

## Pulling down from the ephemeral

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**Publication Date:**

2018

**DOI:**

<https://doi.org/10.26190/unsworks/20842>

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Thesis/Dissertation Sheet**

Surname or Family name: STAMP

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Abbreviation for degree as given in the University  
calendar: MFA

School: School of Fine Art

Faculty: UNSW Art & Design

Title: Pulling Down from the Ephemeral

**Abstract 350 words maximum: (PLEASE TYPE)**

The purpose of the Masters research project entitled 'Pulling Down from the Ephemeral', is to explore new choreographic processes and to further discourse around the making of performance. The project positions the author's choreographic practice within, and in relation to, fields of dance, visual-arts and interdisciplinary practice.

'Pulling Down from the Ephemeral' is motivated from the perspective of a body-based practitioner and interest in the material capacities of the body. It focusses on choreography as a field of multiple energies and exchanges. Experimentation around how the body inhabits dance as a synthesis of temporalities and affections in time and space, accounting for both material and immaterial forces to converge and endure within a live performance as a living document.

Specific concepts of ephemerality, materiality, energy, residue and 'active presence' in live performance are examined throughout the research. Discourse explored includes a reconfiguration of known spatial and durational frameworks for dance performance, examination of the slowing down of the body in choreography, and the body's relationship to matter and the natural environment. Joan Chodorow's description of the 'psycho-physical' impulse, as well as the notion of 'moving and being moved', is explored in the written thesis and as an important contribution to studio-based research. The work of contemporary choreographer Maria Hassabi and post-modern dance pioneer Anna Halprin are used to examine dance-based presentations across non-studio sites, gallery and natural environment contexts. Kathleen Stuart's description of 'Atmospheric Attunements' is aligned with experimental perspectives in the the natural environment. This produces a more expansive view of how imagery and score meet to reposition the body as a primary material medium that draws from a multiplicity of material and immaterial interrelations, forces and embodiments.

The processes explored and detailed throughout this practice-led research project, document how somatic engagement and attention to 'liveness' support the generative capacities of the material body. The importance of the research lies in its potential to view choreographic work and performance as live, vital, enduring processes of exchange that actively continue to inform, rather than vanish.

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**Pulling Down from the Ephemeral**

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MFA Research

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the Masters research project entitled 'Pulling Down from the Ephemeral', is to explore new choreographic processes and to further discourse around the making of performance. The project positions the author's choreographic practice within, and in relation to, fields of dance, visual-arts and interdisciplinary practice.

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Specific concepts of ephemerality, materiality, energy, residue and 'active presence' in live performance are examined throughout the research. Discourse explored includes a reconfiguration of known spatial and durational frameworks for dance performance, examination of the slowing down of the body in choreography, and the body's relationship to matter and the natural environment. Joan Chodorow's description of the 'psycho-physical' impulse, as well as the notion of 'moving and being moved', is explored in the written thesis and as an important contribution to studio-based research. The work of contemporary choreographer Maria Hassabi and post-modern dance pioneer Anna Halprin are used to examine dance-based presentations across non-studio sites, gallery and natural environment contexts. Kathleen Stuart's description of 'Atmospheric Attunements' is aligned with experimental perspectives in the the natural environment. This produces a more expansive view of how imagery and score meet to reposition the body as a primary material medium that draws from a multiplicity of material and immaterial interrelations, forces and embodiments.

The processes explored and detailed throughout this practice-led research project, document how somatic engagement and attention to 'liveness' support the generative capacities of the material body. The importance of the research lies in its potential to view choreographic work and performance as live, vital, enduring processes of exchange that actively continue to inform, rather than vanish.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my immense gratitude to my supervisor Dr Rochelle Haley, who has been an exceptional source of support and guidance throughout this project. Her encouragement has been most invaluable to the evolution to my work.

I would also like to thank dancers Rhiannon Newton and Ivey Wawn, whom have worked with me throughout this project,. They have each made stunning contributions through their personal insights, dialogue, and commitment, and I would like to acknowledge that the project is inherently imbued with their individual bodily knowledges.

My heartfelt thanks also goes to my family of Sydney-based artists Sarah Rodigari, Brian Fuata and in particular Agatha Gothe-Snape, who's dialogue with me is nothing less than, rigorous, poetic, challenging and bountiful.

Finally I would like to thank my mother Dianne, for sharing her extensive knowledge, wisdom and support while writing this thesis.

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which I research and practice, and pay my respects to Elders past and present, their culture and continued connection to land and community.

## INTRODUCTION

Dancing exists at a perpetual vanishing point. At the moment of its creation it is gone. All of a dancer's years of training in the studio, all the choreographer's planning, the rehearsals, the coordination of designers, composers, and technicians, the raising of money and the gathering together of an audience, all these are only a preparation for an event that disappears in the very act of materializing. No other art is so hard to catch, so impossible to hold. (Siegel 1972, 1)

Dance critic and historian Marcia Siegel's notion of dance as an event lost to the realm of ephemera diminishes the myriad interrelations and potencies that exist in the somatic and temporal nature of dance. I believe Siegel's view, and others with similar views such as performance art scholar Peggy Phelan (1993), overlook the fundamental negotiation of bodily matter and energy that is at the core of my choreographic process and dance performance practice. The premise that it is impossible to hold or capture dance, provides a backdrop to my research.

Dance theorist André Lepecki critiques Siegel's notion of dance existing at the 'vanishing point', in his text 'Exhausting Dance Performance and the Politics of Movement' (2006). Lepecki extrapolates complex relations to temporality, politics, and ontology and examines how contemporary explorations in choreography have disrupted a core modernist value of dance as movement in kinetic flow. Among his arguments is the suggestion that dance exists as a synthesis of multiple temporalities and affections in time and space. This synthesis of temporalities and affections in time and space is a contradiction of Siegel's notion of dance at a vanishing point, because it accounts for the material and immaterial forces that convene and endure as a live network through and beyond the moment of creation. As an artist and researcher, my desire is to push back against the notion of the disappearance of dance to ephemera.

### Research Aims

The purpose of this project is to develop new artistic work that furthers thinking and discourse around fundamental processes important to my choreographic practice and the making of performance. The aim is to examine the multiple energies and exchanges that inhabit and influence the consideration of dance as a synthesis of temporalities and affections in time and space, which account for the material and immaterial forces converging and enduring within a live performance.

Several key questions around the loss of dance to ephemera will guide this research project and are stated below. It is however important to note that in the spirit of process these questions are not exhaustive and they may well change in response to arising opportunities and tangents from research.

Initial questions include; how does the dancer turn their attention towards the material capacities of the body? What kinds of somatic engagement is required to reinforce the dancer's attention to their material dimensionality? How is the material presence of the body perceived, felt and translated to an audience's bodily understanding, within the audience and performer exchange during a choreographic event?

Reflecting on shifts in choreography over the past decades, as well as on performance works included in programs by major art institutions globally can provide some insight into these questions. For example, the Tate Modern and the Heyward Gallery in London, as well as the Museum of Modern Art in New York have each recently featured performance works, retrospectives and participatory programs that renegotiate relationships to the body in exchange with a viewing public. These include, 'Move: Choreographing You' curated by Stephanie Rosenthal (2010-11), the BMW Tate Live collaboration with choreographer Boris Charmatz and his 'Musée de la Danse' (2015), and an exhibition entitled 'On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century', showing a collection of gallery-based performances by seminal choreographer Trisha Brown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (2010).

Performances of expanded durations that encourage audience agency such as Xavier Le Roy's work 'Temporary Title' (2016), presented by Kaldor Art Projects at Carriageworks in Sydney, also assist in contemplations on material presence and live exchange. Le Roy's work, a six-hour durational performance, involves 18 performers whom take on the physical and behavioural characteristics of a pride of lions. Performers individually and collectively embody facets of lion behaviour such as prowling, resting, twitching and panting with highly studied detail. The work requires audiences to determine their own viewing agency, spatial vantage point and time-frame.

In my past history and in my recent work in gallery and museums environments, shifts in thinking have occurred around duration, temporality and audience engagement. Cross-disciplinary dialogue and presentation has led to these shifts in thinking, contributed to discourse on choreography and created room for new avenues of questioning and tangents of thought. For example; how is a consideration of dance as a living choreographic document of process and performance, informed by material, spatial and temporal interrelations that occur within the live exchange of a performance event? Also, what concepts are central to the body's material presence in performance? Concepts and theories informing these questions are explored in this thesis as an arc of thinking in direct relation to my artistic process.

Chapter one of this thesis will focus on improvisation as a method for accessing conscious engagement with material presence. It will examine the body as the primary artistic medium in my dance and choreographic practice, and explore how improvisational practice enables the dancer to



form relationships between material dimensionality and liveness, in exchange with other mediums such as images, atmospheres, natural forms and environments. As a method, concepts of Authentic Movement, a practice developed in 1950 by Mary Starks-Whitehouse, together with the utilisation of scores will be explored. These concepts provide an anchor to the specialised knowledge-base that underpins my expanded experimentation with temporality and material forms.

The detailed evolution of processes utilised in my studio-based choreographic research will be described in depth throughout chapter two. Particular attention will be given to breakthrough themes that emerge regarding body/earth relations, slow temporalities and experimentation with matter. Among the sources informing research development, references will be made to the work of artist Robert Smithson, author Jack Vance and choreographer Maria Hassabi. This chapter will expand upon related theoretical contexts such as new materialist perspectives on matter and material vibrancy discussed by Jane Bennett.

Chapter three will give a detailed account of my practice led research as it exists at the time of writing this thesis and developing the performance outcome. The emergence of a focus upon the body's material presence is contextualised within a broader framework of choreographic practice in a non-traditional presentation platform. The residual energies and processes used to develop a choreographic performance context in the environment, are detailed.

In summary, the potencies that dance offers as a more sustained set of interrelationships is explored throughout my project. The value of improvisation as a methodology and a focus upon bodily agency, matter and environment, is examined. A premise is put forward, that choreography is a living document made up of a multiplicity of exchanges that can be used to question previous notions that dance exists at a vanishing point.

## **CHAPTER ONE: Improvisation and Emergent Acts of Liveness**

This chapter provides insight into the specialised practices inhabited prior to the crafting of the choreographic outcome for my project, 'Pulling Down from the Ephemeral'. Theoretical contexts that cross the fields of dance, choreographic theory, and contemporary philosophy, including Authentic Movement practice, text-based score and the psycho-physical, are broadly discussed as tools that foster my artistic approach. These conceptual tools and processes underpin my consideration of dance and choreographic performance as a living document.

The process that permeates the development and performance of my choreographic work is improvisation. Improvisation supports a live web of interrelations between body, impulse, imagination, forces, and ambiances of context. As a holistic medium of matter, energy and consciousness, the body synthesises with the mind to enact choreography as it emerges in time and space. Improvisation has been used to foreground the precarious state of 'liveness' in my work, which emerges through physical impulse and somatic receptivity to information in process and performance contexts.

For example, my work 'And All Things Return to Nature' developed in 2013, examined concepts within physics and cosmological studies that describe an inaudible vibratory hum as the precursor to universal materiality (the 'big bang'). The choreography was developed through immersive studio processes and durational improvisations to illuminate the choreographic movement language emerging between dancers in relation to notions of sound energy. Discovering how a performance could be activated through live improvisation was fundamentally enhanced by the use of score. 'And All Things Return to Nature' used text-scores that centred upon themes of cosmic energy and transmission. They were used to provoke improvisational movement responses foregrounding a holistic collaborative engagement between movement and sound. A full-length gently structured improvised performance highlighted how and where energy resided between dancers. The energy and movement language residing between dancers in performance became a direct invisible archive resulting from in-depth studio practice.

The history of my choreographic practice and its utilisation of improvisation to develop movement language, allows for authentic engagement with the themes and ideas emerging in each new work.

### **Authentic Movement Practice**

Developed by Mary Starks-Whitehouse in the early 1950s, 'Authentic Movement' is a mode of improvisational practice. Authentic movement pertains to principles used in movement therapy and improvisational dance that illuminates a subject's natural movement impulse and 'active imagination' (Chodorow 1988, 21). Dimensions of movement experienced through active

imagination are accessed through a state of deep inner listening and attunement to imagery and sensation arising through impulse (Chodorow 1988, 95).

The use of authentic movement practice in a dance process, is (in my experience) intimate to the desires of each artist and their specific work interests. Whilst principles of authentic movement appear to have permeated improvisational approaches to dance in the broader field, the nature of how a dance artist may use the principles as a compositional tool in choreography is difficult to reliably and validly determine. Principles of authentic movement are crucial to my dance and choreographic process because they provide a foundation for physical action unburdened by restrictive self-analysis or self-judgment.

Authentic movement fosters an ability to access unrestricted movement consciousness as it emerges through the interplay of imagery, impulse, flow, and receptivity. For example, after a period of rest an image may arise in the mind of the dancer such as a memory or a colour. The image may stimulate movement in a part of the body such as in the chest or the fingertips and freely emerge, without self-moderation, into a movement action response in time and space. In my experience, the coalescing of body and mind consciousness in movement cultivates 'liveness' or pure presence, between the body, time and space. In my history of dance works and in this current project, the use of authentic movement creates the foundations of a movement language, that informs the basis for a choreographic performance outcome.

Past experiences have informed the development of my own authentic movement principles and aspects of live exchange in choreography. For example, in 2005 I participated in a workshop held by New York-based choreographer Miguel Gutierrez, which introduced many core principles of authentic movement to my practice, including 'moving and being moved', and 'seeing and being seen' (Gutierrez 2005, Dance Space Project). These phrases echoed concepts developed by Starks-Whitehouse and resonated with my artistic development.

Further experience was gained with Gutierrez in a piece entitled 'Brindabella' (2009), for which he was co-commissioned by Melbourne-based dance company Phillip Adams Balletlab. Gutierrez's process again drew from authentic movement principles to develop new ways of experiencing physicality through 'states' arising from imagination, emotional sensation and movement-action free from pre-emptive thinking. A focus on 'unravelling' or 'unlearning' existing bodily patterns was also nurtured. Gutierrez's process encouraged in me new, dynamic and unbridled freedoms in my body practice, and respectively in the development of my choreographic works. Crucial to my experience with Gutierrez was the physiological understanding that impulse extends to notions of both internal fields as well as receptivity to external fields, namely the energies of a performance context

itself. The corollary of my experience was an infusion of practices that encouraged live-states arising through impulse and improvised play, into my own choreographic language.

Atmospheres of ‘liveness’ induced by improvisational practice and performance distinguish my dance practice from traditions that have utilised set, structured or ‘known’ choreographic phrasing and compositional spatial arrangements. Performing through liveness supports a conscious locating of the body’s material dimensions in space and time and reinforces acute awareness of matter and energy in bodily experience.

The idea of liveness in my dance practice can be extrapolated to encompass ‘specialised noticing’ as described by Australian dance artist Rebecca Hilton in her ‘Dancerness’ manifesto (Hilton 2014, 1). Hilton used these words to describe a dancer’s unique relation to agency and receptivity. For example, Hilton states;

... because of the specialised noticing and complex managing of sensation, space and time, dancers have the ability to comprehend information at the very point at which our experience of ourselves ends and our experience of the rest of the world begins. (Hilton 2014, 1)

Agency and receptivity are critical to my awareness of the multiplicities of information, energy and ‘matterness’ that reside in my process. Matterness, throughout this project is defined as a quality of bodily matter which possesses an active presence, rather than matter as a static, finite thing. Matterness indicates a conscious relation to the states of active forces inherent to the material body when experiencing complex interplays with sensation, and movement. Energy and ‘matterness’ manifest in my choreography and they are accessed via specialised noticing, agency and receptivity.

Furthermore, my experimentation and improvisation is practiced through a core concept of authentic movement, ‘moving and being moved’. Moving and being moved, echoes notions of agency and receptivity. The moment of discovery and enactment of a movement impulse is inhabited simultaneously in the body, space and time, creating a holistic experience of presence.

Manifestations of Authentic Movement in my practice are grounded in fundamental knowledges attributed to founding practitioner Mary Starks-Whithouse, she states;

to feel 'I am moving' is to be directed by the ego. To experience 'I am moved' is to know the reality of the unconscious. Ideally, both are present in the same instant.... it is a moment of total awareness, the coming together of what I am doing and what is happening to me. (Carroll 2013, 1)

Whitehouse refers to this process of coming together as a 'psycho-physical' connection (Chodorow 1988, 21). The psycho-physical space plays an important role in my process as it draws attention to the body and mind consciousness as a holistic dimension.

Through the simple practice of beginning in a place of rest with eyes closed, the dancer waits and attunes to a deep inner listening. Inner listening allows for the body to follow imagery arising in the mind through movement, and for the body to enter a type of feed-back/feed-forward cycle with imagery, energy, sensation and information. Images, colours, dream states, or particular memories may arise, and through the following of impulse in movement, the dancer may find themselves moving the qualities of these images, colours, dream states or memories through their body. In turn, particular textures, tones, sounds, and rhythms of images may lead to movement qualities of softness, force, extension, power, flow and ranges of dynamism in movement. A 'choreographic movement language' is given space to develop as a result. Recurrent actions, gestures, movement impulses, rhythms, themes or aesthetic dimensions further guide the artistic process that is then built upon by the implementation of structures and scores.

In summary, authentic movement practice brings a poetic structure to my current practice-led research. It creates potential for new patterns, live exchanges and knowledges to be intuitively collected and to inform the evolution of an artistic outcome which is anchored in an entire landscape of practice and performance.

### **Score and the Psycho-Physical**

Scores are strongly associated with the Fluxus period of the 60s and 70s, and have continued to be used in numerous fields of post-modern artistic practice. Dance artist Anna Halprin and architect partner Lawrence Halprin (notable for his 'RSVP Cycles' 1970), are recognised for their cross-disciplinary use of scores to engage community practice, urban planning and experiment in the environment. At her most expansive, Anna Halprin created detailed a score for a global scale 'Planetary Dance' (1987), which proliferated mass engagement with her unique set of instructions (Halprin 1989, 51). In her project, Halprin instructed participants to perform the 'Earth Run' portion of an existing score entitled 'Circle the Earth', that in itself forms part of a greater series

of scored ritual events. Her address to numerous communities that had previously engaged with her work asked participants to do the 'Earth Run' score on April 19th 1987, and embed it with variations framed by their own community needs. She suggested that this may include "spiritual leaders of different backgrounds offering inspiration; processions, spontaneous group dances and singing, meditations, etc." (Halprin 1989, 61).

Halprin's 'Planetary Dance' project subsequently transcends multiple sites and temporalities. Her use of score proliferates and extends the spatial and temporal scale of her work. This, I propose, may be a way to fundamentally challenge Marcia Siegel's description of dance at the 'Vanishing Point', in that the global activation of an improvised choreography is generative, and creates lasting permeable energies between humans, scores and sites.

Score has been defined in a workshop delivered by Halprin, as "a loose framework for artistic creation that delineates how the resources that were collected can be used" (Gergely 2013, 8). In my practice however, score is a tool for a somatic and physiological inquiry of presence, matter and energy. I think of a score as a membrane between the psycho-physical space, the materiality of the bodily and the intuitive. Acting as a proposition for action, a score stimulates new directions of artistic inquiry, challenges known avenues of experimentation and prompts discovery.

My viewpoint on scores aligns with Joanna Burton's reflection on choreographer Debora Hay's dance work, entitled 'No Time to Fly' (2010). Burton observed Hay's twenty-page pamphlet of text-score that included phrases such as, "I start spinning" and, "not literally but as part of an onstage counterclockwise spinning vortex that only I perceive" (Hay as cited in Burton 2010, 1). Burton remarks;

Never relinquishing ties to the here and now of her own material body, Hay nonetheless moves into unabashedly mystical terrain, insisting on her own physical form as a kind of vessel, at once receptor and transmitter. (Burton 2010, 1)

Burton reveals in this statement something of the complexities of score as a channel to matterness and a dancer's respective engagement with numerous dimensions of inward and outward energies. That is, matterness is addressed through states of consciousness which actively flow through imagery, and manifest in the body at a resonant material and cellular level.

From my perspective as a choreographer, score is a proposition for a dance yet to unfold. It enables themes and concepts to be introduced and embedded into a dancer's psycho-physical experience, and guides the development of a choreographic outcome. Through working with score, a dancer's body is anchored by the psycho-physical impulse.

Score does not function in my practice as a system, structure or set of notational instructions. It is used instead as a provocation for authentic movement practices in process, and eventually leads to the development of a final palette of text-based scores that function during a performance outcome. My practice uses a broad range of scores including drawings, images and forms of photographic documentation to inform process. Paintings and or images by other artists are useful to the visualisation of themes and concepts, they are often used to determine potent correlating energies in my own process and to develop short poetic phrases, which become scores. For example, text-based phrases are laid out on sheets of paper and placed throughout the studio space (see figure 1).

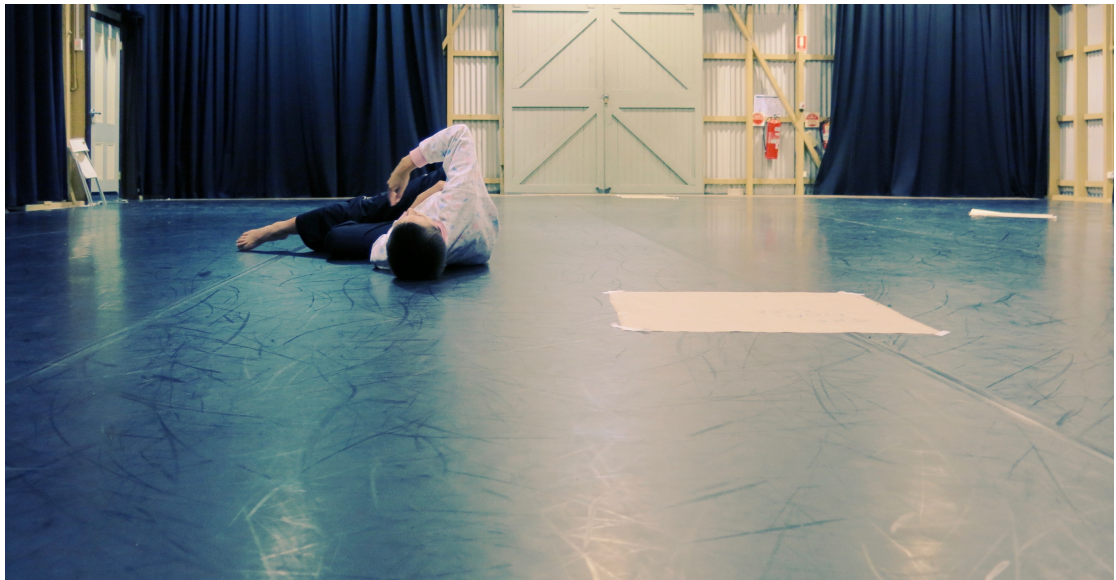


Figure 1: Brooke Stamp, 'working with text based scores', 2016. Critical Path Organisation Australia. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp

Acting as other 'bodies', these phrases behave or exist tangibly as reminders and provocateurs to action. Information gleaned from the scores activate the psycho-physical dimension. Examples of some text-based scores developed in the process stage of my research, include the phrase, 'the non-site' (Smithson, 1968) and 'Inside the Body's Cavern' (Klee, 1940). Artist Robert Smithson used the term 'non-site' (1968) as a metaphor that connects his sculptural interventions in the natural environment with his works exhibited in gallery contexts. The execution of his work in different contexts allowed him to explore how materials inherently embody their temporal displacement from one site to another. The relevance of Smithson's work to my current research project is not essentially ideological, however, I developed from his term 'non-site' a text score that conjures familiar engagements with material bodies, energies and locations in time and space.

Similarly, the title of Paul Klee's painting, 'Inside the Body's Cavern', is a term taken for its closeness to my research context. The circular shapes of Klee's strong sombre image (see figure 2), created metaphorical links to earth and body, and the internal dimensions of core energy. Core

energy has ramifications related to core earth energy, conjuring sensations of heat, vibration and power. It allows the dancer to turn their attention towards the material capacities of the body.

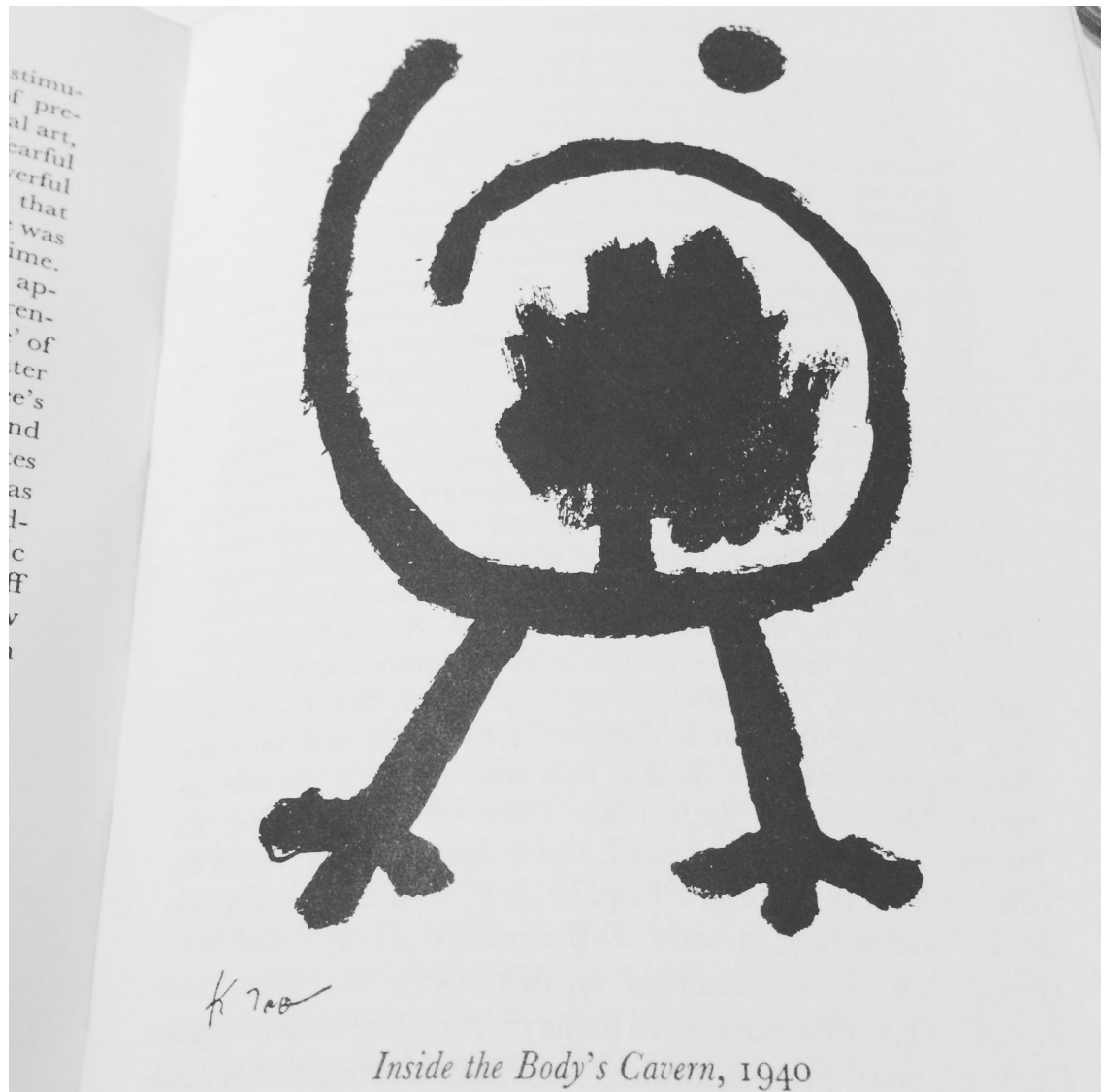


Figure 2: Paul Klee, Inside the Body's Cavern, 1940. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp

Implementation of these phrases as scores in my project, invoke opportunities to study recurring physical actions and engagements that emerge through improvisational response. From this point, I mark-out potent themes, images and conceptual ideas that feed into the developing choreographic language.

The title of my project, 'Pulling Down from the Ephemeral', took on the behaviour of a score. The phrase 'Pulling Down from the Ephemeral', activated my imagination in my early experimentation toward the downward space, the material and resonant spaces of earth matter. For example, images of tectonic forces, geological forms, rocks, landscapes and terrain became resonant to my movement process. Revelations regarding the pulling down trajectory active in my title, inspired the



development of other text-based scores. Phrases including, ‘the spell of temporal stasis’, ‘the glacial’, ‘the tectonic’ and ‘the volcanic’. The emergence of particular modes of embodied relations to these scores seeded actions and gestures that in turn fed my choreographic concerns and process.

In summary, the research methodologies explored in this chapter led the MFA process, foregrounding my artistic approach for ‘Pulling Down from the Ephemeral’. Authentic movement practice, text-based score and the psycho-physical provide a particular lens to focus my choreographic concerns, process and view of choreography as a living document. Chapter two will extend explorations into ‘invoking the body of the earth’ and slow moving, to detail the evolution of my MFA approach and process.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Pulling Down From The Ephemeral**

The phrase ‘Pulling down from the Ephemeral’ anchors my dance and choreographic process as an active and poetic score, enabling a focus on the body as an agent that ‘pulls down’ from the realm of the ephemeral toward the Earth. The ‘Earth’ referred to throughout this chapter is not a metaphor for the dancing body, but a direct and evocative visual conduit used to channel the body’s attention toward its own inherent material tangibility. Expressed through my own imagination this Earth space is not of a planetary scale, but more a visceral expression of solid ground. It conjures familiar qualities of geological formations, natural sites and spaces, rocks, dirt, landscapes and terrains, as well as less familiar, fantastical or imagined Earth qualities such as inaudible sonic rumblings, sensations of tectonic plates drifting and imagined colours, scents, speeds and rhythms active under the earth’s surface.

This chapter will explore in detail the evolution of processes in my studio-based choreographic research, particularly major themes emerging between the body and the visualisation of earth spaces. Themes of earth are relevant to how somatic engagement and attention further examine liveness and connections to the material body. Research methodologies employed as an extension of authentic movement, are expanded to include considerations of the slow moving body, attunement and matter. Discussion of my approach to the research is framed by theories of André Lepecki and notions of ‘still acts’ and Kathleen Stewart’s description of ‘atmospheric attunements’., and an examination of the slow sculptural body, is developed.

### **Invoking the Body of the Earth**

A confluence of earth images, sonic accompaniments, text phrases and bodily response, induces a foundational atmosphere for my studio research and experimentation concerned with a ‘grounding’ of the physical body to earth. This grounding functions within a field of material and immaterial reciprocities, activated by body, text, sound, psycho-physical response and movement.

Initial periods of bodily experimentation drew from a rich palette of visual, written and musical sources that were collated in order to explore the emergent body/earth theme. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these sources included images of Robert Smithson’s ‘Spiral Jetty’ (1970) in addition to the literature of Science Fiction writer Jack Vance and musical accompaniments of Don Cherry and Moondog. Images of Smithson’s work offered stimulating scenes of scale and geometry of spiralling, tumbling rock forms in vast open space (see Figure 1). The remote location, physical grandeur and circular momentum inherent to the Jetty’s form projected through the image as possible physical dimensions to be inherited into the bodily experience. For example, the twisting spiralling arcs in the Spiral Jetty image, informed a bodily dynamic that moved with a centrifugal energy, generating motion in space around the body as a central axis.



Figure 3: Robert Smithson, 'Spiral Jetty' 1970. Copyright the artist, Photo: Unknown

The literature of Science Fiction writer Jack Vance was useful in consideration of text-based score development. Words taken from Vance's 'Rhalt to the Marvellous' (1984), part of the 'Tales of the Dying Earth' series (1950), proposed more abstract qualities for physical exploration related to earth and time. Alternative concepts of earth themes via his poetic and esoteric text phrases such as, 'in this mood of abstraction' (Vance 1984, 7), 'a flutter of abstract chords' (Vance 1984, 7), 'to stand in the acrid vermilion radiance' (Vance 1984, 54), and 'the spell of temporal stasis' (Vance 1984, 36), extended the field of references. Terms such as 'The spell of temporal stasis' are part of a science fiction vernacular which can refer to placing someone under a spell of 'suspended animation'. Our movement practice did not consider Vance's phrase within his given narrative meaning. Rather, the term 'the spell of temporal stasis' was laid bare for new interpretation to arise through authentic movement response.

The fantasy world of Vance created exciting parallels to Smithson's other-worldly art-work, 'Spiral Jetty' formed in the wide-open landscape. The two sources proposed materially and visually abstracted references to earth sites and space. They complimented one-another and resulted in interesting psycho-physical connections of fantasy and reality. Movement responses in the body were broadened by the contrasting evocations of terrain, atmosphere, time-scale and efforts of the imagination.

Musical compositions invited into the studio practice to stimulate and guide experimentation included avant-garde Jazz composer Don Cherry's 'Society for Organic Music' (1972). This piece supported initial exercises in drawing and mapping sounds on paper through authentic movement practice (see Figure 4). Mapping sound through drawing connected the mind and body consciousness through physical action, and opened up embodied connections to sonic rhythms, textures and tones. Resulting images were also viewed as potential maps for movement.



Figure 4: Brooke Stamp, 'drawing and mapping sound on paper', 2016, studio research. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp

Furthermore, and in contrast, the inclusion of a musical composition by musician Moondog entitled 'Invocation' (2006) created a different engagement with a sonic palette that exposed the physical exploration of energy, as a conduit between body and earth.

The atmosphere set-up through the combination of sound sources fostered a dynamic studio practice with a range of affiliations between the body and its ability to examine and move with imagery, sound and language in space and time. Echoes of energy passing between the body and emergent themes of earth, also enabled a basis for research to possess its own agency.

Working collaboratively with Sydney based dancers Ellen Davies, Rhiannon Newton and Ivey Wawn, experimentation with sources led to improvisational movement-based responses and text-

based score development. For example, the durational and repetitive musical composition of Moondog's 'Invocation', was introduced as a sonic atmosphere for movement exploration. The incessant brass, horn and timpani sounds looped rhythmically for a ten-minute cycle established a conscious kinaesthetic relation between body and earth matter. The sound and imagery of brass appeared to parallel the body as a material medium, because it reflected notions of matter being extracted up and out of earth through a dancer's bodily effort.

'Invoking the body of the Earth' then emerged as a key score. Discussion regarding the movement qualities emerging through the combination of brass sounds and action, aimed to articulate in words the physical sensations felt through movement practice. Aligned with Moondog's title, 'Invocation', it was established that the sensations of invoking qualities from the earth into the cellular energy of the body was ritualistic, repetitive and powerful. The score, 'Invoking the body of the Earth' appeared resonant to the concept that earth and the body are of shared material qualities.

Continuing with this process, new text-based scores emerged including phrases such as 'the Glacial', 'the Tectonic', 'the Volcanic', 'the Valley', 'the Clearing', 'the Quarry', 'the Plates', and 'Aesthesis'. Scores were written individually on large sheets of paper and placed throughout the floor space of the studio. A spatial network of scores created multiple sites and spaces for bodies and energies to inhabit. By dwelling in and attuning to scores via kinaesthetic, psychic and physiological impulse, dancers engaged through acts of transmission between score and body, and body to body, to develop the beginnings of a movement language (see Figures 5).



Figure 5: Brooke Stamp, 'transmission between score and body, and body to body', 2016. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp.

Key research questions were developed from studio experimentation regarding how we were experiencing dancing and moving with the various earth scores and their spatial sites. For example; how does the body move the glacial? How does the body respond to the heat and volatility of the volcanic? Where do earth forces reside in our bodies? What are the temporal qualities emerging through physiological response? How do variations in speed impact the overall movement language and future performance context?

These enquiries continued to energise and form further improvisational processes and discourse, particularly around the parallels with anthropologist Kathleen Stewart's notions of 'Atmospheric Attunements' in which she states;

I am suggesting that atmospheric attunements are a process of what Heidegger (1962) called 'worlding' - an intimate, compositional process of dwelling in spaces that bears, gestures, gestates, worlds. Here, things matter not because of how they are represented but because they have qualities, rhythms, forces, relations, and movements. (Stewart 2011, 445).

Studio processes responding to Stewart's description included, for example, how the body moved in relation to the glacial score revealing that energies and impulses followed were not only a result of individual connections between body and score, but a response to the holistic atmosphere or tone of glacial energy being generated between the actions and movements of dancers. Similarly, dancers' responses to the volcanic score revealed that bodily effort and energy were not a singular feedback experience to score, but to the accumulation of residues and responses that lived between the dancers.

### **The Slow Sculptural Body**

Attending to earth qualities and forces in artistic process revealed that the most resonant movement responses to scores were that of slow, enduring and energetically concentrated actions. Consideration of the body as a conduit to earth profoundly shifted the bodily dynamic from a dance concerned with kinetic flow, to one requiring subtlety and extreme attentiveness to the micro-detail of our relations to space and each other (see figure 6).





Figure 6: Brooke Stamp, 'slow enduring action'. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp

During the studio process, it was not my intention to find what Lepecki (2001) refers to as 'still acts' in his essay addressing the phenomenon of stillness in 'The Last Performance' by Jerome Bel. Bel's acclaimed theatre-based work exhausts notions of traditional choreography through simple and repetitive scenes and theatrical gestures, not always identifiable as 'dance'. The notion of 'still acts' does not effectively describe my work. However a frequent outcome in my studio practice was a disruption to kinetic flow as a common logic associated with choreography. The particular engagement with the slowing of action in my process foregrounded the bodies material dimensionality, and subsequently seemed an important landmark in my process.

In his research into the slow action of Bel's choreography, Lepecki writes, "I would argue that he (Bel) deploys stillness and slowness to propose how movement is not only a question of kinetics, but also one of intensities, of generating an intensive field of micro-perceptions" (Lepecki 2006, 57). Lepecki's words point to the significance of my focus on the body, earth and functions of energy and forces within my choreographic research, because the abeyance of movement in constant flow allowed for greater connection to material presence. Developing material presence in relation to the slower dynamic resonant to my improvisational practice with scores, led to expanded considerations of temporalities.

A consolidation of these ideas in my own practice came through recent experience performing for contemporary choreographic artist Maria Hassabi in her work 'Intermission', which was originally commissioned for the 2013 Venice Biennale. I gained embodied experience of the work during its presentation at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) in 2014 for the 'Framed Movements' exhibition curated by Hannah Matthews. Curator Rainmundas Malašauskas described

the work with the evocative words, “Think of a volcano that moves slow, takes its time and attempts to be still. Trembles and tension become the motion” (Lee 2013, 1).

My experience of performing in ‘Intermission’ required immense kinaesthetic and energetic discipline in order to manage the subtle, slow, enduring shifts in postures required by the choreography. The piece involved three dancers, moving at a nearly undetectable speed through a series of poses, producing what could be described as sculptural images. The choreography descends a stadium sized seating bank. With three bodies positioned at various intervals on the stairs, the sense of scale and atmosphere was magnified. The duration of an 8-hours performance, allowed for connections to be made between time, energy and my conscious engagement of material presence. The specialised physical virtuosity proposed in Hassabi’s work, drew my attention to the moment the material medium of the body encounters its delicate but powerful vibratory force.

Another of Hassabi’s works, ‘Premiere’ (2013), consolidated my thinking around slower bodily engagement. Artist and practice-based researcher Victoria Grey writes, ‘I imagine Hassabi’s visceral dance below the surface; I see muscle, fibre and bone. Her body begins to struggle, affecting a cacophony of micro-movements that vibrate through her entire body’ (Grey 2014, 154). Grey’s description aptly illuminates the kind of visible material dimensions inherent to slow moving action that arose in my early research process.

Whereas Hassabi’s work is defined by set and pre-determined choreography, my process of improvisation distinguishes a difference in where and how the experience of energy, materiality and presence resides. In my studio process with other dancers, witnessing and following psycho-physical impulses implied a different kind of consciousness. The way we utilised improvisation and score invited the body to work through internal intensities as well as external forces to shape its material dimensionality in time and space. The shaping of material dimensionality consciously binds the body to earth connection in my practice led research methodology.

Thinking of the body as a conduit to earth and earth energies, changed our dynamic relations to space and each other. We pulled qualities of earth including tectonic forces and terrain into the bodies orbit and carved this energy through our limbs back into space via a kind of sculptural ‘shaping’ (see figure 7 & 8).





Figure 7: Brooke Stamp, 'sculptural shaping'. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp



Figure 8: Brooke Stamp, 'sculptural shaping'. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp

We became sculptural signals for each other in space, echoing imagined rock images and formations, or slow drifting glaciers through arctic waters. Quiet, deliberate posturing and 'shaping' in space emerged as the most viscerally palpable contemplation on our bodily 'matteredness'. Our movements drifted and rebelled against the notion of a set choreographic formation or point of arrival. We echoed shapes and rhythms transmitted between the scores, the atmosphere and each other's material bodies, thereby consolidating our shared movement language.

A further example of practice in the development of my research methodology is a work I created for the 'Spring 1883' Art Fair (2015) in Sydney, entitled '1992'. Derived from themes relevant to my MFA research, the work stemmed from concerns with im/material forces. Within the context of a hotel room (specific to the art fair conditions), the work was executed on a bed as a metaphoric platform for the earth's surface. The choreography positioned powerfully enduring and glacial-speed action against an incessant and loud sonic backdrop of seminal DJ/producer Jeff Mills Industrial techno track, 'Waveform Transmissions' (1992). Echoing the concept of transmission, dancers drew upon the energy of the context to create a landscape of movement that encompassed an improvised series of slow moving shapes and sculptural movements to form a choreographic terrain.



Figure 9: Brooke Stamp, performance of '1992', first presented at QT Hotel 2016. Copyright the artist. Photo: Igor Sapina

The development of the slow and sculptural movement practice enhanced a conscious bodily experience of materialisation in relation to earth images and scores. Shifts in temporality and sustained somatic awareness to micro-movement impulses, became a movement language informing the overall aesthetic direction and energetic dialogue in the overall research approach.

### **Bodies and matter**

As imagery of earth-forms and energies emerged in our physical dance dialogue, I resolved that an extension of our studio practice would be to invite other material apparatus into the studio practice.

The intention was to explore other material forms and material relations to liveness and agency. Soil was the most visceral material that appeared to speak directly to the exploration of the relation between earth and body. Soil was not chosen to represent, symbolise or act as a metaphor for earth matter. It was chosen because of its inherent authenticity *as* an earth matter. My interest was with how the use of soil could inform or retain the resonant material forces of the human body particularly as the two mediums worked together.

In addition to my research into artists use of soil including Smithson's 'Nonsite, (Essen Soil and Mirrors)' (1969), and Walter De Maria's 'Earth Room' (1977), notions of materiality relevant to my research have been informed by political theorist Jane Bennett. In her book, 'Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things', 2009, Bennett postulated that matter is in itself lively, stating that;

If matter itself is lively, then not only is the difference between subjects and objects minimised, but the status of the shared materiality of all things is elevated. All bodies become more than mere objects, as the things powers of resistance and protean agency are brought into sharper relief. (Bennett 2009 12,13)

Bennett's description of an elevated, shared materiality, has an affinity with the direction of my enquiry and the observations of soil and human body qualities. For example, during a residency period at the Ready Made Studio in Ultimo in 2015, body/earth affinities were explored. Mounds of soil resting on large sheets of tarpaulin were examined by dancers in order to attune their bodies to its texture, scent, colour and form. We engaged in the task of slowly dragging the soil throughout the space, to test relations between the two masses (see figure 11).





Figure 10: Brooke Stamp, 'experiments with soil matter', 2016. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp

Weight and gravity were key elements that connected and resonated between bodies. In addition, we created spatial configurations and installations of the soil in the room, and using the more psycho-physical realm of improvisation, we meditated on ways to inhabit soil qualities in the dancing body.

At this point, I clearly observed that my interest in the use of soil in studio-practice, and how it might resonate, was not profoundly contributing to my project. The 'intensity' that I was interested to find in the earth material was missing, and in contrast to Bennett's suggestion, appeared to lose its life force or agency. The use of soil in the studio context reduced its value to the realm of object/thing. The scope of my experimentation with soil in studio practice illuminated that matter (object), human (subject) were problematic orientations in my search for material vibrancy. This discovery left my process in need of broader material context. Earth matter remained a keypoint

of focus, yet questions regarding how the process could benefit from direct and authentic access to earth materials were put forward. Consideration of how to connect with tangible earth qualities through sensations of touch and contact led to questions about how to genuinely engage with Earth matter.

In her keynote address delivered at the Performance Studies International Conference, Melbourne (2016) Professor Rebecca Schneider remarked;

if I am researching an artifact – I am researching a being -- whether stone, a bit of ritual artifact made of grass, a mask, a human, a mosquito, a cat, a sardine can -- my approach is building relation skin to skin where I acknowledged myself to be touched as well as to touch (Schneider 2016).

Schneider's remarks poignantly echo my sentiments and concerns, and articulates the importance of building relationships authentically and directly with material artifacts and beings. The lack of intensity encountered with materials including soil during my studio experimentation, limited opportunities to progress my choreographic inquiry and led to a decision to move the choreographic process into the environment. My experimentation thereby sought direct contact between bodily and geological forms to further expand possibilities for a shared material exchange between body, natural spaces and earth matter. Connections were also sought between ambiances of place, and their potential impacts upon the body and improvisational practice. Materialities and ambiances such as those found in The Sydney Botanical Gardens, coastal bay cliff areas such as Neilson Park, Lane Cove National Park, and the Katoomba Blue Mountains region enabled first explorations into non-studio based sites.

The detailed evolution of processes in my studio-based choreographic research, in particular the major themes explored between the body and the visualisation of earth spaces have been explored in this chapter. Additionally, the event of slow temporal engagement with the bodily movement language has revealed key developments forming the foundation of a choreographic performance event. The coming chapter details how these key themes are expanded upon in the context of the natural environment and how they shape the development of the performance.

### **CHAPTER THREE: The Body In The Environment**

This chapter gives context to the performance event 'Pulling down from the Ephemeral' and traces the key processes undertaken to develop the performance event. The title, 'Pulling Down from the Ephemeral' prompts me toward a hard and more dramatic context. I envisage the sensory backdrop and presence of core earth found in a quarry, to provide a more profound visceral experience between body and raw earth forms. A quarry, essentially a deep chasm in the Earth's surface, provides a radically different material context for my work. Bombo Headland Quarry Geological Site, a heritage-listed landmark of the Illawarra, Kiama region, is the chosen context for experimentation and performance, because of its resonance as an earth site.

Geologically, the site consists of Kiama Sandstone, Bombo Latite and a layer of Basalt formed through Volcanic activity occurring between 260 and 60 million years ago (Sydney Water 2009). The area possesses many histories and temporalities that exist as resonant ambiances. The first nations inhabitants of the area, the Wodi Wodi aboriginal peoples occupied the area at least twenty-thousand years prior to European settlement. Historian Michael Organ in 'A documentary History of the Illawarra & South Coast Aborigines 1770-1850' (1990), described the land and its peoples as having a rich spiritual and cultural heritage that has been disturbed and alienated through the complexities of colonisation. Subsequent quarrying for blue-metals and sandstone has eroded the once lush panorama of shining green tropical foliage (Sydney Morning Herald 2008) and left behind is a space vast in scale, surrounded by a visually monumental perimeter of rock formations, cliffs and giant enduring columns.

The quarry now stands resonantly empty and cavernous. The other-worldly resonance and residue of timelessness with the nearby ocean and local birdlife, brings poetic qualities to a barren space; a perfect physical space for this project's experimentation. As a somatic practitioner, it was evident to me when first stepping into the Bombo Headland site, that potent histories exist, are resonant, and continue to live among the multiplicities of information present.

The expanded choreographic event on site at Bombo Headland requires the convening of accumulated knowledges and residual energies to be drawn from the three key research phases; improvisational processes, pulling down from the ephemeral to invoke the body of earth, and the body in the environment, and the overall research methodology occurs between both environment and studio based practice.

#### **Practices in the Quarry**

At the Bombo Headland site, improvisational methods are being used to research the body in relation to the sites composition and qualities of tangibility. The choice of landscape for

experimentation prompts echoes of familiar images of solid ground and provides tangible qualities of earth, rock and terrain to amplify concepts of matter. These qualities I distinguish as being more important to my work than soft or fluid contexts, green or urban spaces.

Practices such as deep inner listening and moving with eyes closed create space to continue with the slow manifestation of physical impulse, and to respond within the vibrant field of material and ambient information offered by the site. Continuing to explore the slower impulse encourages the dancer to 'dwell' amongst and with the vast natural rock formations. The process determines new avenues for embodiment and sensory meditations (see figure 11 & 12).



Figure 11: Brooke Stamp, 'experiments at Bombo Headland Geological Site, 2016. Copyright the artist. Photo: Rafaela Pandolfini.





Figure 12: Brooke Stamp, 'experiments at Bombo Headland Geological Site, 2016. Copyright the artist. Photo: Rafaela Pandolfini.

Meditations on sand and rock textures, their temperatures and spatial dimensions, inform a sensitive, expanded engagement in and with the psycho-physical space. Additionally, lying around for long periods on sandstone columns, noticing how form and haphazard configurations maintain a broader structure in the environment, enable embodied contemplations that subsequently invite rock qualities into the body. Examination of invisible micro-movements emerging at the membrane between human and non-human (earth matter) connections, help to identify nuances of sensation.

Questions arising through collaborative dialogue are; how does the surface, and mass of the rock columns inform bodily action? What forces are being received into the body? Does the rock possess power to push back? How is the body's centre of gravity affected by the arrangements, precarious angles and undulations of the rocks in space? Is temperature and texture guiding movement response? What other kinds of signals are intuited from the atmosphere (sounds or scents) at this site that could affect the choreographic practice and process. And, what are the broader implications for dance practices in environment historically? Furthermore, consciousness of historical earth-based practices also form part of my thinking sphere.

The title, 'Pulling Down from the Ephemeral', and the original association with earth concepts are impacted by the energies present and the field of interrelations at play at the Bombo site. Interrelations of energies at the Bombo site require sensitive unpacking in order to inform the evolution of the choreographic work. This prompts further examination and contemplation of



artists who have opened up similar interests around body and earth. For example, the viscerally palpable images of work by visual artist Ana Mendieta and the ground-breaking experiments in the environment by Anna Halprin provide some further insights.

Woven into the thread of feminist and environmentally motivated work of the era, Mendieta's performances and sculpture were largely symbols for personal inquiry, particularly those of displacement, absence and ritual. Her well known works, including 'Siluetas' (1973-78), were enacted through her body to carve out spaces into earth sites; sites she would embody and imprint with her ritual, sculptural and performative interventions. Mendieta is quoted by Jessica Petty, stating, "My art is grounded in the belief of one universal energy, which runs through everything, from insect to man, from man to spectre, from spectre to plant, from plant to galaxy" (Petty 2007, 1). Mendieta's comments on the universality of energies relate to my interests in the shared elemental resonances between human and earth matter, and the more expansive scope of energies present in the Bombo Headland site. Furthermore, her words strengthen my potential to harness the interplay of energies in choreographic form.

Pioneering post-modern dancer/choreographer Anna Halprin and her seminal workshop series with partner Lawrence Halprin, 'Experiments and Environment' (1966-71), experimented with somatic exercises such as blind-folded walks and participatory building and movement events in coastal and urban spaces.



Figure 13: Anna Halprin, 'blindfolded walk'. Copyright the artist. Photo: Unknown.

Anna Halprin says that her renowned place of movement practice a mountain dwelling home studio, the 'dance-deck' and its 'out-of-doorness', provided inherent dynamic qualities. This non-traditional site for dance practice provided for her a venue from which to explore and teach (Merriman 2010, 433-38). The inherent dynamic qualities attributed to the outdoor environment with its changeable and irregular surrounds, is a source of interest to my notions of how the environment might penetrate the psycho-physical and kinaesthetic interplay in dialogue with movement impulse. The changeable and irregular surrounds create a field of multiple stimuli rather than set of direct images to move to, adding to an overall range of changeable rhythms, textures and dimensions impacting the movement impulse response.

The oeuvre of work for which artists such as Mendieta and Halprin are well known, fortify my choreographic direction and interests in how time, space and embodied practice are enlivened and transformed via collective energies. A decision to cast my performance outcome at Bombo Headland, is informed by a cannon of artists including pioneering Australian performance artist Jill Orr, contemporary Australian artist Zoe Scoglio, and New York-based choreographer Jennifer Monson. My work in the environment echoes interests of these artist's who share similarly non-traditional motivations as my own, and additionally draws from the intimate and fertile collaborative discussions of site-related queries that arise from group experimentation in the environment.

### **Residual energies, somatic relations and score**

The expanded vision of the overall research project provides new possibilities and parameters for a choreographic framework to develop. Through the folding in of information from environment into studio practice, and by introducing elements including score and sound, two streams of practice are now given attention. These include a retracing of somatic relations to environment, and the consolidation of a palette of scores.

The retracing of somatic relations to the environment requires investigation into how and where the site information resides in the body via studio practice. This requires reconnecting to the psycho-physical space to re-inhabit the rock entities and energies, and to re-live the residues of our somatic experience through movement and improvisation. Iterations of somatic practice, involves using each-others bodies in close-proximities to transmit and echo forces of material tangibility (see figures 14 & 15).



Figure 14: Brooke Stamp, 'transmission through close proximity', 2016. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp.



Figure 15: Brooke Stamp, 'transmission through close proximity', 2016. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp.

Examining the concept of pressure and using the bodies to improvise together as one entity, we sensitively engage with subtle exercises around weight transfer between bodies. By communing through flesh, bone, musculature and sensation of material dimensionality, access to patterns of microscopic flow and vibration are revealed. Weight and relations to gravity are at the core of experience and physically materialise as slow, enduring energetic sculptural movement.

Consolidating of a grouping of scores anchors the improvisational process and provides ways to draw from internal, as well as site-related experiences. Language and phrases that resonate with the body of research includes text drawn from a range of sources. For example, ‘the spell of temporal stasis’, the ‘non-site’, ‘dwelling’, ‘the glacial’, ‘the balancing point between two competing forces’ and ‘invoking the body of the earth’, are collected and examined.

Scores are not being considered in any order of hierarchy or system, nor will they be used as a representation for experience. Rather, they will provide a multi-modal avenue for spatial and temporal engagements. Each score possesses a unique association with aspects of the research process. A description of some of these phrases allows the richness from where they were derived to be acknowledged, and their potencies to be exposed. For example, excerpts from Author Jack Vance’s science-fiction novel, ‘Tales of a Dying Earth’ are used. The phrases ‘the spell of temporal stasis’ and ‘like the balancing point between two competing forces’, examined as scores in the improvisational practice, are now evocative terms to move with. Implications of the score ‘the spell temporal stasis’ make evident in the arising of spatialised movement and dynamic flow of energy in body practice. Subtle interjections to flow through potent stillnesses, reveal a movement language under a spell of timelessness; a body lacking a true location or central impulse at the core of movement.

The score ‘dwelling’, is a term emerging in this current project process, as a result of a previous collaborative practice with Visual Artist Agatha Gothe-Snape during the 20th Biennale of Sydney, (2016). ‘Here, an Echo’, was a scored walk in the urban environment of the Sydney CBD that traced rhetorical and physical passages both trodden and uncharted. Throughout performative iterations of ‘Here, an Echo’, the concept of ‘dwelling’ took form in acts of laying at rest in various city spaces, benches and urban squares. The purpose of the score expanded upon a central theme of the work, which was to invite viewers to notice, capture and respond to the ambiances of different physical situations in the city of Sydney. Although the urban context for ‘Here, an Echo’ is of contrast to my choice to explore Bombo Headland Geological Site, the score ‘dwelling’ surprisingly appears to be harmonious to current experimentation in the environment.

Both phrases, ‘the spell of temporal stasis’ and ‘dwelling’, are providing context for a particular noticing of the movement and ambiances of surrounding spaces. Transposing these particular scores to the Bombo Headland environment, opens up vast new networks for physical and psychological inhabitation of place, with numerous existing energies. The ability for the dancer to dwell with and live through temporalities with a conscious connection to language score, are enhanced.

‘Glacial’ is a score that emerged from and through early periods of studio experimentation that identified emergent, slow and sculptural movements associated with earth imagery. Despite it serving as an evocative tool for somatic inquiry, when transposed into broader contexts of geological site research, the score’s potential power to inform movement dissipates among the scope of other existing information. While useful to bodily investigations around speed and duration, its lack of connection to the arid and harsh vistas of the quarry is notable. The lack of synergy is an unexpected outcome, but the process reveals how the entire approach to building a choreographic language with the Bombo Headland site relies heavily upon intuitive connections and relations.

At this stage, attention given to somatic retracing and the consolidation of scores, proposes a new term that points to ‘the choreographic landscape’. This term is being put forward to encompass all phases of embodiments, intensities, images and languages to describe the web of energetic and material interrelations that comprise the notion of performance as a living document. The vision for an expanded choreographic event as a landscape or living document now exists with its own inherent flux. The premise is, that this project ‘Pulling Down from the Ephemeral’ remains somewhat open to change as new information arises in the lead up and within the execution of the performance event.

In summary, this chapter examines the shared material exchange between body, natural spaces and earth matter, and is grounded in the somatic energies found in ambiances of place. It examines where and how these exchanges impact upon the material body and improvisational practice. An expanded concept of a choreographic work and performance event is proposed as a live, energetic exchange within inherent flux and openness to new information as it arises in the lead up to, and within, the execution of the final performance event. Viewing the choreographic performance event as a landscape of multiple exchanges, expands its scope beyond the moment in time in which it is witnessed.

## CONCLUSION

The original purpose of this project was to explore processes in and around the making of a choreographic work, particularly the multiple energies and exchanges inhabited within both process and the performance event. The notion regarding the loss of dance to ephemera by Siegel put forward in the introduction to this thesis, prompted initial questions around how the dancer might turn their attention toward the material capacities of the body. The research asked; what kinds of somatic engagement and attention are required to foreground the dancer's material presence?

This thesis, developed alongside sustained studio enquiry, addresses the key research questions arising from the initial experimentation through to performance outcome in chapters one Improvisation and Emergent Acts of Liveness, chapter two, Pulling Down from the Ephemeral, and chapter three, The Body in the Environment.

Focussing on the materiality of the body influences the consideration of dance as a synthesis of temporalities and affections in time and space within this research project. This focus also influences how the field of interrelations might function in a live exchange within the performance context. The processes used in my studio-based choreographic research, are informed by improvisation, visualisation of earth spaces and environment. The three major themes clarify the trajectory and evolution of thinking and practice.

Improvisation is identified as a key methodology utilised to support notions of materiality, presence, and liveness. The potencies activated within this methodology allow for a direct focus upon bodily agency and matter, which has been discussed through this thesis using the term 'matterness'. Discourse around key concepts found within Authentic Movement practice such as 'moving and being moved', and the use of score as a provocation to visualisation, expand the research process and glean new information regarding psycho-physical relationships to materiality and temporality.

Visualisation of earth spaces addresses how somatic engagement and attention to liveness, supports the generative capacities of the material body and consciously counteracts notions of dance's disappearance. The focus on earth imagery, and the resulting slow sculptural movement language response, substantiate the value of improvisation as an avenue for the experience of material liveness and presence. A breakthrough in thinking regarding energies present in the title 'Pulling Down from the Ephemeral' redirects attention to core gravitational earth qualities. The breakthrough also in response to studio-based experimentation with matter (soil), exposes limitations. This realisation radically prompts the process to engage with a more dramatic contextual environment of earth resonances.



The choice of environmental context for experimentation is pursued at Bombo Headland Geological Site. The site provides a more intense field of ambiances, and supports direct sensory contact with earth terrains more consistent with emerging ideas around matterness. Possibilities for shared material exchange between body, natural spaces and earth matter inform an artistic outcome anchored in an entire landscape of practice and performance.

While it is not my intention to ‘prove’ that dance can be captured or held, my view that dance relies upon a network of material and immaterial interrelations is supported by a cross-section of artists, theoretical voices and my practice-led research that intersects with dance, contemporary art and theory. Implications of Siegel’s ‘vanishing point’ are inconsistent with concepts such as Chodorow’s ‘moving and being moved’, and Lepecki’s discussion of ‘still acts’, because the intersections and complexities permeating the disruption of dance’s kinetic traditions, reframe that which is lost toward that which is generative.

Furthermore, a generative aspect of energies which surface in this project, rely upon changes to temporal engagement to promote material vibrancy. The offer of a more nuanced, delicate yet determined engagement with material energies inhabiting creative process, suggests that a detailed treatment of forces folding into process, reveal what is active, live and generative in the ‘Pulling Down from the Ephemeral’ performance outcome.,

The premise put forward by this research, that choreography is a living document made up of a multiplicity of exchanges, is seen in the performance outcome at Bombo Headland site. The multiplicity of exchanges can be seen through observing, and attuning to temporal engagement experienced between bodies and landscape. Additionally, acknowledgment of the psycho-physical layers present in the dancer’s performance, including that which is ‘pulled down’ through their conscious and somatic experience, contributes to the expanded view of exchanges as the dancers dwell, listen, shape and feedback into the environment.

The spirit of process permeates the work ‘Pulling Down from the Ephemeral’. Viewing the work as an ongoing inquiry, rather than as a set choreography or spectacle, means the choreographic process and performance is generative and ongoing, beyond realms of present temporalities.

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## FIGURE LIST

Figure 1: Brooke Stamp, 'working with text based scores', 2016. Critical Path Organisation Australia. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp

Figure 2: Paul Klee, Inside the Body's Cavern, 1940. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp

Figure 3: Robert Smithson, 'Spiral Jetty' 1970. Copyright the artist, Photo: Unknown

Figure 4: Brooke Stamp, 'drawing and mapping sound on paper', 2016, studio research. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp

Figure 5: Brooke Stamp, 'transmission between score and body, and body to body', 2016. Copyright the artist.

Figure 6: Brooke Stamp, 'slow enduring action'. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp

Figure 7: Brooke Stamp, 'sculptural shaping'. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp

Figure 8: Brooke Stamp, 'sculptural shaping'. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp

Figure 9: Brooke Stamp, performance of '1992', first presented at QT Hotel 2016.

Copyright the artist. Photo: Igor Sapina

Figure 10: Brooke Stamp, 'experiments with soil matter', 2016. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp

Figure 11: Brooke Stamp, 'experiments at Bombo Headland Geological Site, 2016. Copyright the artist. Photo: Rafaela Pandolfini.

Figure 12: Brooke Stamp, 'experiments at Bombo Headland Geological Site, 2016. Copyright the artist. Photo: Rafaela Pandolfini.

Figure 13: Anna Halprin 'blindfolded walk'. Copyright the artist. Photo: Unknown.

Figure 14: Brooke Stamp, 'transmission through close proximity', 2016. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp.

Figure 15: Brooke Stamp, 'transmission through close proximity', 2016. Copyright the artist. Photo: Brooke Stamp.