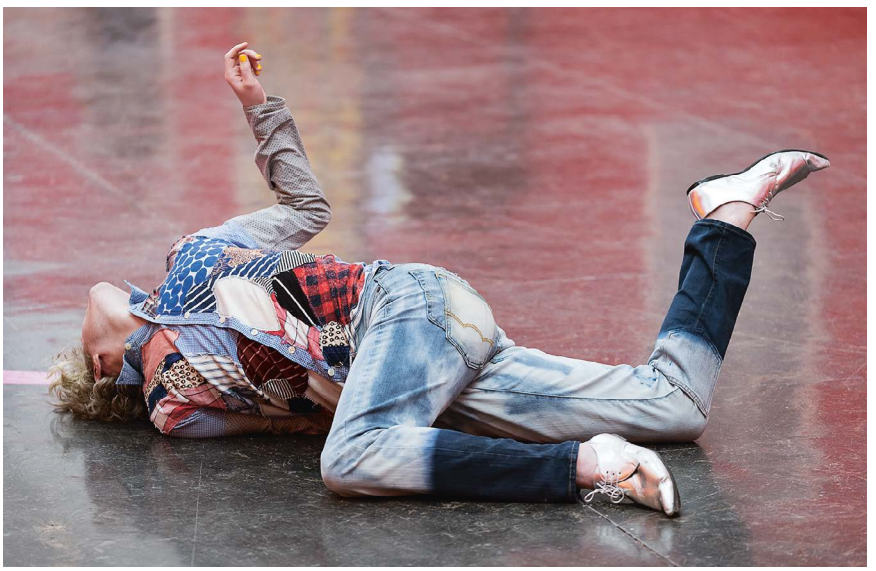
MH In what way?

PP In the acquisition of *STAGING: solo*, we agreed together that your work might expire in the future, which is also why you were interested in shaping these sculptural and archival versions. There's a tension between artists and the institution, especially regarding the institution being a place that typically wants to hold an artwork in perpetuity, like an object in amber, and trap the work in a way. I think that what you set out was very exciting because it shows that works of art shift and are, especially in the case of choreography, contingent on human relationships. One of the ways we addressed this was the stipulation for 'Licensed Teachers', who are continually trained and taught how to perform the work. Has your thinking around this issue changed?

MH I don't think it has changed, although I've realised I am less interested in revisiting previous works – I'd rather make new ones. Even for my works that tour, I give a frame of three years, then they're done. When people ask me, 'Can we have *PREMIERE* from 2013', I say: 'No, it's done'. Usually, choreographers show their work even if it's from twenty years ago. With my object-based works I don't confront the same issues because once they're done, I'm free from them. They can be shipped, belong to others and, apart from minor sustaining, I have nothing else to do with them. With liveness, it takes so much time to recreate, so I prefer to use this time to make something new.

PP That's a very interesting point because keeping the work alive, let's say conserving it, is so much more time-consuming for the artist and demands a lot more energy than conserving a photograph or a painting. Do you think *STAGING: solo* will be an anomaly in your practice, a singular thing? Or do you think there will be other acquisitions that have similar concerns?

MH There is another acquisition of *STAGING: solo* underway. It's done, it's packaged, I'm committed to it. But let's say if there's an interest for a new live installation to be acquired, I would only commit to it if it were score-based, or move forward only with either an archival or sculptural element, such as the lights, which were part of our acquisition conversation for a while.



MARIA HASSABI *STAGING: solo* 2017, Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo, 2018. Performer: Oisín Monaghan. Courtesy the artist and The Breeder, Athens. Photo: Istvan Virag

PP Yes, I remember.

MH But then we all decided, including myself, to go for the live part, that was more exciting. And it was and still is a very special experience and one that gave me a new awareness of how I would do things moving forward.

PP I think it's important to contextualise, for the reader, that the light installations *STAGING wall #1*, 2017, and *STAGING wall #2*, 2017, were shown on either side of the entrance to the galleries where the Walker was presenting *Merce Cunningham: Common Time* – the

exhibition *STAGING: solo* was commissioned for.[1] *STAGING: solo* existed as both a solo in the gallery space, as well as a quartet on a pink carpet in a public space, in a lounge. At the beginning of the conversation, I think we were so hardwired as curators to gravitate immediately to the objects that we started talking with you about the lights. But then the crux of your practice is really liveness.

MH But also lights. I've done many light installations over the years and they are also a crucial element in my theatre works, as they function as another body in space. Therefore, the light installations felt pretty natural to me. But it was more exciting for all of us to think in different terms, in terms of the live element. I remember in the beginning, I thought the lights would be easier and could actually be sold at a more expensive price point. [*Laughs*] But we were really intrigued in figuring out how we could go forward with a live installation. How can we figure this out? And we did!

PP I remember you saying at the time when we explored acquiring the solo or the quartet, that you couldn't wrap your head around a quartet; it was too much at that point.

MH Yes, because you have a script for one performer in *STAGING: solo*. In the quartet, there are four different scripts. It's a four-hour loop, while the solo is a two-hour loop. You know, the quartet is huge! I would have to charge you a lot of money, at least four times more ☺.

PP Oh, I am so happy we went for the solo. [*Laughs*] I remember when we were working on the acquisition, while you were developing the materials you were talking to friends and colleagues, asking them for advice. Can you discuss the role they played in thinking through the acquisition?

MH I don't remember clearly. I remember that it was technical. I remember mostly asking about the technical aspects of the acquisition, such as what the certificate of authenticity should look like. I needed to ask artists, friends of mine, to share their own experiences.

PP We request these certificates for every single work that comes into the collection.

MH I made this acquisition with you directly, without either of the galleries I was working with at that time, and I think that was the difference. Usually, a gallery takes care of the certificate of authenticity. I also wanted to talk through the idea of editioning [*STAGING: solo* is editioned], as well as pricing. I do this every few years. I ask people about prices, to understand the market. I do the same thing with dancers – how much do you pay dancers on tour? How much do you pay for rehearsals? Although I don't define my rates based on that, it brings an awareness of the market rates – I make my own prices thinking of who we are in relation to that.

1 *STAGING*, 2017, is a co-commission of Aarhus 2017, Denmark; *documenta 14*, Kassel; Evergreen's Don River Valley Park Art Program, Toronto; the Keir Foundation, with support from Dancehouse Melbourne; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, with support provided by the William and Nadine McGuire Commissioning Fund, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. It was developed during a residency at Baryshnikov Arts Center, New York.

PP When you think back to the process of creating this acquisition, is there anything significant that you would have done differently?

MH No, I think the changes that I want to make now relate to *STAGING: solo – 5min*. I want to feel proud any time I see it. It's not that I'm not, but I think as an artist, I'm not good with premieres and I didn't see the work realised before the acquisition. The work has to have its first exchange with the audience before I can see clearly what I need to change or edit.

PP I think that one of the other things that is worth talking about, especially at this moment when you're going to have new collaborators, is how you see the future of the long-term stewardship of the work and its 'Licensed Teachers'? As you start working with new people, will you be teaching them *STAGING: solo* so that the Walker will have new people who know the work? How do you think that future memory of *STAGING: solo* will live on?

MH As part of our aquisition overview, the 'Dance Professional' teaches the new dancers *STAGING: solo*. I will have online meetings with the dancers and, a few days before the exhibition, myself or one of the 'Licensed Teachers' will join rehearsals for the final touches.

PP I think for us as an institution, the acquisition of your work was very important. It taught us a huge amount. I think museums and collections such as ours assume that we have to hold things exactly as they were at the time of acquisition. I think that what you've done with *STAGING: solo* has allowed us to think more about how we hold an artist's intention, as much as we hold their object. I think that's been really, really rewarding. And there have been many other people thinking about how we bring choreographic and live works into institutional collections. I think that what you've conceived of with us has been singular and very important to us.

MH Thank you.

(pp. 106–7) MARIA HASSABI *STAGING: solo* 2017, Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo, 2018. Performer: Hristoula Harakas. Courtesy the artist and The Breeder, Athens. Photo: Istvan Virag

BEATRICE JOHNSON

‘Invite being seen’: Judson dances in the Museum of Modern Art

One rarely sits close enough to a performing dancer to lock eyes with her, hear her breathing and see individual beads of sweat on her skin. In the autumn of 2018, as part of the exhibition *Judson Dance Theater: The Work Is Never Done* at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, the virtuosic performer Megan Wright marched, arms raised, towards the front row of seated audience members. As Johann Sebastian Bach's *Goldberg Variations* played over the sound system, Wright completed her performance mere centimetres away from her spectators, eyes fixed on the person in front of her. In a liminal moment as she took her last step and before she dropped her arms, smiled and ran to centrestage to take a bow, she held the gaze of the spectator in front of her. This instant of suspension, between the end of the performance and the beginning of the applause – 'between art and life' – was made possible by the physical proximity between performer and viewer.[1] The encounter would not occur in most proscenium theatre settings, where architectural and visual boundaries – an elevated stage, tiered seating, curtains, lighting – separate the performance and audience spaces. In the MoMA atrium, dancers and spectators occupied the same horizontal plane, with only a line of floor tape delineating their respective spaces. The bright, homogenous lighting blurred the traditional performance boundaries further, with performers and audience members able to clearly see each other. The physical gap between artist and viewer was closed and along with it, an affective one.

Wright performed as part of the exhibition's live performance series, in a program of works by Judson-era choreographer Steve Paxton that took place three times daily for six consecutive days. As an Assistant Performance Coordinator for the exhibition, I saw all eighteen presentations and as many close encounters between dancer and audience.[2] Nearly every time, spectators singled out by Wright's gaze watched her approach with a combination of awe and unease. I witnessed an uncertainty and levity in these moments that contrasted with the context of their occurrence: a well-rehearsed, repeatedly performed restaging of a decades-old work in a historical exhibition. The tension between this canonising of dance history and spark of unpredictability characterised *Judson Dance Theater: The Work Is Never Done* (henceforth *The Work Is Never Done*).

The exhibition's atrium performance program showcased works dated between 1961 and 1986, and featured each of the following artists in consecutive, two-week segments: Yvonne Rainer, Deborah Hay, David Gordon, Lucinda Childs, and Steve Paxton. The final segment focused on Movement Research, a New York–based non-profit that serves as a laboratory for the investigation of dance and movement-based forms. Movement Research's program considered the 'contemporary afterlife' of Judson, and the enduring influence on dance artists today of those 1960s experiments.[3] In the interstitial moments between performances, a large-scale video installation designed for the exhibition by filmmaker Charles Atlas was

1 Building on the avant-garde movements of the 1910s and 1920s, in the early 1960s, an interest in blurring the conventional boundaries between art and life developed globally and across disciplines. This became evident in the materials artists employed to create object-based artworks, and in emerging practices that involved viewer participation. Robert Rauschenberg incorporated everyday objects into his *Combine* paintings and stated: 'Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made (I try to act in the gap between the two).' (Robert Rauschenberg quoted in Dorothy Canning Miller, *Sixteen Americans*, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1959, p. 58.) The critic Arthur Danto wrote of this milieu: 'Closing the gap between art and life was a project shared by a number of movements, united by a common mistrust of the claims of high art.' (Arthur C. Danto, 'The world as warehouse: Fluxus and philosophy', in *Unnatural Wonders: Essays from the Gap Between Art and Life*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007, p. 336.) This interest developed in dance as well, and historian Sally Banes considers it a key concern in postmodern dance of the 1960s to the 1980s, with real life becoming 'both subject and material for art'. (Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, CT, 1987, p. 16.)

2 In fact, I saw thirty-six of them: the Paxton program was bookended by two performances of the *Goldberg Variations*, the first by Wright and the closing one by Nicholas Sciscione.

3 Ana Janevski, 'Judson Dance Theater: The Work Is Never Done – sanctuary always needed', in Thomas J. Lax & Ana Janevski (eds), *Judson Dance Theater: The Work Is Never Done*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2018, p. 35.

YVONNE RAINER *Diagonal* 1963, presented as part of *Judson Dance Theater: The Work Is Never Done* 2018–19, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Performers: Yvonne Rainer, Keith Sabado, Emmanuèle Phuon and Patricia Catterson. Photo: Paula Court

projected across two walls of the atrium. Atlas, in collaboration with Trisha Brown Dance Company's former archive director Cori Olinghouse, memorialised the late Trisha Brown in a segment showcasing rehearsal and performance footage of her landmark works from 1966 to 1981. Inside the exhibition galleries, alongside a presentation of artworks and archives, a selection of Simone Forti's *Dance Constructions*, 1960–61, were performed three days per week for the duration of the exhibition.[4]

What follows is articulated around three stages of the dancer's journey in the museum: the choreographic nature of dancers' travelling within the museum building, the hierarchy between humans and objects once dancers occupy museum galleries, and, finally, the possibilities presented by the performer's encounter with the audience. This text is part of a larger project that parses historical and theoretical writing along with firsthand accounts to develop an analysis of dance in the museum, using the singular contributions of *The Work Is Never Done* as a basis for both insight and improvement. My observations while working closely with artists and museum professionals on the exhibition support a deliberately functional lens through which to interpret part of the enormous amount of scholarship produced on the Judson Dance Theater. Beyond Judson's significance in art history, I am most interested in the human relationships that defined it then, as they also define it today as a subject for exhibition in the museum: the movement, effort, trust, exhaustion, anxiety, exhilaration and care that animate both dancers on stage and museum staff in the proverbial wings.

THE BUILDING

Ralph Lemon describes his experiences performing at MoMA in terms of belonging and transgression: 'The dancers were visitors. Visitors with agency, but visitors … Dance will always be on the outside. It doesn't really belong there.'[5] Questions of agency, belonging, and inside versus outside undergird the presence of dance in the museum and synthesised the interwoven histories and discourses of *The Work Is Never Done*.

In the case of Judson-era works, which originated in and around arts institutions, the notion of belonging is particularly nuanced.[6] Despite a rich shared history and community, dance artists do not 'own' the museum in the same way that they own the theatre during a performance run. Traditionally, dancers 'belong' in the theatre: it is theirs to inhabit, to use, and its spaces are built for them.[7] Moreover, the blueprint of the theatre is familiar to them: downstage, upstage, stage left, stage right, backstage and green rooms are organised according to known principles and described with a shared vocabulary.

4 In 2015, MoMA acquired Forti's *Dance Constructions*, including the following works: *See Saw* and *Roller Boxes* (formerly *Rollers*) from an exhibition at the Reuben Gallery, New York, in December 1960; the five *Dance Constructions* presented in Yoko Ono's loft in May 1961, *Huddle*, *Slant Board*, *Hangers*, *Platforms*, and *Accompaniment* (all 1961); and *Censor* and *From Instructions*, two of the 'some other things' in 'five dance constructions and some other things' (also 1961). (Megan Metcalf, 'In the new body: Simone Forti's *Dance Constructions* (1960–61) and their acquisition by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)', dissertation, University of California, 2018, p. 128).

5 Mark Franko, 'Mark Franko responds: homeless in the museum, or, how to be a school', 6 Feb. 2014, *Movement Research – Critical Correspondence*, <https://movementresearch.org/publications/critical-correspondence/mark-franko-responds-homeless-in-the-museum-or-how-to-be-a-school>, accessed 15 May 2023.

6 Artists of the Judson Dance Theater generation were keenly interested in re-evaluating both space and place, and many performed outside the traditional proscenium framework: in the Judson Church itself; on streets, plazas and rooftops; in lofts, studios and art galleries. Moreover, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a number of these artists increasingly allied themselves with visual arts spaces and their audiences. Simone Forti presented early works in an art gallery and Yoko Ono's loft. Alex Hay, Lucinda Childs, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer and Trisha Brown were all included in the Whitney Museum's well-regarded *Composer's Showcase* series in the early 1970s. And as early as 1969, Deborah Hay – who had performed her work in other museums, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Walker Art Center and Moderna Museet in Stockholm – wrote directly to the Whitney's director John Baur and negotiated the use of a large, uninterrupted performance area in the museum galleries to stage her dance concert *911*. (Banes, xvii; Claire Bishop, 'The perils and possibilities of dance in the museum: Tate, MoMA, and Whitney', *Dance Research Journal*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2014, pp. 69–70).

On the other hand, MoMA belongs to a lineage of institutions built to house objects, and until the 2019 unveiling of its new black box theatre, 'The Studio', its spaces were – often idiosyncratically – retrofitted to accommodate specific performance projects, and not always knowable to performers ahead of their entrance into the building.[8] In addition, MoMA's scale and structure include many barriers to entry, many thresholds to cross. I walked tens of thousands of steps over the course of the exhibition to escort dancers to and from different parts of the building, like a shepherd to a flock of artists. Without my staff ID to unlock access to the museum's staff elevators and conference rooms, where the green rooms had been temporarily set up, performers could not travel these paths on their own. Ironically, these restrictions in movement created a new choreography: a migratory group of performance coordinators and cast members moving along set itineraries at specific intervals before, between and after performances. This secondary choreography also impinged upon the mental space that characterises pre- and post-performance moments, which are often quite personal and introspective for performers, and became compulsorily collective and public, as coordinators corralled performers from offices through public thoroughfares and spaces directly onto the atrium stage, in full view of the audience.

THE GALLERIES

Though many Judson Dance Theater works were born in and around visual arts institutions, there existed then (and still exists now) a hierarchical relationship between dance and the visual arts.[9] Introducing living, moving artists into the MoMA galleries brought the power dynamics between humans and objects in the museum context into sharp focus. Art museums are still primarily designed and run according to the needs of material objects, with protocols for the safekeeping of these objects generally overseen by an institution's Conservation and Registration departments. The museum's climate-control systems – low humidity and temperatures hovering around or below 20 degrees Celcius – favour the museum's objects and are less than hospitable to working performers. Members of the Stephen Petronio Company, who performed the Paxton program, huddled in a small area adjacent to the atrium, sectioned off with pipe and drape to serve as a makeshift wing, where air conditioning caused steep drops in temperature between performances. Piles of fuzzy blankets were purchased, space heaters were hazardously plugged into gallery walls, and performance staff did what we could to provide support and encouragement, if not actual warmth, to dancers. Other performance essentials, such as access to water and warm food, posed similar challenges given the

7 In the strictest and most traditional sense, the museum is a public institution dedicated to the presentation, interpretation and preservation of art objects. In an equally traditional and cursory sense, dance is a movement-based art form that mostly occupies stages in proscenium theatres. While folk dances such as flamenco, samba, bachata, jalisco and others have historically occupied public spaces, such as town squares and the street, so-called 'concert dance', deriving from court dances of the seventeenth century and epitomised by ballet in the nineteenth century, emerged as a supporting art form for opera, and thus found its home in the theatre.

8 For *The Work Is Never Done*, MoMA outfitted its nearly 4000-square-foot atrium space with a wall-to-wall sprung floor and marley, providing performers with what most in the dance field consider a baseline standard for safe performance. Other accommodations proved more erratic: construction areas partly open to the outside became backstage spaces; a rotating selection of conference rooms and auditoriums – some several flights away from the performance space – served as green rooms; a bright, homogeneous lighting design served as the single lighting plan for all performance programs; and in lieu of a tech booth, a folding plastic table with two AV staff and their laptops stood directly on the atrium floor, in full view of the audience. Performers were generally introduced to these performance conditions and the layout of these spaces on their first day of rehearsal in the museum.

9 As dance critic Franz Anton Cramer notes: 'Only when an art form could give proof of its presence in the museum could it be considered part of high culture.' (Franz Anton Cramer, 'Experience as artifact: transformations of the immaterial,' *Dance Research Journal*, vol. 46, no. 3, December 2014, p. 24.) Regarding modern dance, theatre and dance studies scholar Gabriele Brandstetter writes: 'Terpsichore, always on the lowest rung of the hierarchy of muses according to the aesthetic canon of philosophy from Aristotle to Hegel.' (Gabriele Brandstetter, *Poetics of Dance, Body, Image, and Space in the Historical Avant-Gardes*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015, p. 64.)

museum's strict policies about food in the galleries, also set in accordance with the preservation needs of the artworks.

STEPHEN PETRONIO COMPANY *Excerpt from Goldberg Variations* 2017, based on *The Goldberg Variations by J.S. Bach Played by Glenn Gould Improvised by Steve Paxton* 1986–92, presented as part of *Judson Dance Theater: The Work Is Never Done* 2018–19, the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Performer: Megan Wright. Photo: Robert Altman

While dance artist Shelley Senter performed as part of Boris Charmatz's *Musée de la danse: Three Collective Gestures* at MoMA in 2013, the cashmere scarf she left near her performance area was taken, presumably by a visitor. Senter was not able to receive assistance in dealing with the incident, and the scarf was not recovered. Though visitor belongings do not fall under museum security staff's purview, Senter recalls her frustration that a valuable tool for her safety as a performer – particularly in the museum's frosty galleries – was not given careful consideration by the guard. She also perceived a certain irony in the strict guarding of Robert Morris's *(Untitled)*, 1968, in an adjoining gallery – a sprawling floor installation of shreds of various media, including fabric.[10]

The question of *what* and, more importantly, *whom* museum staff are trained to protect can define encounters between dance and the museum, and is a central and evolving concern of performance curators and producers at MoMA, as the institution now consistently invites living, breathing, and occasionally dancing bodies into its galleries. Following the Charmatz exhibition, still early in the history of MoMA's live dance programming, the museum organised a series of retreats fostering in-depth conversations between museum curators and dance professionals, with the goal of developing best practices for dance presentations at the institution – many, though not all of which could be implemented for *The Work Is Never Done*.

THE AUDIENCE

On the fourth day of her program at MoMA, Yvonne Rainer unexpectedly took the stage. After three days of watching her cast perform, Rainer stood up from her front-row bench and joined six dancers in the middle of *Diagonal*, 1963. The dancers moved back and forth along diagonals in the space according to pre-formulated movement sequences combined through a game of chance: when a dancer calls a number or letter, all or part of the cast moves according to a specific travelling movement pre-assigned to that number or letter. The sequencing, duration and intersections of each movement type are determined by the dancers' decisions in the moment. That day, Rainer's desire to be onstage added a new level of chance, which both her cast and the audience embraced

10 Shelley Senter, interview with the author, 3 March 2023.

with surprise and palpable emotion. At eighty-three years old, Rainer could not do all the movements, which include both graceful and silly iterations of walking, running, leaping and crawling on hands and knees, for example, '8. Straight-leg waddle – arms high doing small windmill'; or 'D-2. Parallel arms str. ahead, at peak of ascent, round back'; or, delightfully, 'C. Movie death run ('Breathless')'.[11] Instead, Rainer marked some of the movements, milled around or stood during others and, most poignantly, took flight as the cast came together to lift her body up during one movement, to the rapturous applause of the audience (see p. 112). The horizontal relationship between audience and performers in the MoMA atrium gave Rainer the unique ability to act on a spontaneous decision and perform her own work onstage. Although, through its very nature, *Diagonal* always involves the unexpected, Rainer's unscripted appearance shifted the energy of the piece, and of the room. The work, quite playful and somewhat informal, became laden with both pathos and heroism – its creator physically and metaphorically supported by the future stewards of her work.

When dancers move from the theatre into the museum, the spatio-temporal boundaries of the performance become porous, and the audience's rules of engagement shift. The traditional signals delineating 'performance time' – spectators in their seats, dimming lights, rising curtains – give way to more ambiguous markers: an uncertain hush spreading through the audience, performers spotted walking into the gallery, the beginning of a sound piece over a sound system. From an audience perspective, *The Work Is Never Done* generated a shift in time – what Claire Bishop distinguishes as 'gallery time' versus 'theatre time'.[12] The indistinct boundaries of the performance area in the galleries of *The Work Is Never Done*, along with the atrium's partial role as a building thoroughfare, allowed for non-linear viewing experiences. Visitors who entered the atrium with the express purpose of seeing a performance generally arrived early, found a seat and stayed for the duration, following the conventions of 'theatre time'. Visitors to the exhibition who were unaware of the performance schedule, or, moreover, museum visitors who were entirely unaware of the exhibition, had more unpredictable viewing patterns and attention spans. While some took a brief look then moved on, as one might with an art object on a wall, others became captivated and stayed for the duration of the performance. While monitoring the atrium floor during the Rainer, Childs, and Paxton programs, I witnessed both types of reactions, and many in between, from toddlers to octogenarians.

Dancers' physical proximity to museum visitors makes the focus or distraction of their audience quite palpable. It also creates some of the most charged and thrillingly unpredictable performance moments, such as Rainer's surprise appearance in *Diagonal*. In particular, the gaze defined many of these performer–audience interactions. Julie Cunningham and Rashaun Mitchell of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company describe locking eyes with their audience during the company's 2009 performances at Dia Beacon, New York. Cunningham remembers the emotional arc of moving from a darkened theatre, imagining that no one is there, to a brightly lit museum space: 'It's at first intimidating, but after a while, I find it fun to look people in the eye, and see what they do.'[13] Mitchell remarks: 'I choose to look at people.

11 Score for *Diagonal*, from Yvonne Rainer, *Work 1961–73*, Primary Information, Brooklyn, NY, 2020, p. 28.

12 Claire Bishop, 'Delegated performance: outsourcing authenticity', *October*, vol. 140, 2012, p. 104. Although Judson Dance Theater artists often resisted these architectural and temporal boundaries, as noted in note 6, Bishop refers here to traditional proscenium theatre settings, which remain the most conventional and common home of the performing arts, including many contemporary presentations of Judson-era works. Beginning in the early 2010s, choreographers such as Trisha Brown and Lucinda Childs – along with Merce Cunningham, whose performances in non-traditional settings beginning in the mid-1960s laid the groundwork for Judson's experimentation with space and place – were regularly celebrated and received top billing in performing arts institutions both nationally and abroad, including at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Bard College's Richard B. Fisher Center for Performing Arts, and the Paris Opera, among others.

13 Nancy Dalva, 'Merce Cunningham: Mondays with Merce #7: Events', 1 Dec. 2019, *Classroom – Art & Education*, <https://www.artandeducation.net/classroom/video/306374/merce-cunningham-mondays-with-merce-7-events>, accessed 16 May 2023.

It might make them uncomfortable, but I feel like it's a little bit more real to do that.'[14] One senses a playfulness, even a slight exertion of power, in these descriptions. For her part, Megan Wright vividly remembers locking eyes with her audience during the final bars of *Goldberg Variations*, perceiving – and relishing – this moment as one of singular agency in a context otherwise loaded with historical significance and circumscription.[15] David Thomson, who performed in the Rainer and Hay programs, also describes a feeling of agency, along with experiences of profound emotional resonance and humanity in several encounters with viewers, in particular while holding their gaze.[16] To Thomson, the porousness of the atrium space and direct visual access to his audience enabled him to find new and transformative approaches to inhabiting a role, occasionally moving him to tears.

Deborah Hay's movement practice is articulated around deceptively simple instructions that encourage open-ended, curious and risk-taking investigations into physical awareness, perception and communion with others. Hay's choreographic framework and transmission engage poetic language, often in the form of aphorisms that, in their intentionality, encourage performer agency and demonstrate Hay's willingness to relinquish control: 'get what you need'; 'no big deal'; 'no hesitation, no reconsideration'; or 'invite being seen'.[17] Hay writes:

> Inviting being seen spontaneously creates relationship between the player/performer and audience who may otherwise go unrealized. I thereby replace my separation from the audience with a field of positive action that invites audience to engage attentionally.[18]

As dance artists move through the museum's private and public spaces – its offices, elevators, hallways and galleries – they contend with a heightened state of 'inviting being seen', trading private, introspective moments in the wings for more direct relationships with their audience, beginning before they step onstage and continuing after they take their bow. Dance's dynamic and imperfect frictions with the museum can only benefit from close analysis and refined practices, but perhaps its most rewarding opportunities can be found in Hay's 'field of positive action', where being seen is an invitation rather than an imposition, an exchange rather than a witnessing – an instant of communion that a darkened proscenium theatre cannot offer.

14 Dalva.
15 Megan Wright, interview with the author, 22 March 2022.
16 David Thomson, interview with the author, 22 Feb. 2023.
17 Miguel Angel Guzmán, interview with the author, 27 March 2023.
18 Deborah Hay, 'Playing awake: letters to my daughter', *TDR: The Drama Review*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1989, p. 72.

LATAI TAUMOEPEAU IN CONVERSATION
WITH ERIN BRANNIGAN

‘Doing space’: *The Last Resort*

1 *NIRIN* was the first Biennale of Sydney with an Indigenous Australian artistic director, Brook Andrew, and ran from 14 March to 8 June 2020.

The Last Resort, 2020, was a live performance and installation co-devised by Tongan–Australian artist Latai Taumoepeau with her relative Taliu Aloua, presented at the 22nd Biennale of Sydney, titled *NIRIN*, in the vast disused industrial building on Cockatoo Island.[1] During vernissage week, Taumoepeau and Aloua slowly and carefully removed glass bottles from woven plastic bags stacked around them like a dam, working the glass with mallets and bricks strapped to their feet, like Japanese geta, into a sea of shards. The performance-creation resulted in piles of bags and a sea of glass that remained in the exhibition space, accompanied by split-screen video of the action, throughout the duration of the Biennale. *The Last Resort* shared many components of another work, *Stitching Up the Sea*, 2014, devised for a theatre context at Blacktown Arts Centre, Sydney, and performed over two hours. The following is an edited transcript of a discussion between Latai Taumoepeau and Erin Brannigan about these works.

MATERIALS, URGENCY AND THE SPACE BETWEEN

LATAI TAUMOEPEAU (LT) *Stitching Up the Sea*, 2014, and *The Last Resort*, 2020, are genealogically the same work, performed over time. The first iteration of *Stitching Up the Sea* was part of a co-curated program that Paschal Daantos Berry and I put together for Blacktown Arts Centre that explored how that organisation might generate a relationship with the local Pacific Islander community. I had to make a performative response to that outreach, so, in its very first iteration, the work was looking at the fragility and strength of a community, and that's how the glass came about. My cousin Tevita Havea was a glass-blower at the time, and we were thinking about glass and the poetics of that material talking to the strength and fragility of any newly arrived community. *Stitching Up the Sea* observed the space between generations and the space between family members. 'The space between' is a translation of a common Tongan concept, *tauhi vaha'a*, which loosely means to maintain the space between things. So it's a relational practice that we observe, whether it's between family members or between a person and the environment or the natural world.

Then, over the years, another understanding of the relationship between glass and silica and sand has developed from an environmental and climate-change perspective, and another poetic meaning has emerged associated with an island. So the way the work progressed, starting as one thing and then revealing other ideas

through the same material, enabled me to get a little bit more money and focus on exploring its possibilities. Then in 2016 I took it overseas to the *SACRED:Homelands Festival* in London.

This development of the glass followed a similar pattern to the way I worked with ice in *i-Land X-isle*, 2013, and *Ocean Island Mine*, 2015. Ice is another transparent material and is also linked to working within budget limitations. Working with 'urgency' in terms of climate change and crisis means you can't work in large timescales and budgets because you need to be responsive and adaptive. So that really spoke to working with very modest materials that are readily available. In Blacktown, the local Workers Club is literally right behind the Arts Centre, so we sourced glass from there to trial as a material.

PRECARITY AND INVENTION

LT After that second iteration and after the work went to London, it just sat there for a little while. The Australian Museum wanted a work to feature climate change, but their insurance wouldn't allow *Stitching Up the Sea* to happen. The Sydney Opera House did a very small version of it that was attached to a climate talk. Then I had a brain injury in 2019, a year before the Sydney Biennale. Because of my health event I missed many opportunities to apply for more funding, and it became clear I had to revisit an existing work for the Biennale. At the time, I was still learning to walk and sit down, I had to relearn many things, so *Stitching Up the Sea* became the work I thought I could do. I brought my cousin Taliu in from Tonga because having someone else I could work with made it easier. Once they told me I was exhibiting on Cockatoo Island, that also informed what I would do. It was nice to think about the labour that had occurred on what was an island penitentiary and how that aligns with *Stitching Up the Sea*. I retitled the work *The Last Resort* because I wanted it to be a new version that was site-specific.

I also wanted to edition documentation of *The Last Resort* for collections because I had used the Biennale money to bring my cousin over from Tonga. I had to ask my costume designers and lighting designers to credit me, but I was confident I could sell the video. That was based on my relationships, trust, generosity and my way of working. Treating professional relationships like cultural ones, like genealogical ties that are old and deep. It also relates to my cousin and that ancestral kinship – it's an obligatory relationship. Can I work with arts professionals on this basis? It's reflected in the strength of the glass and fragility in the work.

The serialising of this work was really important because every iteration focuses on a different area that it can actually represent; each version is trying to emphasise something within the context of where it's being shown. The very first iteration, *Stitching Up the Sea*, explored the relationship between myself and my cousins, the in-between or the *vā*. Our relationship is actually a friendship, and then we have these other obligations based on our own as well as our ancestors' biological sex. Part of that comes into play in how the performance takes shape – Who are the people I might be able to engage to do dangerous work? This is something that we find

particularly interesting in the cultural diaspora. As time goes by, these relational, intangible things are the things that disappear. A few centuries ago, kin could have been obliged to have one of their fingers cut off to bury with a significant person. These parts of the relationship still exist, they're strong, but often they're unseen, and then other parts are fragile, which is where the glass poetics come from. With *The Last Resort*, because the Biennale is a global stage, it's another context where we don't need to focus on our personal relationships. It's part of the narrative, but the greater relationship is who we are in the natural world and in relation to economically developing countries who are doing all the climate advocacy labour. So that became the focus.

PERFORMANCE/ART

LT The performance side of it is really important because it's sitting among other artists' beautiful objects. In comparison, my work has to be created in the process of performance, so what is left behind of the work is actually the residue of a performance. I don't like my work being compared to a visual-art installation. It needs to sit inside my strongest practice which is performance, not visual art. Apart from constructing the work during vernissage, we scheduled three performances. Everything is based on what the insurance stipulates. I had to perform the work with a first aid officer, and one day they didn't turn up, so the performance was cancelled. I think maybe they didn't understand that it was critical to the artwork. It does go to show the comprehension needed around what's required for such work to happen.

ERIN BRANNIGAN (EB) Your fellow Pacific artist Taloi Havini said about the glistening light of the glass in *The Last Resort*:

> When I stood in your work and watched this whole bed of glass glistening with light, it looked to me in many ways like how the light hits the surface and reflects on and through the ocean.[2]

LT For this work, I had a lighting designer, Amber Silk, come in and work with me. I always work with a lighting designer whenever I can. The Sydney Biennale had their own light but it was very functional, and the shards just looked like glass rubble. Theatre uses visual cues in the space and I'm used to working with theatrical devices, so I worked with Amber to create that glistening – to create a complexity around the material and an association with the ocean in that kind of holiday-ish way, the resort kind of life. What Amber did was so beautiful; there was light streaming in from above the vast industrial space on Cockatoo Island and the sun was shifting, so she set up a lighting system that would track in a very similar way to natural light to catch the glass.

2 Taloi Havini in Latai Taumoepeau and Taloi Havini, 'The Last Resort: a conversation', *e-flux journal*, no. 112, Oct. 2020, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/112/353919/the-last-resort-a-conversation/>, accessed 15 April 2023.

It was a big deal for the Sydney Biennale to think about different 'states' of the work and the light doing things, not simply lighting the object for a functional purpose. In the performance world, lighting is part of generating an experience for the audience. Working inside a visual-arts perspective, I try to have a relationship with the audience that I have as a performer, using all the devices that we are used to having. This is also a way of instructing institutions. It's part of an ongoing relationship with non-performance-based institutions, trying to emphasise some of the important things from a performance practice.

MOVEMENT PATHWAYS

LT It is nice to be talking within the context of dance and the gallery and the *Precarious Movements* project because I know dance and choreography are at the core of my practice, but it's not necessarily visible or understood that way.

A general term I've been using is *faivā*, which is the category of performed-body practices. Dance sits in there, but so does surfing, it's broad, and then with the introduction of cinema, they've called it 'electric dance'. But the actual word *faivā* I translate as 'to do space'; it's the action of doing space. A body practice allows anything to happen, which is what I like. It enables me to find the process I need to create that work, and the body work always sits within the parameters I have that come from my cultural structures and vocabularies. Those parameters are the invisible things that add to the way that we can perceive the form of a performance, that add to that global conversation around what performance is and what it does and how it works.

In *The Last Resort*, like *Stitching Up the Sea*, working with my cousins was quite interesting because I thought, 'I'm a dancer, but what are they going to do?' Taliu has a very strong body and has a yoga practice, and setting parameters for his movement was really important to reflect our cultural roles in relation to each other. It meant I could add more cultural vocabulary to my movements, while he was being very practical and functional. Also, at that time my physical abilities were still building back up after my health event so I didn't have as much control over my body and had to choreograph an improvisational framework accordingly.

I'm always creating the conditions for us to just be 'real'. The rejection of virtuosic dance vocabularies is very deliberate. There's also dancing with the materials, all of it, the costume and the glass, so the movement comes from those conditions, the balancing of an ecosystem.

EB You have said, 'I don't separate myself, my own personal body from this region Oceania, or the Pacific'.

LT That statement comes from a very specific Tongan word, which is *fonua*. It means land, it means placenta and it means burial. In this relationship you see how the body is not only relatable to place but also to life and death, a cyclical relationship. It's taken me a long time to be able to articulate some of these concepts where many intersecting but different cultural perspectives are involved. But now there's a tangible body of work that other people can comprehend, and it is something that I just know in my body, that materiality of the body, that knowledge in the body, that embodied archive that's so alive. My work is creating different frames for that body of work to exist, and I share this with my *moana oceania* colleagues Victoria Hunt and Brian Fuata. It's part of coming from an oratory culture where dance's function may be to record and document what happens, and we as dancers embody that. It's our responsibility in the arts to enable and explore other cultural frameworks that are true to us, growing deeper forms that carve out multidisciplinary spaces that may serve our communities and contribute to the artistic lanscape in Australia. My question has always been, 'How do I make dances about our times now?'

(p. 122) LATAI TAUMOEPEAU *The Last Resort* 2020, 22nd Biennale of Sydney, Cockatoo Island, 2020. Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney with generous assistance from the Oranges & Sardines Foundation. Performer: Latai Taumoepeau. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Zan Wimberley

LOUISE O'KELLY

A third way: performance, choreography and the institution

> The most effective way of bringing about change isn't by resisting institutions and throwing grenades, but by walking through the front door and accepting the invitation to make change from within.[1]
> ELIZABETH DILLER

As the founder and director of Block Universe, London's leading international performance art festival and commissioning body, I identify well with Elizabeth Diller's sentiment and the desire to affect change within institutional structures. In my case, this desire was to foster positive developments in the relationship between art institutions and performance, and to reposition contemporary performance within the cultural landscape of London.

Almost a decade ago, there were no support structures for what I saw as a new generation of artists who were approaching performance in a novel way: usually working in an 'undisciplined' or interdisciplinary manner and often developing work in collaboration with others, mixing installation, video, music and dance or choreographic structures.[2] There were also a number of artists with backgrounds in contemporary dance who were working in a conceptual way that spoke to the frameworks of contemporary art but were struggling to find sufficient outlets or the right contexts in which to present their work. For me, all of these emerging artists reflected a visionary new direction in contemporary artistic practice that lacked recognition, appropriate support and resourcing. Any solution for integrating this new generation of performance makers into the fabric of institutional programming and London's cultural landscape would require a creative approach somewhere in-between, or perhaps beyond, the two scenarios identified by Diller: a third way.

At the time I launched Block Universe in 2015, performance of any kind still occupied the margins of contemporary art and was not a common feature of institutional programming in the United Kingdom. When we began, performance was mainly presented as a form of entertainment at a gallery opening, or as part of a public program at the weekend – existing primarily in response to the main exhibition but never given space in its own right. We can still see this approach in the way institutions plan summer, learning, education, late-night and interim programs or when a performance is expected to 'activate' the spaces in-between and around an exhibition, rather than inhabit it on its own terms. This reflects a common understanding that live programs rarely occupy the central exhibition halls or command lengthy time slots and significant budgets within an institution. Instead, artists are frequently offered peripheral sites and conditions which continue to marginalise their voice and practice. In addition to compromised conditions within institutions and commercial galleries, there was not a single venue in London dedicated to performance where one could consistently experience this type of work. It was clear to me that improvements were needed in both the working conditions of artists and the resources allocated, as well as a better understanding of the importance and complexity of live works.

This led me to create Block Universe, a curated, international-facing platform dedicated to cutting-edge performance, with an emphasis on supporting emerging UK-based artists. In our inaugural year, I was concerned with how, as a festival, we could create a legacy for what are traditionally considered ephemeral works of art. One approach I utilised was presenting works that involved choreographic structures, song, and oral histories to posit the body as both an archive and repository for performance. This emphasis foregrounded the concept of embodied memories, highlighting works that involved rehearsal and repetition, and were designed to be repeated rather than 'disappear'.[3] This concept also acted as a riposte to theories around the ephemerality of performance as espoused by Peggy Phelan. I felt her

1 Elizabeth Diller & RoseLee Goldberg, 'In conversation with RoseLee Goldberg', in Charles Aubin & Carlos Mínguez Carrasco (eds), *Bodybuilding: Architecture and Performance*, Performa, New York, 2019, p. 62.

2 When speaking about her practice, Alexandra Pirici uses the term 'undisciplined', which can be described as art that does not distinguish between disciplines or accept categorisation, as defined by cultural theorist Irit Rogoff.

3 Peggy Phelan, 'Performance's being … becomes itself through disappearance', in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 146.

much-quoted theory was rooted in a type of work from the 1960s and 1970s prioritising one-off actions that were not representative of contemporary practices.

As part of my mission to reposition contemporary performance practices within the artistic landscape, performance needed to be brought in from the margins both conceptually and geographically. This is where I felt institutions had an important role to play. With direct access to large audiences and central London locations, they were the perfect vehicle for building awareness of this type of work with audiences who might not otherwise seek it out. Hence, over the years we have worked with many major institutions, such as the Royal Academy of Arts, Somerset House, Institute of Contemporary Arts, British Museum, IWM (previously Imperial War Museum), Tate, Whitechapel Gallery and Sadler's Wells, among others. Although for the purposes of this text I will be primarily looking at examples of how we worked with institutions such as these, it was always important to me that the context for staging a work was considered, as each location comes with a pre-existing set of conditions that influence the behaviour and expectations of the audience. So, apart from traditional museums and contemporary art institutions, we also programmed events across London in historical buildings, black box theatres, community centres, office buildings and semi-derelict buildings, to name just a few, as well as staging international projects in a variety of contexts abroad. In our new commissions we could be playful with how we paired performances with venues, addressing practical needs alongside the artist's vision.

Two examples of works we realised in traditional institutions where the venue had an important resonance with the artistic concept are Alexis Blake's commission *Conditions of an Ideal*, 2016, presented at the British Museum, and Alexandra Pirici's *Leaking Territories*, 2017/19, presented at the IWM, both organised through the public engagement departments. Blake's *Conditions of an Ideal* was presented within the British Museum's Parthenon galleries, which host the politically contested Elgin Marbles. It took a year and a half of conversations to gain the trust of the British Museum team, who were concerned about a performance acting as a form of protest or in any way criticising the museum board. In this highly charged and historically significant setting, Blake devised a choreography against the backdrop of Classical Greek busts in partnership with an ethnically diverse, all-female cast of performers ranging in age from sixteen to sixty-plus and of varying physical ability. Through movement that referenced Diana Watt's and Dora Menzler's contributions to the women's physical culture movement of the early twentieth century, *Conditions of an Ideal* eloquently challenged national collective identities and representation, addressing colonialism's deep roots as manifest in one of the United Kingdom's leading institutions.

Alexandra Pirici's ongoing action *Leaking Territories*, originally created in 2017 for the decentennial Skulptur Projekte Münster, had responded to the unique history of Münster's town hall, where the Treaty of Münster was signed in 1648. As part of the Peace of Westphalia, this treaty is widely recognised as the foundation of our modern system of nation-states and international law, as well as promoting tolerance and diplomacy. The choreography of this ongoing action, involving movement, sculptural montage, spoken word and audience interaction, speaks to territorial divisions, and historical and political milestones as remediated through the performers' bodies. Adapted specifically for its UK presentation and referencing Brexit, it was important that we found an appropriate site that could speak to the history of politics and power in the United Kingdom. This led to the choice of the IWM, which positions itself as an institution that represents the experiences of ordinary people living through war and conflict. However, similar to the British Museum, there were some concerns regarding the potential controversial nature of the work. Again, Block Universe acted as a mediator – in this case to counter requests from IWM for the script, an intrinsic constituent of the work. A compromise was reached whereby the first rehearsal would be attended by the IWM team to experience the work in person, which seemed to satisfy any concerns. Often it seems that fears around the content of performances are extinguished by experiencing an intelligent and powerful work of art firsthand.

As an independent platform representing relatively marginalised voices and practices, in these cases and numerous others,

Block Universe created a space to mediate the relationship between the artist and the institution, acting as an entity somewhere between the two. As part of negotiating this space, we made proposals for work that would align with pre-existing programs where necessary and provided the majority of the budget as well as a dedicated team to realise the production of performances in tandem with in-house staff. Neither throwing grenades nor awaiting invitations to walk through the front door, we invited ourselves in. Finding this third way is emblematic of how we needed to operate as an organisation to successfully negotiate space for artists working outside the bounds of the traditional media that dominate exhibition programs.

By inviting ourselves in, we found an alternative means of entering the institutional framework. Frequently, this would be via an institution's public programs department, which seemed to have greater capacity for risk, with an events-based structure operating within and around exhibition spaces, courtyards or lecture halls. Working with departments whose programming may undergo less scrutiny than the main exhibition program often allowed us a presence within institutions that otherwise would not have been possible, and more flexibility to negotiate a partnership that wouldn't compromise the presentation of a work. As part of a larger festival, these events could also receive wider recognition and visibility through Block Universe's own press and marketing than customary for a public program event. We found this approach to be an effective way to inhabit space in institutional programs that were not structured to host live works, in buildings that were not designed to cater to the needs of performance: a way to *make* space where before there was none.

This approach to finding an alternative way to gain access can be viewed as a creative and reasonable means for an independent organisation to 'hack' an institution and its curatorial infrastructure. In our context, it is helpful to consider Block Universe's methods as an example of Martijn de Waal and Michiel de Lange's model of 'civic hacking', defined as a

> process of clever or playful appropriation of existing technologies or infrastructures or bending the logic of a particular system beyond its intended purposes or restrictions to serve one's personal, communal or activism goals.[4]

Civic hacking can be viewed as a form of ethical hacking used to access political or social structures in a nimble way, representing the interests of a community that are not currently well-served. By finding an alternative means to gain access to a system – via a public program or late-night event – we can 'bend the logic' of the institution and work with their team to test its flexibility or permeability from within. In this context an independent organisation such as Block Universe, operating as an ethical or civic hacker, can be seen as a point of connection between the institution and the artist, addressing the needs of artistic subcultures operating on the fringe or at a grassroots level in order to facilitate a shift in standard operating procedures.

Since Block Universe began, we have seen some reassuring changes in the artistic landscape in relation to performance and choreography, including some that are a direct result of our interventions and collaborations in the institutional realm. Since 2015, there has been a marked increase in the number of live programs across London's art institutions as well as a consistency in programming performance works with healthier resources and time allocations. Across London there is now more experience and confidence within institutional teams, as well as a number of dedicated staff members committed to the presentation of performance works. Emerging artists we have worked with have gone on to receive institutional invitations for solo shows, win awards and residencies and experience increased career opportunities.

Yet, there is much more to be done, particularly in a challenging economic environment post-pandemic, when sustaining a relationship to performance and choreographic works has become untenable for many

4 Martijn de Waal & Michiel de Lange, 'Introduction – The hacker, the city and their institutions: from grassroots urbanism to systemic change', 6 Dec. 2018, *Springer*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-2694-3_1>, accessed 25 April 2023.

(pp. 128–9) ALEXIS BLAKE *Conditions of an Ideal* 2016, British Museum, 2016. Performers: Vanessa Abreu, Nandi BheBhe, Ruby Embley, Tanja Erhart, Eleni Papaioannou, Kezia Pollendine, Ellen van Schuylenburch. Courtesy Block Universe and Delfina Foundation. Photo: Arron Leppard

organisations. Under a series of in-house and public roundtable discussions throughout 2021, Block Universe led conversations with other organisations, curators, commissioners and practitioners to explore alternative approaches to sustaining live practices under exactly these circumstances.[5] From artist-led initiatives to privately funded programs and the potential of digital space, a number of new routes to sustainability were explored. New models of co-commissioning and touring works similar to festival circuits have also been proposed, requiring not only wider institutional collaborations but also increased commitment to an artist's practice over time. It was clear that not all solutions lie within or even originate from existing institutional structures, though their contributions represent significant support to this fragile ecosystem. Thinking through holistic strategies to ground these ways of working within larger teams or across departments rather than individuals is vital. Building networks of support not only within but also between and beyond institutions will be crucial to sustaining artistic performance and choreographic practices. These networks can ensure longevity for works that are often only presented once or twice in public, but represent a significant time investment on behalf of the artist, as well as an important artistic contribution to the field.

Taking a third way to operate within the bounds of the institution has proven, for Block Universe, to be an effective means of collaboration and, I believe, has had a significant impact on London's cultural landscape. Taking this flexible model of working with institutions to explore new points of access to their structures may not only be an act of necessity and survival for independent practitioners, but also has the potential to create more impactful outcomes than either party could achieve alone. By creating a meeting point between parties we are capable of aiding institutional learning, enriching curatorial practices to address the needs of artists working with the body, and building new audiences. Due to the collaborative nature of this model, structural issues can be addressed in a non-adversarial and synergistic manner in order to improve their functioning for the wider community.

It is my hope that, in the future, modes of civic hacking to access institutional space won't be necessary and that by working in partnership with institutions we can ensure a thriving, mutually supportive ecosystem for performance. However, taking new approaches to navigate the meeting points and tensions between artists and institutions is an important territory to explore if we are to ensure a rightful place for choreographic and performance-based practitioners. As an important facet of contemporary artistic practices, it is vital that their work receives the platform it deserves with contemporary audiences, and that their legacy is preserved for future generations.

5 For the publicly aired and recorded discussions of 'The Performance Research Network', created by Block Universe in partnership with founding members Glasgow International and the Liverpool Biennial, see: <http://blockuniverse.co.uk/projects/performance-research-network/>.

SHELLEY LASICA IN CONVERSATION
WITH HANNAH MATHEWS AND MELISSA RATLIFF

WHEN I AM NOT THERE

SHELLEY LASICA *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* 2022, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2022. With support from the Australian Research Council through research and commissioning partner *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*. Performers (left to right): Rebecca Jensen, Megan Payne, Oliver Savariego. Collection of the artist. Photo: Jacqui Shelton

Over two weeks in August 2022 the performance-exhibition *WHEN I AM NOT THERE*, made by Shelley Lasica and collaborators, took place at Melbourne's Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA). This new, durational ensemble work was commissioned for the occasion and performed live for ten days during regular museum opening hours. *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* was a response to MUMA's invitation to Lasica to reflect on forty years of choreographic practice, and was created with dancers LJ Connolly-Hiatt, Luke Fryer, Timothy Harvey, Rebecca Jensen, Megan Payne, Lana Šprajcer and Oliver Savariego; sound composer François Tétaz; consultants Lisa Radford and Colby Vexler; creative producer Zoe Theodore; and curator Hannah Mathews. It also comprised contributions from the artist's long-term collaborators and drew from an archive of Lasica's earlier works. The performance-exhibition contributed situated research on the curation and practice of choreography in the museum environment as part of the Australian Research Council–funded project *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*.

This conversation between Lasica, Mathews and Melissa Ratliff (Curator, Research at MUMA, and editorial coordinator of the monograph published on the occasion of the performance-exhibition) took place in Naarm/Melbourne in November 2022.

MELISSA RATLIFF (MR) **What was on your mind when you were approaching the development of *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* in the context of MUMA?**

SHELLEY LASICA (SL) **I'd been thinking about time telescoping and this particular situation, about how I came to think about things in that moment – how I got there from the past.**

MUMA is part of an educational institution, so it is a very particular situation. I'd been very aware of MUMA's exhibition history too. Exhibition-making is something that isn't necessarily part of my practice, but I have done it. It's different in its relation to performance-making, and the opportunity to be able to do it in this context seemed really special. Not all institutions could host or imagine that type of activity.

HANNAH MATHEWS (HM) **Within their spaces, or within the culture of the organisation?**

SL **Within both their spaces and culture. It not only has to do with the scale of MUMA, but also because it's part of a really active conversation around local visual culture and contemporary art practice in Melbourne.**

HM **I've been thinking about the specificity of *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* at MUMA in relation to what it will go on to become at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney next year [May–June 2023].**

An important element for the project's success at MUMA was, as you said, your knowledge of the museum's exhibition history. But I think there was a combination of factors: your

physical proximity to the gallery and visits over many years; your knowledge of architect Kerstin Thompson's approach to the gallery and how that informs its layout; your knowledge of how the space works for an audience; the relationships with people who work at MUMA, from [former Director] Charlotte [Day], to Melissa [Ratliff], to myself [as former Senior Curator]; as well as MUMA's scale.

This knowledge of MUMA and its context were crucial. And we know context is everything when it comes to your work! But the key thing, I think, that emerged from our learning sessions and interviews conducted after *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* was the importance of relationships. These longstanding networks are a conscious and active part of how you work, but how crucial they are is not necessarily apparent until the work has happened. Those interviews revealed that it would be really difficult to conceptualise, produce and transpose *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* somewhere else. Lobbing it into another space from far away would probably mean transforming it.

SHELLEY LASICA *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* 2022, rehearsal image, Drawing Studio, Monash Art, Design and Architecture, Melbourne, 2022. Performers (left to right): Luke Fryer, Shelley Lasica, LJ Connolly-Hiatt, Megan Payne, Oliver Savariego. Photo: Jacqui Shelton

SL Yes, and the possibility of having discussions with you over a period of a couple of years was also incredibly important.

HM So much grows out of these relationships – between us, with the dancers, with Zoe Theodore as creative producer. *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* is actually a work that has been in development and in your mind and in the conversations you've been having for such a long time. It's like *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* at MUMA was only a small, public ——

SL The ice cap.

HM Yes, only the ice cap of the whole thing!

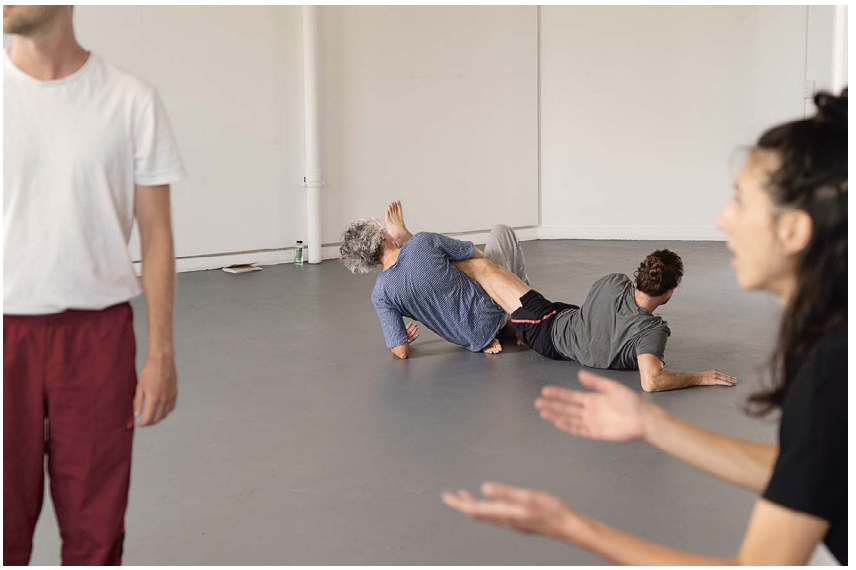
SL And that's exactly how I feel about it. There is all this other stuff, before and after and around, that is very much part of it. It's really

interesting now, when thinking towards the Sydney iteration. It's not a re-creation. It's still a growing thing.

MR So aside from relationships, what else from your personal context is relevant to *WHEN I AM NOT THERE*?

SL When I first started making work, I was so interested in how and where it existed. I had an art-history background in addition to dance training and friends who were visual artists, and was never clear where my practice fit in terms of the more siloed practices. It always seemed there were some very interesting conversations to be had about the differences and specificities of aspects of creative practice.

HM Thinking about the development of *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* and the point we began to work together with the physical elements in the space, I wonder whether choreography, exhibition-making and curating came at the same ideas, at the same time, but using different toolkits and ways of doing?



SHELLEY LASICA *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* 2022, rehearsal image, Drawing Studio, Monash Art, Design and Architecture, Melbourne, 2022. Performers (left to right): Luke Fryer, Shelley Lasica, Timothy Harvey, Lana Šprajcer. Photo: Jacqui Shelton

SL I was thinking about organising not only from the point of view of curatorial practice but also choreographic practice, which in some ways has to do with perspective, not only in space but also in time, or through time.

One of the questions we had was 'What is the object?' When I say, 'the object', I mean the choreographic object not the people objects, but also a resistance to the idea of the things that were in the space being objects. This led to play between the stability of those things.

HM This is a good segue to the notion of the performance-exhibition. The invitation to Shelley was made with the confirmation of the larger umbrella project, *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*, and fell into the strand of MUMA's programming that surveys part of an artist's practice: either a specific period of time or specific set of ideas, generally accompanied by a commission. That's the context of the 'official' invitation.

I can't recall now how quickly you conceived the term 'performance-exhibition'.

SL Some of the main themes in my very initial thinking were the ideas of display and of figuring and the figure; how these concepts might work through the languages and structures of the museum and choreography. So objects, both choreographic and otherwise, can respond to and resist the multiple conventions of display.

Performance-exhibition was the term that seemed most appropriate to describe this endeavour. It came about through that extraordinary conversation we had when working on the catalogue.

HM That was a long Zoom conversation! It began when the sun was up and ended when night had fallen.

SL Zoe and I were sitting in the car in Sydney and you and Mel were in Melbourne trying to nut this thing out. It was extraordinary; we'd almost get there and then it would elude us. We had to keep on working at narrowing it down to 'What is this thing?' 'How do we describe it alongside all the other works listed in the catalogue?' We were trying to find a connection between museological convention and choreographic practice. *Is* there a way of defining what we're trying to do?

MR Because that was about putting words to what you were doing, which was difficult because words have their own histories and loaded contexts.

HM Those involved had been very conscious of taking care of the work and how we might make a movement-based practice permeable to a visual art audience. But I felt that through the process of simply bringing *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* into the museum that we somehow made it more fixed or defined; we countered that really inherent quality of ambiguity central to Shelley's work.

SL There are three things in there that I will pick up on. One is logocentrism, in that words and language are just so dominant. They are stable and they will explain something. Then there's this thing about ambiguity. Because I won't be specific, I've been accused of not taking responsibility for the meaning of my work. I have resisted that criticism as not being appropriate for my work, because I'm dealing with building meaning in many ways that spoken and written language don't always encapsulate. It's something about allowing anybody's response, a response that they use all the time, every day, in every moment of their lives, no matter their particular context or interest. Sometimes you have to *not* speak too much.

One of the great things about being in the galleries for eight hours each day was that it allowed people to apprehend what the performance was doing in different ways. And to understand that they would never actually know what was happening all the time.

HM You mean the audience?

SL The audience, absolutely, and us. I don't know what happened all the time, even when I was performing.

HM This was an interesting mechanism that you built into *WHEN I AM NOT THERE*. The experience of the work, the *I*, could only be fragmented, partial.

SL Absolutely. And that's something I've been interested in since the very early years. Because we, most specifically the performers, are

trained physically, kinaesthetically, what we've been developing is how to continually allow relationships to evolve as we are working. One has to allow this kind of elasticity and give people the confidence to engage in that.

There is a presumption that understanding means knowing everything or being able to explain it. But this doesn't preclude being able to speak about it. One of the really fascinating things for me is that ideas I've been thinking about but which I don't describe are communicated through the work.

MR Your use of the room sheet was also a means of containing logocentrism.

SL Yes, and it was really fantastic figuring out how that worked. That's why it was so great to have consultants Lisa Radford and Colby Vexler also working on the project.

The thing about the room sheet is that when you move around the room with it you have to make relationships. You literally have to look up, look down, orientate yourself in a space, and that immediately invokes a different set of abilities and sensations. Whereas, if you just go to a point and read a wall text, the verticality of the wall comes into focus. The room sheet is about the horizontal as well. It's a shift of plane. In some ways, room sheets are imaginary too. Like maps and lots of other drawings of space, the room sheet sometimes doesn't completely tally, it's not completely authoritative, but it gives people a way of referencing certain things in the exhibition.

MR It's one of the conventions that you leaned into. Is there anything attached to the visual arts or theatre that you consciously leaned out of?

SL Yes. Documentation of live work as part of an exhibition, especially one that has a survey aspect, is often presented as still and moving imagery. Trying to translate from one media to another sometimes reduces the possibilities of that particular form and also what something could be or is about. This is the struggle between specificity and the whole idea of translation. Hannah and I were very keen to resist this and find different solutions to time, context and the multiple collaborative relationships in my history. The looping through past work of mine is a feature of the way I build new performances, and it was developed even more for *WHEN I AM NOT THERE*. Past works are all always in the new work.

The sound component also had elements of the past but was calibrated very specifically for the space. And Franc [François Tétaz] was super specific about that. He was part of a lot of the earlier conceptual conversations, and that's really important for me.

HM Thinking about the archive and the conversations we had about your oeuvre, there are several works that, at different times, you described as not working or not working as you wanted them to. Now that we are thinking back to *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* as it was at MUMA, and looking forward to what's going to happen in Sydney, at what point in the process did you know if it was working or how it was working? Because to be honest, in my experience as a curator, until a project is in the space you don't know if it's going to land. That's why the installation period is so important: working things through, having flex, being surrounded by a group of people, being in conversation with people.

SL I think that's something I realised during extended studio periods with the dancers and whoever else was lurking around in those rooms. Learning to trust what happens in there – just slowly learning, through years of experience, to trust that process of being able to set things up a certain way and allow things to happen, rather than trying to go directly to the end point. It's not that I don't know how I want it or I don't anticipate how it will be, but again, there's that tension.

HM In a conventional exhibition context, you can determine pretty quickly what's working and how you might need to reimagine and reconfigure things. While we attended several viewings during the development period for *WHEN I AM NOT THERE*, it really was not a work I could apprehend immediately. Over the ten days I spent with it, I came to understand its different mechanisms more clearly, but it wasn't until it finished, and literally those last hours at MUMA, that I could I really claim, even if not to fully understand the work, to understand it enough to see how the whole project worked.

SL My experience was not dissimilar.

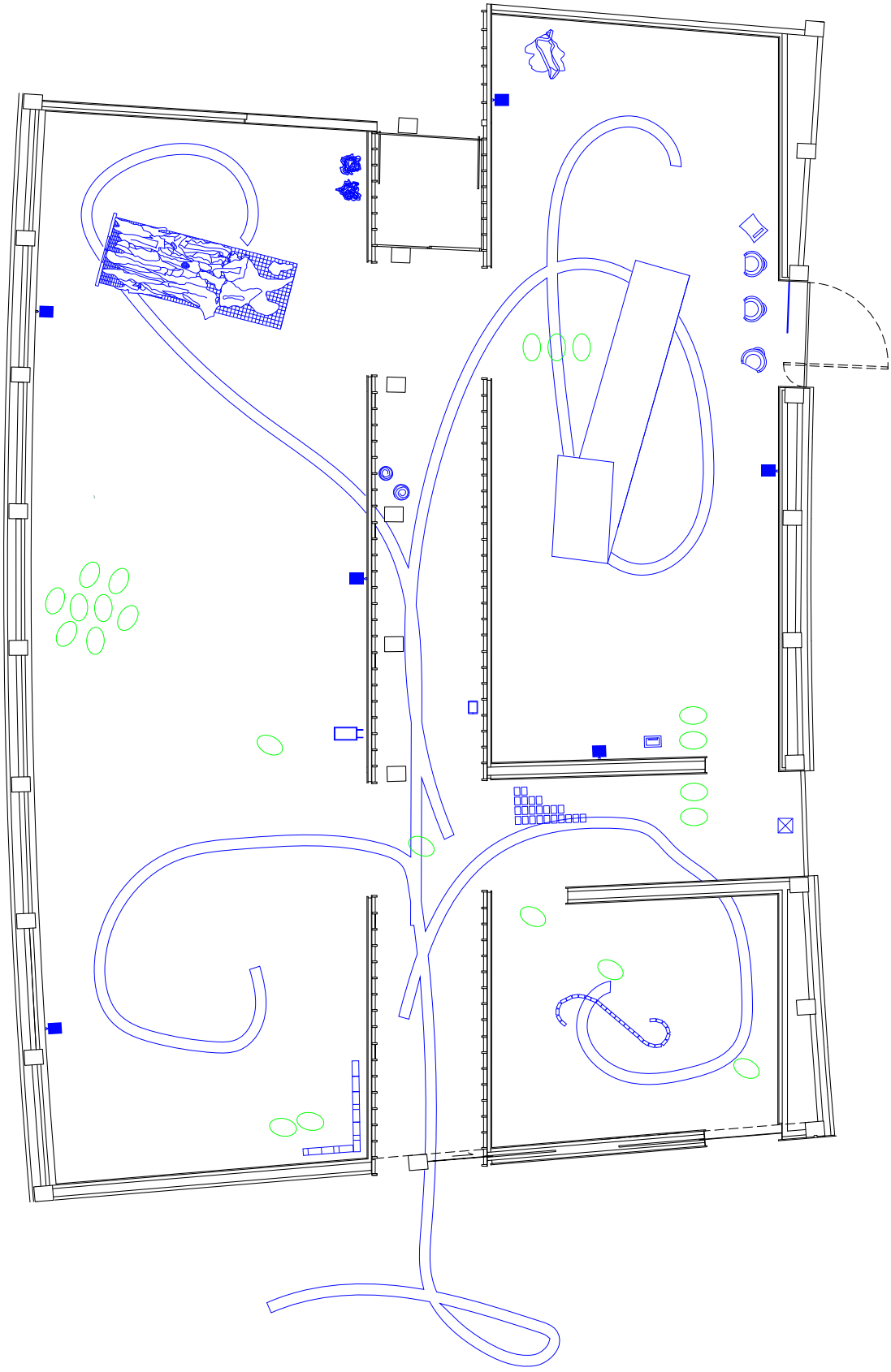
HM A few people had the opportunity to see *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* with Shelley in the space and then without Shelley. Some people talked about a real shift in dynamic when Shelley was not there. Did you anticipate that in your planning and scheduling of four to eight dancers throughout each day, then returning to four again?

SL The four to eight dancers thing is really practical. Logistics play a big part because we are dealing with people who need care. It's about balance between giving all the performers, including myself, the agency to bring this thing to fruition. For them, it's all the different things we've worked on and the different ways we've worked over this long period of time, some of which are really specific and some much more amorphous – they are amorphous for a reason – and how to negotiate all of that and make decisions for yourself and have the confidence to make those decisions. And it's not the performing of confidence, it is *being* confident, where the edges of this performance mode are being very clear that you are performing but not necessarily performing vulnerability.

Another part of it is just whether there's a lot of people there, whether there's nobody there, whether there's one person there, understanding what that is and giving everything its value. That's something that my mother, Margaret Lasica, taught me when I was quite young and was very disappointed when not many people came to a particular performance.[1] She said, 'Don't worry about it. That's not actually the important thing'.

I was also very aware of communicating to everybody that people are allowed in, in different ways. That you don't block them out and you don't leave them stranded. There's a certain responsibility and also care that you can communicate to the audience that they also need to address in their relation to the performers, to reciprocate. And I believe it's possible to do that.

1 Margaret Lasica (1926–93) was a Melbourne dance choreographer and teacher who established the Modern Dance Ensemble in 1967.



FLOOR PLAN FOR A PERFORMANCE-EXHIBITION. PERFORATED OVALS INDICATE POSITIONS THAT THE ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE MAY TAKE, AND LOCATIONS OF ARTWORKS, COSTUMES AND OTHER OBJECTS ARE REPRESENTED BY SYMBOLS THAT INDICATE THEIR LOCATIONS AT ANY GIVEN TIME.

SHELLEY LASICA,
WHEN I AM NOT THERE 2022
ensemble performance
Performers: LJ Connolly-Hiatt, Luke Fryer, Timothy Harvey, Rebecca Jensen, Shelley Lasica, Megan Payne, Oliver Savariego, Lana Šprajcer
Sound score: François Tétaz
Consultants: Lisa Radford, Colby Vexler
Creative producer: Zoe Theodore

FRANÇOIS TÉTAZ,
soundscape for
WHEN I AM NOT THERE 2022
multi-channel audio soundscape created with scores previously produced by TÉTAZ and MILO KOSSOWSKI for Lasica's work

Floor-based vinyl, 2022,
in reference to audience circulation diagram for Monash University Museum of Art, hand drawn by Sophie Herel of Kerstin Thompson Architects, Melbourne, 2010

SHELLEY LASICA,
movable screen for
WHEN I AM NOT THERE 2022
honeycomb cardboard Tamba wall
400 x 160 cm
Fabricator: Simone Tops

ROBYN MCKENZIE,
text produced as research material for
ACTION SITUATION 1999,
first presented at the Immigration Museum, Melbourne, 1999
24 pages (3 parts, with introductory notes)
Courtesy of Robyn McKenzie

CALLUM MORTON,
Twister 1999
Originally produced for *RESTRICTED SITUATION* 1999, presented by Chunky Move for *Live Acts #1*, Revolver, 1999; later appeared in *Greater Union* 2018–20 at The Substation, 2018; 215 Albion Street, Brunswick, 2018; and 257 Albert Street, Brunswick, 2020 (all Melbourne)
single-channel video, colour, no sound; 9 minutes 9 seconds
Cast: Luke Adams, Nick Chilvers, Olivia Dwyer, Michelle Mantsio, Chris Mether, Spiros Panigirakis, Helen Walter
Courtesy of the artist

ROGER WOOD,
maquette produced for the set of *History Situation*, 2002, Horti Hall, Melbourne, 2002, as part of the L'Oréal Melbourne Fashion Festival
paper and balsa wood
17 x 41 x 20 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Sports flooring, 2022,
in reference to scenography from *Here BEHAVIOUR Part 4* 1995, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne, 1995
vinyl
911 x 150 x 0.5 cm

Trioli children's chairs by Magis for *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* 2022
rotational-moulded polyethylene, sourced new and used
4 parts: 58 x 49 x 43 cm (each)
Designed by Eero Aarnio for Magis, 2005

Window film, 2022,
in reference to the gallery lighting adjustments made by Roger Wood with green fluorescent tubes for *Square Dance BEHAVIOUR Part 6* 1996–97, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne, 1996
260 x 135 cm

SHELLEY LASICA,
dual function bag for
WHEN I AM NOT THERE 2022
cotton and webbing
198 x 115 cm
Fabricator: Simone Tops

ANNE-MARIE MAY,
Breathing 2015
Originally produced for *Solos for Other People* 2015, first presented at a private showing at RMIT Design Hub, Melbourne; then the Basketball Gymnasium, Carlton Baths, Melbourne, as part of Dance Massive 2015
metallic foam foil
2 parts: 335 x 113 cm; 583 x 118 cm
Courtesy of the artist

ANNE-MARIE MAY,
Rope for Mutual Interaction 2008
Originally produced for *VIANNE* 2008–09, fortyfivedownstairs, Melbourne, 2008 and Dancehouse, Melbourne, 2009; later appeared in *Greater Union* 2018–20 at The Substation, 2018; 215 Albion Street, Brunswick, 2018; and 257 Albert Street, Brunswick, 2020 (all Melbourne)
PVC and metal fastener
2 parts: 12.9 m x 4 mm; 12.3 m x 4 mm
Courtesy of the artist

SHELLEY LASICA,
nautical net for
WHEN I AM NOT THERE 2022
mesh, metal links and laundry pegs
approx. 520 x 180 x 1.5 cm

RICHARD NYLON,
unique costumes produced for Fiona Macdonald, *Museum Emotions* 2003, video, 104 minutes. Worn by dancers in scenes choreographed by Shelley Lasica
3 costumes: nude body suit, neck piece, sleeves, mask and gloves; lycra, nylon wigs and photographic elements

BELINDA HELLIER,
unique costumes produced for *COLLECT* 2011, Bagging Room, Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne, 2011
9 jumpsuits; silk georgette, silk satin and plastic tags

BELINDA HELLIER,
unique costume produced for *The Shape of Things to Come* 2016–17, Room 301 at SPRING 1883, The Hotel Windsor, Melbourne, 2016; *Superposition of Three Types*, Artspace, Sydney, 2017; and *I Love Pat Larter*, Neon Parc, Melbourne, 2017
jumpsuit, undergarment, neck frill and blanket with strap; ruched nylon, silk, silk georgette, velvet and leather

SHELLEY LASICA and KARA BAKER for PROJECT,
unique costumes produced for *Play in a Room* 2003–07, Tower Studio, Queens College, University of Melbourne, 2003; 7 costumes: cotton mix jersey

MARTIN GRANT, unique costume produced for *Turning Away the Affect of a Mystery* 1987, Athenaeum Theatre 2, Melbourne, and Performance Space, Sydney (both 1987)
wide-leg pants and gathered top, shorts and long-sleeve top; cotton wool crepe and cotton linen knit

MR Were the costumes and movable screen object ways of offering opportunities to hide or retreat, given the work was of such long duration?

SL In some ways, yes, because it gives people a different kind of activity to do. It also allows you to become part of something, to go into a different mode, which can be like retreating in some ways.

HM It's also an element that recurs throughout your work. Types of costumes, many with hoods, or screens that are used to obfuscate or hide behind.

SL Appearing and disappearing is definitely something that interests me, or appearing to disappear, or disappearing to appear – all of those things.

MR The aesthetic experience of seeing up to eight of you in or across rooms was strong, particularly with each day having a different colour code.

SL To function the way that it did – over a longer period of time during the opening hours of the gallery – it had to have that many people.

HM I think it also enabled the work to be present across the flow of spaces that constitute MUMA – the galleries and circulation spaces, such as the 'spine' that is the central hallway. Having dancers together in one space, and then in smaller groups or on their own in other spaces simultaneously really animated the various thresholds and apertures that the architecture affords.

SL Exactly. All of those things were part of the initial thinking, quite a few years ago, about how this work could be made manifest.

MR Is that the kind of parameter that could change in other locations?

SL The only parameter that wouldn't change is that the work does not function without the same performers being there. I don't like recasting. The knowledge sits with the conversations we have had. It exists through the history of the conversations with the eight of us, in addition to the conversations with Zoe and with Hannah and Lisa and Colby and Franc too.

HM One of the questions that came up in the interviews we've been conducting for *Precarious Movements* was whether there are specific curatorial methodologies when working with choreography. I suspect there are only curatorial temperaments. In the last twenty years there's been a lot of attention focused on commissioning work in general, but what has revealed itself over that time is that not everyone has the temperament to support an artist through the making of a work. There is a tendency to start editorialising pretty quickly so the work is easily defined and understood, so you can map it here and put it there and write about it and so on.

SL For me, I just have to be confident in that situation, not knowing.

MR This resistance to fixedness reminds me of Zoe's description of your methodology as 'critique' in the publication *WHEN I AM NOT THERE*.

SL It is a critical resistance. I guess it's because I was so aware of a historical precedence in the area I was interested in working with when I was young – in part because of the influence of my mother, but also due to the range and volume of work in a number of mediums that I was seeing: dance, theatre, music and visual arts of various genres, not all to my taste, which was enormously useful.

Thinking about things now, for me to be performing is not so common, especially in Australia, because I'm sixty-one. The

performers in *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* encompass a very wide age range, and I did that on purpose. I think it's really important for the work, for a lot of reasons. It's not that the work is about that, but I think it's something to note.

HM I think it's also interesting to see choreographers performing their own work.

SL Absolutely. But it's important to see other people doing it, so this whole authorial thing has a bit of play. The way that I communicate what it is I want or what I'm working with has shifted immensely at different times. I've learnt a huge amount about what does and doesn't work for me and why.

HM I think a lot of it is actually figuring out how to make things work or addressing the questions that come up over time.

SL Absolutely. It's like, how do I do this thing? I want to try that. How do I get to do that? I have to work out how I can do a performance there. So who do I ask? What do I do? I was incredibly lucky that I had certain mechanisms to be able to ask those questions and make those choices.

HM And I think it also allows the infrastructure – all those relationships – to just keep growing and accumulating. The survey invitation is another example: 'Well, I'm going to figure out how to make it something that is different and a better fit for what I am doing.'

SL Yeah.

MR So the machine is all these kinds of productive irritants.

SL Yes. That's a very good way of putting it.

(pp. 140–1) SHELLEY LASICA *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* 2022, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2022. Performers (left to right): Lana Šprajcer, LJ Connolly-Hiatt, Timothy Harvey. Collection of the artist. Photo: Jacqui Shelton
(pp. 144–5) Floor plan for SHELLEY LASICA *WHEN I AM NOT THERE* 2022, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2022.

GLOSS

Angela Goh

Angela Goh's *Gloss*, 2021–ongoing, is a speculative conservation practice surrounding her choreographic performance work *Sky Blue Mythic*, 2020–21. It is an accumulation of scores, annotations, chronicles, maps, inventories, demo videos and correspondences, a selection of which appears in the following pages. These materials don't document *Sky Blue Mythic* but rather create a re-entry point into the world of that earlier work in an expansive process of remembering.

'Gloss' is derived from glossary in the spirit not of definition but of continued search for meaning. As a work it borrows techniques and strategies from archiving and conservation – language, image capture, score – troubling and repositioning them as methods for keeping an artwork alive and expanding. *Gloss* fosters indeterminacy and transforms a single work into an infinitely variable set of forms, ideas and possibilities.

I am a dance, personing

A can of papaya milk, a baseball cap, a sundial and a cubic zirconia walk into a theatre….

ANGELA GOH *Gloss* 2021–ongoing, materials #5, #7, #11, #19, #20, #33, #32, #53. Courtesy of the artist and Fine Arts, Sydney

CURTAIN CALL WITH BRUCE HAINLEY

Brian Fuata

Brian Fuata's series of email performances, 2012–ongoing, take the form of emails from the artist to recipients who become co-performers in the work. Fuata uses CC and BCC email functions to include and choreograph audiences who witness the performance from visible (CC) and unseen (BCC) spaces. The page as stage and the scrolling window as curtain frame the email as a space for composition and choreography using text, typeface, punctuation, colour and arrangement. The email is encountered at different times by each recipient, unsettling the temporality, locality and collectivity of performance formats.

The following pages comprise an excerpt of *Curtain Call with Bruce Hainley*, 2013, consisting of correspondence between Fuata and Australian artist Ian Milliss, known for his pioneering conceptual art practice. The text is redacted and overlaid in an act of veiling, opening with a pink curtain (a repurposed exhibition room sheet with an essay by Bruce Hainley), and closing with an 'Ovation, standing'. Fuata employs collage and painted redaction as improvisational methods for adapting email performance for print.

This work is an extension of an initial performance; the first is forwarded to new audiences who weren't originally present. As Fuata writes in the work, 'THIS NEW PERFORMANCE IS A FORWARD FORWARD'. In this process the email chain accumulates new performers (whose names are redacted) who receive the performance as an echo or choral refrain. Here, this method of re-performance sees *Curtain Call with Bruce Hainley* framed by another performance *new artist? (after ian millis) – a new old performance by Brian Fuata*.

BRIAN FUATA *Curtain Call with Bruce Hainley* 2013

[redacted]

[redacted]

Fwd: FORWARD: FORWARD: new artist? (after ian millis) - a new old performance by Brian Fuata

11 messages

Brian Fu <brian.fuata@gmail.com> Wed, Jun 5, 2013 at 9:37 PM
To: ian@millis.com

[redacted]

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Brian Fu** <brian.fuata@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Jun 5, 2013 at 9:31 PM
Subject: FORWARD: FORWARD: new artist? (after ian millis) - a new old performance by Brian Fuata
To: Brian Fuata <brian.fuata@gmail.com>

DEAR IAN

[redacted]

[redacted] [redacted] - FORWARD: FORWARD: FORWARD: new artist? (after ian milliss) - a new new old performance by Brian Fuata

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Brian Fu** <brian.fuata@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Jun 5, 2013 at 9:31 PM
Subject: FORWARD: FORWARD: new artist? (after ian millis) - a new old performance by Brian Fuata
To: Brian Fuata <brian.fuata@gmail.com>

DEAR IAN

MY NAME IS BRIAN FUATA. I HAVE BEEN MAKING THESE SMALLL ONLINE PERFORMANCES FOR OVER A YEAR NOW.

CLOSE TO TWO.

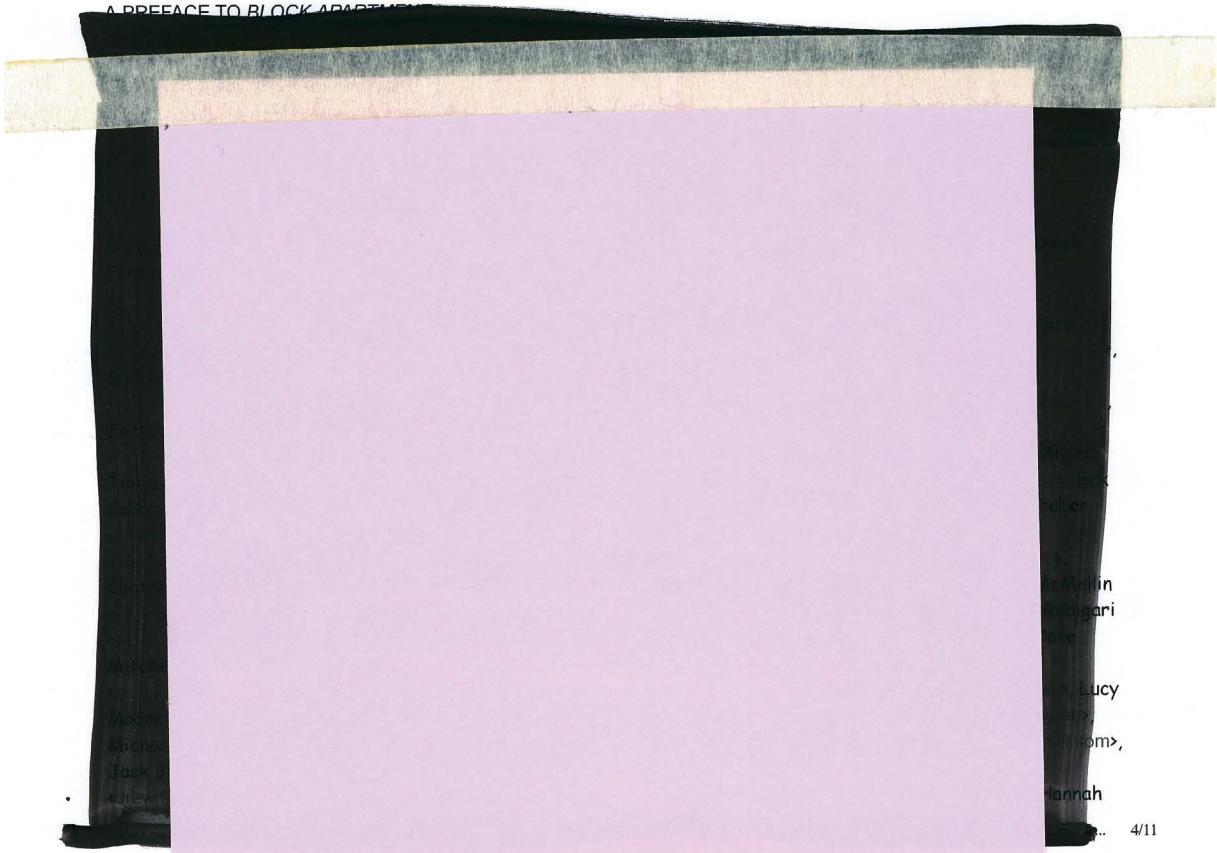
WHAT BEGAN AS A HUNCH, IS NOW MERELY A HUNCHED BACK OF POETRY.

THIS NEW PERFORMANCE IS A FORWARD FORWARD.

IT'S PREVIOUS ITERATION MADE PUBLIC ITS PUBLIC, AND NOW THEY ARE SEATED (OR STOOD) IN THE DARK - BCC'D IN ON THIS ONE ON ONE ASIDE, SOLILOQUY AND MONOLOGUE. IT IS BEING WATCHED BY THE BLOCKS OF *NAMES* MENTIONED ABOVE AND BELOW.

FORWARDED MESSAGE ---------- PARTLY CONVERTED TO COMIC SANS TO LIGHTEN MY INVASION - THESE NAMES ARE OF ARTISTS, CURATORS, ACADEMICS AND TWO LAWYERS.

A PREFACE TO *BLOCK APARTMENTS*



[redacted] - FORWARD: FORWARD: FORWARD: new artist? (after ian milliss) - a new new old performance by Brian Fuata

...dedicated to C.H

2 attachments

IanMilliss-new artist - catalogue essay 1973.pdf
189K

BLOCK APARTMENTS.pdf
34K

[redacted] Mon, Jun 24, 2013 at 9:36 AM

Ahmaxing. Typo stays.

[redacted] Mon, Jun 24, 2013 at 9:41 AM

[redacted]

[Quoted text hidden]
--

[redacted]

[redacted] Mon, Jun 24, 2013 at 9:49 AM

[redacted]

[redacted] - FORWARD: FORWARD: FORWARD: new artist? (after ian milliss) - a new new old performance by Brian Fuata

I loved me prostrate in bed friday night proclaiming "children!" In outrage of your tales.

[redacted]
ellabarclay.com
sent from an android
[Quoted text hidden]

[redacted] Mon, Jun 24, 2013 at 10:44 AM

I know...just when I thought you couldn't get any better.

[redacted]
You o
X
[Quoted text hidden]

[redacted] Mon, Jun 24, 2013 at 10:47 AM

My latest performance just for you two.

[redacted]
[Quoted text hidden]

--

[redacted]

2 attachments

IanMilliss-new artist - catalogue essay 1973.pdf
189K

BLOCK APARTMENTS.pdf
34K

Ian Milliss <ian@milliss.com> Mon, Jun 24, 2013 at 11:58 AM
Reply-To: ian@milliss.com
To: Brian Fu <brian.fuata@gmail.com>

As one's existene on the web is now the only real existence it is amusing to know that it is possible to disappear (despite rumours to the contrary) by way of a simple misspelling, or rather to mutate by splitting off and evolving into a differently spelt entity entirely. Since no-one knows you're a dog the possibilities are endless. I wonder what Picaso and Matise are up to these days?
regards
Ian Milliss
[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]

[redacted] Mon, Jun 24, 2013 at 12:02 PM
To: Brian Fuata <brian.fuata@gmail.com>, [redacted]

1978/2013

NFR

[redacted] Mon, Jul 22, 2013 at 5:03 PM

[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]

[redacted] Thu, Aug 28, 2014 at 9:06 PM

i wasn't sure here what to extract. i'm going to leave it up to you, and go from what you offer.

x

[redacted]

--

[redacted]

2 attachments

IanMilliss-new artist - catalogue essay 1973.pdf
189K

BLOCK APARTMENTS.pdf
34K

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

new artist? (after ian millis) - a new performance by Brian Fuata

10 messages

CalArts
Cel(luloid) (See 'Animation')
Chandleresque
Character Actor
Cocktail
Cruising (See 'Movies'; 'Men')
Curtis, Jackie (1947–85)
(See 'Dandruff'; 'Warhol, Andy')

D
Dandruff (See 'Curtis, Jackie')
Death
Demi-monde
Dick (See 'P.I.')
Disney, Walt

E
Eeyore (See 'Pencil')
Economies (as in 'of scale';
'of means')
Eraser

Lawler, Louise (as in *His Gesture Moved Us To Tears*)
Location
Los Angeleno

M
McDonald, Boyd (1925–93)
Men
Movies

N
Negative (See 'Yes')
Nineteen Eighties
Noir

O
Obsolescence (See 'Cel(luloid)';
'VHS')
Ornament
Ovation, standing

U
Untitled (as in *Untitled (Cinema Moralia)*, 2009)

V
Variety
VHS (See 'Obsolescence')

W
Warhol, Andy (See 'Curtis, Jackie')
West Coast
Winter (See 'Landscape')

X
XXX (See 'Ford, Leo')

Y
Y, find a friend at the
(See 'Smith, Duncan')
Yes (See 'Negative')

[redacted]

[redacted]

PART THREE
LEGACY AND TRACE

What happens after first contact is made between a choreographic work of art and its performance context? Discussions around the afterlives of dance have been thickening over the past decades and the discipline of conservation has brought new perspectives into play as dance moves into its orbit. Here, we deep dive into *KŌIWI*, 2023, by Victoria Hunt, combining the voices of the artist, curator, conservators and First Nations experts to explore topics ranging from custodianship, transmission, storytelling, cultural safety and protocols, and modelling a First Nations-led shift towards 'networks of care'. Artists Sara Wookey and Alicia Frankovich bring creative perspectives to the pressing issues of legacy and trace, but also the impact of choreography on the museum, including matters of trust, modes of attention and witnessing. Artist-archivist Cori Olinghouse forms a bridge between dance-based knowledges and institutional methods through a model of 'living archives' towards embodied futures for both archiving and conservation. Finally, conservators from Tate and the National Gallery of Victoria ask how choreographic works have influenced the very way we understand conservation practices. They identify challenges to existing processes and procedures created by the 'variability, instability and changeability' of new choreographic works, which are revolutionising conservation and prompting both logistic and aesthetic imperatives for this field, which must 'unlearn' some of its assumptions.

VICTORIA HUNT IN CONVERSATION WITH LISA CATT,
JUANITA KELLY-MUNDINE AND CAROLYN MURPHY

When the whale comes up for air: dance, custodianship and questions of conservation

VICTORIA HUNT *KŌIWI* 2023, with collaborators Boris Bagattini, James Brown, Moe Clark and Rosie Te Rauawhea Belvie, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2023. Commissioned by the Art Gallery of New South Wales as part of the *Dreamhome: Stories of Art and Shelter* exhibition and with additional support from the Australian Research Council through research and commissioning partner *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*. Performer: Victoria Hunt. Photo: Juan Salazar

This interview was undertaken in the lead-up to *KŌIWI*, a durational performance by Māori–Australian interdisciplinary artist Victoria Hunt. *KŌIWI* was commissioned by the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW), Sydney, as part of the exhibition *Dreamhome: Stories of Art and Shelter.* This immersive new work continues the artist's investigation into the story of her ancestral meetinghouse, Hinemihi. The work, led by Hunt, was co-created and performed with two esteemed Indigenous artists: Moe Clark, Métis vocalist and drum carrier (Turtle Island/Canada); and Rosie Te Rauawhea Belvie, Māori vocalist, haka custodian and performer (Aotearoa/New Zealand). In addition, Hunt worked with long-term collaborators Boris Bagattini (objects and lighting design) and James Brown (sound design and composer), as well as new collaborators Matt Stegh (costumier, Wiradjuri) and Samara Davis (Māori tutu weaver, Aotearoa/New Zealand). This interview took place between Hunt and Lisa Catt, Curator, International Contemporary Art, Juanita Kelly-Mundine, Conservator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, and Carolyn Murphy, Head of Conservation at AGNSW.

LISA CATT (LC) It feels appropriate to start our conversation with your ancestral meeting house, Hinemihi. To you, she is always the beginning. What can you tell us about Hinemihi and your relationship with her?

VICTORIA HUNT (VH) Hinemihi embodies multiple layers of significance – as a female ancestor, as a *marae* (meeting house), and as a communal space for ceremony, rituals, celebrations and instruction. The carvings that make up her structure are imbued with Māori concepts of creation and cosmology. As a powerful architectural representation, she symbolises a cataclysmic moment in the tribe's existence. Her carvings serve as a mechanism for ritual and storytelling, weaving narratives of *whanau* (family), *hapu* (kinship group) and *iwi* (tribe, nation). Hinemihi embodies the collective body of her people. Recognising this interconnectedness unleashes a profound energy. The house is intrinsically aligned with performance. Viewing these carvings as static objects oversimplifies their function.

As a descendant, my connection to Hinemihi is deeply rooted in genealogy and ancestral narratives. I inherit and activate a role to keep Hinemihi 'warm'. My way to do this is through dance and performance. My dance for Hinemihi is an honest and raw expression of where she is at, and where we both have equal presence. I dance her, she dances me.

Currently, Hinemihi is 'sleeping' in a storage facility in the United Kingdom – dislocated, displaced, dismembered but not disconnected. She was transported from Te Wairoa, New Zealand, to England in 1892, where she became a curio, a relic from a romanticised past – an 'artefact' assimilated into British society, conjuring

images of exotic events in far-off lands. However, plans are underway to return her to her rightful home. Her people and her land are preparing to be reunited with their *kuia* (grandmother) and to receive her original carvings, in exchange for new ones that will contribute to a new Māori meeting house in Surrey. This exchange will strengthen the cultural connection between the UK-based Māori, Oceanic peoples and between New Zealand and UK communities.

The safe return of Hinemihi to Aotearoa is currently being negotiated by various stakeholders, including the Tuhourangi Tribal Authority, Te Arawa, Ngati Hinemihi, the British National Trust, Ngati Rānana, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, New Zealand Māori Arts and Crafts Institute, as well as community members. This rematriation process has been a result of extensive advocacy efforts from the community and my own dedicated involvement spanning almost two decades.

LC Custodial practice and creative practice are bound together in your work. How do you negotiate between managing relationships with your community and making dance, both of which require considerable energy, time and labour?

VH Reciprocity, connection and nurturance lie at the heart of my dance practice. Tending to relationships is a constant state of care, remembrance, dedication and love. Within this practice, I engage in personal and collective rituals, nurturing a deep connection to what I do and who I care for. It is a lifelong commitment that demands endurance, resilience and ongoing renewal. My dance journey is a durational work.

With my latest performance work, *KŌIWI*, as well as in all my previous works, the foundations of *Whakapapa* (ancestral kinships) and *Kaupapa* (sacred purpose) guide and shape the creative process. Along the way, cultural responsibilities emerge, and it is crucial to acknowledge, uphold and follow them. I am in consistent dialogue with knowledge keepers and those involved in the rematriation efforts to bring Hinemihi home. Cultural safety is a paramount consideration for myself, my collaborators, institutional partners and the audience.

While there are deadlines and timelines imposed on the creation and presentation of any work, I endeavor to reclaim temporal sovereignty within my practice and refuse linear narratives.

CAROLYN MURPHY (CM) A museum's time commitments – revolving around programming and budgets – are not planned in a way which might allow for the time needed culturally, or relationally, for some dance works. I am wondering, should the museum rethink its approach to project timelines and schedules, or can such limitations actually be generative for an artist?

VH Yes, I believe this is very important. It is often underestimated how violent timelines can be. For example, the tight timelines imposed on putting ideas into print. Oral lineages are culturally sensitive, and in many cases inappropriate to disseminate in written form. Permission for such knowledge to be made public is governed by my accountability to uphold protocols that protect institutions of Māori knowledge. Tight programming time frames aren't sensitive to the level of engagement required with key people, especially with Kaumātua and Kuia Elders from the communities to which I am bound. In recognition of these shortcomings, I am restricted in what I can present here in written form. These considerations are foundational to my practice.

JUANITA KELLY-MUNDINE (JKM) Your comments about having to tend to relationships and cultural responsibilities as part of your practice are very relevant when we talk about how to support First Nations dance. Museums need to be aware of the broader network, of the energies that performers and dancers may be interacting with when they're making work. There are energies and protocols on Country that – regardless of whether they are purposefully brought to the fore and made a fixture in the development of a new work – are always present.

It is incredibly important for the safety of artists, First Nations staff and for Country that we properly acknowledge and respect Country and cultural protocol when facilitating dance and welcoming artists into a space.

CM What can an institution and the people who make up an institution do to support that aspect of the creative process?

JKM I think it comes back again to relationships and reciprocity. How can the museum offer artists connections to First Nations people, either internally or externally to the institution? A lot of dance practitioners now, whether First Nations or not, want to interact and interface with Country in a meaningful and respectful way. There can be fear and anxiety in not doing things appropriately, and this can act as an impediment to the progress of work. If you are holding those feelings in your body, then it can take up space where your work might otherwise grow and evolve. And so, I think being able to release that unsettled sensation and create openness is really important. And that relies on connections.

VH Being granted the privilege to receive guidance, ask questions and engage in ongoing dialogue with the AGNSW Indigenous Advisory Group has been crucial. As an individual with Indigenous roots in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands, but born and raised on Yugambeh and Kombumerri Country in Queensland, I bring a unique set of questions and approaches to the table. It is important to acknowledge that these conversations and questions can vary significantly depending on the artists' backgrounds and cultural lineages, and having access to ask questions is essential – just as essential as tuning in to the wisdom of Country.

Through my collaboration with Indigenous artists Moe Clark and Rosie Te Rauawhea Belvie, a creative forcefield has emerged between their practices of *têwêhikan* (drum) and *poi*. These conversations not only exist between humans, but between the animate voices of the *taonga* (precious tools) and practices we call forth from our cultural lineages. Hosting these artists, while being hosted on Gadigal land, has helped me deepen my understanding of how local mob care for Country, that lives both within and without the institution.

LC Really, it sounds like the performance itself is only one part of the work.

VH Yes. I have been contemplating the *Kaupapa* (purpose) of *KŌIWI* as I delve into the current state of Hinemihi and the implications of making a work within the museum context. With Hinemihi dismantled and temporarily housed in a storage facility in Chichester, UK, the particularity of her displacement is at the core of *KŌIWI*.

This reminds me of a story from Butoh conversations about what dance is – it's the story of a whale navigating deep ocean currents, compelled by necessity to surface for a breath of air. As the whale emerges towards the surface – it is in that fleeting moment as their blowhole pierces the threshold between water and sky, releasing a spray of water into the atmosphere – this is where the dance exists. It is an ephemeral, suspended moment, after which the whale returns to the depths until it needs to breathe again.

I find deep resonance with this story. The journey of rising through levels can be arduous, but the work itself persists out of a deep necessity.

LC What a wonderful analogy. It prompts some interesting questions about the conservation of dance – what to do when there is this temporary manifestation of choreographic and cultural material that is otherwise ongoing and enduring?

VH For me, conservation is not a static concept but a living series of relationships which dream backwards into the future. When we perform, we are the vision our ancestors dreamt into being, and through our dance, we invite generations to come to join in this dreaming. Dance inhabits the liminal, for the ancestral to come through. Dance is this constant bridging.

One cultural concept that supports this work is the *Wakahuia* – a symbolic vessel carrying precious intergenerational treasures and belongings. As a dancer my role is to reciprocate with the *Mauri* (energy, essence) of the *Wakahuia*, through cosmological, terrestrial and subterranean navigation. I harness the courage to transmit my cultural inheritances and to question them through experimentation and collaboration. It is through our collective efforts that we can ensure the *Wakahuia* remains resilient and culturally maintained, transcending time and hopefully inspiring generations to come.

CM Could conservation be about supporting the cultural processes around the artist and their community? If you're the custodian, or your community is the custodian for those practices and activities, perhaps our role as conservators is about doing all the things that support you to continue that work.

JKM And even more broadly, for any dance or performance practitioner, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, who leaves a kind of energetic footprint, how can conservation look to appropriately hold space for artists? How can it acknowledge the significance of what has taken place and facilitate whatever resetting or recalibration might be necessary for an artist or space afterwards?

It is like when we have ceremony. We open a kind of portal in the land, on Country, and welcome ancestral energies to enter. At the end of ceremony, we sometimes trample over that ceremonial ground and close off the portal, leaving behind a physical and energetic footprint on Country. The closure is crucial

and becomes a kind of documentation – evidence of that performance, even though it is also ephemeral.

VH That's beautiful. I resonate with that strongly. Heightened sensory awareness, tuning in to intricate cycles and processes that unfold in and around us. Opening and closing of portals, approaching precipices, crossing through passages and thresholds – real and imagined. Always in constant states of change, becoming, almost becoming, unbecoming and leaving. Experiencing the body as energetic potential within a sensory field and recognising Country as the primary witness. This feels fundamental.

LC The museum is well-versed in how to acknowledge something when it remains physically in or with the museum. I guess that's what more traditional conservation methodologies are structured upon. But I wonder what the methodologies are for what you're describing. What should happen when the whale disappears again? What gets preserved after the space is closed?

VH I am genuinely eager to hear your perspectives on how you approach and contemplate this matter.

CM We've talked before about the act of acquisition by a museum being a very colonial idea based upon the taking of something, and how perhaps that is not a constructive way of supporting art practice, particularly dance and performance. But could it be useful if it was remodelled?

I mean, for the museum, it does not have to only be about what is collected. Really, it comes down to what stories you tell, how you tell them and how you document them. It's also about the commitment you make to reflecting on how you talk about what you're doing and why you're doing it. The story-making capacity of the museum is not static; it's a constant and ongoing process of deciding which exhibitions, programs and activities are supported and propagated.

And so, if the decision is made that collecting isn't necessarily productive for certain types of practice, it doesn't change the fact that we can still think about how we tell the stories of art and culture. They're two separate things: what we've collected versus what history we document and what stories we tell. This is where the archive is so important.

JKM This makes me think about how First Nations people and our ancestors are incredibly innovative in the way we continue to move through time and update culture while maintaining it. There are wonderful opportunities to marry new technology with culture, where relevant and appropriate, to create different forms of documentation.

Keeping in mind, of course, that documentation and any remnants of the work may not be authentic substitutes for the performance, I think it would be interesting to consider how the museum might extend its own conventions and understandings of documentation. Should we document audience responses to Victoria's new commissioned work? How did it make people feel? What was it like to be held in that space? These sorts of things can be

as much a part of the history as the notes about what day and where the work occurred. How might we create a more holistic documentation record that includes the work as well as all of what is beyond it?

VH Documenting audience responses can initiate an insightful form of reciprocation. When people grapple to find words to describe their experience it's a gift back to the work.

And there are so many ways to document and create archives. Seen through the prism of a palimpsest concept, performance practice is a process of inscribing events, where the body becomes a rewriting of temporalities and embodiments, and an archive of memory and imaginings. These are rewritten over and over; through practising and dancing performance a palimpsest is evoked. The body becomes a rewriting, a remembering, a rematriating of temporalities and embodiments that reawaken the archive of memory and imaginings. There is a close connection in the palimpsest concept to Body Weather processes. Body Weather as a practice offers strategies to challenge the body's socially inscribed habits informed by the environment. When and what we inscribe in our bodies is the processual component that leads to the rewriting of histories and redressing histories with new facts.

It would be ideal to combine approaches that not only capture the physical manifestation of the work but also provide insights into the underlying principles and the artistic intentions behind it.

JKM Can you describe what form this type of documentation takes that could capture those underlying principles and intentions?

VH My work is co-authored with *tūpuna* (ancestors) and is liminal, situational and bound to the conditions surrounding it. Because I began as a visual artist and then a documentary photographer in the 1990s, I have an extensive personal archive. When I became a Body Weather practitioner, my documentary practice deepened to include an inner dreamscape informing movement practice and performance works.

Lifting out of the bones like thin streams of smoke
Floating into the atmosphere
An empty husk remains.

This is a choreographic notation that I danced in *KŌIWI*. My performance works are layered with movement concepts, which become omnidirectional images danced in specific parts of the body, negotiating thresholds, inside and outside. This is a dance of relationships, where the body is a carrier of time.

During my years of training with De Quincey Co., I learnt choreographic notation systems which I have been developing. These documents are like a blueprint to all my research and performance works.

Te Arawa Elder Paul Tapsell shares a story of the tui bird weaving a cloak. The bird carries a thread in its beak, skillfully weaving it in and out of the two sides of the cloak – one side visible, the other hidden. Performance and documentation mirror this analogy. It is a navigational constellation map that continues to grow

as a codified knowledge system – as a new body of knowledge. Documentation is an ongoing living process that supports the work as it is unfolding. It is a living archive that is rarely accessible to the public. This process of documentation speaks more to the life around the work than the production.

LC Speaking to the nature of documentation as a living process, and your practice being a dance of relationships, could you talk about the role of collaboration in your work?

VH Collaboration lies at the heart of my practice, which encompasses creative partnerships, knowledge keepers, institutional commissions, funding bodies, practice networks and society at large. In fact, everything we discuss is part of the choreography to me. It is through this collective effort that we create work and contemplate the *Kaupapa* (sacred purpose).

I'm thankful to have worked with so many gifted people across the years. Collaborating with extraordinary artists like Boris Bagattini and James Brown for almost two decades has been ingenious. I am also immensely grateful to my mentors, Tess de Quincey and Charles Koroneho, as well as Sarah Waterson, Barbara Campbell, Rosalind Richards, Fiona Winning, Jeff Khan, Erin Brannigan and Margot Nash. Their generosity, expertise and love have been instrumental in shaping my artistic journey and nurturing the evolution of my work.

JKM Hearing you talk about the importance of collaboration makes me think about the conservation work I'm doing with some of the Aboriginal works in our collection, where I am considering what treatment practices should be implemented for these objects that are also windows or portals for ancestors to move through and bring forward song and dance and story. I am also thinking about how, as a conservator, I can interact with those objects with awareness and attention to prepare that space to be safe.

CM Is conserving the right word, I wonder? Even though this all might be the role of conservators, is it more about supporting than conserving, ensuring an environment in which work and culture can happen? Rather than conserving being about 'pinning butterflies', how might it keep the butterflies alive?

VH Perhaps the notion of conservation takes on a more appropriate meaning when we consider it as a conservation of the formation of possibilities and our capacity to respond to shifting atmospheres, climates, turbulences and intensities? Take Hinemihi, and her *Pare* (carved door lintel). This carving is her pelvis. Like the butterfly, the *Pare* is suspended in a private collection in Paris. Her pelvis is caught in a foreign value system, in a foreign place, surrounded by foreign people who have turned her into a commodity. As living descendants of Hinemihi, we have an obligation to look after her. I am grateful to be having this conversation.

CM And I guess that then opens the question: Who has agency in the conservation process? Should it really be about a museum taking a cultural object and a conservator looking after it and calling that conservation? Or should conservation be about supporting custodians to manage and continue their cultural traditions or practices?

JKM It is important to critique terminology, but I feel like the issue is not conservation. The issue is mislabelling: when activities that are not true conservation are labelled as conservation. If you look up the roots of the term conservation, it comes from 'con', which means 'together', or 'with' and then 'servare', which is 'to protect, preserve or keep safe'. The meaning itself is actually really beautiful.

LC Listening to the three of you has made me realise, Victoria, you actually use dance as a conservation technique. You've innovated traditional practices through dance to conserve Hinemihi, to preserve her history and to prevent that story from being lost. If conservation is about keeping something safe and together, that's essentially what you do when you dance.

VH My Uncle Wally Ruha, at a Campbelltown Arts Centre showing, once said, 'We have lost Hinemihi in a sense but she's still there because she is in your dance. So, it'll be our memories that you'll be dancing. So, we haven't lost her at all, we've got her because she is in your dance. It will bring back a lot of memories'. He helped me understand my role as a *kaitiakitanga* (caretaker) of our beloved *whare tūpuna* Hinemihi.

LC It always comes back to you and Hinemihi, Victoria.

VH I am the house, and the house is me. I dance the story of the house, and she reveals my story.

(pp. 172–3, 178–79) VICTORIA HUNT *KŌIWI* 2023 with collaborators Boris Bagattini, James Brown, Moe Clark and Rosie Te Rauawhea Belvie, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2023. Commissioned by the Art Gallery of New South Wales as part of the *Dreamhome: Stories of Art and Shelter* exhibition and with additional support from the Australian Research Council through research and commissioning partner *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*. Performer: Victoria Hunt. Photo: Mim Stirling

CORI OLINGHOUSE

Notes on method: developing an embodied and living archives framework

I come to archiving dance and performance from multiple perspectives – as an artist, performer, restager, archivist and curator – engaging an embodied 'living' archives methodology I've been developing over the past twenty years. In carrying out a constellation of projects, I partner with artists and institutions to create models around dance and performance archiving and acquisition, documentation and visual storytelling. Several lines of enquiry, including my experiential research in varied histories of improvisation, performance reconstructions and time-based media archiving are influential to my approach.

A 'living archives' framework is an open-ended system that is adaptive, responsive and modular. Rather than attempting fixity, the archive operates regeneratively, working with memory to capture multiple perspectives over time. The archive is dynamic and contains both pre-existing and newly generated documentation produced from past, present and future iterations of works, alongside a built-in system for review, redaction and expansion.

In 2017 I founded The Portal to re-imagine methods of performance archiving and conservation, asking if we can archive performance, and if so, for what future?[1] How does embodied practice come to life at the site of the archive? What is archiving as an ethical and embodied practice? Formerly, as archive director for the Trisha Brown Dance Company, New York, I established the legacy planning for Brown's company and archive. My role as a former company member was integral to treating the Company's vast array of archival materials as evidence of Brown's choreographic ideas, and of her interdisciplinary mind in movement.

In the following, I describe how my embodied approach considers the ways performance archiving requires adaptability and improvisation to respond to the living and changeful aspects of the forms themselves. I define the ways I am working with specific terms while also journeying through the multiple practices that have influenced me. This poetic nomenclature is the result of my own practice-based research and development over the past two decades.

POETIC NOMENCLATURE

An embodied approach to archiving requires a particular attunement to the concept of body-to-body transmission, a process grounded in performance forms and cultures that use orature, improvisation, ritual, storytelling and choreography.[2] There are as many varied and distinct practices of embodied transmission as there are performance histories. In considering the ethics of what it means to transmit performance, it is essential to be able to qualitatively understand *how* transmission is taking place, which means attuning to the memory structures that underlie particular forms.

As part of my work with dance and performance-based artists, I approach the body as a living repository for knowledge, attuning to ways of knowing that cannot be easily contained by objects and documents. I seek out forms of transmission that allow for agency, improvisation and interpretation – where value is placed on qualitative forms of exchange and reiteration, rather than on form, geometry and imitation of choreographic grammar. A straight attempt to translate the original is not only impossible, but it can also result in a stilted representation, foreclosing the future life of the work. In thinking about the ways performance changes over time, especially when being reinterpreted through forms of adaptation, my approach engages notions of translation and interpretation.

The following questions, developed over many years, guide my approach to performance reconstructions: What are the essential parts of a performance work that need to be carried forward with each iteration? What

1 In 2015 I was invited to speak as a panellist in the 'Storytelling in the Archives' forum at The Museum of Modern Art, where curator Ana Janevski posed a series of questions, including: 'Can we archive gesture and movement and for what future?' This question draws inspiration from Janevski's prompt.

2 Contesting existing performance studies' claims that performance disappears, theatre arts and performance studies scholar Rebecca Schneider writes about the ways 'performance does remain, does "leave residue". Indeed the place of residue is arguably *flesh* in a network of body-to-body transmission of enactment'. See Rebecca Schneider, 'Performance remains', *Performance Research*, no. 6, vol. 3, 2001, p. 102.

aberrations can occur through each subsequent revision? Who has the authority to further adapt the work? How can future interpretations mutate in ways that don't overly codify the work – that keep the performance alive?

For each project, I place the distinct form of each archive in direct conversation with the complexity of an artist's practice and work, looking to see how the archive might best reflect the unique ways in which an artist is working. The primary thrust of this methodology relies on an improvisational approach that varies from artist to artist and demands variable and adaptive responses.

In one example, as archive director for the Trisha Brown Dance Company, I collaborated with David Thomson on an audiovisual database that reflects Brown's development of a lexicon of movement, mapping her choreographic ideas and methods into an accessible and searchable vocabulary.[3] The database responds to the way Brown assigned names and poetic descriptions to choreographic material during her creation process. These words became a verbal cueing system to orally remember and refer to sections or phrases in the choreographies. Like in the game of Telephone, these names have been passed down by various Company members, morphing throughout the years.[4] This oral lexicon of movement can be searched as vocabulary within the database, so that the language surrounding Brown's embodied practice is not lost for future research and scholarship.

In another example, in 2019 I collaborated with the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, on the acquisition and restaging of Autumn Knight's performance work *WALL* – the first performance to enter their permanent collection. *WALL* gathers an intergenerational cast of Black femmes in a performance layered with sounds, rituals and actions. Sitting at the nexus of social and artistic practice, it is both a performance work and a form of social action. Over several months, Knight and I undertook multiple studio visits and conversations to map the concepts and embodied practices embedded in her artistic work. We collaborated on a multivalent documentation strategy, using textual, aural, visual and embodied means to transmit the presence of the work. In rewriting the terms for performance conservation in this way, the process of acquiring *WALL* initiated a model for acquisition that invites future interpretation and modularity and applies a call-and-response methodology as initiated through Knight's practice.[5]

Rather than applying a set of 'best practices' to every instance of performance archiving, my approach relies on an adaptive method that follows a given set of principles: *transmission*, *mnemonics*, *description* and *animation*. *Transmission* involves the body-to-body transmission of the embodied knowledge that emerges from performance practice. *Mnemonics* looks relationally at the documents and objects that surround performance work and their relationship to memory, approaching these materials as retrieval systems for the senses. *Description* draws upon oral history gathering, experimental writing practices and artists' notebooks to explore a generative space around language. The practices that inform this methodology, including transmission, mnemonics and description come to life through the fourth principal, which I refer to as animation. *Animation* involves any process of reconstituting the archival materials; through performance, curation and exhibition-making, drawing upon principles of montage, assemblage, interpretation and translation.

I expand upon standard metadata practices used in archives through practices of subjectivity, oral history gathering, mapping and thick description.[6] Subjectivity involves the conscious relationship of an archivist's positionality and how this manifests in provenance

3 During this process, the embodied practitioners who performed, restaged and collaborated with Trisha Brown acted as content specialists who enriched the details of the audiovisual holdings and their corollary relationships to Brown's choreographic practice.

4 The game of Telephone is when a message is passed on by several people, with the original message radically changed along the way. Also called Chinese Whispers, it usually happens as a game where each person in the chain whispers into another's ear. It speaks to the ways memory is not static, and how recollection processes involve creative distortion.

5 For more information on this process, see Cori Olinghouse, 'A letter to the future: Autumn Knight's *WALL* (2016/2019) and the Studio Museum in Harlem' in Luisa Passerini & Dieter Reinisch (eds), *Performing Memory: Corporeality, Visuality, and Mobility after 1968*, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, 2023.

records, finding aids, metadata tags, and content descriptions. Oral history and interview gathering acknowledge the social context of creation, offering multiple perspectives and narratives around the representation of a work, which results in a polyvocality; rather, the assumption of one fixed narrative, or origin story, within a creative process. Mapping deals with the recognition of emergent patterns within an artist's creative practice and relies upon their notebook(s), along with immersive conversations. In working with artists, I find that the materiality of the words on the page – their colour, size, texture and placement on the page – often act as mnemonics, triggering kinetic and embodied memories. Not all these elements are employed within each archiving project; they are intended as a fluid set of practices that can be applied within each context and circumstance.

This subjective handling often results in complex negotiations around the ways an artist's work is represented, which requires a conscious understanding of the subjectivity and positionality an outside figure, such as myself, brings to an artist's work. Video, film and photographs are only some types of material that emerge from a choreographer's practice. These materials are charged with layers of representation. Who is documenting the work? From what position? How does a filmmaker's or videographer's seeing of a performance influence or change the thing they are attempting to represent? These are all questions that speak to the complicated nature of documentation, ethnography and performance archiving. Archives play an active role in producing the subjects they come to represent; how we relate to this inscription and how it manifests into form is the site of ethics. I play with the performativity and subjectivity embedded within the role of archiving – the fact that these aspects are always already happening.[7]

EXPERIENTIAL RESEARCH

Understanding improvisation is critical to this approach. My study of improvisation first began in 1995 when I met Nina Martin, an improviser, teacher and founding member of New York's Channel Z and Lower Left. Martin's approach to improvisation draws upon her work with North American choreographers Elaine Summers, Mary Overlie, Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, Simone Forti and Deborah Hay, among others. From 1997 to 2001, as a student at Bennington College, I worked with Susan Sgorbati, who has created a framework for understanding improvisation as a

> complex, interconnected system, where there is enough order and interaction to create recognizable pattern but where the form is open-ended enough to continuously bring in new differentiations and integrations that influence and modify the form.[8]

In 2008 I immersed myself in the NYC house and voguing communities, studying intensively with legendary House of Ninja voguers Archie Burnett, Benny Ninja and Javier Ninja in house clubs and classes. In hindsight, these studies are part of a ten-year trajectory in which I use my body as a site of and vehicle for critical examination of whiteness and the postmodern aesthetic of my training.

It is through this work I am reminded of the ways artists are already incorporating

6 Made famous in the 1970s by anthropologist Clifford Geertz, whose ethnography was written in this style, 'thick description' has gradually come to mean a way of writing qualitatively with detail and context. See Clifford Geertz, 'Thick description: toward an interpretive theory of culture', *High Points in Anthropology*, vol. S.531–552, 1988.

7 I turn to queer and feminist scholarship for answers to these questions, including Laura Marks' notion of haptic visuality – a visuality that refers to embodied spectatorship through the sense of touch – and Donna Haraway's idea of situated knowledges, which argues for taking the 'view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity'. See Laura Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2002, pp. 2–4; and Donna Haraway, 'Situated knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 3, no. 14, 1988, p. 589.

8 Susan Sgorbati, 'Practice & performance', *Emergent Improvisation*, <emergentimprovisation.org/home.html>, accessed 1 April 2017.

archives within their creative practices.[9] Burnett talks about the cypher as being a place where dancers are generating and remixing movements on each other's bodies. The immediate feedback offered by improvising in relation to the music and one another becomes a way for movements to become recorded and remembered. Movements are kept alive through a call-and-response logic, which are held as part of a social body. Improvisation enables performance to remain through complexity, rather than the reproduction of choreographed gestures through mimicry and appropriation. Improvisational approaches to performance transmission should be critically distinguished from repertory processes (the dominant contemporary form of 'living' choreographic archives) that codify particular choreographies and forms.

In sharp contrast to this was my experience working intimately with the Trisha Brown Dance Company as a performer from 2002 to 2006, where I witnessed the complexity involved in restaging performance as repertory. When I entered the company, I danced original cast member Eva Karczag's role in *Set and Reset*, 1983. I spent hours upon hours learning choreographic phrase material and ensemble forms in the absence of Karczag. With the aid of videotape, and with multiple witnesses giving corrections, I was instructed to learn Karczag's inflection of the *Set and Reset* phrase material as form, particularly her spatial, geometric and affective renderings. What did it mean to transmit this piece as repertory more than twenty years later? Was it even possible to imitate her movement affects as learned choreography? These experiential understandings have led me to seek out forms of transmission that allow for transformation and difference.[10]

During this time, beginning in 2001, I worked with former Museum of Modern Art curator Jon Gartenberg, a film historian, archivist and distributor. I was drawn to embody and understand Brown's kinetic and visual lines of thinking while simultaneously learning how to track patterns in time-based media archives in the cataloguing and preservation stages. In my time off from Brown's company, I would meet with Gartenberg in his office on 96th and Amsterdam to work on a variety of experimental film and video projects.[11] In conversations with Gartenberg, we explored preservation and reconstruction through ideas of temporality and imperfection. These conversations influenced my work as a performer in Brown's choreographies, informing my approach to reconstruction through their fluid variability.

LIVING ARCHIVES

In a 'living archives' framework, I approach the roles of artist, archivist and curator as an integrated practice, rather than as separated specialisations. Archiving offers an intimate and material relationship to the objects and documents that remain from performance. Curating involves building assemblages by bringing an artist's practice into relation with other disciplines, art-historical time periods, theoretical frameworks, sociopolitical contemporary contexts, and/or invented prompts. A curator, almost like a time traveller, can move across time periods, aesthetics and disciplines in search of unforeseen connections. Artistic practices, particularly those surrounding performance and improvisation, bring an understanding of embodiment, artistic form and improvisational structuring.

9 Or as performance studies scholar Diana Taylor writes, 'Embodied memory, because it is live, exceeds the archive's ability to capture it. But that does not mean that performance – as ritualized, formalized, or reiterative behavior – disappears. Performances also replicate themselves through their own structures and codes.' See Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2003, pp. 19–20.

10 Borrowing from Rebecca Schneider's concept, 'performance remains differently'. For Schneider: 'To the degree that it remains, but remains differently or in difference, the past performed and made explicit as (live) performance can function as the kind of bodily transmission conventional archivists dread, a counter-memory – almost in the sense of an echo.' See Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, and New York, p. 105.

11 As Gartenberg writes, 'filmmakers treat the film emulsion as a living organism. It is an organic substance, a shimmering silver onto which they directly imprint'. The filmmakers' actions merge and interact with the emulsion, exploding the surface of the film through mark-making and tactility. See Jon Gartenberg, 'The fragile emulsion', *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2012, p. 142.

Through these multiplicities, I have found that performance archiving asks for an embodied navigation that relies on dynamics of proximity, relationality and tactility. Proximity involves being in closeness with an artist and the work and practices that surround the work. Relationality has to do with understanding the ways materials in the archive touch one another, the way they emerge from distinct contexts, and the idea that documents and objects come to matter through complex entanglements. Tactility is the way in which touch has the capacity to locate physicality and situate memory. Taken together, these elements form a multivalent approach to the archiving of performance-based works – how to fluidly consider forms that arise and persist through constant reconfiguration and change.

SARA WOOKEY

Decentralising the dance artist: moving and being in the human ecology of the museum

INTRODUCTION

I am interested in examining the spatial relations of dance and the museum through decentralising the dance artist, and how this creates greater inclusivity in cultural institutions. My perspective is informed by experiences and training as a practising dance artist and researcher creating work in and with galleries and museums. This lens enables me to engage deeply with not only physical spaces of the museum, but also less tangible institutional politics. Being a dance artist and researcher informs my view of institutional instability, flux and change. I highlight the self-reflexivity of my own practice, looking critically through the lenses of spatial theory, somatic enquiry, ecology and relational aesthetics – viewpoints that help me reconsider the role of human beings in the museum and how we contribute to the qualities of spatial relations therein.

My work in museums includes performing, lecturing and transmitting my own dance works, writing, research and activist projects; the repertoire of choreographer Yvonne Rainer; and collaborative practice with architect Rennie Tang. I am interested in challenging assumptions of dance's role in the museum, its ability to shift socio-spatial relations and make visible the social construction of space: who has access to it and in what ways.[1] How might dance in the museum help us consider inclusivity in institutions? What privileged position does the dance artist have in the museum, and how is this questioned and brought into the discourse of access and inclusivity? In trying to answer these questions, my work explores how the dance artist can create a space of belonging, play and agency in the museum through creative approaches.

YVONNE RAINER *Diagonal* (part of *Terrain*) 1963 as part of *Yvonne Rainer: Dance Works*, Raven Row, 2014. Performers: Emilia Gasiorek, Samuel Kennedy, Alice MacKenzie, Sara Wookey, Samir Kennedy, Rosalie Wahlfrid. Photo: Eva Herzog

As my practice evolves, it makes a case for equities of belonging in the museum that complicate more recognisable marketing of the autonomous dance artist.[2] It calls for a consideration of the ways the dance artist negotiates a multiplicity of positions – present, detached and absent – amidst others in the museum. Below are two projects addressing the idea of decentralisation of the dance artist through a different kind of presence, and the benefits of absence.

1 This thinking comes from my studies with urbanist Edward Soja whose work *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1996) borrows from the theories of Henri Lefebvre's writing in, among other publications, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso, London, 1991.

2 Examples of centralising the artist can be seen in *The Artist is Present* by Marina Abramović at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010).

CASE STUDY 1: THE DIFFERENTLY PRESENT DANCE ARTIST (TATE MODERN)

In my role as Associate Researcher at Tate Modern, 2018–19, I explored the museum as a dwelling space – a space to abide in, wander through and inhabit. Instead of formal performance, I pursued a kind of abiding presence as performance. I had access to public and non-public spaces of the museum, including office spaces and staff rooms. I offered a morning movement class to staff before opening hours and practised resting as well as moving throughout the museum's front- and back-of-house spaces, including the staff canteen, across the course of a day. Subsequently, staff invited me to accompany them throughout their day and give feedback on the way they inhabited spaces and their interactions with colleagues – as a way to inform their work in the museum.

Following these movement practices, I explored experimental exercises of inhabiting the museum through small-scale actions of walking, sitting, standing and lying down in the public and non-public (staff-only) spaces of the museum, both alone and with others.[3] The letting go of both performing in the context of a scheduled event that the audience comes to watch, as well as the production of an object in the museum, opened another space of considering dance as presence in the museum. The dance artist in this case was neither the focus of engagement for a viewer nor the one offering a space of participation to the visitor. Instead, the dance artist, alongside Tate staff, was at work in the museum.[4] The dancer was warming up, walking, sitting, lying down and researching, and became part of the human infrastructure of the museum – one of many people (visitors and staff) going about their actions, positions and labour. Humans in the museum in quotidian and performative ways contribute to the ecosystem of the museum's social system.

CASE STUDY 2: THE ABSENT DANCE ARTIST (VAN ABBEMUSEUM)

Through a commission from the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, The Netherlands, I co-created *Punt.Point*, 2014–17. This performance project provides a wearable artwork to museum visitors and staff to use to stage movements informed by dance, and to make visible places of accessibility and inclusivity in the museum. It takes place without the presence of a dancer and opens up a space in the museum, inspired by dance, for others to step into. It was created with landscape architect Rennie Tang and was offered in the museum for three years before being acquired for Van Abbemuseum's permanent collection.

The wearable is a soft yellow shoulder bag containing a guidebook, map, notebook, pencil and a cushion, and is mobilised on the body of the participant, who determines their route, tempo and way of moving through the museum.[5] The project suggests trying out ways of being through a set of suggested physical actions. The project invited audiences and museum staff to playfully explore standing, leaning, sitting, lying

3 I invited other dance and somatic-based practitioners, such as my Feldenkrais teacher Fiona Wright and artist-researcher Natalie Garrett Brown, to join me on and off during my residency.

4 The concept of dance as labour, as work, is an influence from my work with choreographer and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer.

5 This material component, or wearable artwork, consisted of a felt bag, or what we referred to as a 'pouch', worn over the shoulder. These are hung in a room just outside the entrance to the museum, before entering the galleries. This room is called the 'toolshop' and is a designated space in the museum with five commissions comprising the *Storylines* program: *Punt.Point* is one of them. There is a series of twelve bright yellow circular felt pouches, each 25 centimetres in diameter, that are attached to a shoulder strap. The items inside – all cut as circles to fit into the pouch – are designed to assist the visitor in performing a variety of 're-positions', including standing, leaning, sitting, lying down and, finally, a headstand. The map identifies locations throughout the museum, such as galleries, hallways and corners, where they will find small numbered yellow vinyl points on the floor. Each of these vinyl stickers has a number printed on it in grey that corresponds with the numbered 're-positions' illustrated in the guidebook.

Museum visitors moving in the gallery space at Palazzo Grassi in Venice, 2018, in between dance performances of YVONNE RAINER *Trio A* 1966. Photo: Matteo De Fina

down and performing a headstand. It offered the same ways of inhabiting the space through modes of comfort and curiosity often found in the way dancers physically position themselves in the dance studio and at home. In other words, dancers often lie on the floor, they attend to their body and engage in physical relational practices with other dancers while dancing. *Punt.Point* shifted the position of the dance artist to absent in order to recognise the museum as a space of innate performance.[6]

I recognise the alignment of this case study to the work of William Forsythe whose *Choreographic Objects* work also operates as a tool for instigating movement and dance in spectators but is not dependent on the presence of a dancer. What is choreography when it is implicit in an object and in what ways, as *Punt.Point* asks, can that object be a tool or permission for other kinds of movements in the museum to emerge? And in this emergence of movement what does the museum become?

This project illuminated the already-activated museum and offered options for dance-like behaviour that called attention to the ways in which people activate the museum. The work achieved this without a performing dance artist *as* the example, but, rather, invited visitors *as* movers to play this out themselves.

CONCLUSION

The museum is an institution people visit and work in. To reposition dance as a form of relational presence we must first ask what kinds of positions (physical, social and political) the dance artist can and does take up, and how those positions allow for, produce and support new experiences of the museum and dance through the lens of equity. What might emerge from the differently configured dance? If the dancer is not central, what happens?

These case studies ask us to consider how decentralising the dance artist might address the politics of space in the museum. These practices, in turn, offer differing approaches to the forms of attention the dancer might create in the museum, examining its physical spaces, positioning dance in its spaces and how the present, detached or absent dance artist might inform the museum's own choreography – its everyday human ecology.

The tendency of dance artists to position ourselves in the world as isolated, discrete beings, rather than part of an interconnected totality negates a rich interconnectedness. This networked system of overlapping relations is one perspective from which to move forward and reconsider dance in and with the museum. This thinking asks that we begin to question dance as an 'activator' of space, artworks and publics; dance as a tool for mediation, engagement and participation; and why and for whom we do this work. The museum is not only a space for dance; dance is also a site for change in the museum. My work takes the site of the museum as an affective construct, and recognises both its under-represented staff and the dance artist as figures to be critically analysed. Dance brings the ecology of the museum to life as a potential landscape for change not only in terms of the museum's potential, but also of dance as a place of social, spatial and inclusive relational (r)evolution.

6 The performance of the everyday and everyday actions as dance is influenced by my work with Yvonne Rainer, whose work exemplifies such provocations.

ALICIA FRANKOVICH IN CONVERSATION
WITH NATASHA CONLAND

AQI2020

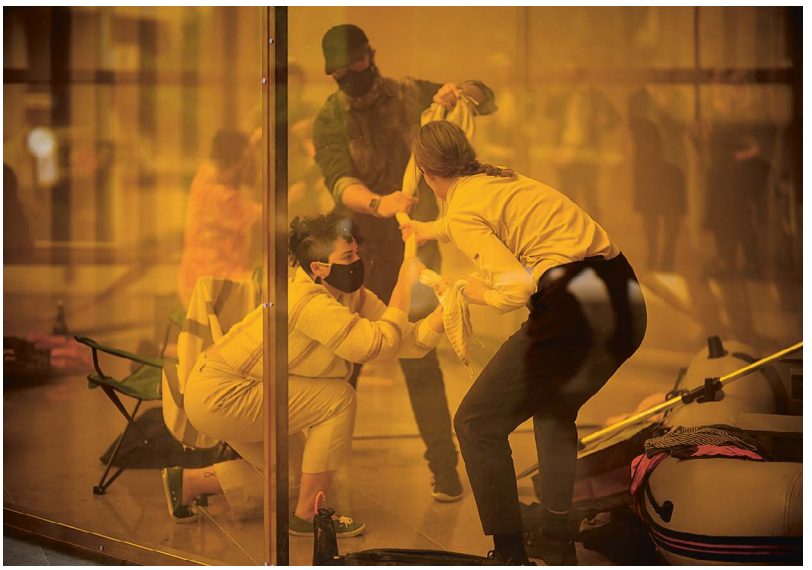
NATASHA CONLAND (NC) To set the scene regarding the commission and acquisition of *AQI2020*, 2020, by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, it is perhaps worth giving some background to the relationship and perspectives you and I share. We first met around the turn of the millennium, during your second year at art school, where I was teaching contemporary art and theory at Auckland University of Technology. I was exploring areas of art history I felt were underexamined in the program at that time: the history of sound and media art in particular. In your year group there were a number of students interested in the potential of the exhibitionary arena, and although you departed for Melbourne soon after this, an atmosphere of ephemeral practice and trans-disciplinarity was unique to this moment. Your emergent practice in the interstices of the body and its limits, performance, sculpture, kinetics, queer theory and the environment still link back to this time. We have subsequently worked together on commissions for the 4th Auckland Triennial (2010) and the *Walters Prize* 2012. However, by 2020 I was conscious that some of your large-scale choreographic works had not been exhibited in New Zealand. Local audiences were still used to your performances in which you work with your own body, and in turn lead the choreographic and performative decision-making. However, when I suggested the prospect of a new commission for our central Atrium at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, you had a very specific proposal in mind. Can you comment on why you proposed *AQI2020* in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland for that time, when in many ways it was born out of your experience in Australia?

ALICIA FRANKOVICH (AF) *AQI2020* was an urgent work for me that had to be made. It overrode everything else present in my mind at the time. I'd had a lot of life changes, having just arrived in Australia with a newborn child at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which would lead to the spread of disease, border closures and extended lockdowns. In January 2020 my partner and I fled the bushfires surrounding Canberra overnight due to the extreme residual smoke from the nearby Orroral Valley and Currowan fires, which had been in the region for more than two months. When you're invited to produce and exhibit a new work, sometimes a short timeframe can offer immediacy to an idea or event present in the imaginary. The climate catastrophe was rendered highly visible by these bushfires and saw devastation and dense smog travel as far as South America and Aotearoa New Zealand. The bright orange skies looked almost elegant in some images, yet where I had been the orange was subsumed by grey, and at times the smoke was so thick that only a little light was seen through the billowing plumes.

Just prior to your invitation I had made *The Work*, 2019, with Kaldor Public Art Projects for their fifty-year anniversary at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. I was building on previous performances like *The Opportune Spectator*, 2012, and *Free Time*, 2013, in which the idea of unseen labour forces came to prominence. *AQI2020* departed from this overt focus on labour, although arguably it is inherent in all of my works due to the nature of the worker relations involved. My interest was in re-situating the recent climate event, which had been visualised and remediated widely and globally in news media, by placing it in the highly visible Auckland Art Gallery lobby.

AQI2020 is essentially a choreographic work staged within a large orange-tinted rectangular Perspex room. There are props inside (an inflatable boat, bags and loose clothing), and smoke emanating from the structure around which the performers (Fa'asu Afoa-Purcell, Christina Houghton, Xin Ji, Rana Hamida, Kristian Larsen, Yin-Chi Lee, Olivia McGregor, Janaína Moraes, Adam Naughton, Sophie Sutherland and Briar Wilson) move through a series of pre-scripted scenes. A musical composition by Igor Kłaczyński, including sound recordings related to the fires, plays through the surrounding space. Face masks were first included as a symbol of the summer of 2019–20, referencing the P2 masks we wore indoors and while asleep to avoid breathing smoke from the fires. Then, as the development of the piece went on, the use of masks became symbolic of the pandemic. It is worth noting that this was a COVID-free time in Aotearoa New Zealand, yet at this point the pandemic was happening all around the world. The critical point that I wanted to make was about the ability of art to remind us of who and where we are. One such signifier of our immediate environment was the use of masks in the choreography.

NC Yes, New Zealand was doubly islanded by COVID, and this work was developed while our borders were locked down in the most severe period of isolation. The initial result was that we were free of COVID for that entire year while we developed the work. The interpretive register of the work was therefore more clearly associated with the recent fiery skies and reports of environmental trauma. With this in mind, can you describe your decision to house the performance in its orange structure, and how in turn that influenced the choreography?



AF For me, the Perspex shell acted as a 'screen surrogate' – a transparent division that isolated the activity of those bodies and objects from their audience. It provided a spatial zone to produce our own reality within the gallery structure, relocating the images and stories that were circulating around this environmental disaster, along with my translations of the lived scenario in Canberra where the Air Quality Index (AQI) had reached hazardous levels of 7700 (26 times higher than safe

air-quality levels). The work's smoke haze, sound, loaded objects and movements built an atmosphere of this remediated situation.

This work attempts to demonstrate that there is no outside, no escape to a second planet. For me, this emphasis reiterates that a body cannot be considered outside the conditions of which it is part. This is a reference to geophilosopher Daniel Falb's concept that there is no way of depicting the Anthropocene, as the apparatus used for its capture and the image itself could not be included in the situation. The amber Perspex booth provided a way to look at and be in a sort of *joyeuse apocalypse*, while being aware of the burning reality of the bushfire crisis that marked the impetus for producing this work. There was a fraction of hope in community and camaraderie, marked by the quest to fight fires. Then there was the political context to draw upon, such as the then Australian prime minister's naive and misfired attempted handshake with a firefighter in Cobargo, New South Wales, which comprised part of the choreography.

NC What worked and what didn't work in developing the choreography remotely from Melbourne, and with assistant choreographer Zahra Killeen-Chance, a new collaborator, especially as you were translating experiences that you were directly witness to?

AF I know artists and choreographers in Europe and elsewhere are avoiding travel for environmental reasons – this concept is a bit more challenging for those of us who are geographically decentralised from the outset. The model of developing choreography remotely is already being used; for example, French choreographer Jérôme Bel's relatively recent decision not to fly to present his work internationally. The nature of the practice itself is open to this kind of transmission. Not everyone would agree to working in this way. Perhaps my work is also open enough to this kind of screen-based and mediated transmission.

The instructions that inform and produce the performers' movements and behaviours in *AQI2020* were conveyed from a distance using video conferencing. The instructions consisted of sequences of action described as scenes or concepts which were

transmitted through images and videos. The events of the fires were remediated from news stories and their circulated imagery, which was translated further into situated movements over Zoom. During rehearsal and performance I was able to have nuanced dialogue via Zoom with Zahra in response to what I was seeing and understanding, along with reports from you, Natasha. Once the work was up and running, I also received texts from performers such as Adam Naughton who wrote: 'There was another lady who was crying today, offering accounts of firsthand emotional responses to the performance'. I also made a couple of different timing variables in the order of the movements once the performance was up and running, to diversify what I was seeing. The museum staff played a key role in gauging air quality in the booth itself and liaising between the performers and myself about any issues where necessary.

In saying this, the firsthand social interaction is what builds relationships and adds a certain spark to the work. It's what produces possibilities and allows for change, however subtle. As a practitioner, I have always felt that dealing with the noise and the shortfalls of a situation is where you pick up a certain energy and divert it positively. However, you'd have to say that the conditions for the production of this work were totally unique.

NC Let's turn to Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's decision to acquire the work. Perhaps I will start with my impulse as commissioning curator to propose the work for acquisition. As a curator who works regularly with commissioning, collections and exhibitions, I try not to deviate too much in my approach between art forms – for example, if I see a rationale for developing and/or acquiring a work (no matter what its material basis) to fulfil the strength and breadth of the collection, I need to honour that irrespective of the complexities and use the gallery's processes to translate the work into a set of museological questions. So, rather than let the detail of a complex work (its 'precarity') halt the process, I start with the questions of whether it reflects a key milestone in an artist's practice, whether the artist needs better representation in the collection, and whether the work reflects or contributes to outstanding practices in art today.

Regarding *AQI2020*, because of the lengths the gallery had already undergone to assist in its development (with conservation, programming and design teams involved), I had an additional interest in wanting to retain that knowledge within the gallery's collection, to solidify and document that history. Having spent years tracking through our archives of performance art history, by artists often at the height of their most experimental phase, I became aware that the majority of their work is retained through the photographs taken by our photography department. In 2018 I made an exhibition named *Groundswell: Avant-Garde Auckland 1971–79* in which I worked through the archives and with the living artists to recreate a decade's worth of largely invisible art practices, artists who lived in oral histories but not museum histories. With *AQI2020* I could see that we had the capacity to work through its elements to collect it in perpetuity because, in working remotely through its construction, we had effectively established a set of written instructions and documents. This period of remote development helped me think of a time and place in which the Gallery might have to reconstruct the work without

you or me or Zahra and answer some of the future's questions about what would be needed to reconstruct it.

I want to ask whether you feel confident about that scenario given the materials we now have, and what considerations you gave to this process?

AF Yes, I have to say I like your fluidity and approach there, with the medium not taking precedence or creating an unnecessary burden. I have made a lot of exhibitions where performance was a driving factor and the lasting material substance is not documentation at all. A good example is *Revolution (Martini Fountain)*, 2010, which consisted of a suspended and partially inverted fountain of reddish liquid spouting from Martini bottles, influenced by my performances with curator Emma Bugden, who hauled me into the air twenty times when opening the door to visitors to Artspace, Auckland, in my work *A Plane for Behavers*, 2009). I was thinking about veins and the flow of blood through these vessels, along with the kind of queer spectacle of the Martini-like swimming pool. There was inversion and subversion of the bodies and bottles, just like my body in the space. This was my way of expanding both performance and object-making. In *AQI2020* movements dominate, and sculpture is also front and centre, but let's not forget the prominence of sound, light and smoke haze as part of the embodiment. While I have enjoyed the precarity of working in the performance medium since around 2006, equally there is a lot of loss, a lot given over to those who walk away and whose memories dissipate through thoughts and conversation.

The problems I see with collecting *AQI2020* are similar to concerns I might have with other works of mine in your collection. I have clear intentions about how they need to function and how they need to be installed. Without those intentions being captured, or my spatial presence, I'm leaving a lot open. I have to trust museum personnel to fight for my absolute interests in the work. This is an ongoing process. I like the idea of experts, those having acquired special knowledge through having worked on the piece as say you, Zahra and the performers did. Someone has to be responsible for closely considering my notes if I am not there, speaking with others who witnessed the piece and noticing what particulars may have been lost or left out. We have to remember that anything other than the piece – like video or photography – is a representation of the piece, so it's always going to be secondary to the performance's *liveness*. So engaging with the embodied knowledge-holders is key here, I think. I don't think anyone is under the illusion the work will be exactly the same with each activation, but there should be a spectrum where people are working hard to reproduce, to re-utter the work in a new time and space. Of course, time and space are also changing, people and politics are changing, lands and their ownership are changing, climate change is changing us, and so whenever this work is reshown, everything else will have shifted. The implications of this are huge, and the associated ethics of care are real. Have wages and conditions changed in the new time and space? How best can this work be shown ethically?

To address the last part of your question more acutely, you alluded to the professional dancers' ability to interpret the work in a way that the non-professionals couldn't. I came to this conclusion also. I'm leaning toward favouring professionals, but ethically I am

also tied to there being bodies whose movement is 'other' in some way, including in the non-trained sense. This is tied to class, sexuality, background, disability and otherness broadly. As you know, I often welcome pregnant, LGBTQI+ and differently abled performers.

NC The points you raise about the changing context surrounding the work are particularly pertinent to the collection and realisation of performance works in the future. Inevitably, if we document the work and don't reactivate it we are securing it to the original social-historical context, but with a reactivated piece it is immediately more mobile and could either benefit or suffer due to changes. While we have the choreographic cycle and instructions, the props list, the video documentation and the sound file, what we haven't captured and perhaps cannot capture is the embodied experience of the dancers, their interpretations. Here we are perhaps at risk of cloning the original movement through repetition; in other words keeping it anchored in a particular time. Opening up to new bodily decisions raises questions of how we record somatic knowledge. We could certainly add information, a palette of responses from the assistant choreographer or dancers to our catalogue of the work in the form of a honed set of questions.

AF There are thoughts, scenarios and emotions attached to my choreographic notes which you have – these are instructions for the movements not implied with an image-only source. There are so many modes through which the atmosphere was produced, like the sounds of local birds from the region of the fires, including the pied currawong. There's a lot for the performers to think about here, and hopefully that shows. These are all resources available to those realising the work again. I could add some of my email notes to Zahra and the performers to the work's accession file. This collection of texts also describes further nuances. I really like the idea of embodied knowledge being favoured, where this group of experts (the performers and curators) hold a combined understanding of the work and that they might be called upon in its representations, in addition to myself, where possible.

AQI2020

(pp. 196, 197, 198–9, 203) ALICIA FRANKOVICH *AQI2020* 2020, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2020. Supported by the Contemporary Benefactors of Auckland Art Gallery. Performers: Raven Fa'asu Afoa-Purcell, Christina Houghton, Xin Ji, Rana Hamida, Kristian Larsen, Yin-Chi Lee, Olivia McGregor, Janaína Moraes, Adam Naughton, Sophie Sutherland, Briar Wilson. Collection Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2020. Photo: David St George

LOUISE LAWSON, CAITRÍN BARRETT-DONLON
AND ANA RIBEIRO

Choreography co-shaping conservation practice

How have choreographic works influenced the way we understand conservation practices at Tate? As collaborators on the *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum* project, we have been reflecting on this question and rethinking our discipline. Indeed, since Tate began caring for performance artworks – and now choreographic and dance works – conservation practice in this area has shifted globally. While we work together on this project, share an interest in dance and choreography and are all institutionally associated with Tate, each of us brings different experiences and knowledges to our contribution to this field. Caitrín is a PhD researcher in the History of Art department at University College London; Ana is a time-based media conservator specialising in performance; and Louise is Head of Conservation at Tate, leading the strategic direction of conservation. This project has given us time to reflect on how choreographic works demand a renegotiation of museum conservation practices, cross-pollinating our various ideas and perspectives. Specifically, we have considered how to support choreographic works in conservation when they become, even if only for a short while, part of the story of the museum.

When a choreographic work 'walks into a museum', it is rehearsed and performed and, in many instances, walks right back out again. Yet it does not simply vanish. Somewhere between its arrival and departure the manifold and ongoing process of conservation begins. This process does not unfold in isolation, because such work lives at the intersection of multiple and diverse processes that can begin, develop and end both within and outside the museum. Choreographic works are also bound to the body. As an interloper in the museum space, the body – more so than any other medium – brings the material-oriented practices of the museum to account. How do we reconcile the corporeal, continuous, itinerant and multifaceted lives of choreographic works with the preservation aims of conservation practices?

The ideas we have been developing together can be grouped under the following themes: 1) Co-shaping; 2) Care and collaboration, and 3) Boundaries and networks. Here we reflect on these ideas and their implications, which are not simply theoretical but have emerged in tandem with our work in the galleries that, in turn, continues to shape our practice and the intentions that drive it. In order to illustrate how choreographic works have begun to redefine conservation practice at Tate in recent years, we look to artist Lee Mingwei's participatory performance work *Our Labyrinth*, 2015–ongoing.

CO-SHAPING

According to its etymology – from the Latin *con*, meaning altogether, and *tenere*, meaning to hold – the fundamental aim of conservation is to *contain* an artwork; to keep it together and thus preserve it. In fact, in Middle English, the words *contain* and *continue* were frequently confused due to their converging meaning: both seek to keep disparate parts of a whole together in space and time.[1] In the conservation of choreographic works in a museum context, however, containment and continuation are in tension. Indeed, the aim of conservation is challenged by these works that move through the world as complex, relational parts and wholes, that expand and contract over time and slip between seen and unseen. How, then, can a choreographic work become part of a collection and undergo conservation processes needed to preserve it without becoming something else altogether?

One way is through a process, afforded by the very nature of performance-based works, that we have come to term 'co-shaping'.[2] The concept is predicated on the knowledge – gained through our combined experiences in conservation – that for a choreographic or performance artwork to live, thrive and evolve in the museum, there will inevitably be some kind of adaptation or shaping of the work not only by the artist, but also by our own processes. For the museum and conservation this means adapting, changing and, in some instances, radically shifting practice, frameworks and boundaries to create the conditions that support artworks. This means listening to artists who ask us to be open to working in different ways, encouraging their agency in and contributions to the processes that surround

1 Oxford English Dictionary, 'continue, v.', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40270?rskey=eIcS3M&result=3&isAdvanced=false>, accessed 7 June 2023.

2 A phrase put forward by Louise Lawson in conversation with Ana Ribeiro and Caitrín Barrett-Donlon, July 2022.

their work in a museum setting. Ultimately, co-shaping will allow choreographic artworks to be preserved while simultaneously being able to breathe, expand and remain elastic. Co-shaping is a collaborative process that seeks to establish dialogue around choreographic works, and it requires decision-making to be transparent and comprehensible so that different voices can be heard. Within the process, artist-choreographers, dancer-performers, producers, curators and conservators come together to jointly decide how the museum can adapt to the work, and vice-versa, while keeping the integrity of both intact.

CARE AND COLLABORATION

The collaboration required to co-shape choreographic works when they enter the museum is reflective of the networks that support and sustain these 'collective objects' – a term used by Fernando Domínguez Rubio – outside the institution.[3] The lives of choreographic works are intrinsically linked to the body of the artist who created them and the dancer-performers who realise them. In caring for these works it has taught us that there are forms of knowledge that cannot be served by existing museum-centric ways of working. In fact, where conservation is concerned, care is about developing an understanding of these works and practices across multiple departments and communities, both inside and outside the museum.

A collaborative approach enables a richness of understanding from the perspectives that ultimately hold and care for the work. To support these artworks and their live legacies, our emerging conservation practice aims to be as living, evolving and layered as choreographic practices themselves, through developing an open, understanding and reflexive approach. Collective art practices, such as dance, call for a collection of people with different experiences, expertise and familiarities to come together: dancers, choreographers, producers, invigilators, musicians, curators, registrars. Within our own context and conservation team, there is an ever-increasing need to combine different experiences and expertise, and to dissolve the traditional hierarchy of our roles. This way of working has also given rise to an expanded team from different institutional and geographical contexts – of curators, academics, artists and producers – such as *Precarious Movements* affords.

However, while collaboration is vital to our practice, it is also worth acknowledging that autonomy is equally important for artists. The ability to recognise moments when artists and dancer-performers require time, space and freedom is critical to support these works. Our efforts are centred around the choreographic works, artists, practices and communities that continue to expand our ways of thinking, understanding and working.

BOUNDARIES AND NETWORKS

Choreographic works involve continuous *networks* of people – from artist-choreographers to dancer-performers, producers and more – extending across temporalities and geographies. Understanding such networks is a recurring challenge within conservation at Tate, including the question of where conservation situates itself within the choreographic ecosystem, particularly when it stretches beyond the museum's boundaries. Such questions have been made more urgent by choreographic works. Our colleague Jack McConchie's 2022 paper titled '"Nothing comes without its world": learning to love the unknown in the conservation of Ima-Abasi Okon's artworks' resonated with our research: How can we as conservators move into, and thus support, the 'worlds' of choreographic works within the museum?[4] In such cases, artist-choreographers and dancer-performers do not traditionally sit within the boundary of the art museum but outside it and in connection to the studio and theatre. Furthermore, each choreographic work is a 'work-in-motion' within its own world and

3 Fernando Domínguez Rubio, 'On the discrepancy between objects and things: an ecological approach', *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2016, p. 77.

4 Jack McConchie, '"Nothing comes without its world": learning to love the unknown in the conservation of Ima-Abasi Okon's artworks', *Tate Papers*, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/tate-papers/35/learning-to-love-the-unknown-conservation-ima-abasi-okon-artworks>, accessed 20 July 2023.

is held in, and materialised by, bodies. To hold these works without constraining them – without asking them to conform to material-oriented practices – calls for a return to the etymological definition of conservation. If conservators are to hold (*tenere*) and care for such works they must reach across the boundaries of the museum *towards* choreographic works, their networks, spaces and communities, to bridge the two worlds.

LEE MINGWEI'S *OUR LABYRINTH*

We have recently experienced the process of co-shaping – of networks, care, collaboration – through the activation of *Our Labyrinth*, 2015–ongoing, by Lee Mingwei, at Tate Modern in 2022. The work was inspired by Lee's trip to Myanmar in 2014 where he encountered volunteers sweeping floors in places of worship in a way he considered to be mediative and a gift to the community.[5] In *Our Labyrinth*, a single dancer wearing a sarong, ankle bells and carrying a bamboo broom is instructed to move slowly and sweep a mound of rice for approximately ninety minutes. Resembling what Lee experienced in Myanmar, the dancer performs as a gift to the museum visitor, who might be transported to a parallel world where things happen slowly, against the tide, contradicting the natural rhythms of production and growth. According to Jean-Gabriel Manolis, a dancer in *Our Labyrinth*, the work can be considered 'a dance inside a performance'.[6] Instead of teaching choreographed movement, Lee simply instructs dancers to listen to the rice: they improvise in sync with the environment that surrounds them. Each performance activation involves at least one seed dancer, such as Manolis, a dancer who has performed the piece before and plays a key role in sharing the work with local dancers encountering it for the first time. The role of the seed dancer is essential to *Our Labyrinth*'s network, yet seed dancers and the embodied knowledge they carry exist outside the boundary of the museum and – to an extent – the reach of conservation. Therefore, from the beginning of our involvement with *Our Labyrinth*, our understanding of how to conserve a choreographic work was tested.

Our Labyrinth entered Tate's collection between 2019 and 2020, at the same time Tate Modern was planning a display of the work. Drawing on the methodology used for a performance in 2019 of Tony Conrad's experimental music and film performance artwork *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain*, 1972, and learning from the conclusions drawn from that experience, the preparation for and documentation of *Our Labyrinth* focused on developing an understanding of the embodied knowledge and transmission between seed and local dancers by means of observation and interviews.[7] The production process of the work began to surface through experiencing the network that came together for rehearsals and feedback sessions, periodically visiting the green room and seeing the performance shaped over its three-week long display.

Observing the work in action, as well as bearing witness to its development beyond the performance space, was critical to improving our understanding of how individuals beyond the artist and performers shaped *Our Labyrinth*. Moreover, it enabled us to recognise that this euphony of voices needed to be reflected within our conservation documentation processes. Observations and interviews needed to encompass an expanded view of the network to include not only the artist and the dancers, but also the Lee Studio manager and collaborators. In addition, care for the work and the people involved was enacted by regularly checking in, and listening to and being adaptable with Lee, the performers and Lee Studio staff. When discussing choreographic works entering the museum, we had always considered care for the body of the performer as a paramount concern, but *Our*

5 For more details on this performance at Tate and Lee Mingwei's work see: 'Encountering Lee Mingwei's *Our Labyrinth*', *Tate*, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mingwei-our-labyrinth-t15700/encountering-lee-mingweis-our-labyrinth>, accessed 3 Jan. 2023.

6 Louise Lawson and Ana Ribeiro, interview with Jean-Gabriel Manolis, Tate Modern, 22 May 2022.

7 For more details on Tony Conrad's *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain*, 1972, on long-term loan at Tate, see: 'Reshaping the collectible: when artworks live in the museum', <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/reshaping-the-collectible>, accessed 8 March 2023.

Labyrinth acted as a reminder to extend that care to all bodies – a key tenet of our conservation practice – including those that have already inhabited the gallery space: the bodies that painted walls, laid the floor or installed the surrounding artworks, without whose labour choreographic artworks cannot materialise in the museum.[8] Equally, we have begun to recognise the importance of the conservator as part of the work's world.

REFLECTIONS

In the museum, as outside it, choreographic works become truly 'collective objects' as described by Rubio; they require care and maintenance through collective but often invisible work. This, we believe, is the work of co-shaping, which is facilitated through a collaborative approach that is communicative and transparent and that acknowledges the work of the different individuals and communities who come together to care for choreographic works over time. Our experience of activating *Our Labyrinth* at Tate has alerted us to the ways in which our conservation processes overlap with, and have been questioned by, the processes of artistic production; specifically, the ways in which these kinds of works can be connected to so many voices, knowledges and experiences. Indeed, these choreographic works – these collective objects – have been instrumental in redefining our conservation practice. From the outset, choreographic works have called on us to ensure that conservation is a process that evolves; that is open to being co-shaped and challenged. These works have danced into our world and introduced us to new practices, opening a space as uncomfortable and messy as it is exciting. Moreover, these works have allowed us to think of conservation as a continual practice of care and understanding, of holding these works … together.

8 This was an important point made by Francesca Colussi, a time-based media conservator working in the Exhibitions and Displays team at Tate, in conversation with Ana Ribeiro when speaking about politics of care, May 2021.

(pp. 206–7 LEE MINGWEI *Our Labyrinth* 2015–ongoing, Tate Modern, 2022. Performer: Aya Sone. Photo: Oliver Cowling

MARYJO LELYVELD IN CONVERSATION WITH
LOUISE LAWSON

Collection care and performance art at the NGV

The NGV was founded in 1861 and has been presenting performance works since the mid twentieth century. The processes through which these artworks enter the Gallery, and how they are documented and cared for while on site, are developing rapidly as understanding of what caring for them entails. This interview, conducted in July 2023 between Louise Lawson, Head of Conservation, Tate, London, and MaryJo Lelyveld, Manager, Conservation, NGV, explores why this might be the case and how conservation staff, or those entrusted with collection care in art museums, might better support and care for performance art–based works.

LOUISE LAWSON (LL) Can you describe the place of performance and choreography artworks at the NGV?

MARYJO LELYVELD (ML) The NGV has a long history of staging performance. It offers a platform for local and international choreographers and performers to present their work to new audiences as well as engage with the NGV as a building and as a collection. Over the past few years, we are more actively commissioning, presenting and representing works in partnership with other organisations to understand how we can enable and support the ongoing lifecycles of performance art within the museum context. It is timely that we examine what documentation exists for these works and how they are captured across the various roles and memory repositories of the institution, given the historical variability of what falls under the terms 'performance' and 'choreography'.

Choreographic or performance works developed for the art museum context that have been staged at the NGV include Gilbert and George's *The Singing Sculptures*, 1973 (performed 1973); Jill Orr's *Marriage of the Bride to Art*, 1994; Simone Forti's *Huddle*, 1961 (reperformed 2018 while on loan to the NGV as part of *MoMA at NGV: 130 Years of Modern and Contemporary Art*); and Angela Goh's *Body Loss*, 2017–ongoing (reperformed 2022). Similarly, there has been ongoing curatorial interest in this area of practice, with exhibitions routinely incorporating trans- and post-humanist works or performativity; for example, Stelarc's *The Extended Arm,* 1999–2000, or Wade Marynowsky's *The Hosts: A Masquerade of Improvising Automatons*, 2014.

Over the past few years, the offering of choreographic and performance works has grown substantially, with a strong focus not only on exhibitions but also connecting with local festivals. This includes Melbourne's RISING festival, which featured local choreographer Lucy Guerin's *Pendulum*, 2021, and Luke George and Daniel Kok's *Still Lives: Making a Mark*, 2019 (reperformed 2022), as well as the NGV's own exhibition-based performance program for *Melbourne Now*, which in 2023 included four new commissions by artists Alicia Frankovich and APHIDS, and choreographers Jo Lloyd and Joel Bray. As part of *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum* the Gallery is commissioning and documenting two new works by international artists that will feature in the NGV Triennial 2023 program.

This is a very brief overview and doesn't include various performances that fall under cultural or ceremonial performances, which take place at the NGV but draw upon deeper temporalities and specific cultural contexts. These works bring in different voices and considerations, but there are some very practical overlaps when it comes to working within our museum environment to support performance works.

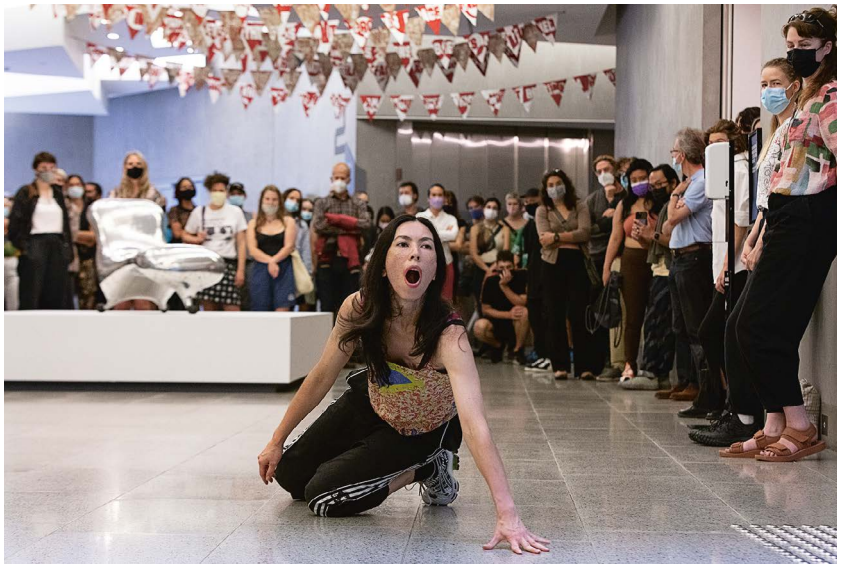
GILBERT & GEORGE *The Singing Sculptures* 1973, National Gallery of Victoria, 1973

LL What are you noticing when these works come into the museum? What's emerging for you from a conservation perspective?

ML In our experience, the performance work is either commissioned or contracted by curators or Audience Engagement staff and coordinated as a public-facing program. This event-led process allows performances to be presented very efficiently. The museum's Audience Engagement staff are familiar with the art museum's audiences, work with a range of creative practitioners across media types and cultural practices, and routinely work with front-of-house, security, multimedia and marketing teams to stage performances and events. The focus is given to event delivery, logistics and compliance, and media requirements, with a temporal front-ending to produce and present the performance. Compared to object and other variable and time-based media that enters the museum, I feel there is less time given to understanding, supporting and documenting the artists' intentions for the performance work, the conditions and impacts of the performance, evaluating the art–public interface or the artwork's intended legacy and trace, and what forms its archiving should take. Material-based and digital-born artworks, whether collection or loan material, that are brought into the art museum are documented, recorded and vetted to ensure their care within the museum accords with industry 'best practices'. These best practices consider the physical environment of the work, the artist's intent for its presentation and ongoing maintenance needs for the display and life-cycle of the work.

My own involvement with choreographic and performance works at the NGV began as part of a risk walk-through in the lead up to Angela Goh's *Body Loss*. The work was re-performed in 2022 in a public

foyer space at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, which also had a collection furniture piece on display. *Body Loss* is very physical. The artist moves through the museum singing a single note, feeling her way through the space, which takes her into close proximity to other artworks and culminates in berries being eaten in the space. Conservation staff were invited to the risk walk-through to advise on how close the artist could perform in relation to the decorative art item on display and whether or not food was allowed in the space. These are standard practices when discussing public-facing and catered events in gallery spaces; however, given that *Body Loss* itself was an artwork, I found it interesting that NGV Conservation staff were not engaged in discussions about the care of the performance artwork. This example highlights the disjunct between standard workflows (Conservation advising on and being engaged with artwork care and its preservation) and the nature of the artwork, whether a physical object or the ecosystem that enables that artwork (for example, the performers, the building, the audience), being presented for that care.



ANGELA GOH *Body Loss* 2017–ongoing, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2022. Performer: Angela Goh. Photo: Nicolas Umek/NGV

Although the NGV has commissioned choreographic works, it is yet to acquire one, an activity that would trigger collection management workflows that involve other teams, such as Conservation and Registration. As such, there are limited collection management system (CMS) database records documenting performance and choreographic works that have been activated within our galleries. There is also limited supporting Conservation documentation that describes the scope and detailed parameters of the work, an evaluation of its condition (or the effectiveness of the work to communicate the artists' intent, at a given time and place), along with supplementary documentation, such as artist questionnaires or artist's notes for the work. Some documentation can be found in curatorial archives, but these tend to be focused more on correspondence leading up to the performance than the artwork itself. More recently, we have started recording these works through photographic and video documentation.

From a conservation perspective, having performance-based and choreographic works enter the Gallery is exciting because it prompts us to review our workflows and ambitions for preservation practice, not only for these works but also for the collection more generally. For example, how do we adapt our collection management system to meet the needs of choreographic works, and how does this impact the care practices for other works already in the collection and on loan? How does the institution undertake such an adaptation? Who is involved with the development of these new processes and what knowledges do they draw on? What methodologies and technologies are available to the institution for supporting the documentation, preservation or future activation of the work, given the distributed knowledges that constitute the work over time? Such knowledge carriers include not only those involved in the development, production and presentation of the work, but may also include the embodied or tacit knowledge of the dancers, the implicit knowledge of the choreographer in realising a work, the explicit knowledge required for production coordination, and the declarative knowledge that defines our collection management systems. The complexity of these works stretch these systems and connecting artists and art workers in new and exciting ways.

Conservators at contemporary art museums such as Tate have been grappling with the practical problem of 'capturing' performance art for well over a decade. Projects such as *Documentation and Conservation of Performance at Tate* (2016–21), *Performance at Tate: Collecting, Archiving and Sharing Performance and the Performative* (2014–16); *Collecting the Performative* (2012–13); and *Performance and Performativity* (2011) highlight the variability, instability and changeability of performance art and, most importantly, how its preservation is dependent on being attentive to the interobjective and intersubjective relationships such works entail.[1] This work has revealed the limitations of 'objectivity' within conservation by guiding us towards the documentation of interobjectivities – for example, the location and relationship of the dancers within the space and in relation to other artefacts and viewers, and the resulting effect on the performance. The Tate's research projects have also mapped how conditions, procedures and policies have affected the work through shifting subjectivities and inter-subjectivities (see Table 1).

This alertness to documenting and preserving the work in its realisation across concurrent temporalities (for example, as a present performance and as future activations under different contexts) feeds the growing interest in conservation that seeks to synthesise rather than compartmentalise the various components and contexts of a work – to guide its preservation needs and expand preservation possibilities to incorporate 'people, objects, place and time'[2] and support the 'becoming' and 'liminality'[3] of 'active matter'.[4] It suggests a dialogic approach that understands conservation as both

1 Louise Lawson, Acatia Finbow & Hélia Marçal, 'Developing a strategy for the conservation of performance-based artworks at Tate', *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*, vol. 42. no. 2, pp. 114–34.

2 Nicole Tse et al., 'Preventive conservation: people, objects, place and time in the Philippines', *Studies in Conservation*, vol. 63, no. 1, pp. 274–81.

SUBJECTIVE

- The thoughts, emotions, memories, states of mind and perceptions of those involved with the development, delivery and care of the work over its lifetime/s
- artist statement
- artist interview
- performer and production team interviews
- production team interviews
- curatorial rationale for the work
- 'witness statement' as documentation

OBJECTIVE

- The materiality of the work: anything that is observable and recordable in time and space
- visual documentation: e.g. photographic and video documentation
- choreographic score
- documentation of duration
- space/gallery in which the work was presented
- description of physical components
- presence of other artworks in the space

INTERSUBJECTIVE

- The shared values, meaning, language, relationships, social and cultural backgrounds of those involved with the production, performance and preservation of the work: dance culture and artistic influence
- professional networks (artists, performers, museum departments)
- institutional strategies and policies that impact the conditions of the work
- audience behaviour in response to the work

INTEROBJECTIVE

- The systems, networks, technology, government and the natural environment: collection management details and institutional procedures
- impact of conditions/limitation upon the work: e.g. technical equipment, budget, legal frameworks, flooring, sound
- listing of decision-makers involved in activation of the work
- selection of performers

Table 1: Aspects of a choreographic work that may be documented[5] to help map out the parameters of the work and its variability with each presentation, set within an Integral framework.[6]

3 Hélia Marçal, 'Becoming difference: on the ethics of conserving the in-between', *Studies in Conservation*, vol. 67, no. 1–2, pp. 30–7.

4 Peter N. Miller & Soon Kai Poh, *Conserving Active Matter: Cultural Histories of the Material World*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2022.

5 This table draws from tools such as Tate's 'Performance specification', and 'Tate activation report and map of interactions'. See Louise Lawson, et al., 'Strategy and glossary of terms for the documentation and conservation of performance', *Tate*, <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/documentation-conservation-performance/strategy-and-glossary>, accessed 17 Sep. 2023.

6 Ken Wilber, *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science, and Spirituality*, Shambhala, Boulder, CO, 2000.

7 Pip Laurenson & Vivian van Saaze, 'Collecting performance-based art: new challenges and shifting perspectives', in Outi Remes, Laura MacCulloch & Marika Leino (eds), *Performativity in the Gallery: Staging Interactive Encounters*, Peter Lang, Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wien, 2014, pp. 27–41; Annet Dekker, 'Networks of care: types, challenges and potentialities', *Networks of Care. Politiken des (Er)haltens und (Ent)sorgens*, Berlin, 2022.

a noun (profession) and verb (practice of care and protection that supports persistence). This has resulted in better support for preservation practices across all artwork and collection types.

LL Where are the tensions, where are the challenges in conserving performance works in the museum?

ML Internationally since the 1960s, public art museums generally, and conservation practice specifically, have been focused on professionalisation through the creation of definitions, specialist roles and the development of industry standards and museum 'best practices' in the acquisition, presentation, research and preservation of collections. Addressing some of the more restrictive or maladaptive aspects of this professionalisation, involving some unlearning by conservators and others within the institution, is required. There are many conservation guidelines, such as no food or drink in gallery spaces, that contradict what is needed for performance to thrive in the museum environment. Many of these guidelines, which may have started out as helpful standards for risk management, have become prescriptive rules that choreographic and performance works challenge. At best, these restrictions may be seen as an inconvenience for the artist, but at worst they diminish support for the artist and the choreographic work so that they receive less care than other artworks and artforms in the museum. Greater nuance and a dialogic approach are needed to deal with some of the perceived risks that presenting and preserving performance work presents.

The NGV is moving away from reliance on 'expert care' and leaning into more system-dependent preservation practices or networks of care where the conservator (or those entrusted with the longevity or trace of the works) acts as a facilitator between the choreographer and the institution.[7] The conservator is then engaged in understanding the parameters of the work and under what conditions it might be reactivated. This goes beyond good communication and documentation to involve developing an awareness and empathy for the different logics at play within those care networks, and honouring the collective responsibility for its preservation.

LL Where is your focus, and how would you like to progress in this area?

ML The NGV will be opening its third site, The Fox: NGV Contemporary (NGVC) in coming years. Planning for a dedicated contemporary art site and the works that will activate it is something we're already thinking about, and I expect that choreographic art will be well

represented. And although the building will feature the work of local and international artists, recent NGV exhibitions and involvement with festivals highlights the museum's commitment to supporting the local creative landscape. I would like to continue presenting such work and facilitating its preservation. As we work through our own in-house documentation and workflows, I expect we'll be drawing on the rich performance and choreographic art scene here in Victoria to establish our own networks of care, and developing our own conservation practice.

(pp. 220–1) MARIA HASSABI *HERE* 2021, Secession, Vienna, 2021. Performer: Alice Heyward. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Thomas Poravas

(pp. 230–1) ROCHELLE HALEY (artist) with ANGELA GOH and IVEY WAWN (choreographers and dancers) *A Sun Dance* (still documentation of the work in development), National Gallery of Australia, Kamberri/Canberra, 2022. Commissioned by the National Gallery of Australia and assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body. With additional support from the Australian Research Council through research and commissioning partner *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*. Photo: Karlee Holland/National Gallery of Australia

DAINA ASHBEE is an artist, director and choreographer based in Canada. Known for her radical works at the edge of dance and performance, she is a double prize-winner at the 2016 Prix de la danse de Montréal, winning both the Prix du CALQ for Best Choreography of 2015–16 for her choreographic installation *When the ice melts, will we drink the water?* and the Prix Découverte de la danse for *Unrelated*. In 2019 Daina won a New York Dance and Performance (Bessie) Award for Outstanding Breakout Choreographer. In 2021, at the age of thirty-one, she had two separate retrospectives of her performance artworks: one in Montpellier and the second in Montreal. In 2022 she was the recipient of the Clifford E. Lee Choreographer Award from the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in Alberta.

JULIA ASPERSKA is a dedicated arts leader with diverse experience in international contexts. She completed a master's in ethnolinguistics and a postgraduate course on art history and curation at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. Julia is currently Associate Curator at Internationale Tanzmesse NRW, Düsseldorf, where she is responsible for building the artistic program of the contemporary dance event, which includes full-length performances, work-in-progress presentations and conferences. Together with five other international colleagues, Julia is a member of the jury selecting works for Tanzmesse NRW from all over the world.

CAITRÍN BARRETT-DONLON is a PhD candidate in the History of Art Department at University College London. Her doctoral research project focuses on the recent dance works of the prolific American choreographer, filmmaker and writer Yvonne Rainer. Alongside a close reading of these dance works and an investigation of Rainer's ongoing choreographic practice of 'revisioning', the project considers the ways that experimental dance works call into question the fundamental concepts that frame museum processes. Since June 2022, Caitrín has been the Conservation Projects Coordinator at Tate and an institutional associate researcher on the *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum* project.

LARA BARZON is a PhD researcher in performance studies (University of Warwick) and social sciences (University of Ljubljana), awarded by the EUTOPIA co-doctoral program, with research interests in the aesthetics and politics of decolonial practices in contemporary dance. She is a committee member of the University of Warwick Centre for Arts Doctoral Research Excellence and the global dance conference Dancing with Decolonisation. In addition, Lara works as a movement artist and curator: she is co-founder of the collective Istmo Nomade and has collaborated with various cultural organisations, including La Biennale di Venezia, ITEM Madrid and the Italian Cultural Institute of Montevideo.

ERIN BRANNIGAN is Associate Professor in Theatre and Performance at the University of New South Wales. She is of Irish and Danish political exile, convict, and settler descent. Her publications include *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image* (2011); *Bodies of Thought: 12 Australian Choreographers*, co-edited with Virginia Baxter (2014); *Choreography, Visual Art and Experimental Composition 1950s–1970s* (2022), winner of the 2023 Selma Jeanne Cohen Prize in Dance Aesthetics (The American Society for Aesthetics); and *The Persistence of Dance: Choreography as Concept and Material in Contemporary Art* (2023).

JULIA BRYAN-WILSON is the author of *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (2009), *Fray: Art and Textile Politics* (2017), and *Louise Nevelson's Sculpture: Drag, Color, Join, Face* (2023). As Curator-at-Large at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo, she co-organised the exhibits *Women's Histories*, 2019, and *Histories of Dance*, 2020.

LISA CATT is Curator, Contemporary International Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales where she recently curated several major commissions and exhibitions for the opening of the AGNSW's new building, including *Adrián Villar Rojas: The End of Imagination* (with Justin Paton), 2022–23, *Dreamhome: Stories of Art and Shelter* (with Justin Paton), 2022–23, and *Lisa Reihana: GROUNDLOOP* (with Ruby Arrowsmith-Todd), 2022. She has worked with Australian choreographers and dancers Shelley Lasica, Victoria Hunt, Angela Goh and Riana Head-Toussaint on projects presented at the AGNSW across 2022–23. Previous curatorial projects include *Get Arted: Pat Larter*, 2020, *Here We Are*, 2019, and *Yona Lee: In Transit*, 2018. Her writing has been widely published in national art magazines and journals, and she has contributed to and edited various exhibition catalogues and artist books.

NATASHA CONLAND has over twenty years' experience developing contemporary art exhibitions, including as a freelance curator, Curator of Contemporary Art at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, curator of the Auckland Triennial 2010 and Curator of Contemporary Art at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. Selected recent and notable exhibitions include *Necessary Distraction: A Painting Show*, 2016, *Shout Whisper Wail!*, 2017, and *Groundswell: Avant Garde Auckland: 1971–79*, 2018. She writes for several contemporary arts journals and catalogues in the Asia-Pacific region and co-edits *Reading Room*, a peer-reviewed contemporary art journal published by the E.H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery. She has diverse interests which have focused on art in public space and the dissemination of the historic avant-garde.

TAMARA CUBAS lives and works in her home country of Uruguay. She received a bachelor's degree in visual arts from the National School of Fine Arts Institute at the University of the Republic of Uruguay, and she holds a master's in art and technology from the School of the Arts in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Tamara studied contemporary dance at the Contradanza School in Montevideo. In her stage practices she has developed two lines of research: one that delves into the performative body in a constant search for autonomy (*Cannibal Series*, 2019, *Anthropophagic Trilogy*, 2017–19), and the second refers to the 'Other', where she develops projects with non-artistic groups (*Multitude*, 2013, *Offering for a Monster*, 2023). Cubas runs her own enterprise, Campo Abierto, a cultural farm in Uruguay with services and programming specialised in art and culture.

ALICIA FRANKOVICH is an artist working across sculpture, performance, video, photography and the format of the exhibition itself. She holds a PhD from Monash University and has been the recipient of the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship and the Australian Postgraduate Award Scholarship at Monash University. Her numerous solo exhibitions and performance commissions include *The Eye*, Brunswick Baths, Open House Melbourne, 2022; *Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies*, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, 2022; *AQI2020*, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2020; *The Work*, Kaldor Projects, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2019; and *Outside Before Beyond* at Kunstverein Düsseldorf, 2017. Her notable group shows include *Endless Circulation* and the TarraWarra Biennial, 2016; *Complex Bodies*, Gebert Stiftung für Kultur, Rapperswil, Switzerland, 2015; and *Framed Movements*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2014.

BRIAN FUATA was born in Aotearoa/New Zealand. He works across the fields of improvisational visual and performance art. He uses multiple registers and modalities of improvised performance to produce from a given institutional context a dumb zone of dramatic effects.

TAMMI GISSELL is a Murrawarri-Wiradjuri woman and Collections Coordinator, First Nations at the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney. Since 1996 Tammi has toured as a performer while working across cultural and educational institutions as lecturer, program coordinator, producer, assessor, compliance officer, registrar and team leader. She holds a Bachelor of Performance: Theory and Practice (Honours) from the University of Western Sydney, was inducted into the Golden Key International Honour Society for achievements in performance theory in 2004, and later graduated Deans' Medallist and Reconciliation Scholar in 2005. Tammi has presented her body of solo works and appeared with Australian dance and theatre makers including Dance Encore, Mirramu Dance Company and the Physical TV Company.

ANGELA GOH is an artist who works with dance and choreography. Her work is presented in contemporary art contexts and traditional performance spaces. Most recently Goh's work has been performed at the Sydney Opera House, Haus der Kunst, Munich, Performance Space New York, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the National Gallery of Victoria, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney. She was awarded the Keir Choreographic Award in 2020, a Green Room Award for Most Outstanding Creation in 2023, the Create NSW Performing Arts Fellowship in 2019–20, and the inaugural Sydney Dance Company Fellowship in 2020–21. Angela lives and works on Gadigal land in Sydney, Australia.

ROCHELLE HALEY is an artist engaged with painting, drawing, choreography and dance to explore relationships between bodies and physical environments. She is also a Senior Lecturer at the School of Art & Design, University of New South Wales. Haley's approach merges visual arts and choreographic processes to investigate space, structured around the sensation of the moving body.

MARIA HASSABI is an artist and choreographer working with live performance, installation, sculpture, photography and video. Since the early 2000s she has carved a unique practice based on the relation of the live body to the still image and to the sculptural object. Concentrated on stillness and deceleration, her works reflect on concepts of time and the human figure while employing a variety of media to emphasise the complexity of formal organisation.

AMRITA HEPI is an award-winning artist of Bundjulung and Ngāpuhi territories. Her current practice is concerned with dance as social function performed within galleries, performance spaces, video art and digital technologies. She engages in forms of historical fiction and hybridity – especially those that arise under empire – to investigate the body's relationship to personal histories and archive.

ALICE HEYWARD is a dancer, choreographer and teacher from Australia living in Berlin. Her practice develops through diverse collaborations, as author, co-author and interpreter. Through movement-thought, she explores the production of embodied poetics. Alice works with artists Maria Hassabi, Xavier Le Roy, Luísa Saraiva, Alexandra Pirici, Dora García, Grażyna Roguski, Simone Forti, Trisha Brown, Hana Erdman, Alicia Frankovich, Adam Linder, Shelley Lasica, Rebecca Hilton, Lulu Obermayer, Chloe Chignell and Colette Sadler. Her own work has been presented at Klosterruine Berlin, Hua International Berlin; Uferstudios Berlin; MPavilion, Melbourne; PS Artspace, Fremantle; Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne; Next Wave Festival, Melbourne; Kunsthaus KuLe, Berlin; Dancehouse Melbourne and Murray White Room, Melbourne.

VICTORIA HUNT was born on Kombumerri and Yugambeh Country in Queensland and is currently living on unceded Bidjigal Country, Maroubra, Australia. Her ancestral affiliations are Te Arawa, Rongowhakaata, Kahungunu, Irish, English and Finnish. She traverses the visual and performing arts as a dancer, choreographer, director, dramaturge, photographer and filmmaker. Victoria's work draws from Indigenous epistemologies within diasporic concepts of identity formation and belonging. Her work is liminal, intercultural, interdisciplinary and reinstates the power of Indigenous creativity within the politics of Rematriation – inserting the body into frameworks of power, for future ancestors, in a reciprocal imagining. Central to this is *whakapapa* (kinship/genealogies), *mana atua wāhine* (feminine tapu energy), Body Weather and IndigiQueer revitalisation within creation practices. Her work is a gradual binding of intimate collaboration between artists, elders and communities.

BEATRICE JOHNSON is a New York-based arts administrator, performance producer, and curator. She has organised visual arts and performance projects with a range of artists including Steve Paxton, Lucinda Childs, Pope.L, Allora & Calzadilla, Papo Colo, Laurie Anderson, Brian O'Doherty, Lawrence Weiner, Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir, Marcia Hafif, Richard Nonas, and Zipora Fried. She currently works at the Brooklyn Museum and was previously at MoMA PS1 and the Clocktower Gallery, New York. She was also a Performance Coordinator at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, where she contributed to the landmark exhibition *Judson Dance Theater: The Work Is Never Done*, 2018–19. Beatrice studied art history at Hunter College in New York, and her MA thesis examines the exhibition, historical reconstruction, and museum acquisition and conservation of postmodern dance, with *The Work Is Never Done* as a case study.

JUANITA KELLY-MUNDINE (she/they) is a proud West Bundjalung and Yuin woman engaged in First Nations cultural heritage conservation. Her practice focuses on creating conservation and collection management strategies that prioritise community and artist engagement, and the integration of Indigenous knowledges, systems of care and languages. Juanita's practice is also concerned with engaging Indigenous principles of custodianship in the preservation of intangible forms of artistic and cultural expression, including choreographic, dance and performative modalities. Juanita is the Conservator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

AMITA KIRPALANI is a curator and writer and is currently Curator of Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Victoria. She was previously Curator of Contemporary Art at ArtScience Singapore and writes regularly about contemporary art. Amita has held managerial and curatorial positions at Canberra Contemporary Art Space and Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, and has tutored in contemporary art theory for RMIT University. She was Projects Producer for the Wheeler Centre, Melbourne, and has produced and managed a range of projects from live in-conversation events to large-scale solo commissions, many of which communicate her interest in 'liveness' in the gallery.

SHELLEY LASICA has shown choreographic works nationally and internationally for more than forty years. She is interested in the context and situations of presenting choreography and is a lead research associate with the *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum* research initiative based at the University of New South Wales.

LOUISE LAWSON is Head of Conservation at Tate. In this role she is responsible for the leadership and strategic direction, development and delivery of Conservation at Tate. Her recent research has focused on the conservation of performance-based artworks, through leading the project *Documentation and Conservation of Performance at Tate* (2016–21) and through her participation in *Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum* (2018–21). She has shared learning from these projects via lectures, presentations and academic publications. Her current research project as a partner investigator is *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*.

MARYJO LELYVELD is Manager, Conservation at the National Gallery of Victoria and holds a Bachelor of Applied Science (Conservation) and a Master of Strategic Foresight. MaryJo has twenty years' experience working with state gallery and private collections treating cultural material and developing integrative collection care and engagement programs.

ADAM LINDER is a choreographer. His works, presented in theatres and exhibition spaces, incorporate text, props, costume, scenography, printed matter and musical compositions in various scales and with varying emphasis. Recent presentations have included at the Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney, deSingel Antwerp, HAU Hebbel-am-Ufer Berlin, Kampnagel Hamburg and The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

HANNAH MATHEWS is Director/CEO of Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts. Hannah was commissioning curator of *Shelley Lasica: WHEN I AM NOT THERE*, 2022, when she worked as Senior Curator, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne. Hannah is a lead investigator on the Australian Research Council Linkage project, *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*.

CAROLYN MURPHY is Head of Conservation at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Carolyn's research interests include investigating the ways in which museum and conservation practices impact artists and their works, with a particular interest in installation, performance and time-based artworks. Carolyn has worked at several cultural institutions, including the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Canadian Conservation Institute and the Queensland Art Gallery and was the recipient of a Getty Fellowship at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Carolyn is currently a partner investigator on two Australian Research Council Linkage projects: *Archiving Australian Media Arts* and *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*.

LOUISE O'KELLY is an independent curator based in London. In 2015 she founded Block Universe, London's leading international performance art festival and commissioning body, with the mission to create a platform and support structure for a new generation of artists working with performance. Louise sat on the committee for a UK-wide Live Art Sector Review in partnership with LADA and Arts Council England (2019–21) and inaugurated the Performance Research Network with founding members Liverpool Biennial and Glasgow International (2021). She regularly delivers talks, workshops and short courses related to performance at institutions and universities, and is currently an associate researcher for *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*.

CORI OLINGHOUSE is a research-based artist whose practice combines performance, video, living archives, curating and writing. In 2017 she founded The Portal, an artist-led initiative that cultivates archiving as a poetic and performative practice. She collaborated with video artist Charles Atlas on a moving-image installation for the Museum of Modern Art exhibition, *Judson Dance Theater: The Work Is Never Done*, 2018–19. In 2019 she collaborated with the Studio Museum in Harlem on the acquisition and restaging of Autumn Knight's performance work *WALL*. Cori holds an MA in performance curation from the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance at Wesleyan University and serves as visiting faculty at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College.

PAVEL PYŚ is an Australian-British-Polish curator and writer. Since 2016, he has been Curator of Visual Arts at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, where he has realised exhibitions and projects across the Walker's galleries, stage, corridors and Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. From 2011–15, he was the Exhibitions and Displays Curator at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds.

MELISSA RATLIFF is Curator, Research at Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, where she was coordinating editor for the publication *Shelley Lasica: WHEN I AM NOT THERE* (2022). She is an associate researcher with the Australian Research Council Linkage project *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*.

ANA RIBEIRO is a time-based media conservator at Tate. She studied conservation and restoration at Nova University Lisbon (School of Science and Technology) and trained in media art conservation at the Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art – Ghent (S.M.A.K.), the Nederlands Media Art Institute (NIMk), and at Tate, where she works on all aspects of bringing time-based media works into the collection. Ana's main areas of interest are performance preservation, documentation practices, and Degrowth. She has worked on Tate research projects including *Documentation and Conservation of Performance* (2016–21) and *Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum* (2018–21). Ana's current focus is the preservation of dance and choreographic works in the museum. She is an institutional associate researcher on the *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum* project.

LATAI TAUMOEPEAU is a Punake, body-centred performance artist. Her *faivā* (temporal practice) is from her homelands, the Kingdom of Tonga, and her birthplace, the Eora Nation/Sydney, and everywhere spanning Oceania. Latai activates Indigenous philosophies and methodologies, cross-pollinating ancient practices of ceremony with her contemporary processes and performance work to reinterpret, regenerate and extend her movement practice and its function in Oceania and beyond. Her work brings the voices of marginalised communities to the foreground.

ZOE THEODORE is an independent curator, producer and writer based in Sydney. She regularly works directly with artists on the realisation of new work for museums and galleries including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, the Immigration Museum, Melbourne, and Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne. She is currently Co-Chair of Firstdraft, Sydney (2022–23), and has held professional roles at Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, and MoMA PS1, New York. She is a current PhD candidate at the University of New South Wales, researching the relationship between dance and the museum.

PIP WALLIS is Senior Curator at Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne. She was previously Director of Programs at Callie's Berlin and Curator, Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Victoria where she curated projects by Hito Steyerl, Helen Maudsley, Simone Forti, Camille Henrot and Adam Linder.

IVEY WAWN is a dancer based in Eora (Sydney). She makes choreographic works primarily for live audiences and contributes regularly to the work of other artists from a range of disciplines.

CATHERINE WOOD is a curator, writer and art historian specialising in performance and the cross-disciplinary within the field of modern and contemporary art.

SARA WOOKEY is a dance artist, adviser and a transmitter of *Trio A*, 1966, by Yvonne Rainer. Her interest is in revitalising potential in individuals and teams and creating positive lasting legacies. She researches ways that dance and expanded choreography are methods for institutional change and was an associate researcher at Tate Modern (2014–17). Currently Sara is an associate researcher for *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*, an affiliate researcher at the University of Cambridge, and a trustee at Dancers' Career Development. Her book *Who Cares?: Dance in the Gallery & Museum* was published in 2015.

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