

on the precipice of some space else:
an ecology of being through (with) improvisational performance process

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (by creative work and dissertation)

December, 2019

Faculty of Fine Arts and Music
The University of Melbourne

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Declaration

This is to certify that

- i. The thesis comprises only my original work towards the doctorate except where indicated in the Preface,
- ii. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
- iii. The thesis is fewer than 50,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Reynold Walters.

Abstract

All performance events, and particularly those of General Assembly of Interested Parties (GAIP), that I have participated in from 2014 until 2019, constitute the work upon which I have based reports, extrapolations and interpretations in text, resulting in this dissertation.

The original works, in varying physical modes and carried out in wide-ranging contexts, were undertaken for their own sake, as creative imperatives.

That work has come and gone across time.

Documentation from this activity is a new work and experience in itself (in the making or witnessing) even though its existence stems from the original event, it is freed of obligation to simply record what happened.

Writing, directly referencing or stimulated by these performative events, exists as an improvisation upon and around memory of the original work.

Much, but not all, of the vast quantity and array of original work was documented, to some extent. The format of documentation exists as video, still image, audio file and physical object.

As the reader will discover, the digital file containing the dissertation text also contains digital images, external video links, and is a 'designed space' that takes notice of the aesthetic experience of reading text in combination with textual meaning. This approach is in keeping for an examination of an holistic creative practice.

There are three audio files, using source material from each year of data gathering (2014-16), and one video that together with all linked media and text, constitute the creative project. External links for the three audio files and video file can be found on pages 153 and 154 of this document.

Preface

There are two terms used in my thesis title I will address; *ecology* and *improvisational performance*. I employ the word ecology effectively as an adjective, to point at, to describe interrelation, interdependence, that numerous elements collaborate in co-constituting an event, an object, a self. This amounts to a *way* or *mode* that then embodies those tendencies. ‘Ecology’ as a noun (a branch of biology that deals with the relations of organisms to their environment) as in ‘the Earth’s environment forms an ecology’, a usage where I first encountered the term, is well developed as a distinct discipline, and can be extended from the physical world into the philosophical and theoretical spheres, ripe with metaphor and terminology, exemplified by words such as *rhizome* and *field*. Geographers such as Nigel Thrift and Doreen Massey contributed to the expansion of this use of ecology in proposing that place, along with its physical features is constituted relationally (including the human). Erin Manning continues this expansion; “What a body *does* is ecological: it becomes in relation to a changing environment, and what it does in that relation is what it is.”

‘Improvisational’ is a term that also indicates a way, a mode of approach to making, creating, even to living. It is a way that ranges from slight variation upon an iterative form to an all-out attempt at incipency – an act born not of acknowledgement of the known, but of active resistance to the known, to reach beyond, behind, underneath for some space else.

This improvisational way is applied to ‘performance’, a term that extends from the functionality of utilitarian action as in preparing a meal, through to a conscious public presentation of anything from specialised knowledge to simply being. I use the term performance, to perform, across this spectrum of meaning.

I employ these terms, *ecology*, *improvisation*, *performance* and others such as *ritual* throughout the thesis against a background of vast amounts of practice and scholarly research undertaken into these subjects, not to propose anything original or unique in their deployment but as the methodology by which I conduct my arts practice.

Acknowledgements

I appreciate the opportunities that life has afforded me in being able to undertake this project. It is a privilege to study under Dr. Robert Vincs and Dr. James Oliver, my supervisors, and to do so at the University of Melbourne where I have been supported, encouraged and free to carry out the work.

An APA scholarship award was very helpful in creating time and space to undertake the work during the early part of the project.

My performance practice is collaborative in nature. I acknowledge all the performers who have enabled GAIP and other events in which I have participated from March 2014 to December 2019. All creative work undertaken is improvisational, authorship and ownership equally shared.

I acknowledge the unconditional work and time invested in creative expression, exploration and challenge by all those artists I have connected with over six years of performing from 2014 until 2019. The performances were undertaken by all participants through their own creative impetus.

Ongoing gratitude and creative energy to all those co-creators.

Some students from the Free Play classes at the VCA-MCM and Advanced Improvisation and Collaborations 2 at Box Hill TAFE have also contributed by wholeheartedly embodying challenging creative concepts, living-through their development, allowing transformation and inspiring all.

I thank my partner Juana for her unfailing love and support, especially when the project’s momentum was faltering.

I acknowledge this land and the original inhabitants integral to it, and I thank that reality for sustaining my life and providing the basis for all I am and do.

*I dedicate this work to the memory of
close friend, creative ally and mentor
David Tolley
and my parents
Wes and Judy*

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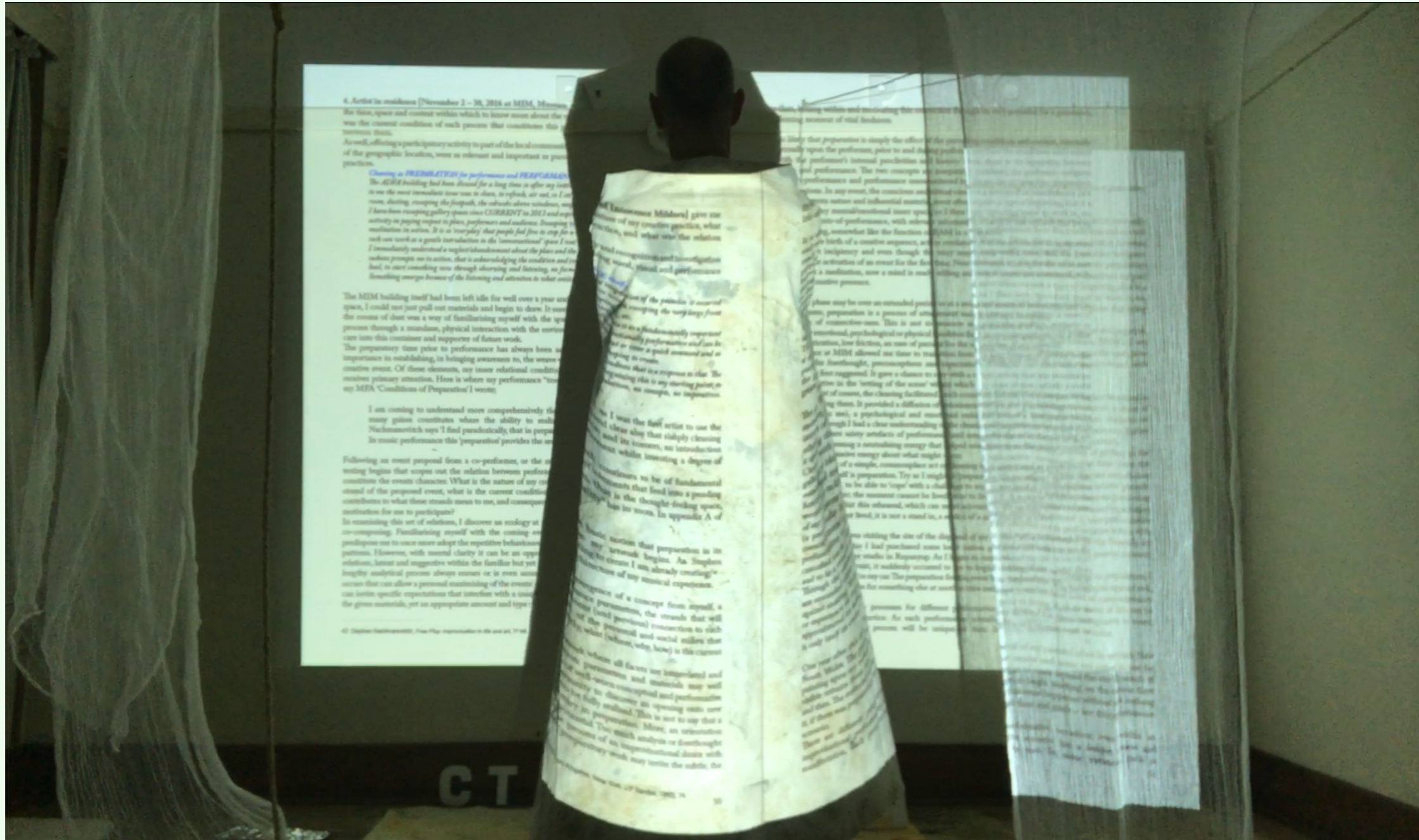
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Why undertake this mode of investigation into a creative practice

The textual component of my practice would not exist to the extent it does without the necessity of having to respond to the requirements of producing a post graduate thesis. I ask, is the thesis writing a creative peer within my performance practice, or is it simply an attempt to codify raw experience (as reportage and commentary) into some legitimate and legitimatising form?



Does the textual material only hover outside the performance experiences inevitably already passed, commenting, extrapolating, philosophising?

Or, can it also be inter-effective, that is, have meaningful interaction with the process and outcome of my performance practice as all other disciplines do?

The use of the written word in responding to recollections of occurrences within other mediums, has translated, has somewhat crystallised the memory of those primary experiences into a concept, an idea, a premise. It has, in some instances, brought about a new perception, a fresh experience through the very mechanisms of writing, brought a way of perceiving peculiar to the medium of text and so, a novel experience, extrapolated from the memory of an event occurring within another form.

I am reminded of Marshall McLuhan's

"we shape our tools and afterwards our tools shape us"

we think, we imagine through the medium, with its array of possibilities

and constraints which then

in turn re~~SHAPES~~ our perceptions. I have come to know the **WRITTEN WORD** as possessing creative potential in how it can be arranged to stimulate thought and experience in ways unique to it.

Although I have not and still do not think of myself as a 'WRITER', I have taken up the process of thinking-through, of asking is that thought, assembled as words in my brain, accurate in articulating what it is I am *thinking/feeling*, have experienced and am experiencing?

Writing is a way of distilling, of making tangible even **physical**, the thought, the feeling. And through experiencing the thought as a word, then speaking it out loud, a kind of conversational process occurs that is constantly on the verge of opening up new thoughts, new connections, through the *doing*, through tuning in to the medium, through channelling **energy** via the sense-making mechanisms, the agency, the capacities of this **tool**.

So, I am grateful for the set of circumstances that conspire in requiring me to express experience's *memory*, to create experience *with words*, and for the search undertaken in finding out how this may be done.

This process has opened up a faculty within that was **underdeveloped**.

The consequent stimulation engendered through such commitment has flowed through to enhance the intellect and my capacity to articulate, to 'know' more deeply through the particularity of thought to **word**, the creative workings of an artistic practice.

I write not only to communicate specific information, but also to elicit 'the affective force of the performance event again'.

I must admit to a lingering suspicion; that our interpretation of the **WRITTEN WORD** is so subjective and my use of it so inept that to imagine a document of value emerging from a project that is neither scientific nor poetic would seem fanciful. Still, the use of thought in the form of a **word** has become a creative act, capable of great challenge and satisfaction and a medium for transformational experience.

As such, textual process has made itself a legitimate one within my practice and I have found a resonating value in working within its *confines*.

1 Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex; Performing public memories* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 12.

As this dissertation will map out, over the last few years my search has taken me to the precipice, where music making, once the central concern of my performance practice, no longer demands a central position. Yet, I have experienced no diminishment in my love of sound, of playing the guitar and of that *i n v i s i b l e*, phenomenal medium.

I declare from the outset that this is a thoroughly subjective and personal text. As such, it is directly opposed to an academic orthodoxy that declares the candidate should “avoid recourse to one’s own experience as the basis or justification of the research ambition.”² A common question in academic circles asks; “Can practice-led research survive without making personal experience the criteria of its research?”³ There is much in-depth study available on this subject from learned academics, so I will keep my response to this important topic as brief as possible.

My reason for using an **academic context** within which to pursue this *creative* project, is precisely because of the questions the institution asks of it, of me. The academic format offers an enabling constraint, a particular and defined context with which I am in constant, stimulating negotiation and thus am motivated by. I am presenting this dissertation to elucidate one artist’s response to a set of conditions common to any artist, to offer one example of the consequences of a series of choices applied within a *creative* process and for this then to be set within, amongst or against an **academic context**.

I am fully aware that such an undertaking has the capacity to contract as well as expand any and every aspect of my ongoing *creative* work. Simply, the risk to me as a practitioner the one who wants to be immersed in an intuitive creative process, is that bringing to the conscious what is sub-conscious, in such a formal manner, may interfere with the delicate inner ecology of *creative* process. The question is then; *has that interference strengthened/expanded or diminished/contracted parts or all of my practice?* I trust that this question is addressed through the course of writing.

I am assembling information albeit subjective and tenuous in nature, for repository within an **academic institution** for human reference.

Why gather information, what is information for?

2 Andrew McNamara from QUT in an article entitled “Six rules for practice-led research” <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue14/McNamara.pdf>. His second rule states: Avoid recourse to one’s own experience as the basis or justification of the research ambition, which contains the sentence; “In particular, a PhD research project needs to justify its research contribution in terms that extend past the researcher’s subjective experience.” 6.

3 Andrew McNamara <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue14/McNamara.pdf> 6.

Knowledge is a word often associated with information, but knowledge would seem to contain an element in excess of accruing and storing of factual information. When information is applied, brought to a living, inter-affective situation, where information modulates the participating forces which in turn modulate the information, is information then becoming knowledge?

However the word **information** is understood, for living beings it becomes useful, helpful when it is applied, when it is applicable to a task at hand and this is how I would like this body of work, this collated information or knowledge to function for my fellow inquirers.

The text herein is a scrutiny of personal performative experience arranged to a story line, with more *unwritten* than *written*. A parsing of this from that, temporarily stabilising memory to carve a subject. The intent is that what is articulated here offers some quota of commonality and of difference useful for the reader’s own creative story and endeavours. Although I aim to satisfy a commonly adopted thesis structure, including a **Conclusion**, much of the material is not ‘concluded’ and does not constitute a cogent, water-tight theory of improvisational performance practice, rather, the textual articulation of a chunk of time lived in an artist’s life, exposed to a manner of thinking that attempts to embody an opening-out of interpretation, of theorisation to incessant creative invention and becoming.

There will be inconsistencies, contradictions, failings and absences but for the author this is integral to an open-ended, creative/destructive process.⁴

Across the course of this text, you the reader will find some questions left unanswered. You will also encounter text that explains a position or describes an occurrence but consequently then fails to provide a conclusion. My reason for this varies with each instance, however, I aim to reflect the nature of the subject matter as closely as I can through text. This means there are passages where to leave a degree of suspension, indeed a lack of resolution accurately reflects my own position and to speculate beyond what has been written, beyond what I ‘know’ is too contingent or there are still too many possible alternatives to commit to text at the time of writing.

In keeping an open mind, you the reader, likely a practitioner may be drawn to speculate for yourself on further ramifications of the descriptive material. In some passages I tend toward the usage of a more poetic and evocative text, again, as I consider this approach best serves my purpose. As you will have already observed I am using various approaches to the selection of **FONTS** and *f o r m a t t i n g* in order to enliven the experience of reading such a document⁵.

THIS IS IN KEEPING WITH MY SUBJECT AND IS CONGRUENT WITH THE AUDIOVISUAL DIGITAL MATERIAL THAT ALL TOGETHER CONSTITUTE THE WORK.

4 Please note, an Addendum to this document (p158) addresses some broader contexts for the work that you may wish to consult before proceeding.

5 Using text in this manner calls upon the activity of *concrete poetry* where the visual dimension of the typed word is used to further affect the readers experience beyond the literal word, offering another layer of interpretation of word symbols.

I chose to include the following quote from humanist geographer David Seamon (citing Edward Relph) as I share an interest in attempting 'to see clearly what there is' even within this autoethnographic investigation where the geography is the self, located in its place, both a product of and a maker of place in its fluid, porous, malleable structure.

I MAKE NO CLAIM TO UNIVERSALITY JUST TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOME EXPERIENTIAL INTERPRETATIONS ARE USEFUL FOR OTHERS.

Poststructuralist, critical, and relationalist geographies reject external standards of reason and trustworthiness; rather, any claim to validity or accuracy is considered provisional, local, and no more correct or real than any others. As Rosenau makes the point, "there is no truth, and all is construction" (1992: 90). Relph reports that, when Mahatma Gandhi was asked what worried him most, he replied, "The hardness of heart of the educated" (1981: 107). This is perhaps the central question for a reinvigorated humanistic geography: How do we invoke a compassionate, emotional engagement so that our accounts of geographical phenomena are generous, heartfelt, accurate, and alive? Relph writes that the need is for "a way of seeing that strives to omit nothing yet imposes nothing. It takes the world whole and as it is given, and attends carefully to the particularity of places and situations. It is the attempt to see clearly what there is" (1981: 177). This mode of understanding involves charity, grace, respect, and resilience. Its impetus fueled humanistic geography in the 1970s. It may yet be revived as younger geographers grow weary of the dense, cerebral hard-heartedness of the current dominant geographies.⁶

How to present such a subjective examination in a way that attempts 'to see clearly what there is' without excess or omission is the task that faces me here.



What to include what to leave out?
What is relevantly valuable?
What is superfluous?

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

I have been involved with creative visual practice longer than I can remember and aural practice from around the age of seven. I have also been involved in music education on and off since the late 1970's. A multi-discipline art education connected me to a wide range of creative mediums that I have consistently maintained interest in and activity with, albeit in some cases sporadically. I give further information on my history in the **BACKGROUND** chapter later in the document.

This **TEXT** contributes to a body of work entitled **On the precipice of some space else: an ecology of being through (with) improvisational performance process** and examines performance work and written responses to that work that took place between March, 2014 until December, 2016⁷.

Documentary material (digital imagery and audio files) together with all **textual** material constitute the doctoral thesis presentation as an interrelated **whole**.

The **APPENDICES** section includes my journal-type responses to performance events presented in full, alongside related papers and presentations that indicate the position of my research at the time of their writing and so mark successive stages of the thesis process.

Much of the creative work for this project occurred under the auspices of **General Assembly of Interested Parties**⁸ (www.gaipsite.com⁹), the conceptual structure supporting my previous academic project (MFA) *"The Moment of Performance: trace and materiality in improvisational music practice"*.

⁷ I stopped reporting on creative events at the end of 2016, although performative experiences across the following three years continued to have a direct bearing on this project. Some references are made to events during this period, 2017 to 2019.

⁸ As an organisational body, GAIP is a sham, nothing but a proposition to stimulate a creative process, a conceptual space from where to find *how* and discover *what*.

⁹ Please note that this website may not be in operation following the publication of this thesis.

⁶ Final paragraph of David Seamon's paper, "Lived Emplacement and the Locality of Being: A Return to Humanistic Geography?" (2015) https://www.academia.edu/4935949/Humanistic_Geography--Lived_Emplacement_and_the_Locality_of_Being_A_Return_to_Humanistic_Geography_2015, 45.

GAIP continues to be a relevant structure for this current work. As noted in **Appendix C**;

GAIP is a vehicle for multi-disciplinary, multi-faceted performance events and a context for unpredictable creative interactions often in non-conventional performance environments. As such it tends toward placing performance within a non-specialised, even non-specific, broad social frame allowing for a fluid definition of what constitutes 'a performance'¹⁰.

GAIP performance events supply the raw experience and data upon which my (re)search is based. The initial reports/findings presented in **Appendices A, B and F** were later analysed for their salient points, that is, material deemed most significant to the evolution of my practice at that time.

These key phrases/concepts were compiled at the end of each event's report, forming what I then termed '*condensation*'; a meaningful summary of a selected experience from the event. I decided to include all the original unedited notes as Appendices for the purpose of allowing the reader to find significances for themselves within the data. In some instances, I have included the events summary and/or *condensation* in the main body of text as well.

In retrospect I have concluded that there were **FOUR KEY EVENTS** of profound significance for my creative practice. Interestingly the first of these on March 18, 2014 was the beginning of data collection and the final one during November, 2016 at its completion.

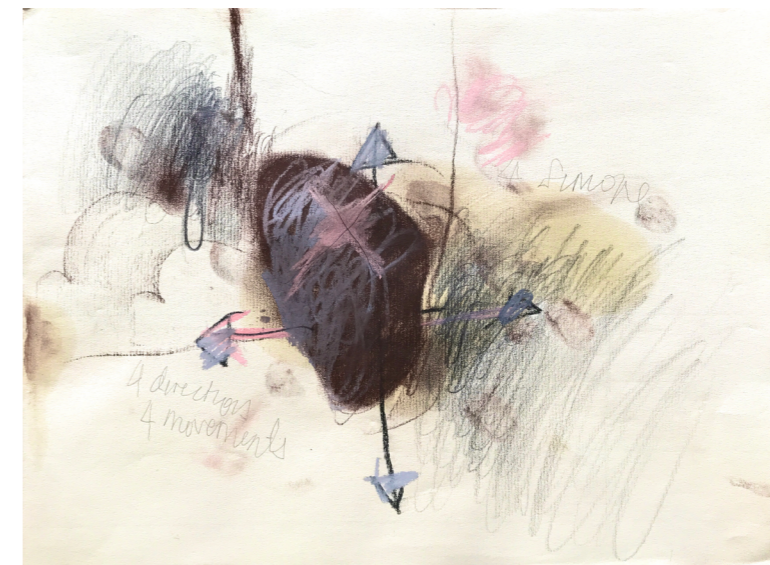
These four key events were each the first of a kind;

1. **THIS Ensemble at MIUC, March 18, 2014**, the first occasion where another discipline, dance, was combined with music, breaking down the linearity and static nature of sound performance with deliberate movement.
2. **THIS Ensemble Wimmera tour October/November 2015**, the first occasion of rural, outdoor roaming performance through landscape, taking up the specifics of geographic location and social situation.
3. **Journey to disperse my father's bodily ashes November/December 2015**, a spontaneous ritual that emerged as a sequence of performances/ceremonies within the landscape.
4. **Artist in residence at MIM, Museum of Innocence Mildura, November 2 - 30, 2016**, the first AIR for me and for the museum. My creative work functioning in a regional social context (outside of my usual performative environment) and the social/environmental effect of this upon my working process and outcomes.

The *condensations* pertaining to each of these four pivotal events are then supplemented by related *condensations* from other events. This is to either reinforce a salient point or to reveal or extend its connections (across time) thus forming a tapestry of co-affective material and evidence of an evolving practice.

Along with commentaries, this material forms the core of the thesis. It is then followed by further examination of consequential issues crucial to my process, this acting as a **conclusion**.

At the conclusion of the thesis *The Moment of Performance* I asked, **where does this research lead?**



¹⁰ 'An Artist Walks Through A Doorway' is a review of a recent GAIP event by Paul W. Blackman, that may contribute to the readers sense of how a GAIP performance can unfold.

I then respond by writing that my proposed PhD project, titled;

"The Space Between: improvisational music as site-specific social practice", will "investigate improvisational music performance as a way of being in relationship with fellow performers, the performance location inclusive of its inherent (and particularly human) content, and any elements perceptible within the broader context; what happens between the performer(s), the site, and the work, how does the site mark its presence in the work? What is the experience of and what is the nature of the spaces between all perceptible elements?... primary motivation being the enactment of improvisational performance processes in unorthodox private and public spaces. The goal is to migrate this practice to new spaces, new contexts, new audiences."

This was the platform I set myself to begin the current thesis and as such provides a reference point for what ensues. Two years or so after this response to the concluding question from *The Moment of Performance*, I again attempted to set the tone of this PhD document (giving a further reference point),

The specificity of the improvisational music performance practice that occupied my 2012-13 MFA thesis has transmogrified into a less specific, possibly fractured and madally diverse, rhizomatic creative desire. Driven by inner necessity and a falling away of what were once imperative behaviours of a more certain creative trajectory. The significance of the work resides in a commitment to a process that continues to see the evolution of a creative consciousness shifting from the prioritising of a singular discipline (music performance) to a more diffuse 'some space else' where the creative form and mode of making are in symbiotic relation with the creative context and purpose.



There are two important issues integral to my current relation with performance that have become prominent over the course of this thesis.

I have decided to flag these complex concerns right from the outset by placing them within the INTRODUCTION as they both have importance as background material against which the text is set.

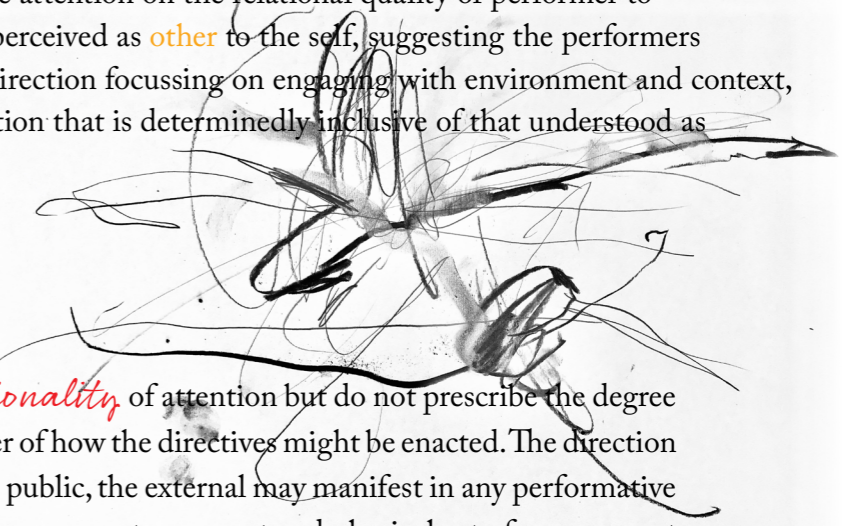
ONE ISSUE is in regard to the social, collaborative and interactive dimensions and the individual and private aspects of performance.

When for arguments sake, I reduce this concern to the polarities of *public* and *private*, I discover that in practice neither **SPACE** exists independently of the other, so then preferable to think of describing a *directionality*, that is, a **thinking-feeling-movement** toward one pole or another.

Prior to this project coming into focus I was seeking to move my performance practice from the cloistered space of a highly specific music performance to a more discipline-inclusive, socially inclusive, life inclusive space.

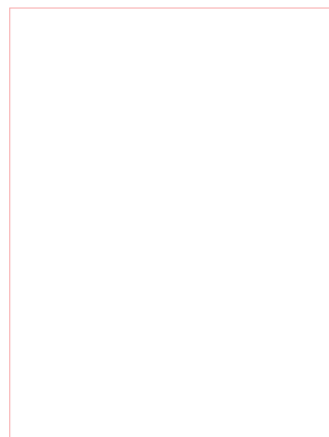
A previous title for this thesis nominated the topic 'improvisational music as a site-specific social practice' whilst the pronouncement for the formation of GAIP declared; 'I am seeing an assembly of interested parties, capable of and interested in a broader social 'performance' where people of diverse contexts, formats and modes of functioning can meet.'

Both these statements place attention on the relational quality of performer to co-performer and what is perceived as **other** to the self, suggesting the performers concern is in an outward direction focussing on engaging with environment and context, cultivating a creative direction that is determinedly inclusive of that understood as external to the performer.



The statements declare a *directionality* of attention but do not prescribe the degree to which, nor the extent or manner of how the directives might be enacted. The direction of attention toward the other, the public, the external may manifest in any performative behaviour from a simple passive awareness to an overt and physical act of engagement. It may feel like I the performer, am observing or listening to the other without that having a noticeable effect on my performance or conversely, I am accepting of and ready for my perceptions of the other to have maximum impact in directly shaping or motivating my performance. In all instances, inclusion of the other may be undertaken in a self-conscious manner or come spontaneously with minimal or no anticipation.

I group the term 'other' alongside public and external, advisedly. There is clearly an existence of other within self, that is; what the self may reject as non-self or what is not yet known or conscious to the self. But my primary concern here in characterising inward and outward directions as internal/external or private/public, is to highlight a tendency in directional **thinking-feeling-movement**, to reveal an orientation and map how this thinking-acting has changed over the period. It is then important to say that these polarised positions exist in a lived life are therefore never static, always fluid and upon deep interrogation evidence of one position can always be found in its opposite; the other needs not-the-other to exist!



How then do these public and private polar directionalities co-exist within me,
what is the recipe of their relation?

I employ the terms public and private as gross descriptors of directionalities to indicate where my creative energy, my motivation is coming from and going toward and to more clearly indicate an overarching narrative to this text.

There is however another layer, a subscript that sees the private-public dichotomy described here contained within a single body. The other, the unknown, the not-self as the destination, offering directionality to the self, the known. A tantalisingly peripheral other, barely perceptible but full of promise precisely because this sense resides within the deep recesses of the artists lived experience, as an opposing energy completing the whole yet out of the grasp of the conscious mind.

I recall at least three decades from the 1970's onwards where my priority was squarely on presenting public performance where engagement with co-performers was a crucial element. But, not at the expense nor to the detriment of my performance. I also required significant periods of individual and group preparation (mostly with a sense of being conducted in private even if there may have been other eyes and ears nearby). During these times public and private indeed seemed like specific and well-defined states, I inhabited one or the other. Performance was undertaken in public and practice was conducted in private.

I have since realised that for me I was not and still am not able to function at an optimum level independently of co-performers. Then, I wanted to possess self-reliance and self-mastery *before* collaboration with the other performers.

I now understand we were interdependent, whilst having certain individual capacities much of what we sought creatively was based on a collaborative feedback process.

Much has changed with the form and manner of my performance practice, and perhaps the approaches and attitudes I describe above can be attributed in part to the structural and conceptual positions taken in addressing an idiomatic performance language that is no longer my focus. However, I now understand that no matter to what extent I aspire to function independently, I will never be completely independent for that is an impossibility for any phenomena on our planet. Nonetheless, independence, along with public and private and external and internal is best understood as a relative term existing on a spectrum of independence and interdependence, close and remote.

By the end of 2017 I had begun to feel a little at odds with the position I had expounded within **G.A.I.P** and my thesis title that emphasised a 'social practice'.

What was becoming apparent was a rising sense of urgency to address a building pressure of inner forces. I state clearly that a depleted emotional/physical condition diminished my zeal for organising performance events. It stripped away my previously consistent ability to keep performing, keep presenting despite inner turmoil. What followed was an intuitive reduction process for and of creative survival with my essential creative drives revealed unadorned, simplified as fundamental urges, notably still existent, despite the serious depletion of energy resources.

In the midst of this extended creative shift I gained access to a rural studio space that facilitated my deepest exploration of visual art and offered space and time to ruminate, process and explore fundamental creative drives in a singular manner.



During this period (2017 onwards) my performance situations have been largely private or unofficial outdoor activities interspersed with a few conventional music performances.

Whilst all my creative work can still be understood as improvisational performance process, I have not so much rejected the social, public, external *directionality* of the work but found a deep need to return to the particularly personal investigations and creative impulses within my source disciplines.

A creative life inevitably contains oscillations and dialogues between the inner and outer, the private and public but they are never truly separate, one is always contained in the other like the up and down phases of a swinging pendulum where the momentum up comes from the release down and the release down comes from the momentum up.

A change in performance orientation from public to private forms part of a conclusion to this thesis. The shift in emphasis has occurred before but not in the same way.

The process enacted with each swing of the pendulum sees a richer practice with greater understanding of what is important to its continuation and my survival as a creative human, one who is motivated who is energised to again make work.

The SECOND ISSUE, regards my observations and behaviour in relation to the subject of control; what is it for me, when am I exercising it, who is in control?

I will attempt to get to the heart of my interest in the subject by characterising polar positions (as in the first issue above) where the performer has a sense of being **IN-control** or **NOT-IN-control** with the materials at hand.

I observe within self the desire to be highly specific in exerting control over the details of a creative motion, I consciously manipulate the marks, the movement, the sound to affect a process or outcome; self, consciously aiming to exert direction, to control a process and outcome regardless of whether I succeed in achieving the desired result or not.

On the other hand, at the other end of the spectrum I also have the desire to **dispassionately observe** what is, to **listen to** what is already in motion without obvious interference or imposition from self, although coming to this decision exercises an act of will, and so too a form of *control*.

Taking up this relation to the creative material, to the world, may also be understood as relinquishing the compulsion to edit, to vet a creative motion (again clearly a willful decision).

The desire to be specific and detailed about the material I want to work with, how and when I work with it exercises personal choice in selecting *THIS* and not *THAT*.

I pick up *this paint brush*, move in *this direction*, **make that sound**.

Often though, the sense of choice, even a sense of the one who is making the choice is intangible, as I am not conscious of the feeling of choosing anything.

Still, I can reasonably state that I am exercising control in the choice of material and approach to the work.

My creative control mostly does not articulate a completed vision of a performance, painting, composition, etc. but it does reach for a particularity at a particular moment; it can require *a certain brush, a certain colour, a certain posture, a certain sound* — at a **certain performative moment**.

This discriminating choice is a reaction to a set of conditions that I may or may not become aware of.

The mixture is an alchemic brewing of creative drives (cultivated by my history of choices and proclivities) with the materials of the given situation (co-performers, environment, broader context, etc.) and it constitutes the recipe by which action is taken and thought-feeling-action arise.

In order to address the question of how these two directions of control function for me, the performer, I will cite two examples.

Firstly, in the course of playing guitar I notice a muscular habit of movement (inextricably bound with its corresponding mental habit) that restricts me from efficiently enacting an impulsive creative variation of the original movement despite my intent to do so.

In response,

I can ignore that unrealised movement, accept the limitation and find an alternative path from my existing palette of techniques. I can also note it as a **'point-of-resistance'**¹¹ to then be isolated and focussed upon as an exercise for repetition, familiarisation and awareness development.

I take this last action in order to cultivate creative freedom of choice in a future moment of performance.

I am deliberately attempting to direct what was previously not a directable element within my playing. I find merit and high use value in this notion of control; a drive to access greater flexibility in order to elicit a deeper creative freedom, not simply to be in-control for its own sake as an expression of dominance over the materials.

Interestingly, the more closely I examine what I consider I am in-control of, the more I hear that I am in fact not in-control in the way I had imagined.

As my perception and facility become more refined I am so enabled to see and hear more subtle inconsistencies, phenomena beyond my current level of awareness, of access through choice, of control of the ability to enact, that is; **technique**.

In other words, the more I seem to be able to now manipulate what I was previously unable to, the greater the amount of ineptitude I discover within my current practice. But there is measurable technical advancement and some psycho-physical space seems enriched through the process, enabling more choices, more perspectives when confronting such points-of-resistance as I have outlined here.

So, as has always been the case, at any given moment I have at my creative disposal whatever actualities and potentialities currently exist within me and this is the material with which I work.

Creative control concerns what I seek to implement or manipulate and is self-referential.

Whereas creative vision for me is an unapplied imagining, its source is the unrealised residue of past experience and potentialities often provoked into existence by poetic perception or external serendipitous arisings. Ingredients crucial to the creative vision may coalesce outside the individual.

Yes, the individual is the one experiencing the imagining but the experience is not brought about solely through an artist's personal history or capacities, rather through a kind of sympathetic resonance of forces external to self, and if it takes hold, a further commingling with other aspects of being and this initial resonance.

Any facet of self or any other prospective phenomena can equally function as a catalyst for the imaginings' occurrence and potency.

The self has at precise moments relinquished governing and editing control in recognition of the potential for creative revelation in performance and so is out-of-control,
is away from the thought of control.

*My volition,
in tandem with receptivity
to the non-self and to the other within self,
builds the carriage that takes me to the precipice
where the notion of choice and so of control is superseded
by a vastly simplified performance of revelation, of revealing a movement,
a brush stroke, a sound. A gesture that simply fulfills its own premonition.
I consciously seek out a condition where what is foreign to me
and therefore fresh, is accessible through a dance
between the self, the known abilities in-control
and, the other, the unknown and the
out-of-control.*

As performer my inner world sees a constant negotiation between these forces. Sometimes my articulating voice is too loud and drowns out the quieter, subtle unfamiliar alternative condemning me to an all too familiar experience once more.

¹¹ I have employed the term *point(or field)-of-resistance* in the Free Play improvisation class to denote a compulsive behaviour or a conscious or unconscious attitude that inhibits the performer from freely enacting a task.



Other times I am able to bypass a preoccupation with why, how, where and when a creative decision or action is taken and just begin with the materials and circumstances at hand, prepared to follow the consequences of the decision with an ongoing acceptance of the influence, of the unfolding capacities of the internal or external other. True acceptance of a current inability to execute a certain movement, allows for a reimagining of that 'flaw' as an opening onto an alternative pathway or technique, then in working with whatever *is* in actuality occurring will reveal some space else, perhaps yet to be imagined, but that is as valuable as any other means of development, just one that might not be in accord with the mind's current intention or preoccupation.

As a novice performer every component of each discipline provides a new experience. Now, after much experience I look for ways to subvert the known, to invite in the other. The recipe, made **on-the-spot** in the moments of performance, contains my controlled exertion of will in some measure and an invitation to the unknown, the unanticipated. By definition the invited elements, the other, the outside are unpredictable as to whether they are able to be evoked or enticed to participate. Life tells me that no situation, within or without is ever fully under my control, a regulated movement impregnable to uncertainty. Indeed, for the creative mind the irregularities, the inconsistencies and the unexpected contain the inspirational eventualities that further stimulate our work, that precipitate the quantum leap, that typify an extraordinary experience.

How do I then cultivate the conditions to invite this element of creative surprise into my performance if its presence is not a common feature of deliberate control?

The following story is another example of how the function of control plays out within me, the performer.

During the 2016 MIM residency¹² I had met a farmer at a social function where we had a brief conversation regarding GAIP. I spoke of outdoor and unusual locations being desirable for holding GAIP performances and how we sought to reveal something of the situation and the environment as well as something new to ourselves through the work.

¹² Inaugural Artist-In-residence at MIM, *Museum of Innocence Mildura*, Australia, November 2 – 30, 2016.



He quickly suggested a hut belonging to his grandparents, original settlers in the district, and still fully intact as a site for a GAIP visit.

We took up his offer some weeks later and arrived at the remote location late one night¹³.

Most likely he thought we knew what we were doing, what we were intending and that we were experienced at this sort of thing (whatever that actually was!).

We were all tired from the trip and quite overwhelmed, surrounded by such vastness, standing in front of this humble structure from another era.

The ensuing process was extraordinary and unanticipated.

Each step of the way, from the original conversation and invitation to the time spent in that little hut and its aftermath, was constantly surprising.

Each moment felt out-of-control in that whatever was happening was happening *to me*.

I invite and seek out experiences of this quality and so apparently exert a controlled decision to actualise such an event. But as each action begets another

a feeling of inevitability about what is coming begins to emerge and that it is occurring through my volition or not is almost imperceptible.

I could always call a halt and walk away if I did not feel in accord with what was unfolding but as an artist I am curious to discover the

nature of the experience before me (as one that I have participated in bringing to this point) and as an improviser I thrive in a fertile situation where all perspectives, actions and consequences are

up for grabs

We were amidst a situation that was clearly underway even before any action was taken.

We simply became a part of a situation where we were going to find out in the unfolding moments what part we were to play, what was required of us.

Any notion of performance, of skilled musician or experienced artist was a fleeting thought at best.

What did exist was a **t r a n s f o r m a t i o n a l** **SPACE** that was demanding our participation because we had unlocked the energies of that **SPACE** and were involved in a **DANCE** with the assembled phenomena, that carried us to **some-space-else**, that **transfigured** us to the extent where we found our familiar relations and our familiar selves **ALTERED**.

There was no way for this to occur other than through a thorough giving over of what constitutes the familiar, the controlled-self to the hybrid forces being generated in that space. Here were forms of force, entities of energy whose coming-into-being could only manifest as they did through a truly collaborative creation.

In the first example of the two discussed here, the drive is toward moving through a **point of resistance** that thwarts the manifestation of a form of expression that if not for the force of habit should be close at hand. So an effort of will is applied in a particular direction seeking a particular outcome.

In the second example there is an effort of will applied but it is less obviously so and not immediately understood as being applied in a particular direction.

Over the course of the described event, the sense of self as one who is in-control through decision-making has receded. Now a *viscous, fluid movement of energies* from within and without begins to dissolve the edges of **'the one who decides'** superseded by an ambiguous conglomerate of energies indicated by unfamiliar, unpredictable even uncomfortable thoughts-feelings-actions; who or what is manipulating the materials, the directionality, the specificity of the unfolding event is unclear and not relevant to the immediate experience.

¹³ Full story in Appendix F GAIP experiences 2016.

The broader question of who or what is controlling, manipulating, choosing, speaks to the subject of will. Is there such a thing as individual will or is this an illusory condition my ego has created to cultivate a sense of power, of control over its circumstances and environment? Is individual volition the greatest conceit, the greatest destructive force on earth as it refuses an acknowledgement that what constitutes I is a product of, and inextricably interwoven into a weave of perceptible and imperceptible phenomena that constitute an ultimately indivisible ecology where all components are constantly co-forming a shared 'reality'?

Inevitably it is beyond the scope of this text and my knowledge to seriously tackle the subject of individual will, yet it is an extension of the proposition of control. Neither is it necessary to locate my ideas in relation to it. What is important is for me to clarify that my attitude toward creative control, the directionality of the notion of control within creative activity, is variable depending on the context. My approach moves along a sliding scale, a spectrum book ended by the two examples described here.

At times personal vision can conflict with or can mask what opportunities actually exist in the moment of performance outside of self or even within. This can mean I am *not really listening* or *not really attending* to what is already occurring, not fully available to collaborate with in the moments of performance because what I am already carrying into the performance takes up much of my attention.

Also, I have had a tendency (particularly in the past with 'THAT' performance ensemble¹⁴) to subvert control, to undermine performance proceedings whether that be my own, my co-performers or the context, which can be traced to a desire to entice to the occasion the unexpected, unknown, unpredictability of the other. This urge is undeniably linked to a contrarian strain within my personality that seeks to counter a prevailing quality and admittedly has often consequently led to personal, creative or professional dilemmas.

On one end (in the first example) of this spectrum I function individually in deciding to pick up my guitar, a deliberate action with an intended result. What ensues is a conversation, an affective feedback loop between the present entity called self and previous entities or versions of self and their actions and thoughts all in relation to playing the guitar.

This conversational loop is purposefully narrow in scope and somewhat closed to other entities, phenomena and conversations. Control is defined as an intensity of conversation between self and previous (and future) selves over the choice of material, of how, when, where, why and if to implement action and is further implicated in the consequences of my response.

On the other end (in the second example) multiple entities participate in intensities of conversation modulated by interdependence in a feedback loop very open to affect and involvement from other entities, phenomena and conversations. In fact, the event's existence depends on these relational qualities.

So how do I reconcile drives toward these variant poles within me?

The examples given above highlight contrasting approaches to the idea of control applied to divergent contexts. There is clearly an opportunity to confuse approaches thus undermining my endeavours with inappropriate action negating creative potential through energies functioning at cross-purposes.

At this stage of the process, I trust that my perception and intuition in responding to each unique occasion will work appropriately, keeping any counter-motivational effect or conflicting force to a minimum.

Experiencing a sensation or an idea of being in-control invokes the opposing sensation of being not-in-control.

These conditions are of the same source.

I notice fear or anxiety existent within my attempts to exercise control, of failing to exert control.

I take each performance scenario as a new conversation, an opportunity to think, feel and act differently to similar previous events.

What has become a priority within the intensity of interaction that constantly reformulates, remakes what is control, is

listening.

Listening with commentary and judgment in abeyance, that is, listening that collaborates with hearing (registering) in its readiness to be called upon if necessary.

Listening more closely so to unveil an essence, the heart of the matter, if there is indeed one to be heard.

¹⁴ THAT performance ensemble was created by David Tolley in 1993. Beginning with a different grouping of musicians, by 1995 it had become a trio of Tolley, Dur-é Dara and myself, expanding at times to include a diverse array of collaborators. It was the centerpiece of Tolley's projects, amongst other ongoing groupings; This, The Other, League of Stringmongers and ReMove.

Further, the more intimately I 'work-with' the elements at hand (including self) invoked through performance, the more thoroughly I am co-composing with these elements, then the driver, the mechanism, the concept of control falls away as I am simply a constituent part working-with other constituent parts, those parts working-with me in a relational, co-constitutive movement. Whether a result or a process is something I desire or not is backgrounded.



Co-compositional moment of performance where the individual's control is relinquished in favour of a working-with all present elements to effect a co-constitutive movement.

I know why I begin, that is where and how I begin,
 so I have begun.
 Did I begin before the first word ^{word} thought and then written?
 This Beginning has been coming forever forever.
 When did it begin? That is unknowable.
 Why am I writing these things? To know why is important so I can get on with how and forget why.
 Why this and not that?
 I am now less interested in why I begin or have begun than how I am beginning.
 I, introduce?
 The beginning is introducing itself because I do not accept that it magically appears INSTANTLY from NOTHING.
 It emerges from a primordial pond of something.
 In being intimate with myself I am more likely to discover it has begun. As I consider its source, I realise it was always coming. But now there is a crescendo of emergence that makes it apparent to this dumb listener.
 If why I begin is SOLVED for me - by my past self or some other force - then where, when, HOW become prominent.
 WHERE - it began where consciousness was able to locate the force(s) of a particular momentum.
 WHEN - it has always been coming. The declaration of its particularity is the incipient moment.
 HOW - I'm not sure I have begun if I am asking WHY. I am sure I have begun if I'm asking WHERE, WHEN and HOW.
 WHERE WHEN and HOW.
 When I begin can override where I begin, and how I begin can override both where and when I begin.
 W W H

I know why I begin, that is where and how I begin, so I have begun.
 Did I begin before the first word was thought and then written?
 This beginning has been coming forever.
 When did it begin? That is unknowable.
 Why am I writing these things? To know why is important, so I can get on with how and forget why.

Why this and not that?
 I am now less interested in why I begin or have begun than how I am beginning.

I, introduce?
 The beginning is introducing itself because I do not accept that it magically appears instantly from nothing.
 It emerges from a primordial pond of something.

In being intimate with myself I am more likely to discover it has begun. As I consider its source, I realise it was always coming but now there is a crescendo of emergence that makes it apparent to this dumb listener.

If why to begin is solved for me - by my past self or some other force - then where, when, how become prominent.

WHERE - it began where consciousness was able to locate the force(s) of a particular momentum.
 WHEN - it has always been coming. The declaration of its particularity is the incipient moment.
 HOW - I am not sure I have begun if I am asking WHY. I am sure I have begun if I am asking WHERE, WHEN and HOW.

When I begin can override where I begin, and how I begin can override both where and when I begin.

some background

In searching for the roots of this dissertation subject, I hark back in time to a generically creative, yet specifically articulate influence of my father and an art school structure that cultivated experimentation, non-specialisation and pointed investigation in understanding one discipline through the terms of another. I trace a gathering

differentiation between an emergent functionality tethered to an aspirational virtuosity within music and, the less evaluated, experimentally participatory *other* of a broader art practice. The search for internal reconciliation between the utilitarian and unmediated expressivity within the field of music, has occupied some three decades of my life.

Around the age of seven I was introduced to the piano and a world of serious music. Music lessons were part of a well-rounded education (for those fortunate enough) in Australia during the late 1950's and early 1960's. There was nothing special about the process and my focus was squarely on receiving a **chocolate frog** at the successful completion of a new tune, making myself, my parents and my teacher happy.

Here was my first taste of music as an organised activity where there were gentle yet clear expectations about an outcome, regular practice being one of them. There seemed little space or reason for *structure-less play* (although it did occur on occasion at home), but perhaps the piano had already been claimed by serious music in my imagination and I had become fixed in what I thought the instrument was for. My visual art activity on the other hand, consisted of simply mucking around with materials, directly accessing my imagination without any expectations aside from enjoyment (and perhaps imitating my father).

Although abandoning piano for the more symbolically rebellious guitar some years later, the course of the two strains of artistic endeavour had been charted.

Observing my enthusiasm for guitar, my father took me to big band rehearsals at the Musicians Club on Saturday mornings where I would watch and listen to the musicians (and particularly the guitarist¹⁵) preparing their tunes in a relaxed but 'down-to-business' atmosphere. It was very impressive but somewhat daunting as well to this wide-eyed youngster.

As I struggled with the final years of boys grammar school it was decided that it might be better for me to move on to something that I had an interest in and motivated me.

The choice was to attend art school or music school, the only place available to study music at that time was the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music¹⁶ and after some inquiries it became clear that this was not the place for me. So began a year of preparatory art school at Brighton Technical College followed by a Diploma of Fine Art at Preston Institute of Technology (PIT, now Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, RMIT), Bundoora, Melbourne.

Playing guitar came along almost I really wanted to play the drums, parents to invest in this social infrastructure, school friend parents into believing in his had somehow conjured up a also much to my annoyance, this guitar with one string on it had at home but what I needed was *to be* **LOUD.**



incidentally. but before I could convince my significant piece of sonic and Wayne had already conned his percussive talents, and as Lars bright red electric Hofner bass, left the guitar for me! A classical been lying around for a year or so an electric guitar, *because it had*

¹⁵ The guitarist was Roger Pell, who I officially met decades later and with whom I then began exploring improvised music. I was deeply impressed by his talents and he seemed to be 'under the wing' of the big band director Bruce Clarke who was a noted guitar tutor and mentor.

¹⁶ The Victorian College of the Arts Music faculty, where I teach improvisational sound-making and performance, recently became absorbed into the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. Some forty-five years after my enquiry, it seems that improvisation is being taught at the MCM.

A neighbour's two-tone vinyl covered rusted-string Fender electric, unearthed from the dark recesses of his garage and my parent's readiness to hire a sound system and transport all to the local scout hall, was indicative of the good fortune I had. So I embarked upon a socially therapeutic, creative activity that felt vivid and relevant, unrelated to what my experience of music had been to this point. I learned all I needed to know about the music we wanted to play by sitting for hours on end with my guitar and a portable record player, placing the stylus in just the right place to hear that riff and that solo over and over.

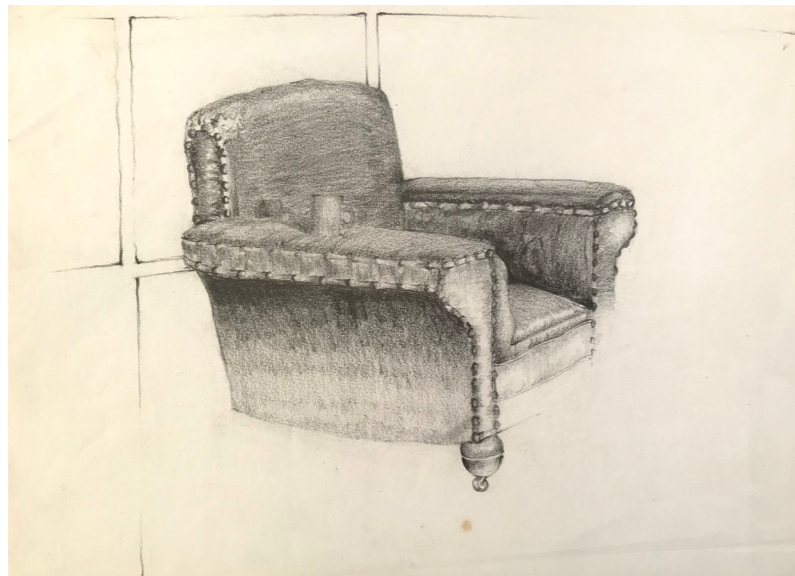
Where could I find those sounds on the guitar? My ears were being trained and the thrill of discovery, the penetration of something previously inaccessible, was an absorbing and empowering activity for youthful angst.

Guitar lessons with an open-minded young man, Peter Roberts, soon followed. We quickly became friends and he introduced me to a world of sonic exploration where I came to see through music into sound.

Tape recorders, improvisation, foreign instruments, random recited text, and open-ended experimentation were timely and deeply effective tools for a developing, expressive consciousness. Those regular meetings provided a rich foil to the youthful articulation of disgruntlement and social belonging that the rock band was beginning to provide.

Crucially, the choice of PIT over the MCM derailed any serious professional musical training in favour of what was a broad ranging, non-specialised, practically creative environment at art school. However, during my years at PIT, sound, music and guitar were constant activities and I would practice or play the guitar most evenings.

The process would always include exploration or improvisation, but the default activity was by and large goal-specific, skills development¹⁷ with guitar.



Skills development never seemed as urgent for me with painting or drawing.

My memory is that the work's content or its concept was foremost and that the technical means to achieve an outcome would be found, would be developed through the course of working. This may have been due to spending many years since childhood drawing without thinking, drawing just seemed instinctive.

¹⁷ Much of the music I was listening to by my late teens was termed progressive rock music and its technical demands were generally greater than the regular rock riffs. This listening motivated my drive to expand my vocabulary, as did a later profound experience upon hearing guitarist John McLaughlin (described in my MFA Appendix B).

A deep motivation to realise what was largely a guitar-focused musical imagining drove me to practically develop my guitar playing abilities through intense instrumental study¹⁸.



The divide between attitudes to guitar playing, and painting or drawing, was not always so clear-cut. I did consider and hone technique in painting and drawing, and I did just simply explore and experiment using the guitar. But a developing objectification of my guitar playing (and indeed my self), measurable and comparable, was taking hold, perhaps simply the consequence of such a strong goal-specific desire or, was the drive of artistic imagining somewhat co-opted by the necessities of financial survival, appropriated and repurposed as a product interacting with its market? Interestingly, I recall the notion of professional achievement within visual art practice as never seriously taking hold even whilst I was busily engaged in making posters, backdrops for bands and other graphic design work.

By the mid 1970's, the social and business dimensions of **'performing music - becoming famous - making records - earning money'** progressively congealed into a cluster of thoughts, informing behavior and decision-making that constituted what music, guitar playing in particular, was becoming for me. The shift from playing with friends to playing with or for acquaintances or strangers, largely meant undertaking paid work, as a guitarist, where broad-based creative decision-making and directives ultimately belonged to the employer.

Also becoming evident, was that the music I loved to play (including original pop music, composed often non-idiomatic works, 'soundscapes' or open improvisation) was not going to provide consistent financial gain, although the lure of sudden wealth was constant in the pop world. For a couple of years during the mid to late 1970's, I was in fact earning a living from performing largely original music, but toward the end of that decade much had changed.

¹⁸ The McLaughlin Appendix B in my MFA document speaks of a profound psychological/emotional experience. This experience and its consequent motivations for technical advancement can be understood as gradually converging with an "objectified career path", in that I was consistently measuring my abilities against the memory of, and the tenets formed, out of that profound experience.

Eventually though, I undertook paid work playing popular tunes of the day for financial stability, performing music as a profession, as utilitarian activity, with the exchange of money for a service a distinguishing feature and with entertainment¹⁹ value thoroughly implicated. Entertainment value became associated with functional music making, strengthening a divide between career music and a general art practice which included experimental and exploratory music for its own sake.



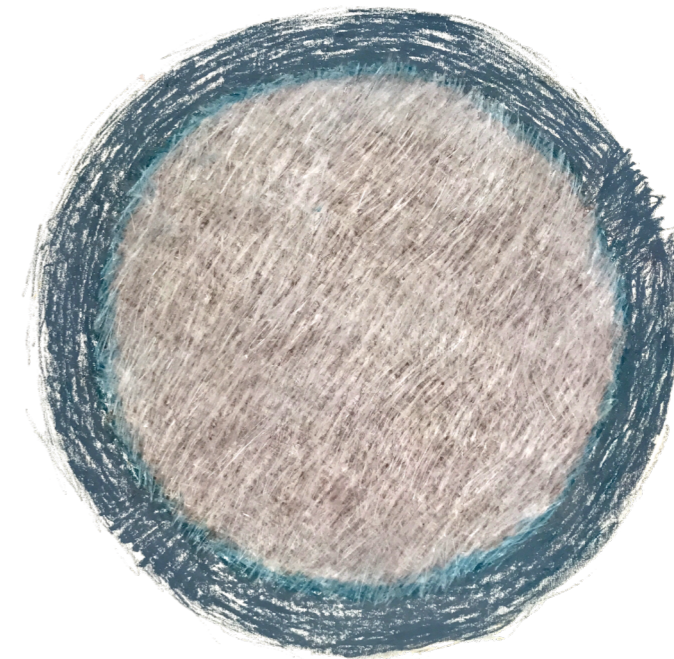
For much of three decades I was to varying degrees, predominantly engaged in directing the simple pleasure of playing guitar, of performing music (be it compositional or improvisational) towards aesthetic, technical, and career goals that when viewed collectively were forging an identity, a musical personality committed to an evolving value system. Although value and pleasure were still experienced in various other musical situations and in sonic exploration for its own sake, I recall a background sense that activity within those other spaces was perceived as peripheral to the 'real work'. I tended toward the view that the real work occurred when I was able to reinforce or greatly expand my professional artistic validity and quality, so enabling perpetuation of performances, recordings, my professional creative identity and value system.

In reality, the above description may not always have been so condensed with clear delineations between the poles of real work and play for its own sake, but it speaks of a tonality present through most of my time as a career musician. Exploratory music was aligned with my visual arts practice, and these pursuits existed within a parallel, alternative value system to that of the career guitarist/composer.

My purpose here is not to compare levels or modes of creativity but to trace historic differences within my music practice to the present day, which may illuminate my current position.

¹⁹ In a live music performance, a promoter and an audience pay the performer for their service. How well I perform in the eyes (and ears) of those who pay money for that service equals my entertainment value. Therefore, I am inclined toward shaping my work to satisfy a perception of what might have more entertainment value in order to progress my chances of continuing work, whilst still honouring my own creative needs.

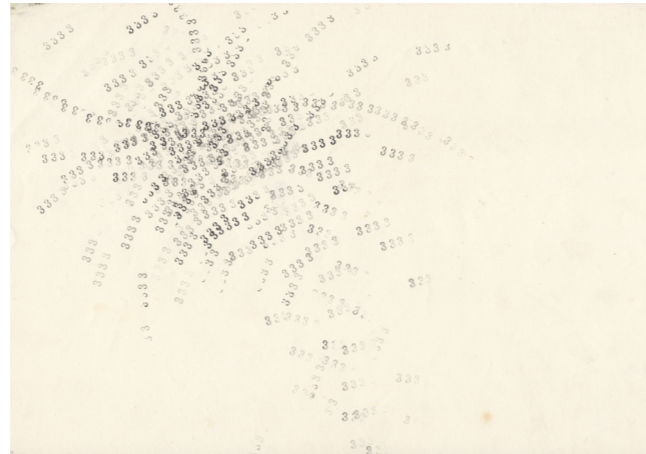
In visual art as in music, I was also motivated by the articulate, individual whose vision and technique were starkly their own. I was inspired through observing these artists, imitative of their work and objectives as is natural in a learning process, yet a structured value system failed to take hold of me as thoroughly as it had with music.



My visual practice was nonetheless subject to personal objectives concerning what my work should achieve or look like. These desires developed through interaction between myself and an art world I had internalised, the influence and opinions of my father (himself a visual artist) and regular exchanges between a few close friends. They were sustained as inner contemplations and sharing with peers and were not about projecting a persona into an artistic social strata, which I desired to be a part of, as had become my aspiration within the sphere of music.

Although various facets of my general arts practice were at times utilised for financial gain, those projects tended toward the episodic and attempts to perpetuate them ran out of steam.

As referred to above (John McLaughlin story, footnotes 10 and 11) the role of the heroic, virtuosic musician was a template with which I identified and found myself building an identity around, thus driving linear development, (measurable) growth and audible achievement within a systematic approach that contrasted starkly with the



seemingly chaotic instability of improvisational music making.

As stated earlier, when the virtuosic aspiration became entangled with the realm of professional musician, then quantifiable progress, ego gratification, social acknowledgement through employment opportunities and admiration from attentive audiences and an associated 'industry', formed a compelling network of factors that appeared to offer a creative-career pathway.

Although, compared to many other life pursuits the business of music-entertainment was tenuous and insubstantial, there was still an associated romance and exoticism that provided an allure and spectacle to both artist and audience. Along with the occasional personal testimony of a profound listening experience uttered by an audience member, a musician's sense of self-worth could well be sustained by such a structure.

The virtuosic model has its influential roots within me via visual art, exemplified through the life of my father. Wesley²⁰ and his expectations and display of mastery for himself.

As many sons do, I rebelled against my father.

I recall stubbornly turning away from his 'artistic advice' (not that it was persistent) in favour of making my own way.

It is conceivable that music became a focal point for me because I could create my own world there, and it existed outside his sphere of expertise.

In general, the highly accomplished artist-tutors at art school seemed to me less preoccupied with virtuosity and more concentrated on novel, individual solutions to the creative problems posed within each discipline. The message I took was; how an artwork is realised is intrinsic to the work itself and, I thought, less likely to be evaluated and critiqued *primarily* for *how* it is constructed, that is, technical action objectified and separated out from the content it created, it was ensconced in, as I perceived was an increasingly common practice amongst aspiring instrumental musicians of the day.

²⁰ A noted and successful commercial artist and portraitist. Simultaneously, without commercial necessity, an avid painter and deep visual art explorer.

This perception may be a case of selective memory from the art school experience, how I interpreted the information given, or, an inbuilt training from a childhood permeated by my father's visual art practice, where in everyday conversation technical interests around how a work was made, and how problems were solved would be discussed but fundamentally insofar as the means by which a *whole work* is created. He would insist on a high level of craft refined through the doing, the making over and over, which is what made him such a successful commercial artist in early life²¹.

Yet he simultaneously expected this prodigious technique to be at the service of or co-emergent and collaborative with content, not a focus or an end itself.

Ultimately though, the *how* of visual art rarely preoccupied my attention as it would in music.

I acknowledge that if an artist or a musician is significantly moved by observing or listening to another's work then there is great motivation and reason to search the structural roots, *how* the work is realised in order to find out what makes the work compelling.

Importantly, over time the course of instrumental music performance as a career path and a goal-oriented, virtuosic pursuit, became in my consciousness and in practice separated from a freely explorative, creative activity. A divide, which persisted although by no means exclusively, until my reacquaintance with former PIT tutor (in Sound and Drawing studies) David Tolley²² in 1993. At that time a breakdown of my 'career-driven' music practice was clearly underway.

So began a lengthy, challenging process of re-education to address a circumscribed mode of musicking (and delimited self) that I would interpret later as being marooned from my broader creative practice.

The self-examination required for this research project has led me to perceive aspects of my past musical life in a somewhat different light.

²¹ My father was technically facile and as such found great achievement and satisfaction in exploiting a focus on form at the outset of making a work. This is not to say content was ignored but to say that form was the enabler, how he did something was the entry point for its creation. I may not be completely accurate here and this is only one perspective. But he would seem to have achieved mastery over many forms and I speculate that he would often leave content to take care of itself, to let the unconscious, the incidental, the material arrived at with minimal scrutiny set up what is commonly understood as the subject of the work. His dedication to the form then producing, unearthing content through that very investment of self into the form. This is a description of emphasis rather than a strict methodology. In later years, the emphasis skewed more toward a focus on the *felt* of content.

²² David Tolley; acoustic bassist, electronics musician (an early adopter in Australian electronics performance 1970's), performer, sculptor, visual artist, arts educator and more, a mentor and close friend. We shared a profound relation that fundamentally changed my musical journey. He died February 20, 2014. His influence continues its presence in my work and I am forever indebted. Refer to Walters' MFA 'The Moment of Performance' 18-19.

At times the written word seems **too heavy**, too p r e c i s e to be used in trying to describe spaces, ideas, senses of things that have existed in some manner, to some extent, not as fixed states but as part of a fluid, modulating continuum. While to write of a schism in my musical life, may characterise a separation in feelings and approaches to music making, it equally fails to do justice to nuance and variation, inherent in testing out ways of thinking and functioning within the combinatory creative-career path I was establishing. There were indeed occasions when any notion of a schism in practice dissolved in the face of an extraordinary and complete, musically creative experience within the professional sphere. [I offer this paragraph as a caveat to the reader and to myself]

The objectification of music, the goal-oriented functionality seeded through childhood piano lessons and later experiences set a latent tone, which subsequent events would further seed and feed.

The ingredients in the process of encountering music and its complexities as I have outlined here, are not unusual and in many cases contribute to the foundation of a successful artistic life as generally understood within Western culture.

I have not explained why I responded as I did to the encountered stimuli and conditions and I have only touched on a few of the environmental, personal and social factors that have played a part in shaping my relation to the field of music. My response to my memory is selective in choosing certain recalled events to support my theory and impressionistic, that is, filtered over many years with much detail forgotten. Still, for me a fresh perception is revealed, being derived directly from this research on a key topic that will lend cogency to the unfolding narrative.

Eventually, through the work with Tolley and his partner Dur-é Dara²³ and sundry other processes and decisions, the music/art split began to be healed.

There may always be some sense of separation in this regard within my self; an overlay of objectification upon musical activity, by a professional, career-driven and utilitarian influence. Time will tell - but my interest is no longer occupied by such things. It is in the direction now of closer inter-relation, inter-dependence, inter-influence, inter-affect, an equalisation of sorts where my diverse expressive modes are employed in combination or on their own according to context, situation and motivation.

²³ Dur-é Dara, David Tolley's partner and collaborator, had a profound impact on my life in broad terms (inclusive of music performance). Refer to Walters' MFA 'The Moment of Performance' 19, 24-25, 53-54 and as conversational references; Appendix I.

Through the lens of GAIP, I articulate how my 'art practice' functions and what are some of its processes, this forming the body of the following text.

At this juncture, instead of continuing further into the dissertation I suggest the reader may like to explore some or all of the documents in the appendices. Those that constitute the raw material of the project; GAIP experiences A, B, F and E, or the paper presentations from this period Appendices C and D.

You may also like to listen to the **audio** files that correspond to each year of work from **2014**, **2015**, **2016** and view a **video** constructed of material from **2017** to **2019**.

Please refer to pages 153 and 154 of this document for external links to this media.

[Paragraphs of italicised text indicates the passage (original report) is directly sourced from the GAIP experience Appendices A, B, F]



THIS

1. THIS Ensemble [at Make It Up club²⁴, March 18, 2014]²⁵ was a breakthrough event for me. It was a creative, chaotic crowd of movement, sound and colour. A market place cacophony of co-existences, rising and falling intensities, that all performers were aware of with varying degrees of consciousness. Within this crowd there was an opportunity for individual epiphany and liberation, supported and facilitated by those of us not experiencing that particular intensity at that particular time. Meanwhile, the sounding bubbles along containing all mindsets, behaviours, musical predilections and so on.

THIS Ensemble had been, until then, a largely music-centric gathering, changing line-up for each performance. There were events that included projected imagery and diffuse spatial arrangements of musicians (multi-stages) but the music-making always had primary focus. I realise I had been seeking a larger scale of sonic palette, greater complexity and a broader, deeper, richer experience through expanding performer numbers and attempting to undermine certain musical and behavioural conventions within performance. Experiences gained in working with dancers/movers in recent times rekindled my excitement in the complexity, the mess that putting two things together might create. I embarked upon this path partly due to dissatisfaction with my own lack of physical movement in many conventional music performance situations, having a sense that that this was indicating a certain performative tightness and a shrinking creative scope. My static physical pose apparently helped me to focus on listening to the sound and in executing technique. But there were times when this static position clearly felt locked and frozen, hampering a sense of fluidity in sound making even in physical being and with the apprehension that extraneous movements would break my and the audience's concentration or connection to the music. It seemed worth investigating the consequences of employing more overt movement and repositioning to help release energies and open my creativity. So, I embarked on a mission to free myself up particularly in THIS Ensemble performance contexts.

²⁴ Make It Up club (MIUC) was established in 1998 in Fitzroy, Melbourne (by myself and Will Guthrie, and briefly with Ronny Ferella and Adam Simmons) as an ongoing improvisational music night. In January, 2018 MIUC celebrated its 20th birthday.

²⁵ Refer to Appendix A, A_1-4, for the full account of this experience.

Working with TOE; dancer Niharika Senapti and voice artist, mover Jenny Ruth Barnes, was an appropriate format to push the boundaries and interact with movement²⁶. I then worked with artist Domenico de Clario and dancer Janette Hoe at 'Drawing Now' part of 'Melbourne Now', a survey of Melbourne art practices etc., which also contributed to a developing sense of theatricality, movement and performance art sensibilities.

For this MIUC event I did 'encourage' through conversation, those performers who were able to, to relocate during the performance and to provide sufficient physical space between each individual's set-up for this to be possible. I also gave simple different performance-related suggestions to different individuals, based on my knowledge of them, to foster divergent actions. I was seeking an overall less static performance where a musician's physicality was considered part of the creative output. The dancers certainly helped in this regard. The impact of the physical was clear throughout, I came away exhilarated by the changes, feeling the music to be freed from a certain seriousness of a 'music only' exclusivity. I knew this was the direction I wanted to move in.

I am unsure as to whether my personal performance practice is becoming more deeply particular to me (specialised, identifiable) or if it is diffusing into a more blurred, non-specific presence (generalised, common). Either way, with each subsequent performance event, it evolves. My interest is moving toward the interior of the performative experience turning away from the demands of formal requirements.

I now understand I have a music performance practice that has an independence from my performance practice in general. My performance practice can include my music performance practice, but it is less likely that my music performance practice would include any of the rest of my performance practice. This is of course a product of decisions I have taken in response to the context within which I perform and my relationship with the musicians with whom I perform.

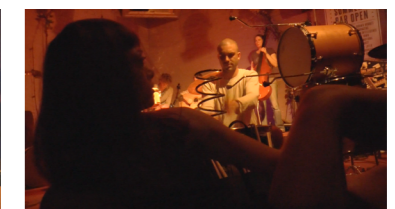
*PLEASE NOTE*²⁷



THIS Ensemble 18.03.14 video #1



THIS Ensemble 18.03.14 video #2



THIS Ensemble 18.03.14 video #3

The following words, written after the MIUC performance, speak of a recognition that my multi-discipline arts practice should be brought out of the shadows;

March 25, 2014

I am starting to understand more about my desires for an expanded notion of performance. Something that started with music now seems energised in a direction of inclusiveness of various art making mediums. The experiences of presenting texts within academic symposiums as a 'performance'; incorporating (my own, as well as others) voice and movement into the usually static music context; music events in unusual contexts; participating in long duration (theatrical) events, etc., all seem to be telling me about a refreshed way of approaching my performance practice and of promoting an inter-penetration of art and life, life and art.

²⁶ (videos: [TOE 1](#), [TOE 2](#), [TOE and Mowson](#))

²⁷ If you are reading this text in a digital format and are connected to the internet, then the 'thumbnail' images, when mouse clicked, will open a URL displaying the indicated video of the title underneath the picture. The URL of each video also appears under [hyperlinks](#) on page 155.

The following *condensation* (salient issue) is from the original commentary (Appendix A GAIP experiences 2014) that responds to the **March 18** event, with further commentary and analysis to follow.

MOVEMENT - A realisation of physical movement during music performance by myself and the ensemble was facilitated by the addition of two dancers and some direction from me. This was a very successful event in terms of shifting the focus for all present from just listening to a musical performance, to instead interpreting the whole event in all aspects, as a creative performance. There was an inner acknowledgement that I had been, for some time, seeking more from my musical performance practice than just standing in one spot playing guitar. I had explored a richer expressive palette in performance in the past with *THAT* (David Tolley and *Dur-é Dara*) but since David's illness that direction had stalled. That night, there was an inner recognition that finally here was the kind of energy and diversity I had been seeking within a music performance context, although this was not an unanimously shared perspective as some performers were noticeably less excited by what had unfolded than I was.

As noted earlier, a lack of movement had become symbolic of a tightening of expressivity. A reductive, exclusive listening indicated my allegiance to a version of the traditional value system in which I had trained. An over-focus or concern about my own part in the music making increased a perceived pressure to execute my part with virtuosity, to bring 'meaning' to my sounds, sometimes with the effect of deprioritising hearing the group's music as a whole. This nest of perceptions waxed and waned in effect, but its presence was enough to warrant examination and to seek change.

Physical movement is inherent in playing an instrument and despite traditional tuition that discourages excess, generous gesture in making a sound can enhance, even generate expressivity.

As with most of the salient points discussed here, this perception of stagnant movement and its influence did not suddenly appear but has been a part of my performance practice for as long as I can remember, emerging as a separate factor at certain moments for certain reasons, none more compelling than the period prior to this performance where a recognition of stagnation aligned with another reading of movement as the courier of change.

A change was coming and needed to be acknowledged. A change heralded by movement itself, toward a broader interpretation of music's performance.

All that needed to happen, was for an opportunity for this momentum to be recognised and that's what indeed occurred on **March 18, 2014.**

How far could performer's physical movement go beyond the place of focus for and location of an official performance, the stage, and still remain constitutive of the singular, designated performance for both themselves and audience?

Subsequent extended duration and outdoor events have responded to this question, but at that moment in time the fragmentation of a stage-centric performance was achieved through adhoc physical relocation by performers within the confines of the room only.

The inclusion of overt physical movement within a music-centric event in the way it was enacted by **THIS Ensemble on March 18**, asks of those present; do you perceive the movement as part of the performance's creative currency?

Movement can be seen as preparatory to sound-making (indeed it is intrinsic to sound itself) but do gesture, do moving bodies through space share equal potency for creative expressivity with sound in a music performance?

I respond that equality is not the point, rather, that aware or unaware movement during an apparent sonic-centric performance exists and so is readily perceived as creative currency for those that wish it so.

This deliberate movement as relocation, as amplified gesture, as a periodic or continual shifting visual focus, for me, enabled a pause in concerted sounding thus delineating a musical phrase/idea/feeling. It was an opportunity to enhance the desirable fragility (not the inevitability) of the existence of the musical offering by 'falling' out of sounding as focus and into movement and vice versa.

My movements to set up a new scenario and my physical interplay with objects and other performers brought about an observable change in my experience and my output. What was offered to the audience was the possibility to experience a fresh set of perceptive values within the pseudo-traditional surrounds of the MIUC.

Mentor David Tolley died less than a month prior to the **March 18** performance and I was still immersed in the profound effect of this experience.

In thinking through this text, I have come to know that period in early 2014, as transformational. My relation to music performance fundamentally changed and despite still playing concerted music performances I know now that the qualities of mind and heart that had been consistent for the four decades until then, were transmuted.

The process and consequences of that transmutation resonate and find expression throughout this text.

Here, again, is movement, not physical but internal.

What is sought by me is an internal movement opening new vistas of possibility in feeling and thought, in turn energising and seeding more fertile territory and so on, serving as inspiration for creative activity and living.

Physical movement throughout the space, diffusing the central focus of a stage performance and strong individual expression within a complex relational environment, were aspects that had been ready to specifically manifest around my music performance and on this night, they found the appropriate context and occasion, enacted through THIS Ensemble.

INDEPENDENCE but highly RELATIONAL – There was also a sense in this performance of a multiplicity of simultaneous creative actions and trajectories possibly perceived as being independent (that is strongly self-sustained) due in part to performers occupying divergent physical locations and irregularly relocating. They were however operating *interdependently*, making choices based on their relation to the actual context. This description echoes and presages the creative workings of GAIP events.

Independence of action, understood and framed within an individual's responsive decision in the moment of performance, has seemed crucial to me in engendering a novel experience for all. Independence is taken with the permission and encouragement of co-performers and provides a base of mutual trust that underwrites the ongoing venture.

Permission fosters tolerance and engenders courage enabling the performers testing and probing of the unfamiliar, *the uncertain*.

Around this time, independent movement was becoming prominent for me within an academic space also.



After quizzing my Free Play²⁸ students, those with no prior experience in art making, about their initial performance experiences the most common response was; “I think we co-operated very well”. I began to think of this response as an automated one and so challenged them to attempt to function more independently of each other.

Initially this involved encouraging them to focus more on their own sound-making, then after a few sessions gradually tuning back in to listen more actively to their co-performers and the sound-field as a whole.

The struggle to create or maintain independence may be due to performed sound-making in itself being an alien activity with no reference points, seemingly chaotic and (as the students say) ‘random’, so the ‘sense’ or meaning is gleaned through the social interaction.

There is also a cultural element to be considered, as most of my students are from Asian countries where family life stresses cooperation and respect as crucial behavioural attributes, this would explain the deep-rooted instincts to cooperate in social activities.

The remaining Free Play students are studying music on an instrument. This means hours of isolated practice developing instrumental independence and listening independently, amongst other skills. I note that on occasion, I have witnessed a highly successful musician performing with such virtuosity and self-absorption that his co-performers are relegated to the role of a ‘backing band’. Conventional instrumental practice is about learning to exert control, to respond to the directives of will, to listen and to

function independently of all else if required and so predisposes the musician to performing that way. The well-practiced instrumentalist's task would then be to discover ways to genuinely cooperate with co-creators beyond the clichés of musical syntax, to make performative, musical decisions that take into account the context, in this case, co-performers with little or no comprehension of the musician's modes of performance.

Many inexperienced participants find it extremely challenging to practice independence in sounding and voice the discovery that it is impossible ‘not to listen’ and ‘not to be influenced in some way’ by their co-performers and immediate environment. (Notably, most music faculty students have not expressed this view). My response is that I agree with them about the impossibility of independence, but I am asking them rather to go toward independence and so come upon a new way of being alive to each other's sounding energy without a kind of sub-conscious compulsive mechanism or self-conscious effort to fit in with the other.

Investigating independence has led to a realisation of the interdependence of all things, and of interest for improvisational performers is in when and how interdependence is highlighted through inter-affect of relation, sudden or gradual convergences in sounding, synchronicity of events, and so on. We found that heading toward independence helped to establish a unique sound world, a multiplicity of individuals functioning interdependently, not slavishly *cooperating*.

None of the issues raised in this paper exist independently of a life lived, that is, they are interdependent with and co-determined by numerous other ongoing factors from everyday emotions to subtle artistic perceptive and behavioural proceedings.

²⁸ ‘Free Play’ is a class first established at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2013 by Alex Pertout and Ren Walters and explores the activities of sound-making and performance. Refer to Free Play entries in **Appendices A** (A_22, 23), **D** (D_10) and **F** (F_16) and MFA ‘The Moment of Performance’ Appendix G. Roger Caillois in *Man, Play and Games* (1958) cites two types of play; ‘ludus’ rule-bound and ‘paidia’ free play. This class, while rooted in paidia addresses issues raised by ludus.

Until early 2014, 'Current'²⁹ was an exclusively sonic-focused performance series, but with the 'Sound Body' event³⁰ (April 17, 2014) that changed to include dancers performing with the musicians.



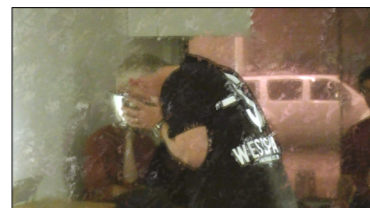
Sound Body video #1



Sound Body video #2



Sound Body video #3



Sound Body video #4

As principal coordinator of this event, the inspiration for this clearly came from my previous THIS Ensemble at MIUC experience. I knew placing movement and theatricality purposefully alongside sounding would squarely challenge many musicians, be stimulating for some and distracting for others. I had given myself, in my role as organiser, the possibility of my general presence at the event being a performative one, from barely perceptible to overt. I had no plan other than to take with me a permissive possibility to act and a sense that my presence in the space was part of what would constitute the events unfolding.

Emphasising physical movement and gesture in performance flowed on for me into a movement of means, a movement of how some impulse, thought, feeling is enacted, that is, the mode of my performative medium, was not fixed, was not inevitable. Movement as the shifting between.

I had begun to understand the desire for movement as signalling a deeper need to expand, to transmute my creative practice toward something else.

The 'something else' in part constituted reinvigorating activities some of which connected to my art school days such as performance, poetry and design.

Most of these modes of creative practice had persisted throughout my life but in general they acted as a foil for sound and music activities.

This *condensation* from Current 'Sound Body';

PERFORMANCE PRACTICE (multi-discipline) begins to emerge - The formal broadening of the expressive palette through the introduction of another artistic discipline (with dance and movement) clearly promoted a more theatrical interpretation of the event. This perception and experience contributed greatly in shifting my own performance perspective and practice. I had for some time been feeling confined within a patterned mindset attached to my sound making practice and was seeking renewal. Through Current, THIS Ensemble and GAIP events this was beginning to happen.

²⁹ 'Current' – a two-day music performance event, was declared; a celebration of music made in the moment of performance - aimed at fostering community across the spectrum of age and experience.

³⁰ See the 'Current' webpage for this event; http://currentmusic-event.com/?page_id=468

Part of this movement of change triggered through the **March 18** event, was the embracing of a decentralised performance space, raising the allied notions of performance frame (where is performance?), performance beginning and ending (when is performance?) and how is 'it' the situation, performance (what is performance?).

I had begun to articulate experience and understanding in this area within my MFA research project and the events initiated over the past three years have provided more opportunities to come to know the **where, when and what** of performance.

The impetus to examine performance as a notion came through an admission of performance anxiety (which had become a powerful factor impacting my conventional music performances during the 1990's), that is, a self-inflicted pressure to produce something of meaning and a sense of narrowing rather than expanding of creative possibilities.

As I wrote in the MFA GAIP appendix

These questions had arisen for me before when I began my work with Tolley and Dara. The sharp distinction that a performance has begun and ended comes packaged within the protocols of commercialised performance practices. The spatial definition of having entered a place where 'art happens' and the temporal definition in the announcement of an event's beginning and ending are as necessary demarcations of a particular art experience as it is for the artist to pay tribute to their particular art form's distinguishing stylistic parameters. The separating power of such formal devices, distinguishing this from that, I began to understand as contributing to my experience of a general state of anxiety and a pressure to perform, to produce art NOW. In exchange for the audience artistic professional acknowledgement and/or money, I would provide a tangible, objectifiable art experience. Likewise, measurement of personal performance criteria mirrored the public performance model and supported the process of objectification, placing further demands upon art production.³¹

Outside of music, in the rest of my performance practice, there was simply a curiosity as to the parameters of performance.

I/we pursued the **when** of performance through extended durations and blurred beginnings and endings as in *THIS Ensemble February 28, 2015*³².

The **where** of performance through outdoor and particularly rural spaces, *THIS Ensemble Wimmera tour 2015*³³ and *THIS Ensemble Mallee/Wimmera tour 2016*³⁴.

The **what** of performance through ambiguous happenings in amongst everyday life, GAIP at Urchin design studio³⁵ and *Intersection 2015*³⁶.

³¹ In 1994/5 the realisation that my personal guitar practice regime was an integral part of an ongoing anxiety and disconnect with music performance in general, contributed to the cessation of the mode of guitar craft practiced to this point. I continued to practice guitar playing, but only as music-making, not isolating specific technical/conceptual components for repetition and mastery. Ten years later I returned to a greatly modified mode of guitar craft practice that insisted on musical integration of any isolated technique/concept.

³² See Appendix B, GAIP experiences 2015, B_1-3.

³³ Appendix B, B_17-25.

³⁴ Appendix F, GAIP experiences 2016, F_33-39.

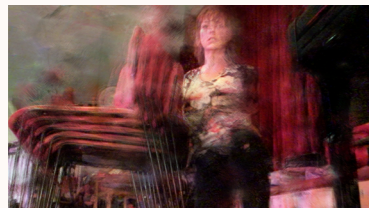
³⁵ MFA 'The Moment of Performance' Appendix E_22, 25, Appendix K_92.

³⁶ Appendix B GAIP, experiences 2015, B_8-12

The performative frame came into focus at my final MFA performance³⁷ and similarly at Current 'Sound Body' observed in the following *condensation* from that event;

Encouraging, permissive PERFORMATIVE FRAME - There is also something about the performance perimeter or 'performative frame' that is drawing my attention. My interest here reveals a desire to protect, make safe, to nurture and encourage those within this frame. To give them a sense of permissiveness, that it is OK to let go, to explore and play in any way with the elements at hand. I would like to transmit encouragement without the performer having any sense of interference.

As a noted musician amongst much of my artistic community, the shifting of performative frame to



THIS Ensemble 01.08.14 video #1

something else was confusing for some co-performer musicians as seen in

in
THIS Ensemble March 18 event
and in this
condensation from the next
THIS Ensemble performance
on August 1, 2014;



THIS Ensemble 01.08.14 video #2

PERFORMANCE can exist without needing an INSTRUMENT - Over the course of the event I spent much more of my performance time away from my instrument than I ever had previously. I was aware that this was, to a degree, disconcerting for some of the musicians who were expecting more sonic interaction with me. But on the whole, I had a liberating experience, able to feel comfortable in performance without dependency upon my instrument and yet still contributing creatively to the whole event.

For Current 'SOUND BODY SIGHT' on August 20, 2014, visual artists were added to form trios with dancers, musicians;

PERFORMANCE as a matter of PERCEPTION - It was preferred that the visual artist not be overtly a performer (in the way of a dancer or musician) in the space, as the physical dimensions of the site were cramped as it was, particularly for movers. Many 'visual artists' do not consider themselves performers in the public sense that dancers and musicians might. Mostly, the visual artist inevitably appeared as a 'performer' in simply carrying out their creative work, even though it was not their intention to occupy the space in the same guise as the dancer or musician. This helped foster a perception that any activity within the space at the time of the scheduled performance (and also spilling out to before and after that performance) could be interpreted as a contribution, as unavoidably participating in the conscious creative and theatrical event currently taking place. Each artist would have their own oscillating levels of awareness and intention of their performative presence as would the members of the audience. This suggests that the condition of 'performance' can then be understood as a matter of perception, a matter of awareness, intention, attention and choice.



Sound Body Sight video #1



Sound Body Sight video #2



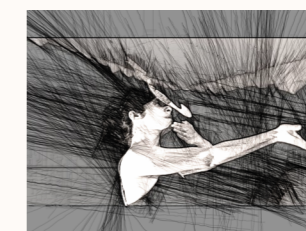
Sound Body Sight video #3



Sound Body Sight video #4

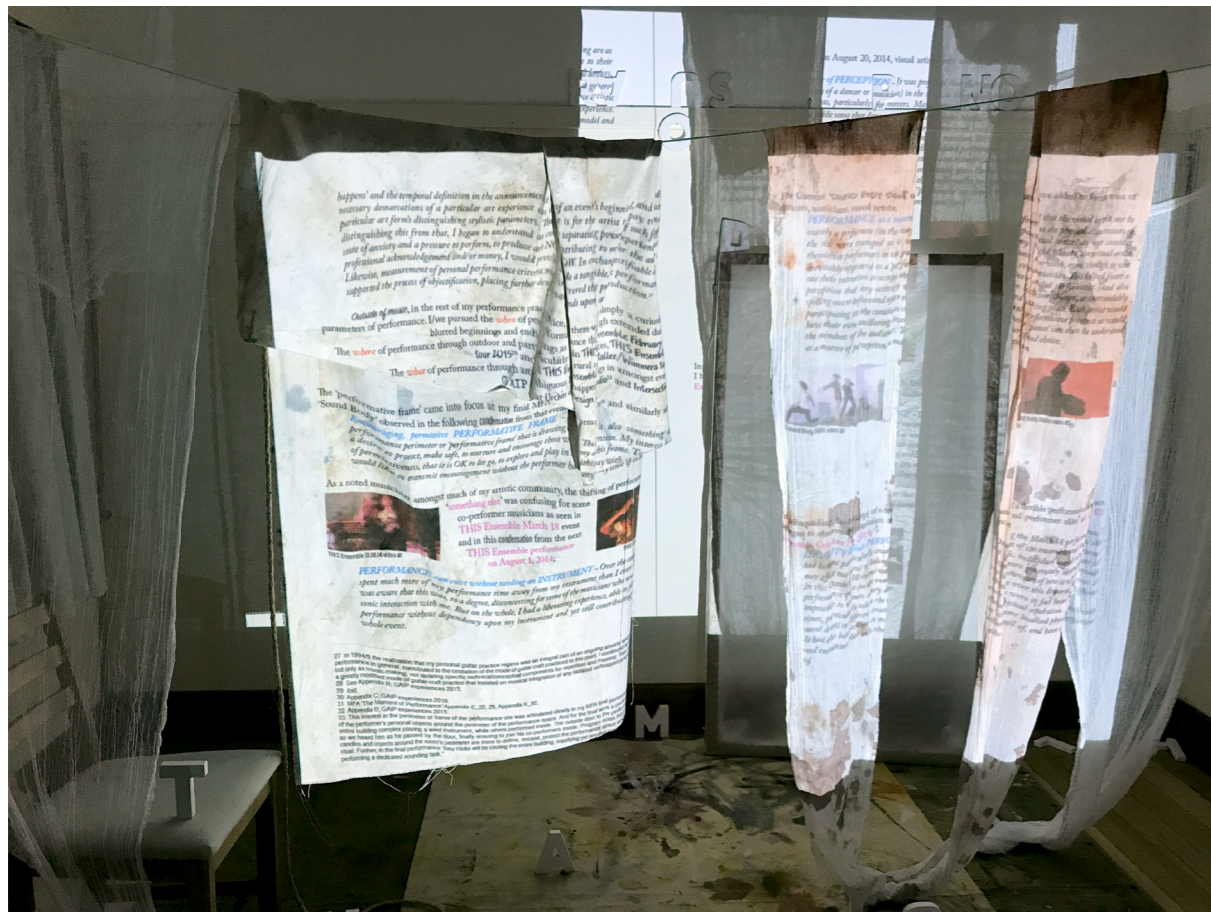
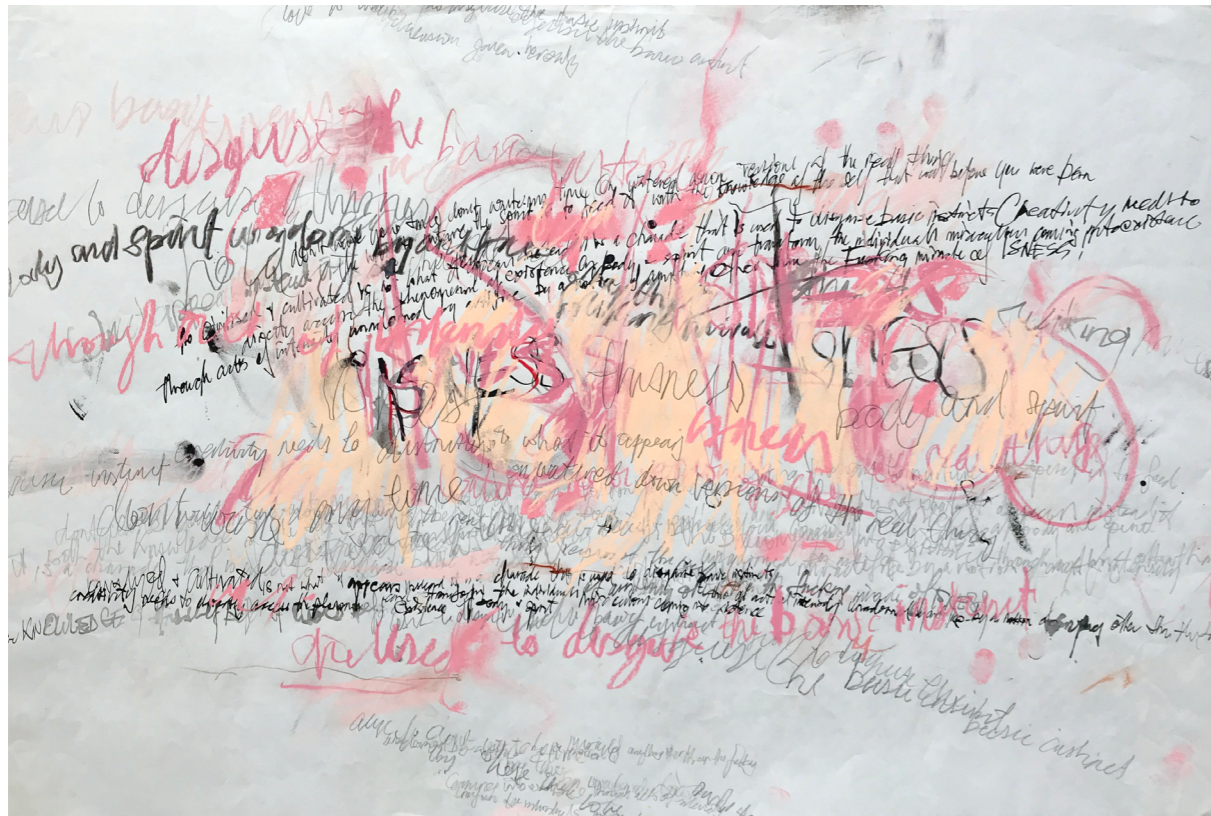
In relinquishing the concept of a confined performance stage in favour of a flexible performance space, I began to observe the variation of experience available for audience and performer alike at THIS Ensemble, October 10, 2014;

LOCALITY defines PERFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE - During the March 18 performance, I had become particularly aware of the physical location of various parts of the ensemble and how this may affect our sense of belonging with each other as well as our specific, individual aural experience. In this October 10 event we seemed to have extended our activity more generously throughout the performance space (as the venue easily accommodated this) and I became aware of how it was virtually impossible to witness every act and sound happening at any one time over this dispersed layout. At times, particularly when the sounding was loud, it was clear that we were in fact hearing different aural detail in different locations of the space due to the distance in physical separation. It had also become clear to me during the August 1 event that there were localised physical activities and encounters that only those local participants would know the detail of, and have the experience of.



THIS Ensemble 10.10.14 video

37 This interest in the perimeter or frame of the performance site was articulated clearly in my MFA final performance where I had a ring of the performer's personal objects around the perimeter of the performance space. And for the final work a performer circled outside the entire building complex playing a wind instrument, while others performed inside. The outside door to the performance space was ajar, so we heard his sounding as he passed by the door, finally entering to join his co-performers inside. Program notes from that event; "The lights, candles and objects around the room's perimeter are there to define, encase, protect the performance space and contribute to a sense of ritual. Further, in the final performance Tony Hicks will be circling the entire building, supplying yet another concentric ring of subtle energy, performing a dedicated sounding task."



On February 28, 2015, THIS Ensemble performed at Clinton Green's domestic event Quiet/Noise IV where the performance space was an expansive garden, without a centralised and official stage. The following *condensation* noted;

Performance that traverses PHYSICAL SPACE offering LOCALISED EXPERIENCES

- The dispersal of the ensemble throughout the garden, and its general mobility at times occupying part of the house as well, clearly illustrated my perceptions from the previous event, of our work as traversing varied geographic locations and providing experiences peculiar to those places. If the audience chooses to relocate from a static position and physically follow their observed activity of interest, as some did, we have created a fluid arrangement for both performer and audience with a variety of experiences available from ostensibly the same performance.

I am excited by the potential for creative activity in differing geographic locations to offer distinct experiences for both audience and performer, whilst concurrently being part of a network of interrelated activities that feedback into each other.

And from the same event, moving from what is commonly understood as non-performance to performance is creatively employed;

When does the performance BEGIN and END? Encouraging a performer's INDEPENDENCE - There is often minimal formality with the beginning and ending of our performances.

Adrian (Sherriff), in fact, had set himself up at the back of the garden on the verandah of the shed surrounded by a vast array of instruments and had been there playing since before I (and most of the others) had arrived. I am very pleased by this independence and the notion that for Adrian the performance had already begun.



THIS Ensemble 28.02.15 Quiet Noise IV video

Transitioning from the condition of non-performance to performance was experienced clearly in INTERSECTION, May 19, 2015;

TRANSITIONING - LIFE INTO PERFORMANCE and vice versa - I said to (co-performer) Takashi (Takiguchi) that my preparation for this event was a gradual shifting from non-performer to ready-to-be-performer whilst driving in. Once I boarded the tram on way to the site I felt a significant shift toward the condition of performing. So, as I arrived at the location, buying coffee had become the performance.

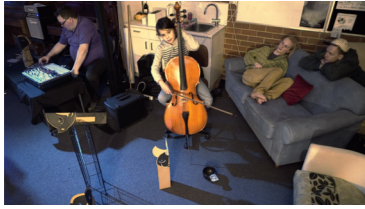


INTERSECTION1 video

I do not adopt a fixed position in response to the questions of performance, other than to say it, performance, comes about through a perceptive decision or perceptive realisation that it is underway or has occurred. In some circumstances, as I have encouraged in the Free Play class, it is simply a framing of time within which we may give ourselves tasks, or not.

INTERSECTION, May 19, 2015;

WHEN, WHERE, HOW, WHAT is PERFORMANCE? - I received a text from Taka (the first invitee to make contact) asking where I was. He did not recognise me as my appearance was different to usual. He then asked where was the music! Where was the performance?!



THIS Ensemble 30.05.15 video 1

At

THIS Ensemble May 30, 2015

extended set up time provided a transitional phase, and the dispersed nature of the groups' set up



THIS Ensemble 30.05.15 video 2

throughout the large hall naturally facilitated movement;

Awareness of the subtle space/process of the transitioning from a NON-PERFORMATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS to a PERFORMATIVE ONE - It is clear amongst the group that set up is a key part of the shift from a non-performative consciousness to a performative one, making the transition between the two conditions a spatial field rather than crossing a sharp line. By 5 pm. some performers had moved well and truly into performance while others were still transitioning or yet to arrive.

Permission to enter OTHER'S SPACE, experience the OTHER'S PERSPECTIVE - It seemed that there was more transitioning and traversing of the space by performers than in the past. Equally, there was more exploration of the 'others space', meaning musicians moving and movers sounding and so on. For the first time, my guitar, as it was apparently quite inviting, perched horizontally on a table top, was played by others in performance.

THIS Ensemble Wimmera tour 2015

(the second of significant events listed in the introduction) saw the maturation of the notions of movement and expansion of the performative frame. All activity was conducted outdoors with some scheduled performances, others on-the-spot, and some ambiguous as to whether what was unfolding was or was not performance. In moving through country, stopping at intervals to perform and finding relation with place, the performance space had become environmental. Geographic relations gave us our position, moving and sounding through terrain gave instant and dynamic feedback and a new understanding of collaborative performance.

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12:00 -> 00:00 19.03.16 video

In 2016 GAIP related³⁸ events of March 19 and April 4 – 6 the spaces and conditions of performance/non-performance were tested thoroughly;

The spaces of PERFORMANCE/NON-PERFORMANCE, PRIVATE/PUBLIC, inside/outside the PERFORMATIVE FRAME, RELATION to inside and outside people and events, including AUDIENCE - There were many questions arising from this (March 19) event, but perhaps the main question was centred upon the audience, made up of strangers and some friends. The invitational, open attitude we extended to whomever wandered into the gallery was sometimes highly challenging for us as exemplified by a visitor's extended playing of Michael's drumkit. Michael gave him permission to play it, but the simple loud-as-possible rock beat he 'practiced' for a long time dominated the space, clearly changing the feeling for us all. I found it somewhat difficult to endure even after distancing myself by sitting outside the space (the sound still clearly audible). The drummer left content, so we could console ourselves with that. Opening a performance to the inclusion of an audience to this extent, presented us with a challenge; Is this OUR performance? Is the invitational quality we seek merely rhetoric if the one who takes up our invitation is disagreeable to us?

Where is our limit when someone or something brings/imposes a very clear (and/or different) agenda within the performance space? How do we react in this case?

It seemed to me that Michael had most to be concerned about in this situation. He was mostly outside of the space during the visiting drummer episode, but I could sense his concern. We all negotiated the situation without panic or overt behaviour by and large accepting what was happening and understanding it as a by-product of our openness to this performance. The visiting drummer went on his way eventually, as we continued on. The fact that this was a 12-hour performance helped with our capacity to contain the drumming episode within the performance, for it not to hijack the proceedings, as there was enough time for many other happenings to occur.

³⁸ Extended duration performance events, '12:00 -> 00:00' with Clinton Green, Michael McNab (March 19) and 'un•habited space' with Carmen Chan Schoenborn (April 4 – 6), whilst not GAIP events as such, the participants and the mode of performance were closely aligned to GAIP approaches. See Appendix F, F_1-10.

To be considered an artwork is a matter of PERSPECTIVE, INSIDE OBSERVING OUTSIDE (performer's observation/listening as the artwork), the doorway as the space between, as INTRODUCTION to whatever is happening, experiencing the conditions of PERFORMER/NON-PERFORMER as flexible and shifting – (April 4 – 6) The gallery window is where the on-looker peruses the artwork inside to ascertain if there may be something of interest and so deem it worthy of entering the space. I had not thought of the reverse, where the artwork peruses the scene looking out, as the artwork tends to be a static non-human object rarely affected by the outside goings-on. As we were the artwork we were able to view and hear the passing scenery and be affected by it. This immediately vindicated my idea of bringing less into the space, making us susceptible to the energies and the theatrically framed material passing and unfolding before us.

Of course, people in a space (that is not immediately understood as a gallery) not obviously presenting artworks in a conventional way, neither performance nor exhibition, is perhaps somewhat confusing and challenging to interpret for the onlooker. So, there is an inherent tension in our presence, we are creating an ambiguous space that hovers between public and private, performance and non-performance, yet we wish to encourage passers-by to give our presence some kind of consideration. We discovered that placing the music stand-artist statement-light object on the street in front of the gallery suddenly seemed extremely important and useful in communicating some basic ideas, a story, an introductory gesture, seemingly putting people at ease in knowing what to expect inside and welcoming the curious.

The issue was not to get the passers-by/public to come inside the gallery and become an audience to an art event, but rather to put our performative presence and activity there, in a way that any other shop/activity in the street puts their business there, although we have nothing to sell, to convince people of, or to demand anything from. The manner of our activity and its content softly challenges the visitor to realise their part in the performance or non-performance, unless they happened to attend one of our scheduled, specific performance events. In which case, they might likely feel more comfortable in the regular guise of an audience witnessing an art event.

gather GAIP (Generous Acknowledgement of Individual Process) 2016, a 24-hour event beginning May 14, stretched the performative frame through extending the event's duration;

ill-health, psychological and emotional distress, all conditions existing within the PERFORMATIVE FRAME of time and space are part of the performance, suboptimal conditions, apparent uneventfulness and ORDINARY LIFE can still constitute a performance – Being physically sick, the performance became a matter of how best to survive the 24 hours. An endurance test, to be available and public, when what I wanted was to be unavailable and private. Strangely, this was a performance of the most vivid kind because all pretense to any condition other than the one I felt, that is being ill, was stripped away.

*I overheard Adrian (Sherriff) commenting on Jordan (White) being asleep in performance; "that's not performance because you were not conscious". My immediate response was to defend Jordan by saying that the preamble for **gather** stated,*

***gather** participants are invited into a shared reality where every occurrence within the boundaries of Testing Grounds (and, if desired, beyond those boundaries) for the duration of the **gather** event functions as performance. In this sense, there will be no separate body called 'an audience', as all in attendance will be participating.*

I read this as an understanding that whatever transpires within that time frame and space be understood as performance; the actions of the person behind the bar, the families with young children who use this space as a Sunday playground, the odd pedestrian who takes a short cut through the grounds, the after-work drinker needing a beer, the performing artist catching an hour's sleep, etc.



gather 14-15.05.16 video

I was an artist in residence, (GAIP at M.M, Museum of Innocence Mildura) November 2 - 30, 2016.

During the residency, I had come to think of the binary; 'performance or not performance', as in many cases being unnecessary to be considered as either. What I may be doing at any given moment could be understood equally and simultaneously as performance or non-performance.

The need to declare an activity either way is relative to the context of that activity.

There are instances where entertaining a thought that the activity underway is (a) performance is detrimental to an experience of absorption in the activity, to a sense of simple involvement, where an ongoing idea of performance can deprive me of a feeling of 'naturalness', without excess.

There are other events where considering the activity underway as (a) performance is indeed helpful in creating a sense of special occasion or ritual giving a kind of tautness to my attention and energy, not a disarming self-consciousness at all.

The external indicators that an activity is a performance or is not a performance for me are modulated by a perception of the creative potential sensed within the thinking and feeling of 'this is a performance', or this is 'not a performance'.

The specificity of each unique situation largely requires a rapid interpretation of my inner condition in relation to the external environment, and the potential for creative novelty in then thinking through the activity as performance or non-performance.

The actual unfolding of this process is more nuanced, messy and not as deliberate as this description, and my inner balance may be such that I am unable or unwilling to take advantage of this perceptive possibility at a decisive moment, nevertheless the schema is now tangible.



2. THIS Ensemble Wimmera tour October/November 2015³⁹ was the first series of events where performances were outdoors and roaming through territory, journeying through the landscape, affecting and being affected by the specifics and subtle energies of physical and human geographic locations.

wimmera

Although performance outdoors had been experienced at Quiet Noise IV⁴⁰, GAIP at Testing Grounds and Intersection, a full scale, sustained duration travelling event had not. Travelling and living together pushed the boundaries of what THIS Ensemble collectively had understood as constituting performance to this point. Physical movement enabled an expansive and fluid mode within a conventional performance frame on March 18, 2014. Now, a broader interpretation of movement through a changing environment, was impacting our sense of what performance could be. Extended durations with uncertain beginnings and endings were becoming familiar performance traits.

With this tour, performances seemed to rise and fall, emerge and submerge, coalesce and disintegrate in and out of our travelling life. At times, there was a concentration of energy, a group will to exert a type of performative consciousness. At other times there was a subtle feeling, that simply because we were in the presence of each other, having committed ourselves to this journey, a performative consciousness was ever-present. That is to say, the division between performance and living an everyday life was unclear, even non-existent, and that this was a desirable and creative situation.

Being in natural environments and places not specifically intended to host performance proved fertile ground for both stimulating and broadening the perception of ourselves as

performers and what it is possible to feel and to enact as such.

Social material, out there in the world beyond the performance venue (particularly the rural), is found in the matter-of-fact human encounter where functional exchange is the modus operandi. Humour, levity of the kind that the Australian dialect is laced with, abounds, creating an opening for the poetic, for the illogical responses, the behaviour that often accompanies a performer's improvisatory relations with the elements at hand, and so an opportunity exists to bring some difference to the occurrence, to the conversation and to assumptions.

Raw, subtle (highly interpretive) energies of the natural environment also draw an interaction that differs significantly from an urban and human to human encounter. Whilst the non-urbanised environment is in many regions imprinted by human touch through farming, power and transport infrastructures and so on, the relatively lower density of the built environment more readily allows us direct contact with an unmediated natural world⁴¹. We can think of place as constituted by a spatial arrangement of physical properties and textural qualities and their relation.

But as I dwell here, the feeling that the perception of these tangible physical phenomena arouses, is also part of place for me. A treeless, stony flat ground in a midday sun feels different to a leafy green valley with a stream

³⁹ Refer to Appendix B, B_17-25, for the full account of this experience.

⁴⁰ Quiet Noise is an annual acoustic sound performance series hosted by Clinton Green in the backyard of his home.

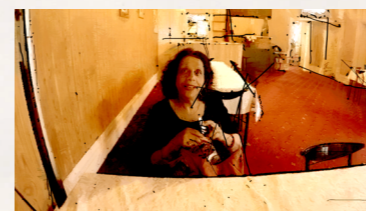
⁴¹ Although much of the Wimmera region of Victoria, Australia has been turned over to farming practices, there are still pockets of relatively untouched 'natural terrain'.

coursing through. What does my perception of this physical place evoke in me? What feelings, thoughts, actions are triggered in my listenings to, through my observations of the qualities of place? Here is scope for direct action or metaphoric interpretation as a performative response.

As the aural, visual and felt energies of the specific terrain register, moving beyond the current surroundings into adjoining space becomes an experience of sensing a shift in these energies, in process and feeling. Even without dramatic physical markers differences in quality of terrain exist. My surroundings manifest through an ongoing perception of the sum of all parts, their textural qualities, their spatial relation, all inseparable from what

constitutes 'me' at that moment, including perceptual capacities and limitations. Even if I were to remain static, movement is also occurring in a temporal sense, as in the shift from day to night and how the physical environment and I, adjust accordingly. As I move, the set of relations and their relational possibilities are reconfiguring, becoming some space else. It is then that I am moving with the environment, and having tuned in to a degree, am able to play with the prevailing conditions as in a dance.

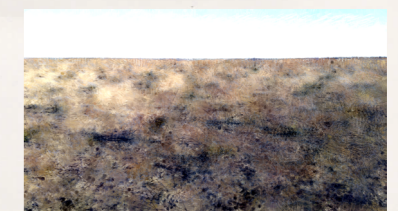
Each performer has their own way of *tuning-in* but for me keeping the inner voice quiet is helpful and regularly aspired to within performance.



THIS Ensemble Wimmera 2015 video 1



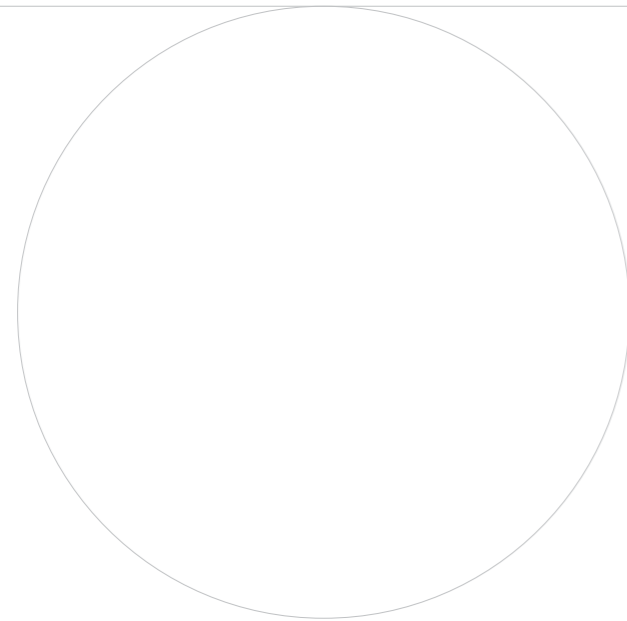
THIS Ensemble Wimmera 2015 video 2



THIS Ensemble Wimmera 2015 video 3

Tuning-in to the place where we were, where we found ourselves was an unspoken but crucial process for the group in securing a meaningful experience. It was a way of connecting with the whole that often entailed a spontaneously devised, personal or interpersonal ritual, listening, inactive observation or waiting. Investing something of ourselves in the space and feeling something of the space in us;

KNOWING a PLACE, a PLACE of KNOWING: DETAILED EXPERIENCE. Where does a "PLACE" BEGIN and END - spending time in a physically small location allowed a relation with the details, with the feelings of that spot. Observing a tree, from different visual perspectives, in changing light and temperature, knowing the space between that tree and the river, noticing the slight rise and fall of the earth, particular plants, fallen logs, certain sounds and their resonances or lack of, treating this spot as 'your' place because you've spent time observing and listening there and experiencing how it relates to neighbouring areas as you walk through your space to adjoining spaces. Where does 'your' space end and the other place begin?



There is movement within and between registers of experience and movement in the contraction and expansion of durations of time.

Being away from the constancy of human referents that mark and map time in the urbanscape (public transport, commerce, street activities, etc.) in an environment where calculated objectivity (the voice of reason inside my head) could find no echo, opened an inner space in which sequential measurement gave way to a pulsing in and out, expanding and contracting (as the lungs might), non-linear; **spherical movement**

A pulsing that took me through scales of perception, registers of experience, nested, not separate perceptual experiences but an ecology of experience. Here was a sense of varied perceptual experience occurring simultaneously. Rapid succession may be a more accurate description, a slipping and sliding between perspectives that whilst different in scale and substance emerge from the same set of conditions.

The following story from the event report talks of an over-lapping, multi-register experience inseparable from fellow performers and the environment at large, next to the Wimmera river at Dimboola;

As I was collecting objects I realised I was moving further away from the group. Gradually the sporadic clanging of the bridge being sounded receded, yet I did not feel I had left my co-performers. There is no official marking of a performance consciousness as we come and go, from whatever this space is, as we feel. I felt and I knew the threshold into performance had been crossed and even with my co-performers out of sight and earshot I still felt connected as a participant.

I heard a panting jogger approaching and turned to see it was Elnaz (Sheshgelani). When she arrived, I strangely felt there had been no break in seeing her, as if my walk alone happened not in 45 minutes but in 45 seconds or no time at all. As I returned to the others I also had the sensation that I had heard and experienced all that they had generated in my time away.

Were these experiences a result of spending a lot of time together as a group and so generating powerful, collaborative, energetic consciousness? Was it to do with a deepening of presence to the natural environment and diminishment of existential anxiety? Was it a resonant, unmediated experience of time and place? Perhaps. But the ideas of indistinct beginnings and endings, of extended performance duration, of stretching physical distances between us, of seeking to bring the subconscious in to play and in to relation with fellow performers, all this was circulating my consciousness and so predisposed me to interpreting experience through the prism of these things. I propose that all the reasons articulated here and the earlier speculative questions all played their part. The ideas and a communally generated consciousness in tandem with a perceptual and lived readiness to acknowledge another dimension laid the ground for a deep connective experience.

*At the Pink Lake*⁴², a short distance northwest of Dimboola, clearly the effect of constant walking and the repetitive crunching sound on the salt conspired to place my conscious mind in a trance-like state making me susceptible to multi-dimensional experience;

We were all very excited by this soft floating vision (of the salt lake) as instruments were dragged out to the middle and we dispersed in all directions, moving and sounding. The crackling crunch underfoot, my laboured breathing and the pinkish patterns of salt (that I kept thinking of as ice) hypnotised me and I found myself trudging great distances tapping out a haphazard rhythm on a little drum to accompany me. The lack of obstruction meant I could keep in visual contact with the others and our sounding began to feel as if we were helping the lake to generate its own sound with us.

Our movements in relation to each other were somehow informing our sounding, and our soundings were somehow informing our movements, which although detailed seemed vast and slow. Something was being brewed up that was more than just random movement and sounding but I am unable to articulate what that was. I can say it felt like an experience without edges, boundless in what was possible to feel.

“Boundless in what was possible to feel”

I interpret as a liberation of the self from its moorings to the identity of Ren Walters.

Out in the middle of the salty expanse, the ‘I’ was taken up in the task of performing

movements and soundings with my co-performers and the salt lake.

The space of the ‘I’ was now available to hear, to intuit, to draw out, to be in the service of, to coalesce in hitherto un-constituted ways.

This open, receptive fluid state allowed for a harmonising

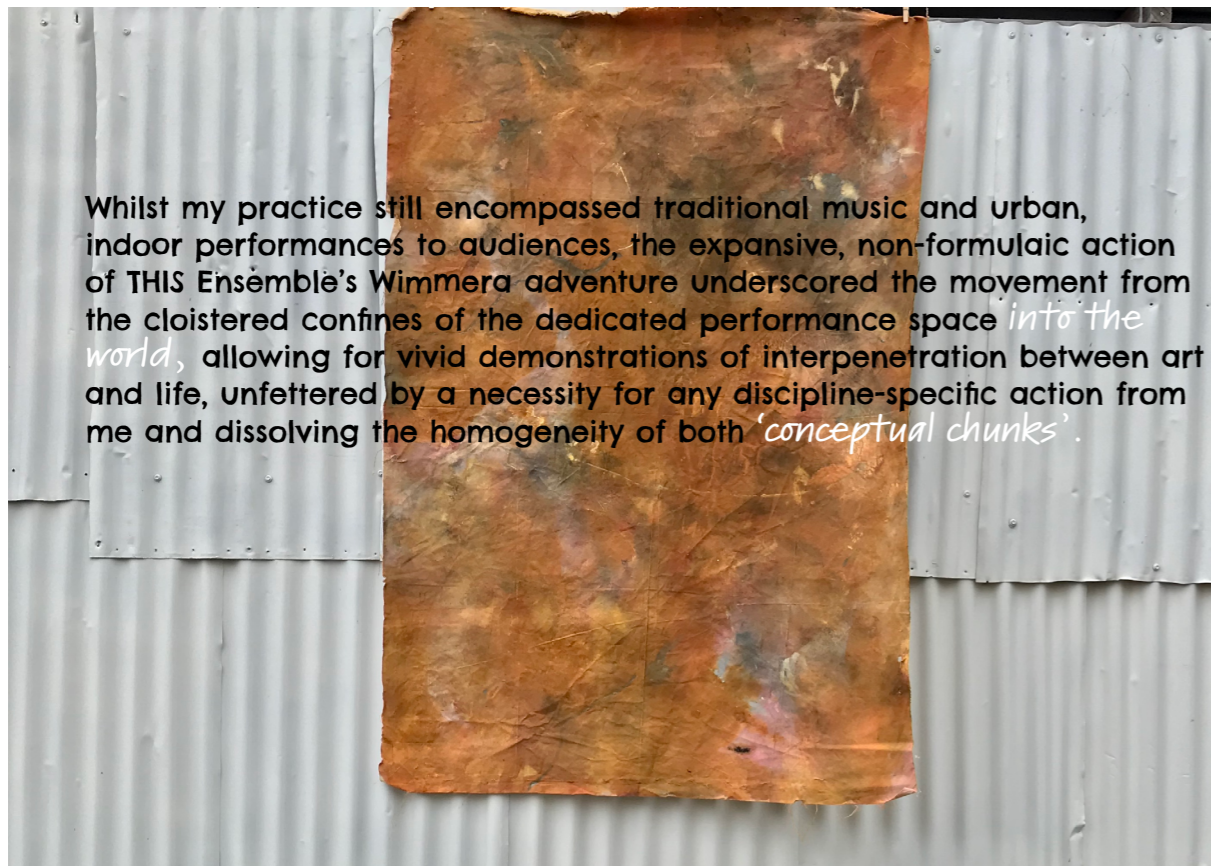
with external and internal forces from across time,

energies that this ecology at this time

had now come to

articulate.

⁴² Also known as Lake Lochiel. It is my understanding that the traditional owners of these lands, including the Wimmera and parts of the Mallee areas of Victoria, are the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk peoples.



Whilst my practice still encompassed traditional music and urban, indoor performances to audiences, the expansive, non-formulaic action of THIS Ensemble's Wimmera adventure underscored the movement from the cloistered confines of the dedicated performance space *into the world*, allowing for vivid demonstrations of interpenetration between art and life, unfettered by a necessity for any discipline-specific action from me and dissolving the homogeneity of both *'conceptual chunks'*.

The sense of openness and flexibility derived from taking this course expanded my creative vision, developed my intuitive sense, and positively adjusted my psychological and emotional health.

In a sparsely populated environment, such as the Wimmera region of Victoria, the individual appears to stand apart more than they may in a densely populated urban one, precisely because of the lower density of humans, our tools and structures.

This perceived *spaciousness* around a person, clarifies, even amplifies the character standing before me and so it often seems that our interaction similarly has clarity, thanks to fewer competing forces jostling for attention as in the physically-dense and information-dense city⁴³.

In my visual vocabulary, a density of human encounter can be represented by mixed, muted colours, greys, pastel shades, the complexity providing ambiguity, multi-perspectives and so on.

With the rural dweller, I notice a tendency toward disambiguity and a directness that suggests to me primary colours, colours whose sources are clear. This is severe over-characterisation, generalisation, simplification, and not the 'truth'.

But I say this from a performer's perspective, that when acting within a rural social sphere⁴⁴ there appears the possibility of a clarity of social interaction typified by simplicity, directness, and definition within which the performer can discover much about themselves, their craft, process and relationality, away from the predictability of a staged space and amongst a dynamic, unpredictable real-life theatre.

During unscripted happenings, THIS Ensemble's audience was often just co-performers. The rest of the time the audience was made up of passing truck drivers, pedestrians, unsuspecting dinner party invitees, a hotel receptionist, a policewoman, Swedish tourists, farm hands, and assorted locals either informed or uninformed as to our status. On occasion during a public performance, a non-performer will make an on-the-spot request for me to *explain* 'what is going on here!?' I must find a way to respond creatively to this inquiry without losing my own place in the subtle web

43 However, I have recently noticed that many rural folk now spend a lot of time socialising/working online and this invitation to complexity is perhaps impinging upon at least a psychological spaciousness.

44 Folklore says the further one is physically away from a major city the less you feel its influence, so there may be a gradual transitional effect with closer rural communities still revolving around the city's gravitational pull.

of relation with co-performers, that is, falling from our performative field we have constructed, through turning attention to a different frame of mind, that of a literal, factual, non-poetic explanation to the questioner.

This audience constitutes part of the place of performance and part of the description of place and location. Interacting with them informs and creates the performance and contributes to the unique expression of the whole, of this time and this place.

Such a prosaic question can thoroughly challenge my sense of performative integrity, but a response cannot be avoided as the exchange is the coalface of the social, relational, environmental performance-making we are undertaking.

The time spent living together as a group was well beyond the duration of our usual performance events which gave us the opportunity to experience more of each other than just our 'performance persona'. All the complexities of a group of people spending time together were naturally present. Sustained interpersonal exploration and expression of relation at close quarters generated an ongoing intensity different from our lives shared during previous performance events.

To perform is our reason for being together, we are accustomed to being in the presence of each other within the heightened, altered sense of reality that arises through performance. Yet much of the time this was not performance this was just day-to-day life, apparently. However, the proximity of co-performers, the unfolding relations between us, the dynamism, even the uneventful and tranquil times brought about a quality different from that of a 'non-performance life', seeming to contain all the potential of performative energy without that being continuously and overtly expressed.

This latent intensity manifested at times but there was no agreement between us that we would persist

with its expression (as we tacitly concur in regular performance), it could simply rise and fall away. Living together in this way did reveal a space that was not just everyday life, nor was it only performance. Informed through our shared performance history, we were signalling to each other the performative potential of our proximity and our situation.

Alone, the pre-performance phase involves a process of recognition and dawning within me. Here, amongst others, our relation triggered a creative pulse of possibility tapping past and future collaborative realisation, a space without edges between everyday life and performance life and at play with the geography and energies of place. The path of my performance practice veered away from an exclusive music performance, due in large part to a sense of entrapment, of fixity that had begun to pervade that space within.

After years of pushing at the boundaries of music with much creative success and satisfaction, I had to acknowledge an unrequited desire for something else, something more from a music performance experience. The urge to move, both in pushing beyond the current status quo and physically, drove the ongoing curiosity in what lay beyond the edges of my current practice.

Eventually the right people and right circumstances evolved to open up a path that has led to a performance practice I had not anticipated, although was well-prepared for. The process that began firmly within music and now pushes into other spaces has enabled a liberation for me within music performance. There is no longer the necessity for music to be something else, although I continue a search for the 'more-than' within its considerable and expansive parameters.

The process described in the previous paragraph brought GAIP, THIS Ensemble and related activities into being.

My process is in fact a constant becoming that constantly arrives yet not finally and is always on the precipice of something else, some-space else beyond the space it currently moves through. This space is the creative well.

The coming of GATP and structures like THIS Ensemble facilitate action in performance that are 'of-the-other' more than I have previously experienced. For me, GATP has unfastened the necessity for performance to be tethered to an expressive, artistic individual identity. It is possible to now act in performance; being in, being with, being for, being formed on-the-spot through a performative consciousness not accessible to me before. It is to be consciously part of an organism that includes performers, non-performers, environment, all conditions, forces known and unknown across time and within place, always forming a unique set of conditions and relations.

This is truly liberating, all actions are possible, none are obligatory. I am in the most fortunate position of having a wealth of diverse creative and life experience upon which to draw, if relevant and of value to the new performative occasion unfolding. I am not capable of always making the 'right decisions at the right time' for the benefit of the performance, or to even know what that may constitute. But the capability to shift emphasis from acting via the prism of a solitary, fixated artistic identity to an improviser of means, an improviser of contexts, an improviser of situations, of relations, ready to take up insight or the glimmer of intuitive potential into action in the moment, frees up creative possibility.

The channelling of creative energy into discipline-specific form can induce deeply connected and articulate work, the proposition here is that if the form of the content is not insistently channelled then there is the opportunity for a vivid embodiment of the vitality of life in a discovery of means, in inventing how form is taken then and there according to the force of content making itself felt. This may deny the absolute sophistication of the virtuoso, the facile ease and confidence of the expert, but it will admit the unmodulated intensity of the-first-time, of a freshness of wonder and thus the intensity of a new-born.



GATP asks what constitutes the (creative) individual and who and what is it that collaborates?
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JOURNEY

3. Journey to disperse my father's ashes [November/December 2015]⁴⁵. As a young boy I would travel with my father to visit relatives and go on camping trips to the Mildura region (where he was born in 1928) in the far north-western corner of Victoria. Vivid memories of the parched Australian bush from these excursions are etched into my mind. Later, there were his drawing expeditions, producing charcoal and pencil works such as the 'Wentworth' series (Wentworth, a town just across the border of Victoria in New South Wales). It therefore seemed an appropriate region to search for a place to cast my father's bodily remains (in the form of ash) after his death on **August 19, 2014**. A description of that journey with his remains exists as an appendix to this dissertation (Appendix E). So, I shall continue with a commentary upon this event.

A key moment occurred soon after I had found the location to set down his remains. After some searching I found a place that was sufficiently remote for me to be undisturbed and was reminiscent of a landscape I had once shared with him.

Until that moment, I was not at all clear as to what I was wanting to do with the container of dust that once was my father. But as I was preparing myself to conduct a kind of ritual;

INTERNAL and EXTERNAL MARKINGS or MAPPINGS of SIGNIFICANCE through 'PERFORMANCE' – slowly, I began to realise that the purpose of this journey, beyond the practical, was a creative one, not a duty to perform some kind of familial rite or to fulfil a loved one's wishes, it is about me and my relationship with my father – at best, inspiringly creative.

Not only did I realise that this process is a performance and about me now, but I also knew it to be implicated in my PhD work and that I should document the experience! This was quite a shift in my perception of what I was doing, it was a liberation allowing my whole being to be present, allowing all emotions, thoughts, physicality, the space for expression. I knew now that I would 'perform' a series of rituals over the next few days dispersing the ashes not just once but in numerous locations.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Refer to Appendix E or the full account of this experience.

⁴⁶ The experiences I describe throughout the thesis occur within a landscape, a country of enduring resonances, that sustain me. There is much of this land, its original inhabitants and their relation, that is beyond my perception and comprehension. I am on the edge of a precipice with only my intuition to guide me, when negotiating such matters as the connections of spirit, body and place. Please refer to Appendix E *Afterword E_17* and Appendix H, for some further reflections around this topic.

Here was a defining moment for my understanding of what I was doing, how I was doing it and why I was undertaking this activity, but it also suddenly deepened my sense of what a 'performance practice' could be, evolving what it was and was becoming.





And so, I continued conducting the ritualised activity in two other locations, one nearby and another at Rocket Lake⁴⁷ before meeting up with Clinton (Green) and Michael (McNab) at Lake Becking⁴⁸. Whatever it was that ensued there, reinforced the performance/outdoor environment activity that the previous THIS Ensemble tour had brought into focus and extended it further.

The remote and physically dramatic dry salt lake, the raw reality of handling the dust and bone fragments of human remains, the different journeys we had all taken to arrive there and the improvised manner in which we proceeded toward something that in retrospect I will name a ritual, all gathered as a weave of factors that rendered an experience beyond description, even beyond our comprehension as it was happening. It is true, the ingredients were potent, but that in itself does not guarantee an experience of this nature.



47 A dry (during my visit) salt lake situated in the north east corner of the Murray-Sunset National Park, Victoria. It is my understanding that the Latji Latji, Ngintait, Nyeri Nyeri nations are the traditional owners of the area. I approached my work with care and respect for this heritage, but also with a sense of my severe lack of knowledge about the historic and spiritual dimensions of this place.

48 Located at the southern end of the Murray-Sunset National Park.



The timing of *when* a creative action is taken in relation to other actions occurring or not occurring, can make an improvised performance event fall flat, come to life, or tip it into an extraordinary occurrence, beyond anticipation such as at the Lake Becking meeting.

The unique conditions and web of relations that carry a potential action to realisation coalesce within a greater network of energies full of different trajectories and potentialities.

The localised and personalised interweave of factors surrounding the Lake Becking event finds resonances and dissonances within the world at large.

It is betwixt and between these dimensions that what we call '*happenstance*' resounds, that a serendipitous meeting carries the creative action further, or not, beyond the extent of our manipulative powers.

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this project to probe further into the nature of *serendipity*, I can, at the least, acknowledge the power of this unpredictable agent in the convergence of energies that constitute a creative event's quality.

Some events to exist, need advanced planning, other events can be spontaneously brought about. Either way, there is no guarantee that a planned or spontaneous action can orchestrate the fluidity, the expansiveness, the sense of a cooperative harmony and the more-than that acting at the right time can provide.

When is the 'right time' to act? As an individual making decisions, I use everything at my disposal to feed into taking action; *when*. Ultimately though, all information, perceptions and thoughts are put aside, in order to know what remains; *what else is there, after thought, after knowledge has been thoroughly consulted.*

At this time intuition can be set to work.

The intuitive process may be fast or slow but at its heart is listening.

Listening to all the constituent parts and listening away from and around these phenomena.

Listening with thought-knowledge-expectation backgrounded.

This is all I can imagine.

I am clear that what constitutes 'me' is an infinitely small entity-of-something within the forces of the universe and that there is always more-than the perceptible phenomena participating in and incidentally brushing up against an event such as that at Lake Becking.



what remains (excerpt) video

The Lake Becking experience of December 1, 2015 was unique and it is unrepeatable.

The most salient features, particularly, cannot be recreated. Further, there is only residue in the memory of the participants and in the resonance of the more-than of the events potential, seeding future action.

Simply: thought, text, or any other medium may indicate conditions and outline experience, or it may tell a new story based on the original, but it cannot recreate the experience.

The *when* of the event and its emergence is related to the *more-than*, which exists as the virtual of previous occurrences, the unclaimed potential, that seeds a specificity's coming into form.

This does not explain why some thing, some space, some feeling emerges whilst another does not. It talks only of process.

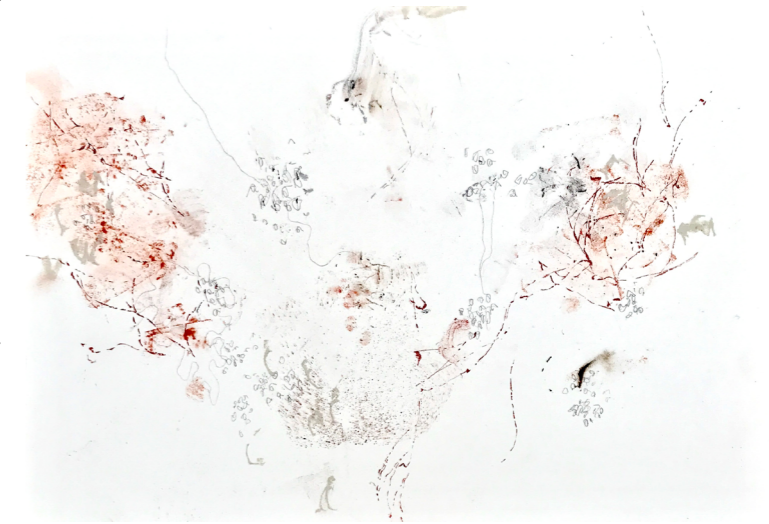
It also does not account for the recipe of energetic forces at the location and their incidental, aleatoric co-composing.

I fully accept this equation and participate in the unique qualities and capacities of an improvisational performance event without need of or frustration in, translation or reinterpretation of the event into thought, words, text or any other media. The event, seeded in past events, was a phenomenon and has triggered much thought and expression in other media yet it cannot be contained.

I love the practice.

The timing of all elements coming together when and as they did and to unfold as they did that day leaves me speechless. That is, because the exclusive nature of all words conspire to perform a disservice to the actuality of what was revealed. Although I can point to the ingredients that went to make up this experience, I still cannot account for a quality in excess of the more than we knew. Yes, **it** is of the experience, **it** belongs to the experience, **it** is strangely tangible and yet I am unable to identify **it**.

The preparation for an activity at Lake Becking involving my fathers' remains had begun before I was fully conscious of any such possibility. The movement in coming-to-awareness finds a parallel in the movement toward beginning a performance and equally, in the physical movement between this location and another location. Stepping onto the salt of Lake Becking began a knowing that created a connection for me to a place, that was until then, just a physically striking landscape. It is now something else.



We had spent a couple of days in the vicinity becoming familiar with the lakes and the country around the campsite. Sleeping, cooking, walking, making music on the rusted salt harvesting machinery⁴⁹, becoming accustomed to the terrain, to the nuance of feeling that different pockets of the country stimulate, all which constituted getting-to-know the place. But after the ensuing ritual this knowing itself then became something else.

I had divested something of myself, and literally something myself was of (that is, my father and his remains) into the place.

Another question occurred to me;
where is this location?

Where is the delineation between where that place is and is not? At the time, I would say the very ground where the remains were dispersed was the source of an intensity and the further away from that specific geographic location the less intensity was felt. But after having returned to the site a couple of times it seemed that now more of the general area was imbued with the memory of the feeling, even the drive on the dirt road from Underbool carried some sense of what had transpired, through memory.

A field of feeling, the feeling's traces within memory, swelling outward from the source of the ritual, connecting to a geographical, regional familiarity that over time seems to become more distinct as symbolising the original occurrence and its precise physical location. Yet there remains a deep and abiding fascination with the exact physical location of the ground upon which we slept and fragments of ash still visible upon the salt.

⁴⁹ Michael recorded the soundings and Clinton constructed a CD release 'At the Salt Museum' for his Shame File Music. Accessible at Bandcamp website: <https://shamefilemusic.bandcamp.com/album/at-the-salt-museum>

Transitioning between terrain that is far removed to that which begins to trigger the events memory is an obscure and inexact space as a marker of *where* the event occurred and this quality is curiously reminiscent of a transitional temporal space between non-performance, pre-performance preparation and actual conscious performance, *when* has performance begun.

'Scale' (the relative size or extent of something), in this case distance (although intertwined with time) appears relevant here. For example, if I return to Australia from a year abroad then touching down at Melbourne airport, the ground, presence to the physical place would mean a proximity to the Lake Becking event's physical source not experienced for a long period of time thus physically connecting me and so strengthening the events' memory-feeling. Likewise, scale of time. For example, one year before a scheduled performance, the shift from non-performance to performance mode (if there is indeed any distinction between these conditions) may be imperceptible or not have begun at all when compared with the momentum felt one hour before a performance's official beginning.

Where does the place of significance end and a different place begin?
When does performance emerge from non-performance?
It is the question itself that is relevant in that it stimulates attention to the topic. Awareness of the turning from one space to another.
The dawning, the glimmer, the instant of recognition of the possibility of beginning or ending.

The personal significance of the journey with my father's remains gave rise to a further significance; the action undertaken with his remains in my hands, led to a sudden understanding in and of performed *real life* underway. Performance and life inseparable in the making and marking of a whole experience. Suddenly, free to allow my artistic consciousness into the *performance of lived real life*⁵⁰, coming about prior to, through and within a living process, then, registering as performative.
Performance; intensified living.

Within the crucible of a concerted action where content was felt first and foremost, revelations and transformations came to light.

Later, an informal, but engaged gathering with friends at Lake Becking, brought an opportunity to attune to forces, to come-to-realise, to interpret, then to mark, to distil, to bring forth a highly personal *and* social sense of meaning.

This dimension of a performance practice, that is, in being initially content-driven even before a conscious awareness of performance underway, vividly exemplified the difference with an earlier notion of the idea of performance as form/structure first, with content (the felt and connectivity) following.

⁵⁰ As mentioned in the Background, my father was a visual artist and encouraged my creative exploratory work all his life. So came the revelation that in death a creative, performatory response was in complete accord with him and our relation.

A planned performance and an emergent, content-driven, action-in-forming appear somewhat divergent. But I have since this time increasingly offered myself a wide

range of choices for possible actions, *Alternatively*, selecting a specific form/material/approach materials, approaches, disciplines, etc., in advance, affects the nature of the content.

The content-in-the-making is funnelled, is influenced and location, eschewing the inevitabilities of animated by the preselected form, once the form is decided upon. For example, if I decide to use either an

I have pursued this approach in order to acoustic guitar, electronics or percussion in a conventional, improvisational music setting, my choice will exert a

direct bearing on the yet-to-be content of my performance and interactions well before a performance

has begun. The parameters of what makes the form the in synchronous collaboration with or form (including my relational history with this form) effect

the felt, emergent content in a way that addresses the and urges of a performance in the making. form, whether in accord with its delineations or not.

Both approaches, form invoking content and content

invoking form, exist on a performer's spectrum of creative

modality with equal potential for creative richness.



4. Artist in residence [November 2 – 30, 2016 at MIM, Museum of Innocence Mildura]⁵¹

gave me the time, space and context within which to know more about the nature of my creative practice, what was the current condition of each process that constitutes this practice, and what was the relation between them.

As well, offering a participatory activity to part of the local community and recognition and investigation of the geographic location, were as relevant and important as pursuing aural, visual and performance practices.

Cleaning as PREPARATION for performance and PERFORMANCE itself.

The ADFA building had been disused for a long time so after my initial inspection of the premises it occurred to me the most immediate issue was to clean, to refresh, air out, so I set to work sweeping the very large front room, dusting, sweeping the footpath, the cobwebs above windows, mopping, etc.

I have been sweeping gallery spaces since CURRENT in 2013 and experience it as a fundamentally important activity in paying respect to place, performers and audience. Sweeping is functionally performative and can be meditation in action. It is so 'everyday' that people feel free to stop for a chat or issue a quick comment and as such can work as a gentle introduction to the 'conversational' space I was hoping to create.

I immediately understood a neglect/abandonment about the place and the sadness that is a response to that. The sadness prompts me to action, that is acknowledging the condition and recognising this is my starting point; to heal, to start something new through observing and listening, no formulations, no concepts, no imperatives. Something emerges because of the listening and attention to what exists.

The MIM building itself had been left idle for well over a year and as I was the first artist to use the space, I could not just pull out materials and begin to draw.

It seemed clear also that simply cleaning the rooms of dust was a way of familiarising myself with the space and its corners, an introduction process through a mundane, physical interaction with the environment whilst investing a degree of care into this container and supporter of future work. The preparatory time prior to performance has always been and continues to be of fundamental importance in establishing, in bringing awareness to, the weave of elements that feed into a pending creative event.

Of these elements, my inner relational condition, that is the thought-feeling space, receives primary attention. Here is where my performance 'tonality' has its roots.

In appendix A of my MFA 'Conditions of Preparation' I wrote;

⁵¹ Refer to Appendix F, F_19-32, for the full account of this residency experience.

I am coming to understand more comprehensively the basic notion that preparation in its many guises constitutes where the ability to realise my artwork begins. As Stephen Nachmanovitch says 'I find paradoxically, that in preparing to create I am already creating'⁵²

In music performance this 'preparation' provides the architecture of my musical experience.

Following an event proposal from a co-performer, or the emergence of a concept from myself, a testing begins that scopes out the relation between performance parameters, the strands that will constitute the event's character. What is the nature of my current (and previous) connection to each strand of the proposed event, what is the current condition of the personal and social milieu that contributes to what these strands mean to me, and consequently, what (where, why, how) is the current motivation for me to participate?

In examining this set of relations, I discover an ecology at work where all facets are interrelated and co-composing. Familiarising myself with the coming events parameters and materials may well predispose me to once more adopt the repetitive behaviours of well-worn conceptual and performative patterns. However, with mental clarity it can be an opportunity to discover an opening and performative patterns. Too much analysis or forethought the familiar but yet to be fully realised. This is not to say that a lengthy analytical process always ensues or is even necessary in preparation. More, an orientation occurs that can allow a personal maximising of the events' potential. Too much analysis or forethought can invite specific expectations that interfere with a unique process of an improvisational dance with the given materials, yet an appropriate amount and type of preparatory work may invite the subtle, the more-than, lurking within and motivating this concoction through its very potential for a generative, life-affirming moment of vital freshness.

It is also likely that *preparation* is simply the effect of the prevailing conditions and context, internally and externally upon the performer, prior to and during performance; how the conditions and context react with the performer's internal proclivities and history.

Here, there is no separation between preparation and performance. The two concepts are inseparably entwined. The performer navigates between non-performance and performance unencumbered by the results of conscious preparatory thoughts or actions. In any event, the conscious and virtual-conscious notions that constitute my part in the coming-event's nature and influential material, most often require a type of forgetting, that is a clearing out from my mental/emotional inner space, so I then have 'operating space' to work in, on, with, for the moments-of-performance, with relevant information accessible and without that being insistent or imposing, somewhat like the function of RAM in a computer.

To be present at the birth of a creative sequence, action revelatory of an event's unique congregation, a movement in its incipency and even though the story may appear well-known,

BANG

I am participating in the activation of an event for the first time. Now instruments are again the tools, now the preparation is a meditation, now a mind is ready, willing and able to move unencumbered, with great agility and creative presence.

The preparatory phase may be over an extended period or at a moments' notice.

Whether measured in months or minutes, preparation is a process of attunement and an attempt to cultivate a sense of internal fluidity, of connective-ness.

This is not to promote any particular position, aesthetic or otherwise, as any emotional, psychological or physical condition finds its way into performance.

Rather it speaks of a lubrication, low friction, an ease of passage for the articulation of any material.

⁵² Stephen Nachmanovitch, *Free Play: improvisation in life and art*, 1st ed. (Los Angeles, New York: J.P Tarcher, 1990), 74.

Cleaning the space at MIM allowed me time to transition from the long journey of getting to the gallery with all the forethought, preconceptions and expectations developed over time since the residency idea was first suggested. It gave a chance to stay with a **simple** activity that was nonetheless functional and creative in the 'setting of the scene' within which the more obvious artistic pursuits would be tackled. But of course, the cleaning facilitated much conscious and sub-conscious processing of my reasons for being there. It provided a diffusion of seriousness and a sense of pressure/expectation (a particular issue for me), a psychological and emotional reduction toward a 'non-performative consciousness' even though I had a clear understanding of the cleaning act as performative action with performative value.

These misty artefacts of performance and non-performance in the cleaning act cancelled each other, forming a neutralising energy that helped orientate me to this present moment and so to a sense of expansive energy about what might occur.

Through the observance of a simple, commonplace act of cleaning then understood as preparation, I am reminded that life itself is preparation. Try as I might to 'prepare' for life, to mitigate against risk, against making *mistakes*, to be able to 'cope' with a challenge to my current level of comprehension or experience in any matter;

the moment cannot be lived prior to living it.

A moment of life can be approximated in advance, but this rehearsal, which can never account for the contingencies to come, is only itself its own moment lived, it is not a stand in, a replica of a moment yet to come.

One year after this event, I was visiting the site of the dispersal of my parents' ashes in outback New South Wales. The previous day I had purchased some loose canvas and some red ochre to use for painting upon my return to my studio in Rупanyup. As I began to roam around the site in search of visible remains from my first visit, it suddenly occurred to me to begin working on the canvas there and then. The material was still in my car. The preparation for this event happened without me realising it, if there was preparation it was for something else at another time and place - not this spontaneous scenario.



There are different preparatory processes for different performative occasions, even within an improvisational performance practice. As each performative scenario has a unique course and manifestation, each preparatory process will be unique in turn. In some instances, such as **INTERSECTION**⁵³, when the external (and internal) markings of a performance are ambiguous, at best, the notion of preparation is equally so. There is preparation for me in organising its date and time, and an arising performative awareness within the participants, thus some kind of preparation, even if that is consciously eschewed.

⁵³ INTERSECTION is a GAIP hosted annual event.

Simply noting a date and time in a diary, sending an email to a co-performer or making a journey to the performance location is in itself preparation. Preparation can be as immediate as an on-the-spot decision that performance is underway. Then performance and preparation proceed hand-in-hand, concrete or ephemeral, they are of each other.

The issue is not with the specificities, magnitude or the duration of this space-time, "coming-to-action". It is with the calculating mind. The technically facile artist activated by this alluring fertile space, with abundant choice in how to act, can incite an abstracted thinking process, one of weighing up the pros and cons of a certain course of action.

Across my creative practice, I seek to take my capacities outside of a seemingly inevitable mental process, one inscribed through training and skill development, those facilities that traditionally define the existence of a practice. I seek this through an alignment, an immersive being-with, the whole of the performative situation in all its facets, even the virtually imperceptible and,

There are some instances however, where the pressure to be creative has produced a fresh and stimulating outcome and to an extent the end therefore justifies the means. But even in these cases my issue is not with the perceived pressure of external or internal forces but with the insistence I play my part in this inevitable performance, solely to ratify the ostensibly creative act's existence.

An improvisational spirit prepares-performs in the space between motivational impulse and realisation, between and indeed during, stimuli-felt and action taken.

Perceptions, decisions, the mode of operation, what happens within this space-time zone, plays a crucial part in determining the quality of the work, repeatedly as an ongoing continuum.

in many cases, the self-given permission not to act and not to act through premeditation. Nor to act through a sense of obligation to myself and co-performers where I am pressuring myself to creatively produce, to come up with a 'performance'. My experience tells me this 'calculation' rarely forges a mode of performance that resonates deeply beyond a functional one.

This preparatory space shared between the calculating mind (*with a tendency toward certainty, closure, possession*) and the intuitive mind (*with a tendency toward uncertainty, openness, change*) could well be a space of foment, destabilising to the extent of immobilisation. So to create, as a seeker of 'some space else' I will need to find a way of sharing capacities to effect not only action but the most richly creative course. To effect a space-time uncluttered by compulsion to act bound by patterned behavior, or to act on certain knowledge.

This space-time can be held for a long duration or it can be imperceptible, the measure of expanse is not important, but the nature, quality and extent of the sharing of difference between the calculating artist and the intuitive artist is.

I am currently, and have been for some time, concerned with practicing a preparation-performance approach that seeks connectivity with intuitive mind over calculating mind as a matter of balancing my creative process for growth and development. However, I have noticed that my actions based on instinct (closely allied to intuitive, but not the same for me⁵⁴) are often habituated, in some capacity, and often overly familiar.

The calculating mind, identifying the routines, is also able to propose and enact strategies for diverting the instinctive drives into new terrain by insisting on a level of discomfort at crucial stages of process, of nudging technical ability this way or that way. Enduring an awkward, unappealing disruption enables a freeing up of ingrained mental-behavioural mechanisms allowing openings onto a delta of alternative images, sounds, thoughts or actions brought by repurposed, modified technical capacities.

The collaborative mind working within itself to affect a sense of spontaneity, improvisational flare, surprise and otherness. A mind now present and swiftly receptive to an adventurous and yet-to-be-known occurrence, milieu. Ready, willing and able to collaborate with the elements at hand.

If the sensing and action occur over a very brief time span there is less time for the calculative mind to function. The challenge is in sustaining the initial connection to intuitive space for whatever duration is necessary for the action's course to be taken.

What seems to be important to me in accessing the intuitive is speed of action. That is, upon sensing an impulse, there is a rapid entry into the space that impulse poses. The process may contain assessment, but this is backgrounded as the sensing can easily be derailed by the workings of an overly conscious mind.

54 The difference between instinctive or intuitive mind? I understand instinctive mind as so thoroughly ingrained, engendered through genetics and environment, as to be virtually inseparable from what constitutes the self, its essence formulated in a primitive space-time of development and honed over time. In this way instinct functions as an idiosyncratic intuition, an intuition of the self, more closed to exterior influence. Intuition on the other hand, seems to be a combinatory mode of perception that utilises instinct but is open to all other perceptible and virtually-perceptible phenomena in its processing of the issue at hand.

As inaugural artist, I was introducing MIM to the local community so I felt some requirement to be accessible to the public. Leaving the front doors of the gallery open as much as possible, became my practice;

Further extending the possibility of what constitutes PERFORMANCE through extending beyond an event into LIVING – A late-night encounter on my first evening in the space was perhaps the most poignant experience of the residency. The woman, a deep feeling, melancholic character stumbled upon this unlikely space that welcomed her without wanting to sell, to demand, to convince, she was just able to be herself in the space.

I invited her in after she had been reading the info posted in the window for some time. 'What is this?' she asks, I say it's a beginning and proceed to tell her a short story about GAIP and how this gallery came to be. After hearing the story, she said "this place and you are what the world needs more of". She said this is a good place for the elderly and the lonely – like her. Her name is Cathy, she had just gambled away \$400 on the pokies after arriving just now on the bus from Melbourne. She still struggled to believe that this was a place to just be in, to be creative or to sit without a purpose. "Can I give you a hug?" she said, "you've made my night, I think you must come from up there!" I said come back tomorrow as she went off with tears in her eyes. It was a gentle encounter not to do with "art" but to do with listening, space, time and human presence. The space and the time provided a momentary sanctuary to counterbalance the brutality of the pokie venue, and perhaps also to allow Cathy to feel what had transpired in her day more acutely.

To meet Cathy in this way at the beginning of the residency seemed auspicious, as my practice particularly in terms of my PhD research, is becoming more open to a broader social setting and engagement and this residency was always going to be an opportunity to, in some way, investigate that. As an artist-in-residence with a connection to traditional art forms, I foresaw a tension and a curiosity in the space between working within traditional mediums and working with a social, non-object oriented engagement, understood as an intersection of performance and everyday human sharing.

Before I had an opportunity to consider the paintbrush or guitar, I was negotiating a dynamic human encounter with an outsider, uncovering a value in each other and the space within which we were without premeditation, just moving with the unfolding of the moment.

As she left I had felt the space and our sharing was a salve to our spirits and that my painting, music and soundplay workshop were also opportunities to salve the spirit for me (and, it was hoped, for others who participated). I do often think of work, whether it be sweeping, painting, practicing or conversing as an opportunity to 'heal', to settle the spirit through a quality of unambiguous energetic application to the activity. The healing can be understood as the realization of a potential and that realisation can be triggered from within or without. It may be the manifestation of an object. It may be an undertaking of a process. It may be through the incidental, the accidental, or the purposeful and all stages of the realisation of this potential can be conscious, subconscious or unconscious.

Through experience, I have understood that this idea of the creation of a condition of healing through a realisation of potential can include the non-work of just being. Just being with oneself and being within the prevailing conditions of a given situation.

The description above, of the meeting with Cathy, happened so quickly upon my occupation of the MIM gallery space, that I had not yet settled into the mindset of an artist/performer accessible to the public. I was very much ensconced in musings around an unfamiliar 'art space' situation. The meeting between two humans was of life, was it also of performance? It was, after all, conducted in a creative performance space, I had found myself oriented as a host and as a facilitator of a 'certain kind' of experience. I was keenly aware of my guests' predicament, I was seeking to enact some kind of positive transformation for her and also for me in terms of effectively affirming MIM's existence and my own presence. This material formed the background to our encounter and encouraged me, albeit unconsciously at the time and more clearly in retrospect, to accept a semblance of performativity, that the making of something, the generation of some particular quality of energy (unique to those moments) actually occurred, was facilitated in this space designed for creative manifestations. This was an affective human to human encounter whether considered as performance or as life and either way value is found. Brian Massumi describes a qualitative life value as;

something that is lived for its own sake, something that is experienced as a value in and of itself in the unexchangeable currency of experience. A life value has value to the exact degree to which it is incommensurable with any other experience. It is the singular colour of an experience such as it is, all of its own that makes of it a life value. In fact (the) quality of life has value in exactly the way (you) would say a colour or a sound has value. It has the value of the qualitative character of its own occurrence⁵⁵.

From a perspective this performance was a vivid occurrence, an experience of such depth of feeling for an (unknowing) 'audience member' (?), an unknowing co-performer (?), and so a highly affective performance of meaningful exchange, that congealed performance into living, living into performance. Or, was it just life, just living, where the thought of 'performance' was an unnecessary extra? Whether life or performance is an arbitrary distinction as these concepts do not exist independently of each other, the question is only of concern to me as an investigator into performance and any other interested parties.

55 Brian Massumi, 'Theses on the Revaluation of Value' YouTube clip (36:53) published May 30, 2018.

Whether to read this happening as performance or just life is a worthy distinction for me if it is creatively stimulating to do so. Although, according to experience, this evaluation comes upon retrospective consideration not in the midst of occurrence. It could be argued that conceptualising a difference in experience debilitates integrity, an unnecessary demarcation to cleave experience in the pursuit of knowledge, of cataloguing, of possessing. Even if this mental construct, brought in-the-midst, in turn influences a subtle difference in the nature of the experience, I am not to know the results from a comparison of this version versus that version of the same experience. Put simply; to engage in thinking of myself as either performing or living in the midst of occurrence, can bring distraction (as the nature of my thought is commonly persistent and preoccupying) from fully experiencing either, and a narrowing potential through conceptualisation and categorisation. Whereas, leaving thoughts of distinctions aside, opens myself onto a panorama of further creative experience. Here I am valuing the raw material of experience primarily, over 'knowledge', thinking's post-event interpretation of that material.

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Sharing of our human condition, human to human contact seemed more relevant an interpretation of a performative gathering north-west of Wentworth, New South Wales during the MIM residency.

First and foremost was a life (and death) experience unfolding in the same terrain as described in 3. 'Journey to disperse my father's ashes', only on this occasion instead of performance coming to the fore through life, life comes to the fore through a performative mind, as we had set out as a group with the intention of performing a ritual around my mother's bodily remains. Finding profoundly personal matters of birth and death amongst our community in a remote, external environment, through a ritual space where rigidity in delineations disperses

bringing the PRIVATE into the PUBLIC - 29/11/16 - The thwarted attempt at the ashes ritual (some days before) was rectified with a late afternoon trip to the site with Clinton, Juana and Carmen who informed us she was pregnant, and where we undertook a powerful performance ritual as the sun set. I was staggered by the synchronicity of formation of life, within a close personal friend, and the dissolution of life, marked by the dispersal of my mother's remains.



I was residing in a building within the town yet the landscape surrounding the town was the compelling reason for me to take up the residency in the first place. This fact was a physical reflection of my creative interest in inbetween-ness, in the margins and boundaries of where this begins and that ends, in

the SPACE BETWEEN town and desert - 23/11/16 - Here were the towns people busy buzzing around with their personal concerns in Mildura, immersed in the minutiae of their daily lives and only a few minutes away was the vast expanse of semi-arid country where any of us if left without transport, shelter, food or water would likely rapidly perish. The contrast of these facts made a vivid impression on me. Two realities operating side by side. Although the town has been imposed upon the land and has reinforced another dimension, it is yet so notably dependent upon the river. I am struck by the perilous frailty, the tenuous nature of our position that seems to be so readily, perhaps by necessity, overlooked. What would acknowledgement of the imposed consumerist culture's vulnerability look like anyway? How would life here be different?

Precisely where does the town end and the non-town begin?
Where does the town thinking-feeling end and the non-town thinking-feeling begin and what are the differences?
A thorough response would need another research project.

The text pivoting around the four significant events above was written between March 2014 and December 2016, when event reporting ceased. This project and my performance practice continued, along with reviewing and further commentary from 2017 until 2019. An extension of time created through a change in candidature from full-time to part-time.

Naturally, creative perceptions do not stand still and I continue to evolve and change in relation to my practice, the textual material, and to self.

In every moment, particularly when deeply considering issues around performance, there is the possibility of insight that may refute or offer a contradictory perspective on ideas and interpretations of experience expressed to date in this document.

I have included previous papers on the subject as appendices for the very reason of revealing my understandings at the time of writing and so documenting stages of the discursive process. I have kept to a minimum further edits or updates of all that material.

que um imponente coactivamente expulso da sua casa... Além disso, os maus tratos e torturas que em muitos casos acompanham essas «evacuações» são um meio bastante seguro de criar patriotas militantes...

Muitos destes problemas não são específicos da guerra do Vietnam: a mobilidade do inimigo é uma característica da guerra de guerrilhas, o ódio generalizado entre as populações é uma característica das guerras de ocupação. Pois bem, o Vietnam não é uma guerra de guerrilhas e uma guerra de ocupação. Além disso, no Vietnam não existem simples grupos de guerrilheiros dispersos por aqui e por ali. No Vietnam há todo um povo que se faz guerrilheiro contra «aliado» e contra um governo que troca de poder e, sobretudo, de dinheiro, vendendo o sangue dos seus compatriotas e a terra da sua pátria a uma potência estrangeira cujo intuito não é sequer o de «defender o povo vietnamita das garras comunistas», mas sim o de «defender a onda comunista».

A melhor prova de que o povo sul-vietnamita não apoia o seu governo está na recusa insistente desta pelas autoridades de Saigão a

As far as this text constitutes a traditional thesis structure (*Introduction, Main Body, Conclusion etc.*) the writing that follows may be understood as forming a Conclusion. This work undertaken largely between 2017–2019 can be understood as embodying the changes that led to a re-titling, a re-orientation of the project. Thanks to an almost six-year time span, the fluxing nature and the subtle and distinct shifts in attitude and perception within a creative process can to an extent be revealed. The change in the project's title underlines this, reflecting a shift away from emphasising a 'social practice' but equally in embracing the otherness of 'some space else'. There will never be a resting place, a final position in relation to any of the material written of here. Such is the nature of a creative being who knows the power and necessity of destruction, of re-making, of regularly renewing the processes of self and of practice.

the condition of mind in performance

the condition of mind in performance

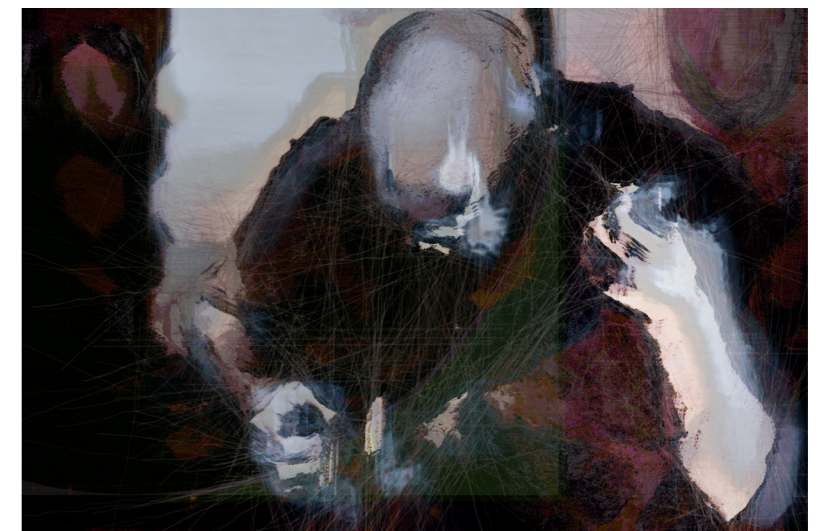
the condition of mind in performance

The range of my social performance involvements extends from the well-planned event to an unplanned on-the-spot occurrence. In any situation I seek a smooth flowing and conceptually uncluttered transition from non-performance to performance under way, where any initial sense of coercion, demand or pressure to act is quickly mollified giving way to whole-hearted performance process.

Over the years, as my creative interests have shifted, so too has the type of performance, my approach to it and expectations about its process and outcome. What has not changed is a

desire for deep engagement with the performance's unfolding process.

When deep engagement does occur, the thoroughness of involvement is not typified by occupation of an ideal, maintained state. It is more a freewheeling aliveness, a dynamic energy of the responsiveness of 'play' with the surrounding elements, where the usual sense of the volitional separate self is greatly diminished through absorption in activity.



So me ti meS during Pe R form Ance there IS MORE extensive cOn sideration and CaLCuLaTion; where am "I" in ReLaTion to WhAT is un f o l d i n g IN the onGoiNGness of the work? IS my level of engGaGement sufficient? WHAT is my RE LATION With the CuRRent ACTivity, is it prOvisionalIY AcceptAble or does IT nEEd to SHIFT and if SO for what reason, is that reason cOMPelling Enough to WaRRant chAnge? HOW is my behaviouR impacting, or hOW will m y anNTicipated ACTion impACT CO-perFormers & CONtext?

These questions may Only arise precisely in the way THEY do DUE tO the peRFORMance coNDitionS. COntSequeNTially, aNy thoughts & **ACT**ions taken UPon these questions will directly modulate the shAred ex perience of A WORK in proGress, its Nature and its manifestation, whAT i shALL TerM *inter-Affectivity*.

POsing these issues dURING peRformerAnce most often occurs over A very brief TIME span and SO they Are often impErceptible as distinctly formulated concerns. The checking questions ADD to an End LESS weave of a tapestry of contextual perceptions constantly modulated by INcoming stimuli.

If the inner VOICE asking these questions is tOO Loud, too inSistent then someThing is lacking. The questions themS ELVES

then contribute to my sense of being DETached from the ACTuality of peRformance-under-way, that IS, I am tENDING toward an insularity, I am NOT moving with whAt is FLOWing around me, I have bECome fixated upon a thought.

Admittedly this thought CAN arise from senSing that something is wROng within and around the peRformance EVen I, beYOND just sELF.

There may be an actual energetic impediment to the performance's becoming, some environmental or external phenomenon or often simply the insistence of the questioning thought returning again and again. However, the performance ecology is such that it does not wait for me to think through and solve the problem before continuing, it and I are ongoing. Ensnared by a thought can cause me to feel preoccupied and separate from the flow of performance, however this is illusory as my experience and any response forms part of the events becoming and so the performance continues, including all, even my preoccupations.

56 I understand this digital (or print) document not just as text with a cognitive meaning that reports, comments and extrapolates upon my creative work, but as a creative work interwoven with and in relation to the other non-textual forms of my practice. The images placed throughout this section until the end of the document emerge from and are interwoven with the ongoing improvisational performance process that is this project. There may or may not be a direct correlation of image to text. See **Image credits and information**, (p151) for details on all images. Along with this dissertation, the appendices and audiovisual material together are interdependent and constitute my research project as a whole.

effortlessness

Often a fluid, successful performance for me is typified by a feeling of effortlessness. It is tempting to postulate that over many years of practical experience making, preparing and practicing performance the raw data to aid in consistently and reliably bringing 'a feeling of effortlessness' should be readily accessible. As much as that work may contribute significantly to a sense of capability in carrying out creative impulses, still 'a feeling of effortlessness' will elude me.

Experiencing effortlessness in performance would indicate that I am at ease with negotiating performative issues, such as; the right time to act, to pause, to listen, how to act, how long to continue, what to do, what not to do, to be, who to be, who not to be and so on, or, that these questions simply do not arise. I do not doubt that the acquisition of skills is facilitated by repetitive labour and much that indicates an accomplished performer is the perception of ease in execution of the craft. Even so, the experienced performer can appear at ease (due to muscle memory, vast experience, etc.) yet internally be unable to feel effortlessness due to an inability to act with a level of acceptance of the incipient, mutating relational quality of all elements at play, in-the-midst of performance. The novice and expert performers challenge may not be all that dissimilar if being at ease is a highly valued performative quality.

For example, during a performance I am listening very well to the sonic environment and my imagined initial response to what I am hearing is asking of me an unfamiliar performative action, a task I have not undertaken before and, beyond what I believe is my current capability. Three possible reactions are; I accept my response does not match my vision and seek an alternative; I modify my response to fit within my perceived limitations, or; I attempt to realise my initial vision, risking failure. A novice or highly experienced performer equally can apply any of these alternative actions, but from my observations the experienced performer will more readily access the self-confidence, acquired through taking similar challenges previously, to take on the risk of failing to exceed the perceived limit. The quality of relation between co-performers, performance conditions and context, and importantly I am novice or expert. If a novice feels fully accepted as they are, externally and within themselves limitations and all, then there is every opportunity for a profound experience. This is not to say certain conditions are required for a profound experience, as any moment carries such a possibility, but years of observation have shown me the more accepted a performer feels within and without, at any experience level, the more they cultivate the right inner conditions to be receptive to and to participate in a successful (on their terms) and even profound experience. The notion of failure is relative. It is indicated in the comparison between an envisaged and actual process or outcome. If envisaged does not accord with actual, if the actual proposes an entirely different solution than the felt, desired one, what is my reaction? Here is a key moment in performance momentum, sense of flow and events' architecture. The novice may not have extensive performative experience on their side but the choices they face; acceptance, modification or risk, are no different to what confronts the expert and likewise the rewards are equally accessible.

acceptance modification risk

In the Free Play⁵⁷ class an introductory performance exercise requires the student to stand in the middle of the room for one minute. The point is made that this is the performer's 'base position'. You, your body and mind, are performing an astounding array of simultaneous actions in just standing there, being alive! It is fully acceptable that your attention to this perception, that listening to this perception and nothing more, will constitute a genuine and satisfactory performance. This exercise is designed to reduce a sense of pressure for the uninitiated and forms part of a training régime to get beneath preconceptions and expectations of what performance is, to connect the novice to the naturalness of performance within our everyday lives.

An experienced performer has a history of solutions arrived at during past performances, examined behaviours and material to 'fall back on' and to modulate a 'failure,' that is, at a time when a performance is perceived to not be going as well as expected.

There is a possibility that this catalogue of past solutions, in its very resolution and in acting as a safety net to failure, deprives me of truly co-composing the unique quality of just this performative time and place. Or that these sublimated and well-practiced, conditioned moves are so self-referential that they are no longer fused with an immediacy of the raw, exposed actions of the beginner who negotiates an unfamiliar territory for the first time.

We all have the miracle of our body, this conglomeration of empathic mechanisms, a model of harmonious collaboration and responsive capacities to draw from or to 'fall back on'. If the beginner is convinced of the authenticity of this 'essential' notion of performance and can feel fully accepted by co-performers, then there is an opportunity for a full, rich and unique creative experience.

If the expert can embrace such a notion, a vital aliveness is on offer, an attunement to the fundamental vibration that gives occasion to the singularity of just this performance, within just this gathering of forces, at just this time. More than a dry formality or predictability of well-known movements masquerading as art, instead, a space where waiting and listening with concatenation of calculating thought side-stepped, to foreground the potency of being ready, willing and able for distinct, particular action, responsive to and constitutive of the exceptional moments co-composing this event.

A thought and thinking per se are by no means excluded from creative process and actions. A thought constitutes as much creative, performative material as any action. An inspired thought enacted can be the performative quantum leap that consequential process is by its nature less likely to induce.

⁵⁷ Largely comprised of cross-faculty students with little to no performance experience, although many may have had formal and informal training in music. Most participants however are complete novices particularly in relation to improvisation practices.





where is thought

where is thought

What I know is that the questioning and calculating thoughts of my conscious mind tend toward the cyclic and so can develop into a neurotic feedback loop, demanding attention and to an extent, reducing awareness of the other (within and without) and the surrounding context. If thought is insistently demanding, is cultivating of self-doubt or self-importance, is caught up in judging the merits of or predicting the course of performance, then a sense of performative flow struggles to be established or tends to stutter, distracting attention from the immediate co-composing of collaborative process. Or even more, can bring full disengagement by *falling out* of a sense of continuity of attentive relation, of an attunement with all present elements.

However, disruptive thought and neurotic obsession can also be creatively fruitful within performance.

I have found this to be true within my visual arts practice much more than other performance spheres. Here I am spending many hours alone, the activity is defined within a self-referential space. The influence of the external other resides in my ability to hear, to see, to sense, to share with, to be a conduit for subtle energies although (most likely) siphoned through the interpretive filter of self. Disruptive and sometimes even obsessive thought, through its beyond 'normal' recurrence, can precipitate a creative or destructive breakthrough, leaping beyond a sequential, habitual working process where all seems under-control.

This unpredictable breach of a functional working flow can be interpreted as an embodiment of the internal other, a provocation by the external other or even an intervention of a future self suddenly seizing an opportunity to evolve. A disruptive thought may break a valuable sense of continuum with the working process, but it is, in my case, worth any risk as I now distinctly prioritise a fresh and revelatory experience in every area of my work and at any opportunity.

The coming to consciousness of an amodal energy is sensed, can be seen, heard, felt and thought, and is creative (or destructive) to the extent in which and the way in which it is taken up in its (the felt energy's) landing upon a mode of practice. Thought, prior to manifestation in its pre-thought virtuality, is enmeshed, not yet modally distinguished, amongst all other pre-modal virtualities (not yet a sonic gesture, a physical movement, a daub of paint, etc.).

As amodal energy fractures, is drawn into modal expression, the *more-than*, that which surpasses thought and yet is of the thought's origin, continues to be virtually present within the newly resolving expression as it distinguishes from life's force, be it into the thought itself or any other sensual manifestation.

Thought is as valuable an expression as any other shaping. But there is no ideal configuration of the thinking process nor the role of thoughts in relation to generating or maintaining performative flow.

Mostly, within group performance practice, I seek to establish a clear sense of connectedness and a sense of continuous energetic flow, no matter how tenuous or insubstantial, to function at my optimum and to affirm our being here-together, our mutual presence to the co-composing under way and the inspirational experiences available through attention to the between of all participatory phenomena.

Group performance is, by definition, a social gathering, so clearly more than self.

It is easier to experience self as part of an evolving ecology in this context than when working alone and there is great opportunity to re-constitute self continually amongst the rich resource and inherent complexity (and shared inclinations) of multiple performers doing the same. Still, a rogue element can be highly creative within this space as well, yet it cannot be manufactured. The action to be truly creative (even if it may be or may appear destructive) will be brought ahead of time from the more-than, from the virtual within the actual collaborative material being generated in the here and now of performance and its co-composing environment. Any connivance will fall flat or curb flow.

During group performance, as when working alone, I clearly function at my best when any sense of internal or external pressure, such as the requirement to signify to the world that I am an artist-at-work, is minimal. Having an expectation of performance and feeling a pressure to perform can often demotivate me.

The reason I experience this is due to a knot of psychological and emotional proportions carried from and repetitive of past anxieties. The pressure is felt when demands to *be* someone 'special' (super-normal?) or to *show* something special are taken on and owned by me as requirements for performative success. I no longer accept this formula, yet some residue remains.

It is the adoption of and imposition of such concepts that interferes with a deeper existent living reality.

A pending performance triggers the associated thoughts, that summon a familiar condition of mental, emotional and even physical entanglement. I am still able to function performatively, but self-consciousness sets a preoccupying emotional/psychological tonality of varying degrees of intensity (the degree to which, is dependent upon relations within the performance context) with which I must contend.

The initial performance exercise for the Free Play class described above is designed as an antidote to such a conundrum. It offers the perspective that simply being *as-you-are* is satisfactory in functioning as performance. After this, to move into a 'performance' event, to begin performing is redundant, as performance is already underway. The exercise helps to reduce the (implied) pressure to produce something, to manufacture some space.

For professional performers this exercise may appear not to address, to be relevant for a performance practice with high skill requirements, but taken as a meditation, as a psychological-emotional orientation, this practice promotes a tending-toward, a directionality, that if taken to heart, can assist in re-balancing performance anxiety⁵⁸.

⁵⁸ The 'Listening' meditation-exercise at the end of this document also serves the purpose of re-balancing, in this case, through an essential practice of non-judgmental listening.

Co-performer, mentor and friend David Tolley famously would follow any score, advice, comments or encouragements with the phrase; “**or not!**”. This was without fail a great relief to me as it allowed for a primacy of the *performative now* when any material previously concocted, consciously held in the mind and brought into the performative present was found to be a self-conscious preoccupation depriving and arresting a flow of group consciousness, now.

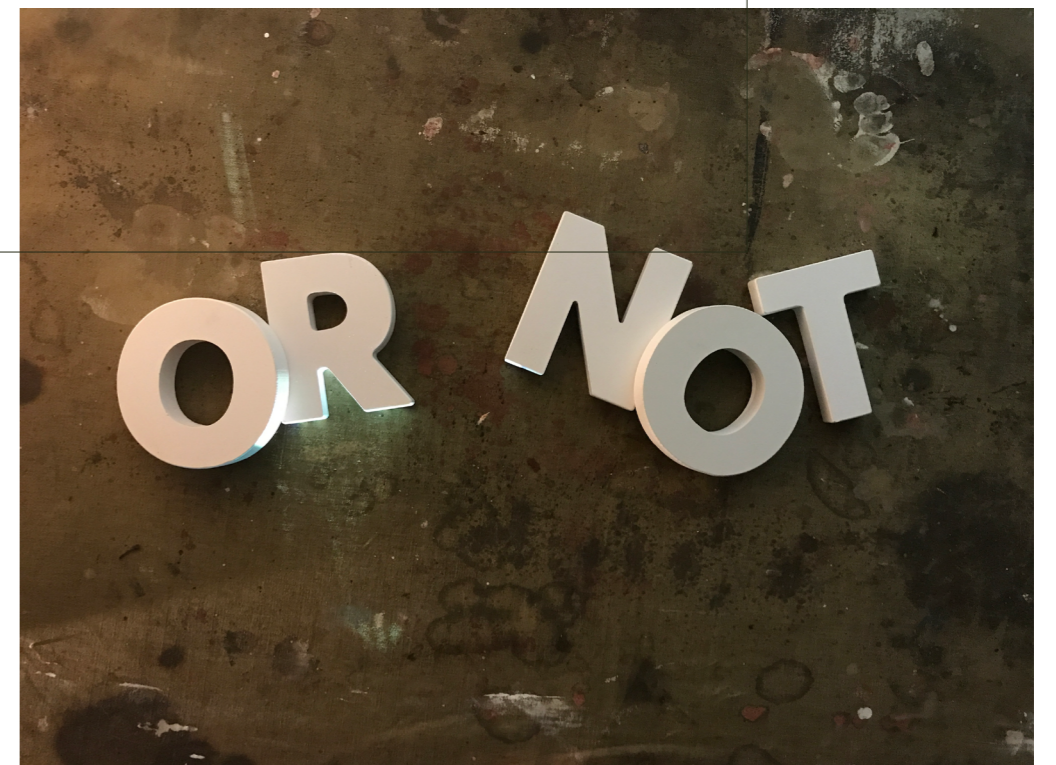
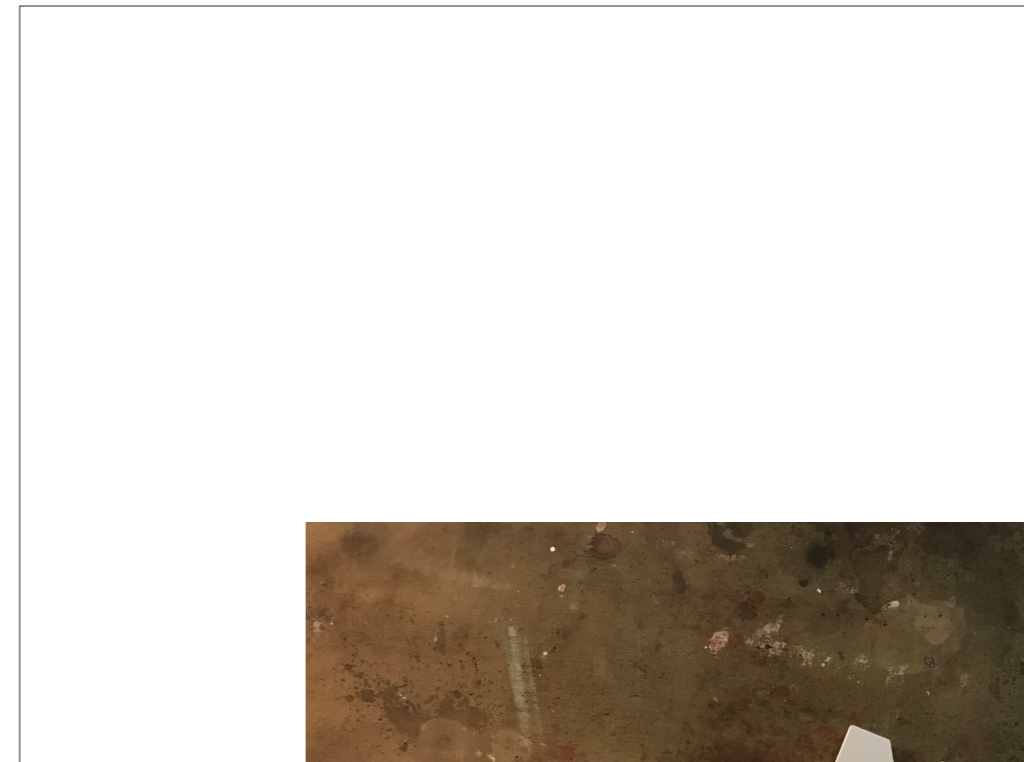
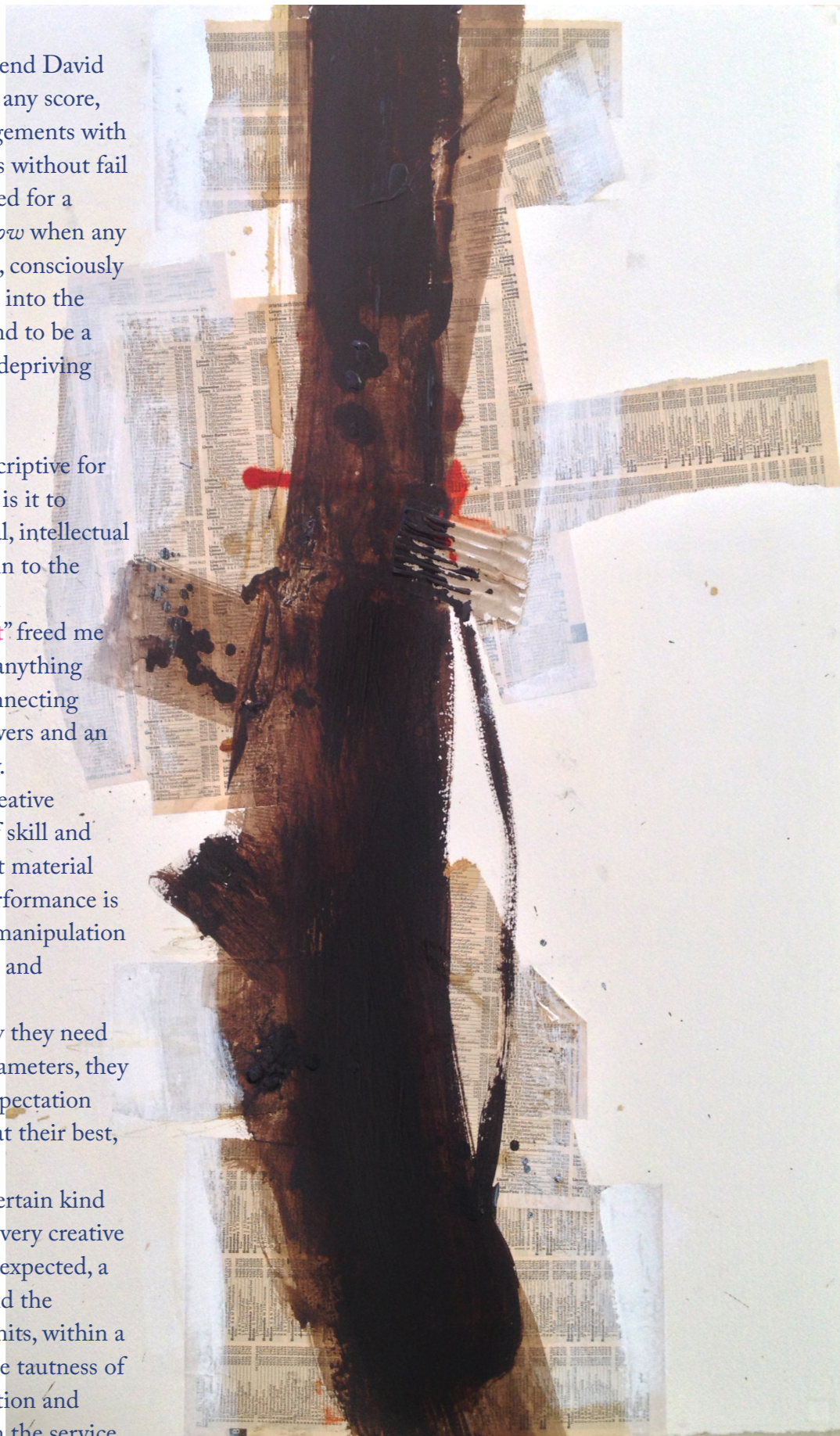
This interpretation is not prescriptive for all performance scenarios nor is it to denigrate thematic, conceptual, intellectual continuums, but it does pertain to the significant portion of my own performance practice. “**Or not**” freed me from a sense of obligation to anything other than communing or connecting with my essential creative powers and an evolving performance ecology.

My developmental work in creative conceptions and challenges of skill and spirit is ongoing, but how that material best finds its expression in performance is not through a self-conscious manipulation as it often is in private testing and experimenting.

Still, I know of artists who say they need deadlines, they need clear parameters, they need a sense of pressure, of expectation from somewhere to function at their best, or to even bother to perform.

There are situations where a certain kind of pressure to produce can be very creative for me, coaxing something unexpected, a surprising quality. I understand the pressure to produce within limits, within a strict frame, as stimulating, the tautness of a flexed muscle, the condensation and marshalling of one’s powers in the service of achieving the specificities of a goal.

There are certainly occasions when this scenario is creatively fruitful.



certainly uncertain

certainly uncertain

A certainty of being in an optimum relation to performative thinking and action, an optimum relation to performative skill, the certainty of being able to engender a sense of performative flow of any kind; none of this I find consistently accessible. The mode of relation and range and quality of techniques used before and during a successful performative process, cannot be guaranteed to be replicable in every performance situation, nor should they be. A successful, replicable formula is not a reality, possibility or ultimately even desirable for me.

Whilst certainty aids strong, decisive action it also closes out possible creative pathways in its very promotion of self-confidence and diminishment of doubt. At the same time, working toward engendering confidence in my ability to perform surely, even *naturally*, has highly beneficial results for my performance practice in general.

Uncertainty would appear to promote hesitancy, indecision, and so give rise to actions that are yet to be fully formed, that lack definition, whose existence is ambiguous.

Whether a condition can be described as certain or uncertain is an interpretive issue, a condition of mind, a perception, often fueled by emotion. I have found that both certainty and uncertainty, as qualities of behavior and approach within performance, rarely exist as ongoing conditions alone and without the presence of the other.

The recipe of their relation within has a significant bearing on my feelings, actions and what is potentially accessible or not in performance. If a perception of uncertainty is disabling my ability to act, then finding a way to shift from resistance to uncertainty to acceptance of it, often means that creativity ensues.

I recall instances of an uncertain beginning, due to a feeling of disorientation, being unprepared or not ready to step into a performance scenario. This, in having a sense of connection with myself, co-performers and performance parameters so insubstantial, so distracted that “I” is barely, indiscernibly *there* in *presentness*, in the way I am accustomed. This feeling is characterised by a discomfort that I am not able to be as in-control or as ‘responsible’ for what I contribute to the performance as I usually am. I do not feel self as ‘solid’. All aspects of my performance seem insubstantial and vaporous. Uncertainty and discomfort are to the fore.

What works well for me in response to this predicament is to request of my mental processes and emotions, simplification, that is, to find the capacity to accept and carry on working with the condition, as it is. Struggling to try and change my feelings of uncertainty and discomfort often intensifies them as I constantly reaffirm my aversions in pursuit of preferable performance conditions. Through acceptance the condition often changes, allowing a perception of flow within self, and between self, the materials and environment, enabling a re-reading of the performative conditions and perhaps a ‘macro’, less subjective perspective.

I also recall on numerous occasions acting on an uncertain impulse to move, to begin with minimal prior thought process and with no predetermination of the next action to come, yet able to engender and stay with a feeling of faith in taking the next action as it comes and to maintain this process continuously⁵⁹. I am keeping my thought and feeling away from speculation and reflection with close attention on the collaborative elements, without too firm a grip, without succumbing to judgment of the moves or where that movement is taking me. It is with good fortune that I am certain enough to be able to connect with beginning. I sustain these qualities through the practiced and sublimated thought that this path is as good as any other, thus enabling a presence to the action that a constantly roving, thought-drenched mind can prevent. So exists a mind of creative uncertainty. Certainly uncertain.

The more I try to configure a workable equation for certainty and uncertainty as descriptor of a satisfactory performance, the more the equation splinters and fragments into situation-dependent exceptions, making any mapping of a useful ratio between certainty and uncertainty dynamic and highly situation-dependent. I must rely upon a truly improvisational responsiveness, the territory of the alive performer whose decision-making functions as part of an organic feedback system.

Even if much of any performative experience is familiar due to inevitably recurrent elements within an ongoing practice, I require a sense of freshness, an unpredictability, a sense that what I am contributing, what is occurring in and about me is vibrantly alive in the now, in the moments of performative play. Without this there is simply a repetition of skills, a presentation of refined craft.

⁵⁹ Here is the capacity to trust in the arising of a process (autotelic) that is of the ongoing flow of life force in its continuous incipency. That listening and waiting for the next action are in and of that medium; movement-listening, sonic-waiting, visual-listening, thinking-waiting, etcetera. If all is connected to all else, then preempting what's to come in search of certitude can be replaced by *intuitive sensing*. The way emerges through attunement in play with related phenomena.



flow to the more-than

flow to the more-than

A perception of *flow* is a precursor for me to sense in encountering a deep embodiment of the unfolding process of performance. It is attention, movement, energy coming steadily, continuously, fluently through action and inaction alike. There are however, periods of time where the sense of flow is intermittent or stagnates entirely. It is during these times that I understand to wait without concern and to listen, most often provides the right conditions for a pause that is fertile, a pause that with minimum effort then bestows entry into the stream of performative experience once more. That I have exited the interminable movement of this event is indeed illusory and a result of a preoccupied mind.

At other times, I have encouraged myself or been motivated by events around me, to take an action 'against-the-grain' of my surroundings, contrary to the waiting and listening approach, to jolt me, to jolt the performance situation into another space, a different flow, a fresh start, a sudden movement – as if falling down a hole into an alternate reality.

When and where to apply this approach, how and what to do to bring about this shift, will or could the projected motion be enacted in a way that has the desired effect? And how will this action effect co-performers and the movement, the becoming of the event itself?

Waiting, imposing action or some hybrid of the two approaches in response to my perception of a stagnating flow will naturally impact how the performance manifests, its contour of movement, its architecture and its experiential substance. Yet there is no guarantee that taking the proposed course of action will achieve a positive transformational effect or indeed lead to flow.

So how do I arrive at the most effective response to creative stagnation, a lack of flow, or a perceived need for difference, for change?

Reasons for being unable to connect with or falling out of performative flow range from tiredness, lack of presence (mentally, emotionally preoccupied), discomfort with performance conditions and partners, and so on. Many of these experiences may be created through self-consciousness, or alternatively an experience of this kind may consequently promote an increased self-consciousness that exacerbates a lack of flow and amplifies a sense of separation or disconnection from the performance materials, context and self.

Self-consciousness is part of every performance. It is its predominance that I seek to dissolve by seeing into, then moving through its self-concerned, self-checking nature.

Being self-conscious mostly means I am scrutinising my feelings, thoughts and actions, deliberating the merits of current experiential phenomena and proposed behaviours, cultivating a sensation that there is the actor the one who must perform, and the director who decides and judges. When this director-self claims too much power, prioritises himself too much, the performance process tends toward the stilted, a stop-start movement checking in with 'director I' for decisions on what happens and when.

This can backfire terribly making the 'whole-me' feel an outsider to the flow of events rather than a participant within them. The director thinks he knows best, but constantly acquiescing to his best intentions can ostracise the overly self-aware performer from co-performers and context and strengthen the director-self performer-self divide.

For an integrated experience, I seek collaboration, with deference to the intuitive movements within, setting an invitational quality to forces around the self. If performative decision-making and experience is overly self-contained and orchestrated by the directorial self with scant attention given to the other in all its guises, the self-referential feedback loop is less likely to discover genuinely fresh material or encounter startling experiences. It is the synergy of ingredients interacting from without as well as within, that powers me to creative spaces difficult to define, that allows me to inhabit a space that can feel both unfamiliar and familiar, tenuous yet sturdy, fleeting yet tangible.

As the years pass, I work toward an experience composed of participatory phenomena and subtle forces of imperceptible origin where the self is but the doorway to the *more-than* of assembled ingredients, and a platform from which to leap or slip off.

I know the inner director can orchestrate, indeed feign an 'adequate' performance, a 'convincing' performance, but for self-as-whole that is not satisfactory. I am not here to duly function as artist, performer, creative being, to merely restate the obvious. Whilst I commit to the work through levels and layers of practice, this is preparatory performance, a harbinger of the performance nub.

It is in the alchemic foment of self and other that reactions seed energies that in turn repel or attract sympathetic subtle forces bringing them to life, to expression, to movement. Further reactivity feeds and corroborates the phenomenon of sympathetic vibration, the quality of flow driving the performers, beckoning forth the imperceptible.

The fundamental motivation of my performance practice is now squarely on evincing the more-than lurking around and within the marshalled elements, and in cultivating receptivity to that subtle force which is not readily perceived as participating ingredient. An intent of focus is required to hear the barely audible, to see the almost visible, but too heavy-handed and all is lost, lightness of touch is a crucial factor.

In looking at something from the corner of my eye, barely discernible, I use a concoction of past experiences and intuitive guesswork to imagine what that something is. What my action might be in response seems less important than *how* I act. Ready to pounce with all the force I can muster, accepting the big splash or slipping unnoticed into an already flowing stream barely ruffling the surface, whichever move is the right one is unknowable in advance, what is *right* is unknowable in advance.

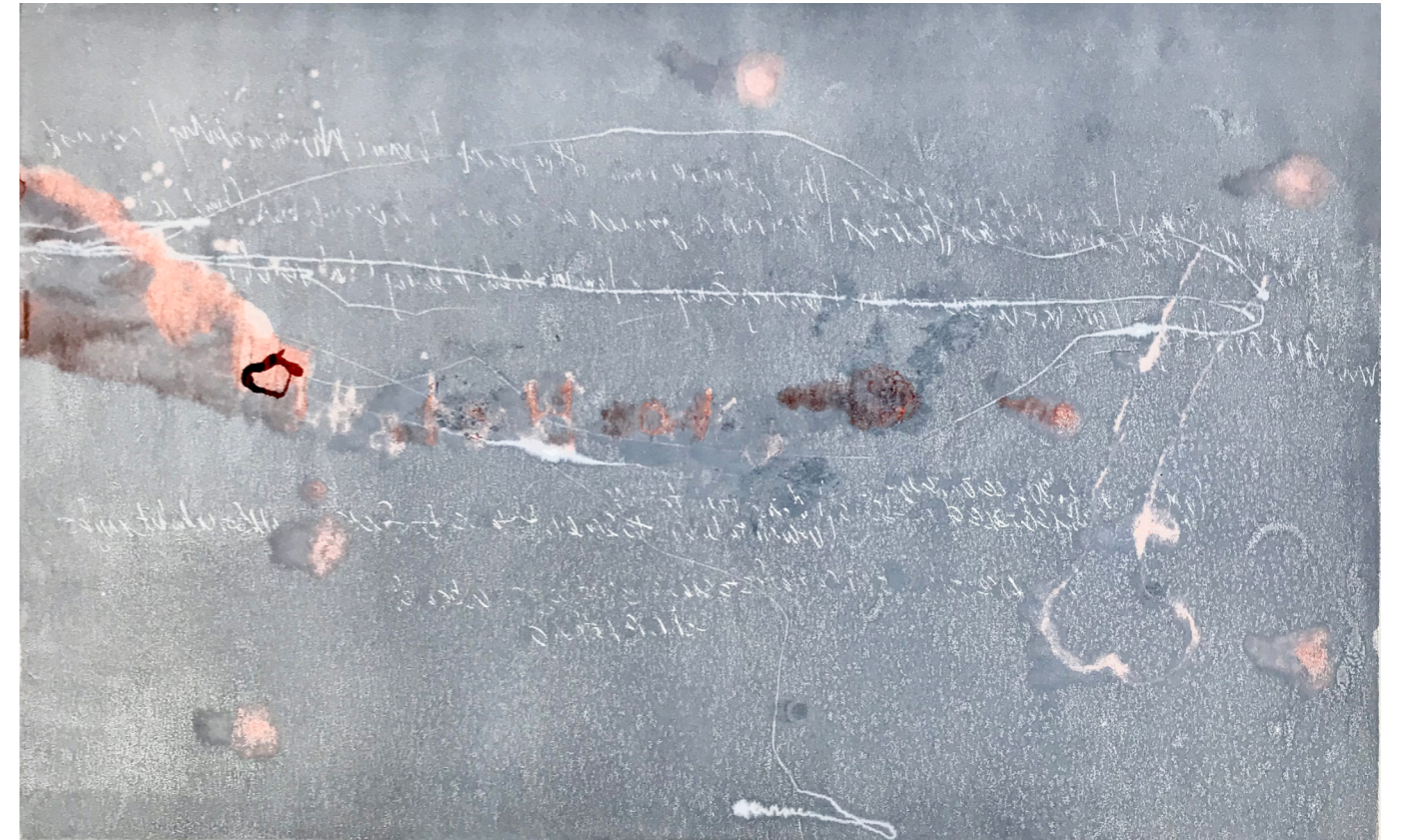
What is it that makes me shiver is not a bodily response to cold, but an expression of the body and the mind when struck by the convergence of outer forces with inner senses, uncontrived.

A thunderclap of synchronicity!

The elements have gathered and are hovering for what may or may not happen, there is no guarantee only possibility, encouraging receptivity.

Staying-with, moving-with, attending to the work with antennae raised and receptive. The lightning bolt or the barely detectable aroma both invite an involuntary fluttering movement of body-mind.

Today I am more prepared to discover this behind me, out of the corner of my eye, in what I was unsure I felt, in what was fleeting before I could grasp it, a vaporous image forming and re-forming before I can decipher, a quake of feeling when the liminal, when the more-than begin to resonate, to expand to lengthen the moment, to dissolve the everyday measures.



point of view

point of view

The mind may be functioning very well not interfering, nor predominating but alive with the potential of alternative performance movements and yet, my emotional self may be debilitated. Or, I may be thoroughly energised and inspired, but my co-performers are impaired by some disharmony or depleted of energy. Or, we may feel connected as a group, but our performance context or environment is full of negative, hostile energy; all performance situations are a mixture of differing qualities and performers and performance conditions are never static. The capacity to navigate the shifting qualities, both inner and outer, is a constant challenge.

An improvisatory spirit works with the assembled elements perceptible and imperceptible, within and without, to draw out whatever may be possible, given the prevailing conditions. But there are days when inner or outer conflict or disharmony within the constitutive elements cleave a gap too wide to bridge despite inventive efforts, despite my attempts to alter perceptions or to generate a performance momentum. A sense of futility, of immobility wins out and my creative movement is brought to a standstill.

The parameters of most of my performance opportunities at the time of writing ultimately allow me to take whatever action I deem necessary in replying to the predicaments I have outlined here. If in response, I choose to physically depart the performance space, or to rest from incessant physical activity by adopting a more listening-observational relation to the work, or to perform some mundane task that requires little creative energy and imagination yet still enables me to support the performance through continued physical presence, it will be in the knowledge that taking any of these actions will be understood by my collaborators as those of a committed participant. There is no obligation to perform if I am not ready to, just for the sake of it.

There is an unspoken understanding that if I cannot locate myself in a satisfactory way within the performance, then leaving or resting are acceptable actions to take. There may well be discussions that follow at a later stage as to why this disconnect occurred which can provide insight and fruitful information for all, but that is by no means obligatory.

There are occasions when I struggle to accept the work of a 'guest' performer, this occurring more within the sonic dimension of performance, rather than visual or movement modes. Perhaps because it is much easier to close my eyes than my ears!

I recall on several occasions having a conversation mid-performance with a fellow musician about the difficulty I was facing in accepting the persistent sounding of a guest performer during a THIS Ensemble event. Their sound was so dominant in my ears and mind that I felt I was suffocating.

All I can offer by way of explanation for my reaction is to say I heard, I interpreted the relation this person had with their sound making, as being *disconnected* from the other sounding performers and context. That is, I interpreted the sounding as occurring in a mechanical manner as if the person was operating in a bubble, insulated from the sonic environment and so not hearing, or not listening and thus not interactive with all else.

I was unable to find any merit in the person's contribution at that moment, in fact I was annoyed that this overbearing, sustained activity was hijacking the texture and feeling of the event. The loudness of the activity meant that it was difficult to offer any sounding that could be heard and thus balance out or offer an alternative for attention.

An experience of this kind is what I can expect on occasion to face. The more open the format of performance to external involvement the more likely to encounter an unexpected situation where my aesthetic position or some aspect of myself is confronted by a divergent or even antagonistic force. I note the clear subjectivity of my reaction and emphasise that my experience here may be contrary to that of others present.

Sharing some details of my struggle with a co-performer undoubtedly helped me diffuse the building frustration within. The ensemble was performing for an extended duration in a large indoor space so relocating far away from the sound source for a time was a feasible personal response, as was patiently, attentively waiting for change, or, leaving the space entirely for a time. Eventually change comes.

What I face here is an experience that may not be in accord with my expectations of an ideal performance. However, for all of us, audience and performers alike, a unique event is unfolding. It may well be full of all kinds of emotional, psychological and spiritual drama, periods of volatility, of instability during a search for connection, periods of stillness, in short much of what happens in our everyday lives and more is able to be experienced.

Solving personal problems, conflict resolution, taking care of another in time of need, taking a rest, pushing oneself beyond perceived limits and the whole range of human experience is to be encountered during THIS Ensemble and GAIP events. These things, the stuff of life, happen when people interact and are if anything intensified during a collective, creative performance.

THIS Ensemble's history carries with it the story of my personal transition toward a diverse performance practice and away from a more traditional music performance group concept. Each consequent THIS Ensemble event sees a different configuration of performers, yet there is a sense of continuity in its mode of operation, of creativity, of aesthetic, of thinking in common that runs through each iteration. This is likely promoted by key performers who indeed participate regularly, in tandem with my preferences being exercised through the selection of new collaborators. Certainly, I am a constant presence and influence, although I rarely articulate any requirements of the performers, my sounds, actions and approach are all perceived by my collaborators, and thus exert an effect. This is equally true of their impact upon me.

As THIS Ensemble evolved to be more inclusive of performance conditions, context and audience, there occurred the moment when an audience member was motivated to physically participate, possibly through feeling the invitational quality of our performance. There are many variations regarding an audience member's motivation or reason to become active as performer and there are also a range of reactions performers may have in response to the guest's involvement.

Continuing with the earlier example of an audience member 'spontaneously' joining in the sounding; it was clear that the guest was capable as a musician and, I speculate, came to the event to participate, knowing this was plausible but furthermore, with a wish to exhibit instrumental proficiency, creativity and capacity to contribute something meaningful to the group's performance. Nothing unusual here. However, I felt that the guest's need to display those attributes superseded and dislodged any organic process of performative engagement, relegating what was already in progress with the Ensemble to the role of a 'backing band'. Participation by proxy, whereby a performance underway was utilised to inflect personal mechanisms, thus representing creativity. The guest's expressivity in fact precisely modulated the performance, but I suspect, in a manner different than perhaps was intended !

This perception may be askew. The guest may have come to the event without an intention to perform, and after absorbing much was motivated to actively participate and what I heard was a genuine and heart felt, spontaneous response to the context and all that was happening to the best of their ability. Either way, what I heard and experienced activated my aesthetic prejudice and then to an extent shaped my performance experience for a duration of time. As similar experiences have occurred on other occasions, I see that my response varies and is contingent upon the condition of all performance parameters, but particularly, the current internal state.

An approach to moving through such a scenario is to tag my reaction as a *point of resistance* (first discussed in the Introduction and used extensively to assist students in recognising and examining the source of impediments to process) to create space around this concern that impedes flow, hampers effortlessness, that produces self consciousness and so on. The *point or field of resistance* will constitute strong, potent, personal material that when acknowledged, examined or accepted will provide source material for self examination and growth. Whatever the predicament and analysis, here is the coalface of creative openness; philosophical attitude confronting aesthetic taste, in the midst of action.

As convenor and as a collective, I and we are open and invitational of audience/by-standers participation. Being socially inclusive in this way expands the experiential possibilities for the willing audience, however the actuality of others involvement brings a distinct probability of encountering a conflicting or variant attitude, perspective, creative value set and so on. How this situation plays out, how all ingredients relate and negotiate performative continuity is very much 'alive,' unpredictable and fluid.

An open question arises; can our performance be inclusive of, can we contain what appears as an enactment (whether consciously or unconsciously) of a contrary value?

Having a conventional music performance background as a bandleader, there is a tendency to take responsibility for anything to do with the performance and accordingly for ego to identify with the consequences. Within the field of conventional performance, one's ability to stage events, to garner structural support, attract and impress audiences, in short, one's reputation is a crucial element in sustaining or developing a (professional) practice.

Most of my performance practice now exists outside of this space, however what remains for me is an ego that does not want to be identified as being responsible for or condoning aesthetic or behavioural approaches to which I have an aversion. I am not sure that I will ever be free of this strong sense of possessing a creative/aesthetic value lexicon, or equally, if such a strong set of values is what I seek to cultivate and maintain.

This list of factors to be undertaken in reputation building within the professional performance realm is barely discernible when applied to THIS Ensemble or other GAIP activities⁶⁰, yet for me, there is an amount of residual concern remaining in maintaining and evolving a certain set of relations with my peers. Within THIS Ensemble, organisational and tonal responsibility to date has been mine (although I am prepared to share this), but the quality and content of the performative experience is ours. For other GAIP events however, any interested party can organise an event and everyone who participates assumes a share of responsibility for themselves, for the other, and for the whole.

THIS Ensemble has never advertised that it welcomes audience participation at its events⁶¹, nor to my knowledge have we seriously discussed adopting such a policy. But through hearsay and openness of the ensemble to guest's involvement, the socially inclusive and socially collaborative aspect begins to show within our practice. I and we are confronted with the reality of incorporating another participant with whom we may have divergent attitudes, concepts and feelings about what it is we are doing in performance and why, how, and what we are performing.

60 THIS Ensemble still relates to a more traditional group of regular performers who, although they may surprise and subvert each other and accommodate the unexpected, are 'contained' with a relational field somewhat like a family. Whereas GAIP is not contained within any particular relational set apart from that formulated by those desiring to participate at the time of its occurrence.

61 However, General Assembly of Interested Parties has indeed made clear an invitational quality to audiences.

As organiser, to what extent am I responsible for and representative of the actions of my collaborators, particularly in the case of an audience member becoming an active participant?

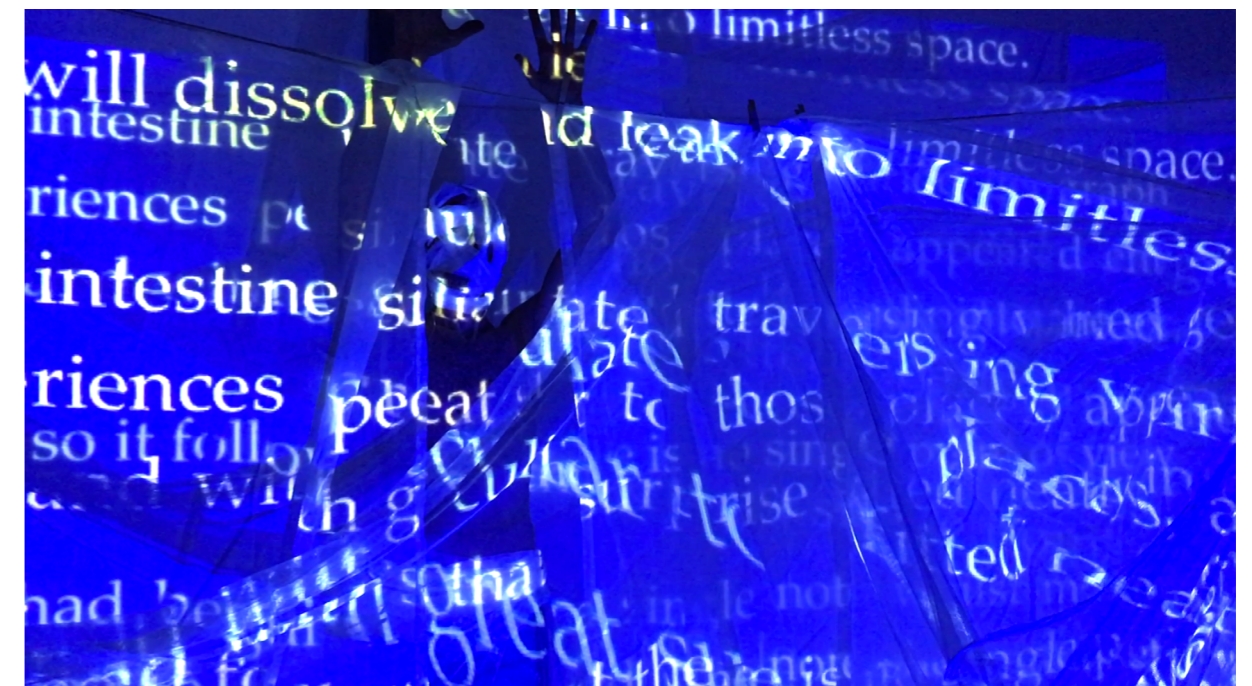
I am without a clear answer.

To balance, there are numerous instances of audience participation being inspiring and without conflict or complexity.

A variation of an outsider joining in occurred during a THIS Ensemble event in the Mallee (December 1, 2016⁶²). Although this was not a spontaneous action and came about through a prior discussion, the group's openness to a very specific situation created a profoundly subtle experience for all involved⁶³. There was no knowing that the circumstances we were entering would be creatively worthy or irrelevant.

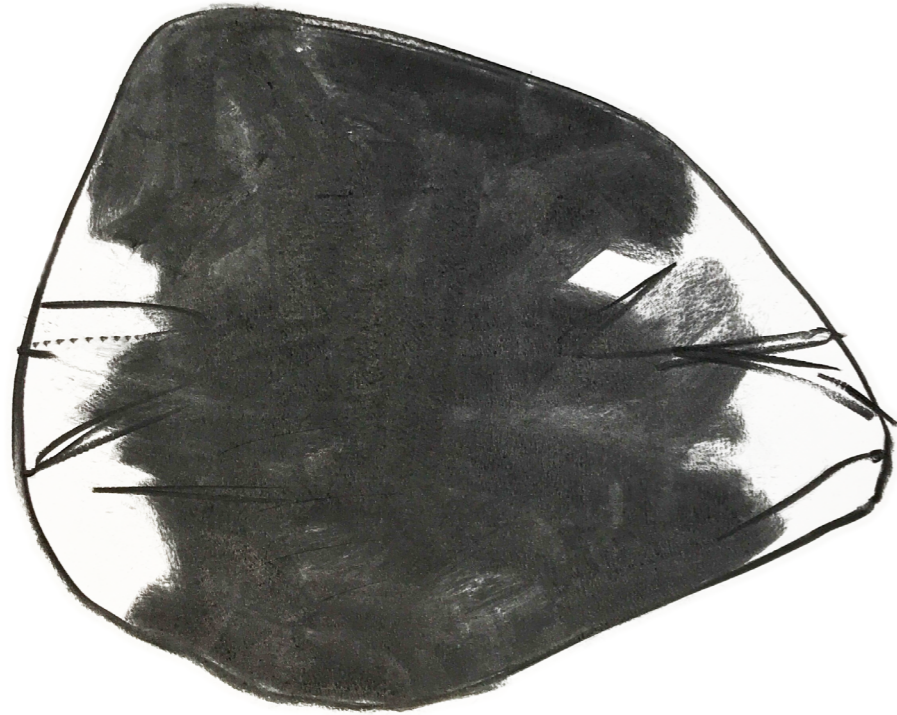
Sound performance was just one small part of an overall weave of modes used to draw out a latent vibrational energy with which we tangibly collaborated. In this case we were the guests of the other as we sought to find our way in, through listening, feeling, observing, sought to participate in a luminosity and a revelation we sensed was imminent in that extraordinary location.

My resolution in relation to an invitational, open performance mode as with THIS Ensemble is to find a way to persist with and through whatever challenging situation or circumstance is encountered. There are as many fruitful responses as there are situations and conditions and so far for THIS Ensemble events all have been creative, workable and distinctive.



62 THIS Ensemble 'Mallee/Wimmera tour 2016' (November 30 – December 5). Full report appears in Appendix F, F_33-39.

63 This story of December 1, 2016 is also referred to in the Introduction, as a second example of how the function of *control* plays out within me, the performer, 18-20.



finding content taking form

As I took up other performative modes and combinatory approaches to creative activity beyond sounding and particularly since the advent of GAIP (around 2011/12), my performance character gravitated toward and embraced hybrid, flexible and indistinct performative modes, from sounding with found objects to spontaneous ritual to simply bearing witness with/in a performative consciousness.

I am no longer beholden to a linear musical practice as a predominant mode of creative expression.

Being freely ready, willing and able to work within alternative creative disciplines stimulates an array of relational possibilities for an arising creative impulse, and equally effects the nature of that impulse as there is less necessity for it to be channeled into a formalised sonic expression.

Commonly, it is through thinking of/in or physically contacting, the materials of the discipline itself, that gives rise to the desire, the excitement, the motivation to continue, and to further coax the inspiration, the nub of the idea, or the momentum that the medium is engendering. I have found that if I 'sit-with', if I stay with the materials of a specific discipline prepared for creative action; if I sit with a guitar, if I sit with electronic devices, if I sit with a blank sheet of paper then those materials and our contextual relation, draw out the non-specific creative energy into conversation as it moves into and through affectivity of the forces of form, modulated by the formal requirements that constitute that discipline.

Sometimes a creative process does not begin with a predetermined form in mind, there is no inevitability in the sensual mode of its expression.

It is then a matter of tracing the trajectory of any idea-feeling that stems from the sensing of this undifferentiated creative impulse. Proposing, through inner play, possible pathways of realisation within specific media, combinations of media or new ways of relation.

Imagining in this way usually requires a sense of spaciousness, plenty of energy and time to 'play around' with the formless, the tenuous. Then, bringing the imaginings into a testing physicality, I must accommodate the 'risk' of things falling apart, not working or not being able to generate flow.

If my obstinate nature allows (!), I can now resolutely move away from a medium if the working process stagnates or stutters or I become ensnared by patterned behaviour, obscuring my quest to bring forth the essence of an original creative impulse.

Naturally I encounter obstacles and difficulties in relation to creative work within any medium but to distract myself from or avoid confronting difficulties by switching mediums is not the motivation of a multi-disciplined creativity.

My motivation comes from a joy in working with the materials of that discipline and I will apply an effort commensurate with my abilities in that moment in search of connection to a flowing work process. If flow does not eventuate because I am unable to perceive it, there is no need to relentlessly persist when another time⁶⁴, another approach, another medium offers an alternative space-time in which to seek resonance.

⁶⁴ When to take action is as fundamental to the formal realisation of an undifferentiated creative impulse as what form that impulse eventually takes. This suggests that *waiting* (along with its opposite, decisive haste), is a crucial technique for creative realisation. Can I just 'sit-with', 'live-with' the unformed feeling as long as it takes for its eventual occurrence or demise ?

A gradual process has brought me to clearly acknowledge my transition from a specific music-centric practice to what is now essentially an aural-visual-performance practice.

To write of this transition has helped clarify that a change has occurred and to realise that the process was an evolving response to causes and effects, before any goal-specific, calculated projections.

Simply put, the way of my current creative practice is the way I *must* now work.

The way I live my life and the way I enact and relate to my creative practices is in accord.

Importantly, I now feel my creative practice is whole.

Disciplines of practice are no longer segregated and prioritised as they once were. This fact has strengthened and emphasised a commingling of the senses, has made clear the intimate and complex relation between physical and perceptual phenomena within and brought forward the opening out of one field into another.

In sensing the sonic aspect of the visual, the sonic is felt through the spatial, textural, dynamic, gestural and tonal relations of the visual material. It is not necessary to be a fully-fledged synaesthete to encounter some 'spillage' or 'cross-referencing' of the sensations felt in relation to one sense experience, say the ears and listening, into those of another, say the eyes and looking. I will not explore synaesthesia here other than to say; any effort made to comprehend the expressions of one medium through the sensibilities of another I have found thoroughly rewarding as a means of enriching, refreshing, revitalising an all-to-familiar process with the medium at hand.

An excerpt from my notebook in 2017;

The aural aspect of the visual; the unheard aural potential of the visual, the virtual aural aspect of the visual is felt but not heard, is energising but is not yet articulated. Yet even so animates, motors my visual work.

The visual aspect of the sonic; the unseen visual potential of the aural, the virtual visual aspect of the aural is felt but not seen, is energising but is not yet articulated. Yet even so animates, motors my aural work.



The space-time of a coming idea or sensual urge before it settles is fertile, enticing and exciting *because* it has not yet landed in form and still has the sense of opening out continuously onto evermore possibility.

It is often the well-trained and concept-bound mind that is unable to hear, see, experience the virtual, yet-to-be always lurking within a dedicated practice. Painting, dancing, sounding, performance could be the landing site of creative impulse as it finds 'a way of relating, a mode of engagement', a symbiotic worlding for both impulse and landing site, co-constitutive of form, co-forming.

Landing sites are the force-fields tending toward the relational form. Through the eventness of force taking form, landings site the environment bodying such that it coalesces into a singularity to which we can attach content. This becoming-event of worlding or landing is first and foremost a feeling, a way of relating, a mode of engagement. Subtracted into an actual occasion, the event folds the infinity of potential landings into a singular iteration, an iteration poised, always, to individuate again, under different and new conditions.⁶⁵



Today, what exists before a creative impulse moves toward form is an underlying inner drive that seeks *more of, more than self*, that must search more deeply within for the expression of some space else.

This powerful urge focuses squarely on expanding, on moving beyond, on challenging the known, the conscious mechanisms that articulate form, a pre-constituted form.

Instead, establishing such an intimacy with the coming of content that no matter which form, forms, or in-between forms ensue, the primary concern is to be fully with, be in and be of the core of that process of coming content, that is, the *felt*.

⁶⁵ Erin Manning, *Always More Than One: Individuations dance* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 23.

For example, when sitting at the computer I construct an audio composition as a response to an indistinct creative desire and whilst working, I begin to sense that sound is not the medium that accords with the unformed urge, the feeling I am trying to get to the heart of and I cannot seem to locate the momentum that carries forth through the original feeling-impulse⁶⁶.

In most situations of this kind, if a sense of flow, if creative fertility can be contacted during the search then the original creative impulse has served its purpose. But if, after some time and effort the working process feels stilted, habitual or uninspired and still the urge remains unrequited, the senses and the imagination will conjure an alternative course, such as; playing guitar outside in the sun, scratching out a charcoal drawing, or constructing still image projections on to the body and so on.

Again, articulating the 'original feeling-impulse' is not as fundamental to creative vitality as is making connection to an ease of movement of enacting, a flowing creative energy, that is; a sense of flow from that creative urge into and through a force of expression that is finding its collaborative form, always ongoing in negotiation of its nature and process with context and form, not a static finale but an expressive singularity seeding new relations.

The original urge is often primarily a desire to feel engaged in a flowing creative movement, to be engaged in an ease of making that is underpinned by an intensity of presence to process, often only revealed as having occurred through exhaustion felt after performing is complete.

Intensity of presence to process means everything is at stake, every participating element is vulnerable, all components are in process and co-constituting a 'mobile ecology'⁶⁷ always on the move. If I am truly a co-composing element then the "I" is being co-composed along with its collaborators, this also means the event (the painting, the sounding, the performance) has concern, feeling and need for me in that process as I do for it. Attentiveness is at the heart of our relation and crucially the *how* of our expression will shape our emergent identity in the shared process of becoming.

I ask rhetorically, what constitutes the content of the creative urge and its level of intensity? Where does it come from? How to connect and remain in touch with the intensity of content felt and to co-form?

There are many questions in relation to connecting to content within, to the felt of creative desire. I respond with an old cliché; where there's a will there's a way. Will, not as a solid, separate entity that wishes power over the world, but will as a burning flame, human's companion in the dark.

66 It may be that an altogether different creative feeling-impulse from the original, emerges during exploration. In which case I could choose to continue pursuing what that is, what is actually happening now, because a sense of *creative flow* is of great value and abandoning this in the search of something elusive and yet to be fully articulated seems at the least, wasteful. It is often a mystery to me what exactly is the nature of the original creative impulse anyway, rather, being more like a *directionality* than a detailed, specific concept. This scenario, that is, to go with the flow of what is happening as opposed to constantly striving to bring the original feeling-impulse-idea to fruition, is highly common for improvisors.

67 Manning, *Always More Than One*, 23.

If the energetic momentum of will is weak if there is no longer the will to endure, to struggle, to search, to invent, to take joy in the materials, then the engine that animates, that powers the worker and the work (not alone but in concert with all else) needs repair, has moved somewhere else, or is dead⁶⁸. If content does not make itself known to me, then it requires the taking of a decision, an act of will to seek its nature, its whereabouts.

Art is a kind of innate drive that seizes a human being and makes him its instrument. The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realise its purposes through him⁶⁹.

Some-space-else is indicated in the more-than, in the extraneous of the existent space and can be indicated, but it is not fabricated, and it is not complex or mysterious for its own sake.

It often reveals itself simply and can be understood as simple in nature because of its relation to the essential, coming through a reductive search.

First focusing on process, instead of form. Some space else may appear unique, untethered to the known, the familiar, or be a variation upon existent processes and their manifestations. Either way the participatory experience is one of vitality, of expansiveness, freshness and often great clarity.

Content does not arise fully formed in the hermetically-sealed isolation of an individual self. Before content becomes that, it requires exposure to the relational compost of life living and so is collaborative.

Some-space-else is a collaborative space of self and other.

68 There are two questions that arise for me from this paragraph and in general regarding individual will and desire as I refer to these both as drivers of creative energy. Can there be a creativity that is not driven by an individual's will, and what *is* will? These complex and deep questions are inevitable for anyone interested in what lies behind a creative practice, however I do not consider it essential to creative work that I fully comprehend what will is. I understand will as the energy that leads me to pick up a pencil, to organise a performance gathering, to make a recording, etc. The degree to which this concept called *Ren* (or self) exercises volition in taking these actions would seem to equate with will, the drive of the individuated self, moving toward fulfilling desires. But often during performance things appear to happen *to me, to us*, where there is little or no clear evidence of a willful act beyond a performative action taken. What unfolds in the process (precisely how actions are taken and the effect these actions have), is greater than an individual's willful plan and is constituted through collaborative feedback. So is there a *collective will* at work here and are there still other forces around the performance environment that participate and need to be accounted for, that may even subvert the individual or collective desire for something in particular?

Is it necessary to understand anything more about desire, other than it exists, in order to use it as a motor of creative action? Desire can both disable and enable my creative practice, the deeper the desire the deeper the impact. So it is important for me to look into the core reason a creative desire exists within. A desire can be so deep it is hard to discern it from what constitutes self. The desire and its determined force forms part of my identity, is allied with will, will finds expression through desire and desire is encouraged by will's power. Sometimes will usurps desires demands and other times desire convinces will of the necessity of the mission. In articulating the specificity of a creative desire's demand, the detail of its needs, a force of momentum fueled further by attachment to a fundamental emotional/psychological disposition becomes creative force for the artist. What is useful is not the actualisation of the desire's demand but the energy of momentum that brings. In following this path, the process reveals the constituent streams that stand in for self, uncovering layers of existence perhaps imperceptible or inaccessible otherwise. Becoming more intimate with this desire and its roots does not mean the journey ceases, it can continue albeit with a different perspective, even so, desire is endless.

I am driven by a desire to experience, to come-to-know and accept my animal nature. A committed pursuit of the essential within my artistic practice has enabled me to fully accord with part of my being that previously had been too frightening to truly inhabit. Moving with the fear of desire gives me access to its drive.

There is also simply the haptic, sensual, even 'spiritual' joy experienced through working with materials of the medium. The physical directness of the act and the capacity for absorption in such pleasures account for a highly motivating desire. At this moment I understand creativity, desire and self as inextricably co-constituting.

69 Carl Jung *C.G.JUNG: Psychological Reflections – A new Anthology of His Writings 1905 – 1961*, selected and edited by Jolande Jacobi (London, Routledge, 1971), 203.

Is there such a thing as an original nature from which content can emerge? Is there such a thing as original self-nature that distinguishes me from you, that articulates my unique being even before “I” becomes “I”, before behaviours and proclivities define my character? Is self-nature what DNA is? I am unable to yet find out, but I take this directionality in working toward some space essential, toward original nature, some space where what is, can be experienced in its and my unobscured, undiluted welling wonder, together.



The separation of form from content, of body from mind declares a split, an illusory duality constantly upheld by the chattering of self-obsessed thought, a mask to the original nature already before thought.

If a fixed, static state is a perceptible illusion, that everything is in process of becoming, constantly moving, then there is nothing more to do, nowhere else to go in search of an original nature always becoming, collaboratively and part of the same movement.

If, through creative imaginings and endeavours I am indeed able to contact a sense of original nature, there is an opportunity for an experience of deep connectedness and embodiment due to the empathetic resonances when a body is of its ecology.

If the mind can hear, can see, can be fully alive to the force of originality constantly springing forth into form, then with each blink of an eye a unique experience enables a feeling of novelty, of some-space-else to be continuously accessible.

In group performance encounters, facilitated in particular by THIS Ensemble and other GAIP events, the multi-discipline format and entanglements that now typify these interactions enable performers to bring the work of their discipline and test its tenets, discover more about its propensities through reactions brought by the friction of form against form, approach against approach.

In challenging definitions and borders of a discipline's terrain, performers may journey into the domain of another form, importing some of this into some of that, or hover somewhere in between without clearly implementing or occupying any specific approach or form.

Such a performative situational structure has enabled me to become a more free-roaming creative with ample capacity and facility to take up discipline-specific expressions from an expansive space of spontaneous action, of observation, of listening, in a lightness of relation to a discipline and the demands of its parameters⁷⁰.

Much of what I have described pertaining to the expression of a creative impulse for me as individual, also applies to me within the social context of a performing group in GAIP-related contexts. I often take a variety of materials into performance to have flexibility in accessing an imagined medium, however at times I also enjoy arriving 'empty-handed' and finding out what constitutes my performative contribution then and there in the unfolding of performance.

Concerns around cultivating and connecting to a sense of flow and prioritising content, the *felt*, are equally important and relevant to creative interactions that involve co-performers. Moreover, the felt of 'my' performance is modulated or is indeed effectively constituted by those with whom I am performing, as the felt emerges from the relationality of this to that.

⁷⁰ As noted throughout, *PLAY (paidia)* is a prime 'technique' in engendering the most creative energy, and in counter balancing the weight of seriousness of the devout practitioner. Play restores connectivity to intuition and so to the quality of trust.

Many of those who participate in GAIP-related events share my enthusiasm for encountering some-space-else and for hovering on the verge of uncertainty and unfamiliarity.

Within a large gathering I often encounter a persona that takes great delight perceiving the spatial, temporal and energetic relational web of performers, context and environment and then engages through action in a way that addresses the perceived totality of the whole. The palette is an unfolding set of interrelations and performance context, and by placing self and its actions just so, the entire relational map shifts this way or that. Such a relation to situational performance particularly, brings forward the phenomenon and the mystery that is life, and self, renewing in every moment, always offering opportunities to negotiate some other movement, some other relation.

I need not this instrument nor that concept to make this creative reality breathe, as it already breathes and as I am already be-ing and the world is already mystery-ing. So the way is cleared for 'hands-free' improvisation with the situation. A scenario replete with a vast richness of further scenarios, brimming with unending creative novelty and variation.



An 'intermediate form' (in between the individual and group, private and public) exists for me in my work with Elnaz Sheshgelani whose creative roots lie in theatre, pre-Islamic Persian Naghali story-telling, puppetry and movement.

In our work together the mode and form of the interaction tends to be divergent and highly situation-dependent and, along with its content, is often ambiguous in belonging to either a public or private dimension.

What constitutes this does not necessarily reside within each of us alone, but is sensed potentially within the situation, the environment or performance context. We find activation of the creative potential through a dance of our individual propensities, the quality of relation between us and perceptible and imperceptible forces. Performative occurrences are contingent and evanescent.

Whatever material or form I take up in our performance work, I know that we share an enthusiasm for the unseen, unheard, yet-to-be-made-tangible, the potential resident everywhere, in every moment, this has become the defining feature of our practice, not the form it may take. Readiness, listening, waiting, immediate recognition and seizing of the moment of performance are hallmarks of our approach.



social practice and audience



social practice and audience

In retrospect, the dismantling of a music-centric practice began in earnest on **March 18, 2014** with THIS Ensemble in front of an audience, it could be safely assumed, who were primed for a specific approach to music-making inside a venue well known for such performances.

Although audience numbers attending any of my concerts over forty odd years from the early 1970's ranged from many to few, I could always expect *an* audience (and relatively informed) to be in attendance bearing witness to the music whether in jazz, pop or experimental idioms. In a way, although always a subject to be questioned by me, the presence of *an* audience was to an extent 'taken for granted' when I staged a music event.

But from around 2012 onwards, with the establishment of GATP, with music-centric performances diminishing and with more performance taking place in non-traditional venues, the notion of *audience* needed reevaluation as it became entwined within the development of a reinvigorated and undivided creative practice.

The role and the concept of a body of listeners and observers shifted from one of occupying a secure position within performance primarily as receivers of experience, to a more ambiguous position, where participation and where effecting the course of events within performance was more readily conceivable. Indeed, as more GATP and THIS Ensemble events occurred outdoors, passers-by, people who may or may not have been knowledgeable about a performance under way, became implicated, embroiled in or would cast skeptical glances over whatever was unfolding before them.

Indeed, an audience now seemed to be constituted more by the incidental witness than purposeful attendee. This occurred concurrently with a shift in the form and content of performance trajectories and these together informed the thrust of the original proposal for this project (entitled; 'The Space Between: Improvisational music as site-specific social practice') promising a more outward looking energy than my previous MFA thesis. Thereby directing attention away from the exclusivities and specificities of a singular artistic discipline toward a broader practice that embraced a theatre of everyday life.

Here, the world at large was the context and provided the materials and circumstances with and within which we functioned as improvisational performers.

Not all performances since 2012 took place outdoors, many were indoors mostly in an environment open for the public to enter without exchange of money⁷¹. Although most of these events were announced via email lists and social media in attempting to entice an interested party to attend, I clearly understood the marginal nature of our work and the reality of attracting a potential audience in an urban environment bulging at the seams with choices for how to spend one's time and energy. This perception prompted further review.

The static concept of audience as an undifferentiated chunk, a single body, seemingly befitting the view within the traditional performance domain, was now instead explained as; an individual or group of individuals being present to an event. Of course, when only one or two visitors attend an event it is easy to relate to the individual as just that – one person, a very small audience.

Nonetheless the perceptual shift occurred.

Individualised, the audience can more readily take on the mantle of a guest, a guest into the space and place and (temporary) community that we are cultivating as we work.

This shift in thinking about audience was simply commensurate with all the other paradigm shifts occurring in my performance practice, helping set the scene to free up expectations of and for audience that I had carried within a more traditional space.

In part due to the performing groups structure and diversity of practice, unorthodox venues, the large number of performers, a diffused 'stage' and extended performance durations, I began to view my co-performers also as audience, as witnesses of an unfolding situation, the heart of which we were discovering then and there.

If they were an audience, then so was I – an audience to my self.

As discussed in the Introduction around the directionalities of private and public, there has clearly been a shift and a return from an outward, socially-considerate emphasis within practice to a more inward orientation, an inner examination. However, this should not be understood as a closing down to the outside, rather I am attempting to become more intimate with the workings and the propensities of self and with the heart of self (if there is such a thing) in order to find out where I come from, to know more intimately the place, the material, the origin of my creativity and so to comprehend how to turn toward the world once more.

71 Although at times visitors might be encouraged to contribute a small amount of money toward costs of the venue usage.

How bare, how uncluttered, can this place of self be made in order to hear, to see, to feel and so to know more of what it might be in its roots, of what may constitute its architecture. Not a knowing that circumscribes, that then delimits possibility. Rather, that reduces, essentialises and so intensifies the ingredients that form the fundamental urges of creativity, stimulating a constant renaissance always penetrating toward the core of what moves the spirit and the body.

The risk is that such a reductive process may lay bare the constitutive elements to such an extent that the mystery, the motivation to get closer, dissolves. Does creative impetus fall away as the sense of having arrived at an essential space begins to be felt, and, the goal is attained? There is also the possibility of 'throwing out the baby with the bathwater' that is, how do I decide what material is mere habitual detritus, thoroughly conditioned reflex or decoration and what is 'essential'.

Or, perhaps a worse fate, that the persistent inquiry kills a fragile ecology of factors that have masked an insubstantial inner relationship with the motivations to create, to make. This can mean devastation for an invested self who finally confronts the fear of an 'inner void'. However, even given this scenario there is the possibility of liberation, in that a fabricated reality is exposed as such and so is no longer necessary to pursue (although one must work through the emotional-psychological ramifications of such a discovery).

Or, as in my case, the *laying bare* of habitualised and unsatisfactory 'pathways of expression', challenged me to search for the very existence and nature of what may constitute content within self (and what may constitute self's content), and then to pursue a course of remaking inner connections to allow that virtual and intangible material to be felt and to be manifested. I eventually concluded, that what constituted content and the drive to express it, was well and truly alive within me, but faulty wiring needed replacing to reconstitute the connective pathways in a manner appropriate for a disaffected and renewing self.

The notion of a singular reduced seed, essence or even centralised 'self' existing as a crucible of creative genius was once, but is no more, an imagining for me. Rather I envisage waves, pulses, sympathetic resonances, concentric spherical movements, a susceptible entanglement of urges, forces, perceptions constantly modulating or re-constituted through feedback and relational affect. Echoes and iterations abound. With presence and enthusiasm, freshness, vitality and the new are but a hair's breadth away.

I have characterised the change in creative orientation as moving from outward-looking to inward-looking in such simplistic terms only to indicate a directionality, a tending toward. The key concern is a need to reinvestigate the fundamental creative drivers of my diverse practice and so to draw out, allow and follow the movement of the work in becoming, anew. The space of the becoming, the fielding of work's movement enfolds an idea of audience as meeting, as hearing, and is found slipping and sliding across a spectrum of private to public access, its constantly adjusting position relative to the mode of work, the type of work undertaken and its time, place and context.

I do not live in a void and so an audience to my work, aside from self, exists whether as incidental or purposeful and regardless of any effort to cultivate it or not. Either way I am in relation to this audience.

A question that may arise from this relation is; can I expand that audience (increase its quantity) by paying more attention to its needs or through employing better (or more) marketing techniques? Another similar question; can I deepen this audience's experience (increase experiential quality) of my work by, likewise, paying more attention to its perceived needs?

Rhetoric from arts funding bodies and commercial interests (which constitute the vast majority of structural supports in facilitating connection between artist and audience) articulate the necessity for the artist to 'develop', to cultivate their audience (increase quantity) so meaningful exchange can occur (money being a key component).

For some artists, to consider the viewer, or to be motivated by the requirements of the listener may well be a highly creative, indeed integral part of their work, or even the reason for engaging in their work in the first place. This may be a creatively rewarding and stimulating direction to take and would seem compatible with audience development, although demands for increasing an audience's quantity may be a more difficult proposition to respond to creatively.

The bodies of power insist that it is incumbent upon the artist, the performer to sufficiently consider the imagined other's experience, to take part in or provide the structures that are designed to facilitate an interaction between artist and other and insist that an external or objective evaluation of the work is the final arbiter of worth.

This is a background against which I and most of my contemporaries pursue an arts practice and against which the notion of audience is set.

If exchange of money between the supplier and receiver of a service, a product, or an experience is removed as an essential ingredient for the ideal art event, I can then more freely conduct encounters and relations in a manner fit for my perception of how I understand or experience my work, without needing to negotiate a parallel value system (to which money belongs) in order to do so. This description befits most of my efforts in staging public performances of the recent past.



By and large in the past I have not been able to consistently procure materials, structures or scenarios to facilitate creative work through the labours of that work. This has both enticed a re-imagining of what my work is and/or expedited funding that work by other means. Relative freedom from the strictures of this 'art production value system' has supplied an alternative to a fabricated pressure that does not belong to me and allows me to form a personal interpretation of what an audience is and where is its meaning in relation to a gradual change of emphasis in creative orientation.

To pursue this line of thinking I will describe two common experiences within my practice.

Firstly, in relation to music making, a video or a painting performance where I am alone; I am the first listener, the first observer, the first experiencer of the work as it becomes apparent. In some situations, as the maker and witness of what is unfolding, I might decide that the process ends then and there, terminating the manifestation of the work and thus denying another's involvement in that (or I might not).

Secondly, in a collaborative performance duet with only two performers present, both performers are concurrently the first observers, experiencers of the improvisatory work as it collaboratively reveals itself, albeit through their unique individual lenses.

In both instances, a witness, an audience to an incipient revelation of co-composition is on hand, and there is the potential for an experience of authenticity and meaning, in part due to the intimacy and personalised nature of the interaction.

Performer and audience are interwoven.

In other contexts where audience is an outsider, that is an (uninitiated) unsuspecting or purposeful audience, they are in some capacity witness to the event and as such, then implicated in its making and so too in contribution. The clarity of their presence is worthy of celebration of a kind that invigorates the work in process, not necessarily in a conscious way as in; "Oh there's a visitor present, now we are really performing!", but as an admission of the energetic force of the other into affective relation with a work underway.

The conventional basis for responding to the inquiries of 'what is an audience and where is its meaning' is constituted by an idea of a body outside of a centralised activity looking in, listening in, with that body's value measurable in quantity. And so it then follows that no external body present to a performance would constitute no audience present, thus marking a performance's irrelevancy or even suggesting that a performance has not occurred, through its incompleteness.

This logic depicts the value system under which I functioned as a performer and by which I still am somewhat influenced.⁷²

⁷² There is a notion of performance as putting on a show, a display that focuses on promoting its values to others, that cultivates a sense of being watched as a motivating force. Self-presentational concerns are an inevitable part of an urbanised, non-indigenous art practice, but through deepening relation with self and other, can I minimise the sense of 'acting-for', of pandering to the imagined validating external?

As the commodification of (personal, private) experience increases so to does the need to protect through a developed awareness of the rapacious and profane external by declaring a sacred space-time that does not require the intruding eye to function in fullness, or to ratify authenticity.

However, through the course of this project I have found value in human to human, or human to non-human encounter that is defined by the nature of its quality, rough or smooth, dull or brilliant, sad or joyful. A value that is immeasurable in the extent of its felt effect because at any given moment its process is still entering a new phase of becoming its next phase.

Potential is revealing itself and more is being seeded.

I will happily stop now and try and articulate what this phase is, where it came from and where it may lead, but this does not mean the process also stops now, the process will carry on regardless.

In further expanding the notion of audience, I have found that self is not a fixed entity but layers, intersections, spherical movements (expanding and contracting) of processes (collaborative with the world in its processes) to which the always becoming "I" is audience.

If audience is here then it is no longer only an external body of quantity, it is insinuated everywhere, and its meaning is in the nature of the relation brought through performative presence. The *worlding* of self and co-composing of participative forces coming forth together.



What an audience is and where is its meaning correlates to what a society is and where is its meaning. My performance practice is still a social practice in that 'social' is no longer exclusively a group of bodies external to each other gathered together in orchestrating a creative event as witness, as participant (and with value in quantity), but rather an acknowledgement and a gathering of forces human and non-human, of similarities and of differences that an event brings together in the co-composing of a creative occurrence for itself and its felt effect within the world.



who or what is (on the precipice of) creating and collaborating ?

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I devised GAIP in the hope of expediting opportunities to refresh, update and transform what was by and large an unsatisfactory and fragmented performance practice. Although there was no overarching plan or long-term design, I just began trimming my creative thoughts and desires in search of essential elements and continued from there.

I was trying to renew my relation to music performance practice, to reinvigorate and to reposition self in the relational arrangement of creative practice in general. This arising out of a recurrent perception that my inner life and my creative practice as a whole, were both somehow and to some extent 'out of sync' with each other.

GAIP came as an external beacon enabling and signifying a creative life realignment within, a device that assisted me to imagine outside of a well-worn artistic identity, to co-compose something else, some space else that would not presume, but rather re-look, re-hear, re-think, re-move, re-relate until the always arising pure movement of pulsating life is felt, and the ever present new moments fully perceived, afresh, enabling my vibrant aliveness. And so to continue from there.

The extraordinary array of open-minded, open-hearted collaborators who found pleasure, creativity and energy within the gatherings of GAIP events lifted me lightly and facilitated a (sometimes clumsy) transition over numerous episodes towards acceptance and ease; while patiently witnessing and partaking in experimental probings, where 'good-taste' was often exceeded; events and occurrences where ineptitude was accepted and celebrated, where the sloppiness of over-indulgence gave a sense of moving backwards; where an individual pushing something too far is the excuse a critic uses to deride the whole; where there is no necessity for audience, as any non-performer in attendance is inevitably implicated as a co-performer, to eventually realise that they too can share and have something unique to bring as a co-constituting element (even if that may be physically passive).

All this and more rolling into and out of a performance that can embrace the specifics of Elnaz' puppets and Nahgali story-telling theatrical methodology, of Tony Yap's trance state butoh-inspired body work, of the vast expanse of Adrian Sherriff's world-of-music traditions, a palette of pan cultural sonic inferences.

As I slip in between, I have a sense that the "I" of past musical commitment has dissipated, has receded into a more intrinsic, elemental creative expression — but who, what or where is the "I" that now collaborates!?

My artistic persona designed the structures to cultivate and expedite change, informed by long-emergent forces constantly and subtly remaking the "I".

The extent of this change, where it is leading, how does a shift register, what constitutes its appearance, is provisionally anticipated, with each perceptible movement of change hosting a negotiation between an artistic-self directing its interests and the environmental nest of co-creative, co-constitutive elements always present.

There is no moment separated from any previous or subsequent moment, no division of time, so the imminence of alteration, whether subtle variation or radical transformation is on its way until a fullness of acknowledgement arises, and yet always to be modulated by further emergent forces.

I accept that the artistic persona "I" is a conglomeration of processes, an ongoing conversation between internal and external forces and the ever-changing specificities of context.

Despite specific events acting as markers, as signifiers, I cannot precisely locate in time the beginning of a force set in motion, such as the force that has brought me to try and bring this text to be. Still, the force parsed from the continuity of its moving-toward expression to actuality in a thought in a feeling, in an action taken, that is; thoughts arise, actions are taken, consequences felt again, and again feelings, thoughts, actions consequences, and again and again. I am located (in or as 'a coming-to-form') amongst, amidst a swirl of permeable processes on their way, coalescing and disintegrating, co-composing and decomposing.

When the skin becomes not a container but a multidimensioned topological surface that folds in, through, and across spacetimes of experience, what emerges is not a self but the dynamic form of a worlding that refuses categorization. Beyond the human, beyond the sense of touch or vision, beyond the object, what emerges is relation⁷³.

Presence to the creative (destructive) moment and the continuity of moments before and after, to actualising, bringing forth the sound, the image, the movement from waves of human and non-human energy, a relational worlding, has challenged habituated mechanisms, dissipated peripheral concerns that once clamoured for attention and has further corroded what once constituted an individual artistic identity, where distinctions between artist and man, authorship and otherness, are no longer firmly in place. Where naming, measurement, judgment are the thieves of originality; (I am) dissipating toward a co-constitutive be-ing.⁷⁴

In this there is freedom previously unknown.

⁷³ Erin Manning, *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 12.

⁷⁴ Philosopher Derek Parfit in questioning self's identity asks; is there, can there be such a way of understanding and living as a *distributed self*, a self not contained within a single body defined by its birth and death, but shared between multiple related entities? He adds that this is hard to conceive of if one believes in the existence of an entity called a soul.

This led me to speculate on the notion of a *distributed self* or *selves*, that converges through timely relation with people and place, and is to an extent co-constitutive with the elements at hand. Not centralised, hermetic, stable, consistent and indivisible regardless of all else, but multi-centred, porous, mobile and relational. To be creative with this notion of the sieve of self, I imagine a spectrum from contracted self to expanded self (selves), not that self occupies one pole or another, but rather fluxes and blooms through matrices, intersecting with any phenomena, the relationality of which constitutes the be-coming 'self' (a congealment of assembling forces), entirely co-responsible for its form, its trajectory, as all that participate in this uncertain community are likewise.

This text coming forth in a context of philosophy needs further comment.

I bring an effort to be transparent about my creative motivations, desires and the phases of becoming, and so the lacking, what has been perceptively missed and the as-yet-undiscerned potential of the creative project, all through the medium of text.

The text tells of a study of creative, performative expression-movement as it is lived through one ongoing story and seeks to reveal what constitutes the perception-action-event-ness of different phases of this movement.

How this attempt translates into philosophy is something difficult for me to assess, as I come to the world primarily as a worker in conventional arts practices, concerned as to how I live in the world this way.

Actionist philosophy engages me as it *'concerns the ecology of powers of existence. Becoming in the midst. Creative change taking place, self-enjoying, humanly or no, humanly and more.'*⁷⁵

A philosophic dimension is undeniable for me when attempting to come to terms with the existence of a creative-living activity. When inquiring; what is this, why is this, where does it come from, who is participating in it, how does it world and so on, there is an active awareness that the questioning constitutes a cut into or out of continuous movement, the separation of a self from the background of bare life living activity always in motion.

Perhaps the stuff of philosophy is not to be separated out from the stuff of artistic expression, perhaps in my sounding experience my philosophic be-ing, my political be-ing, my aesthetic be-ing and all other aspects of what might constitute me in those performative string of moments, all feed into *just* sounding, all participate in the co-formations of musician and world in just that time and place and in just that way.

But I come to this textual space first as one who is of a creative performance practice, an improviser within situations, who now arranges letters in the virtual white space of a computer screen to indicate to a stranger some of what has been an experience within a field of creative endeavour.

I had hoped to find a way to bring through text, precision (in describing condition, context and effect) and lucency (in engendering affectivity for the reader and indeed self), a sense of opening out, of the more-than, extra to what might be immediately apparent when using a combination of words-letters. That is; to not close out, to indicate yet not deny that which is in excess of, and as such, what is implicated in and therefore co-constitutive of.

The philosophic content of this document (if there is such a thing) is 'home-spun' in that it comes from thinking in and around the resonances of creative events from another time-space and then, through encounters with philosophic texts that seem to relate to interpretations I have drawn from my performance practice, I derive inspiration from this material to re-think, again.

⁷⁵ Brian Massumi, *Seamless and event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 28.

Through the processes indicated in this document, I more deeply feel a performance practice, in all its guises, that sustains my place within the world and that comes of the world.

Reading *'Story, song, dance, movement, motif/symbol, painting and carving are integral parts of our languages'*⁷⁶, reminded me that all mediums are part of the same weave of culture in aboriginal life. This simple statement encourages me to aspire toward interaffectivity within my own practice, place and living. Media, modes of expression, cleaved from each other for specialisation and focus as art practices, are naturally interwoven, enmeshed in serving expression, in this case as expression of being, *'as integral parts of our languages.'*

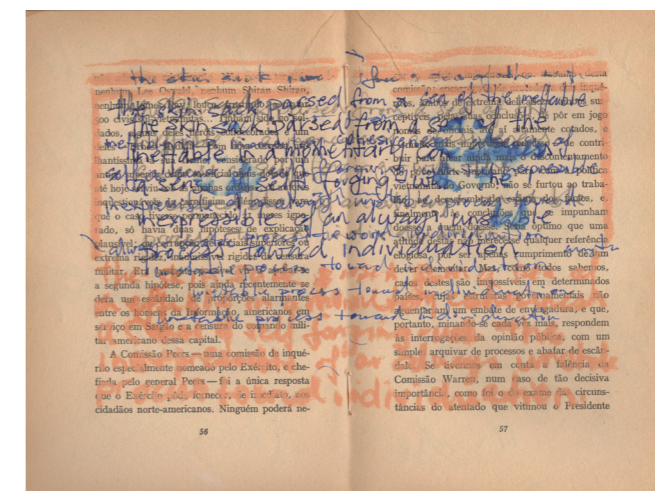
The land in which I live is offering unexpected learnings and connection.

Maintaining an intuitively felt relation to creative process permits me to survive satisfactorily in the world.

The actual experience and the virtual dimension of the work and its processes provide meaning and further motivation. The translation of raw feeling into form, whether that be into an intangible sensing or a recognisable discipline, shows each mode of translation as unique in its manner of elucidating life to self.

The raw material that has stimulated this text, belongs to the physical actions, inner processes and the living, situational relations of a creative occurrence in play.

This space of artist-medium-life is where whatever is vital forges forth in collaborative creative movements virtual until the moment of felt, sensual manifestation, teetering on a precipice until slipping into some-space-else and with every mark, movement, sound into yet another space else, only fully perceived in its eccentricity in the aftermath and with always more to be encountered, to be co-constituted.



⁷⁶ Nyernila – *Listen Continuously: Aboriginal Creation Stories of Victoria*, Project Co-ordinator Vicki Couzens (Melbourne: Creative Victoria, 2014). "Our stories are our Law. They are important learning and teaching for our People. They do not sit in isolation in a single telling. They are accompanied by song, dance and visual communications; in sand drawings, ceremonial objects and body adornment, rituals and performance.", 4.



This project will not conclude.

The creative adventure is ongoing, in revelation and struggle, insight and question.

The remaining text touches on lingering material in the midst of coming to be, or not, and so indicates the nature of the process articulated within this document.

Where is **discontinuity** as a creative force (creative opportunity), not separate from continuity but as a spherical inceptive breathing in and out that truly takes on a revolutionary incipency with each blink of an eye, that is radically new each encountered moment? Is it full presence and attuned attentiveness, serendipitous accident or a conversation between these notions that can crack access to the immanent potential there for us all but rarely able to be lived? Discontinuity as the break that brings a shock because it is non-linear, it insists there is nowhere to go, or there is somewhere different or inconsequential to creatively go. Discontinuity, the unexpected, unanticipated disruption of a continual movement, not a break separated by a void, but an eddy, a fall, a spout that unpredictably moves, unable to be known at that moment as, nonetheless, continuous. Discontinuity as a technique in accessing the vastness of creative material awaiting in the overlooked, locked away in the rejected detritus that the focused pursuit inevitably wastes. As 'progress' seeks the seemingly most important, main concern, biggest profit, most obvious benefit, etc., inevitably much else is cast aside in this pursuit. What lies unimagined, unheard in this scrap, is the future's gold, the new mind's resource, the uninitiated's sustenance, awakening from a slumber. How much is too much experience of disruption, before a persistent discontinuity refuses to allow or overwhelms my sense of be-ing connected, of emerging from place, place of integrity, required to be felt again and again and again to function as such?

What is the **radical simplicity** is a preparedness to take into consideration only that micro-material in front of me. The variety-poor, numerically-poor, seemingly singular and limited, taken as a universe of possibility awaiting entry, a spherical puffing in and out, a

non-linear contraction and expansion, allowing for the perception of fundamental wonder at such a thing, such a space, the phenomenon of all that constitutes living. And perhaps inevitably for a human, how is this possible? To hear through to see through and beyond the habitualised and codified, mechanisms of perception adopted in persuing survival. Are discontinuity (macro?) and radical simplicity (micro?) somehow opposites, or somehow complementary?

As all once extraneous is coopted into the service of an artist in search of novelty, of possessing or accessing the next thing that states avant-garde, or genius, or simply 'worthy', is there no material remaining outside, no detritus that has not been sifted? Or does this question itself reveal the flawed search. Is a radical simplicity an antidote to a constant scanning, a sifting that itself expresses and perpetuates lack as it is beguiled momentarily by appearances? Does radical simplicity only exist as a perceptual position on a relative scale, so that with ever more detailed, intricate examination abundant complexity is perceptible?

As this dissertation tracks the course of my core-discipline-centric practice toward something/space-else, does it equate with or extend to a process of dispersal of the centralised entity of ego? Does this then mean a singular entity is dislodged by an ecology of contributors, that is a distributed self or selves, a wave movement, a murmuration of interested elements? Is there, can there be such a way of understanding and living as a distributed self, a self not reliant upon a concept of unitary identity?

*Voicing such inconclusive speculation leads me to ask, what is it to speculate, more; to poetically speculate? Not as mere conjecture but as a living proposition. A proposition tested in the only meaningful way possible, that is; LIVED, lived through, lived out in the everyday.
Am I capable of such poetically speculative living?
There is no time to loose :- it has, regardless, already begun.*

*During a phone conversation a student posed the question,
'Can I care for myself in (or through) performance?
Is caring for self in performance commensurate with moving through
and beyond perceptual or experiential limitation?
Is caring for my self commensurate with caring for others?
I carry this as a koan.*

He later commented that 'Performance is living intensified'.
That seemed so profoundly simple and conclusive to me at that moment,
that I could say or think no more.



(JUST) LISTENING⁷⁷

Become aware of the rising and falling of your breath
Listening to the sounds
Inside you, outside you

Hear those sounds – with no name,
free of their significance,
one sound, is no more or no less important than any other sound

When the thought of what is making that sound (or any other thought) arises in your mind
let that thought go – and return to just listening

We seek to identify the source, to name, to give value, to judge
(the usefulness of) a sound
But here, now, we let go of all this activity
and just listen to the being of the sound

Free your self of the thought, by returning your attention to the sound

Sounds have particular qualities that distinguish them from other sounds,
examine the detail of those qualities with listening,
not with thinking

Let your listening move through the soundscape
fully accepting what is to be heard now, at this moment

when any thought interrupts your listening, leave it alone and return
to just listening, just hearing

A new quality of sound is perceived, the sound changes,
a new sound is distinguished
Let your self to stay there – just listening to the sounds,
nothing more is needed

Just being here
breathing with the sounds,
breathing in the sounds
breathing out the sounds

Free your self of the thought, by returning your attention to the sound
Use the sound to bring you into this present moment, to remind you;
just listening

Just listening to the sound is all that is needed.

.

(Through this exercise we are practicing; presence, awareness, non-judgmental immersive listening.
Impediments can be; anticipation, reaction, association.)

⁷⁷ This listening exercise devised for educative settings, also functions well as a guided mediation. A phrase is spoken and then a pause of any duration, for the words to resonate.

I recently stumbled across the aboriginal term 'Nyernila' from a publication (accessible as a pdf file online) *Nyernila – Listen Continuously: Aboriginal Creation Stories of Victoria* (Melbourne, Creative Victoria, 2014). "Nyernila means something along the lines of what is described in Miriam Rose Ungemerr's 'dadirri' – deep and respectful listening in quiet contemplation of Country and Old People. This is how our Old People, Elders and the Ancestors teach us."

As *Nyernila* is part of our place, it is a tradition to draw on in navigating contemporary life. If we can find it, the respect required for its practice will be fostered.

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p8: 4 Simone drawing by RW

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p10: *directionality* drawing RW

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p13: *Rumination* at rural studio, photo RW

p17: *Lake Albacutya 5* RW at 'The Desert Within', photo Myfanwy Hunter

p19: Robert Cooke's Walpeup hut, photo Juana Beltrán

p23: *arrangement 23* students of Creative Music Collaborations 2 class Box Hill TAFE, Melbourne, Australia. Rebecca Hart, Jeremy Yeo (lying), Troy Rainbow, Max Posthoorn (upright), photo RW

p24: RW with projected image of Simon Fisher's great uncle, collaborated image Simon Fisher and RW

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p30: *Budding guitarist* circa 1974, photo Mark Prytz

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p130: *fright* Elnaz Sheshgelani, video still edited RW

p131: *suspense* painting assemblage RW

p133-34: *St. Pauls tomb* Juana Beltrán (lying), RW, Gita Kinanthi (kneeling) Jill Orr, Tony Yap, Meredith Elton, photo Steve Chong

p138: *supply chain* drawing RW

p140: *arrangement 27d* students of Creative Music Collaborations 2 class, Box Hill TAFE, Melbourne, Australia. Rebecca Hart, Jeremy Yeo (against wall), Troy Rainbow, Max Posthoorn, photo RW

p141-42: *ESSF* painting RW

p146: *skin sack parsed* excerpt from a story overlay by RW, upon the book by Alice Nicolau *Estes Massacres Que Nos Vem Do Vietnam* (Lisbon, Prelo,1970) 56-57

p147: *San Lucar work* photo Quini Quintero

p149: *San Lucar work 2* photo Quini Quintero, editing RW

Audio and video file information

Audio Assemblages #1 (12:26), **#2** (14:52), **#3** (20:12).

The audio assemblage is a compilation of selected extracts from audio recordings made during performances given in the course of that year.

Audio assemblage #1 [2014] for example, begins with an extract of the recording from THIS Ensemble on March 18 at the Make It Up club (the first of four key events described in my text).

There were more than fifty recorded events that year.

My goals were; to keep the final audio assemblage under fifteen minutes duration, to choose recordings in chronological order from March to December with no necessity to include a selection from every performance, to offer a panorama of sounds and approaches to the listener and to make this a creative work, satisfyingly complete as it stands, beyond being merely 'representative' or as 'evidence' of a past event.

Audio assemblages #2 [2015] and **#3 [2016]** were constructed with the same criteria. I have decided not to include further audio assemblages for the years 2017-19 as this would significantly increase the volume of material laid before the listener.

The diversity and quality of performances heard on those audio recordings over those years continued to change and develop, but enough can be experienced and understood, in relation to this thesis, through focusing on the audio material existent between 2014 and 2016.

AUDIO ASSEMBLAGE #1 [2014] (12:26). External link: <https://youtu.be/u7paAbGnj58>
Performers list, in order of appearance;

Michael McNab	Adrian Sherriff
Brett Thompson	Elnaz Sheshgelani
Samuel Hall	Adam Simmons
Matthias Schack-Arnott	Domenico De Clario
Steph Bell	Geoffrey Watson
Anita Hustas	Reuben Lewis
Jenny Ruth Barnes	Joe Talia
Alice Hui-Sheng Chang	Scott Tinkler
Niharika Senapati	Dave Beck
Ashley McLellan	Angie Seah
Freya Schack-Arnott	Tony Hicks
Scott McConnachie	Ruby Hughes
Jon Heilbron	Aviva Endean
Will Guthrie	Zeke Ruckman
Chris Bekker	Josten Myburgh
Dur-é Dara	Tim Crafti
Carmen Chan Schoenborn	Takashi Takiguchi
Clinton Green	

AUDIO ASSEMBLAGE #2 [2015] (14:52). External link: <https://youtu.be/ZZ-zoMMWjmk>
Performers list, in order of appearance;

Clinton Green	Elnaz Sheshgelani
Matthias Schack-Arnott	Erkki Veltheim
Michael McNab	Dave Beck
Scott McConnachie	Scott Tinkler
Dur-é Dara	Joe Talia
Janette Hoe	Jenny Ruth Barnes
Juana Beltrán	

AUDIO ASSEMBLAGE #3 [2016] (20:12). External link: <https://youtu.be/HMjF56fr2no>
Performers list, in order of appearance;

Michael McNab	Chun-liang Liu
Clinton Green	Takashi Takaguchi
Myfanwy Hunter	Tony Yap
Elnaz Sheshgelani	Erkki Veltheim
Dur-é Dara	Yan Yang
Carmen Chan Schoenborn	Amaara Raheem
Adrian Sherriff	Tim Crafti
Jenny Ruth Barnes	Lisa Dethridge
Shani Mohini-Holmes	Reuben Lewis
Juana Beltrán	Ewen
Scott McConnachie	Mick Douglas
Tony Buck	UB
Scott Tinkler	Peter Forrester
Stephen Magnusson	Moonambel frogs
Alison Zhu	Candice Boyd

As of 2019 and for the following few years, the website www.gaipsite.com will continue to be active and serviced periodically, if you wish to contact or participate.

VIDEO ASSEMBLAGE [2019] (11:40). External link: <https://youtu.be/lccQyGyWaYA>

Most of the material for this video was recorded between 2017 and 2019 and consists largely of solo work, based around text.

Thanks to Simon Fisher, Isabella Greco, Juana Beltrán, Elnaz Sheshgelani for collaborative creativity and filming assistance.

hyperlinks

p5: https://www.academia.edu/4935949/Humanistic_Geography--Lived_Emplacement_and_the_Locality_of_Being_A_Return_to_Humanistic_Geography_2015

p6: www.gaipsite.com

p7: footnote 6, 'An Artist Walks Through A Doorway, An Approach To Liminal Theatre' by Paul W. Blackman, article link <https://clintongreenmusic.com/2018/05/07/review-of-gaip-this-ensemble-at-map-rainbow-last-week/>

p38: THIS Ensemble 18.03.14 video links #1 <https://youtu.be/4rILJYpJRD0>, #2 <https://youtu.be/tNAtk-ZvZ4Y>, #3 <https://youtu.be/XKibhbTk4zA>

footnote 20; TOE 1 <https://youtu.be/5Eq4qMUsAPw>, TOE 2 <https://youtu.be/mWdrlczSSfY>, TOE and Mowson <https://youtu.be/nhVC3kpgBQc>

p43: 'Sound Body' video links #1 <https://youtu.be/-s477JyANAO>, #2 <https://youtu.be/a8ayWXzTkYE>, #3 <https://youtu.be/iyjO8f7sDzs>, #4 https://youtu.be/ICvq_PUQV14, footnote 24; CURRENT 'Sound Body' http://currentmusic-event.com/?page_id=468

p45: THIS Ensemble 01.08.14 video links #1 <https://youtu.be/oZRjGA0n3cU>, #2 https://youtu.be/q-xZVR_UahU

p46: 'Sound Body Sight' video links #1 https://youtu.be/_FDlxPWmflQ, #2 <https://youtu.be/ozMsBtF5QAk>, #3 <https://youtu.be/pOF36SU3ApM>, #4 <https://youtu.be/smqw4ruOZNo>, THIS Ensemble 10.10.14 video link <https://youtu.be/oXNguftPnBc>

p48: THIS Ensemble Quiet Noise IV video link https://youtu.be/_w82DbkOhgl, INTERSECTION video link https://youtu.be/9ATB_csUYSk

p49: THIS Ensemble 30.05.14 video links https://youtu.be/XvgLwg_T9U, #2 <https://youtu.be/6lvVfCpqSMQ>

p50: 12:00 -> 00:00 video link <https://youtu.be/xZWbyjZegyc>

p52: *gather* video link <https://youtu.be/58M3mS6BCYg>

p56: THIS Ensemble Wimmera 2015 video links #1 <https://youtu.be/vyWX3DknSvk>, #2 <https://youtu.be/C9Xc-QmJ-y4>, #3 <https://youtu.be/TUu7CJYQlbg>

p67: 'what remains' (excerpt) video link <https://youtu.be/yhN9VsyP-yY>

p68: footnote 41; Clinton Green, Michael McNab, RW audio recording link <https://shamefilemusic.bandcamp.com/album/at-the-salt-museum>

p80: footnote 46; Brian Massumi, *Theses on the Revaluation of Value*, quote taken at at 36 mins. 53 secs. <https://youtu.be/lhYPAvCROuo>

p150: footnote 76; Nyernila - Listen Continuously: Aboriginal Creation Stories of Victoria

p162: footnote 11; *Experimental Music in Melbourne: A Definition and Historical Overview*, footnote 12; *Some Musical and Sociological Aspects of Australian Experimental Music*, footnote 13; <https://lamama.com.au>, footnote 16; <http://domicodeclario.com>

p163: footnote 17; <http://www.theatreoftheordinary.com>, footnote 18; <http://www.warrenburt.com>, footnote 19; <http://stelarc.org/projects.php>

p165: footnote 22; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VlldJhIFSE>

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Addendum

In setting a context for this dissertation I shall give the reader some information on the author, to reveal the lense through which the work is experienced and observed.

I was born into a democratic society and supplied with all possible developmental opportunities through a balanced and loving family, continual access to health care, food and shelter, financial security, education and freedom of choice. I have never had to fight a war or confront extenuating hardships that have threatened my survival.

I have never been made to feel that any activity I would wish to undertake is denied to me outright. I have suffered no persecution as a consequence of my race and skin colour (Anglo-Saxon, white), politics (democratic, liberal), religion (non-religious), gender (heterosexual), class (middle class) or occupation (artist). I understand the conditions into which I have been born are about as optimum as it gets for a human, therefore I am highly privileged.

I have had the freedom to discover and develop myself as an artist and have felt at odds with prevailing orthodoxies, yet at the same time I have been supported and sustained by the systems of power that underpin such orthodoxies.

Over the passage of time I feel a growing and deep gratitude for the life I have been and am afforded.

At some stage within the first few years of my research I encountered a YouTube video by philosopher Brian Massumi that triggered an interest in his actionist philosophy, leading to a discovery of the work of his close associate Erin Manning.

Although the language and arrangement of thought was not immediately legible to me, I glimpsed enough through the video presentations and text to gain entry to their thinking procedures. The initial points of interest expanded and I gradually found what seemed and still seems to be a way of thinking, of addressing issues of structured thought, that directly connect to certain features in my own practice, clarifying and accelerating my comprehension of these features as being important to the development and articulation of creative process.

A way of thinking is the underlying, fundamental force.

For me, every word from both Manning and Massumi is on the move, coming before it is read and written, seeding future words/thoughts/feelings, probing through convention in search of novelty, of purity.

This is astounding to me, and so somewhat troubling to cut in to its fabric, hacking parts out for exemplification.

Instead of referencing vast amounts of pointedly relevant material I would seek to keep citations in my thesis to a minimum. Rather, to use the inspiration received by examining their work, to embody insights and to process understandings through my lived practice and reflections, to demonstrate the application of the philosophy in living, signalled within the creative activity and as far as possible within the text of this research project.

To immediately contradict myself, and to partially appease, I offer some salient chunks of texts, consonant with my project.

When I encountered this from Manning and Massumi in ‘Thought In The Act’; ‘Research-creation as we propose to practice it is a polyrhythmic attuning of mutually composing autonomous activities that collectively resist definitive capitalist capture and affirm value in terms that cannot be quantified’⁷⁸, the words resonated truly for my own ‘methodology’ (if that indeed is a term I can apply to this quote and its usage in my dissertation !).

In discussing the *Way of Art*⁷⁹, Manning offers

If the art of time is inextricably linked to practice as way, then practice and intuition must always be seen as co-operative: intuition is the fold in experience that allows for the staging of a problem that starts a process on its way, or curbs a process into its difference, creating the germ for practice.

This raises the question of where intuition is situated in relation to practice’s inherent double: participation. Is participation also intuitive? I would say that where art as event is mobilized through an intuitive process that crafts and vectorizes the problem that will continue to activate it throughout its life, participation is the sympathy for this process.⁷⁹

Intuition is a rigorous process that agitates at the very limits of an encounter with the as-yet-unthought. Artfulness is the sympathetic expression of this encounter.⁸⁰

Artfulness does not belong to the artist, nor to the art as a discipline. If it need be attached to something, it could be said to be what the most operational process of research creation seeks to actualize. Artfulness is the operative expression of worlds in the making, the aesthetic yield that opens experience to the participatory quality of the more-than.⁸¹

Artfulness is an immanent directionality, felt when a work runs itself, or when a process activates its most sensitive fold, where it is still rife with intuition. This modality is beyond the human. Certainly, it cuts through, merges with, captures, and dances with the human, but it is also and always more-than human, active in an ecology of resonances that are most readily perceived by the neurodiverse. The process now has its own momentum, its own art of time, and this art of time, excised as it is from the limits of subject-centered volition, collaborates to create its own way. The force of art as way is precisely that it is more-than-human.⁸²

Contemplation makes the artful felt. It does so in the event, in the uneasy balance between seeding a practice and becoming-with a practice. Here in the midst of life-living, artfulness reminds us that the “I” is not where life begins, and the “you” is not what makes it art. . . . This is why artfulness is rarer than art. For artfulness depends on so many tendings, so many implicit collaborations between intuition and sympathy. And more than all else, it depends on the human getting out of the way.

Artfulness: the way the art of time makes itself felt, how it lands, and how it always exceeds it landing.⁸³

These articulations of the movement at the core in becoming art process, compel me toward the more-than of my practice.

So, I will cite the sticky liquid that slithers into and out of our worldly and perceptual phenomena, as a fundamental force, a movement that I recognise.

A quality of movement embedded in the gesture was brought into focus for me through my mentor David Tolley and partner Dur-é Dara as our work evolved. The matter of *how* I moved, and particularly what was thinking’s relation to this movement, was crucial to the nature of our experience and creative activity specifically. This was not discussed at length, yet was implicit in the actions of our music-making, performance, meal preparation and eating, and other individual and social rituals and actions. There was a distinct shared sense that what was perceptible as constituting reality at this moment was only one version, that in the blink of an eye the entire inner and outer environment could shear off into an experience of some other relational field of perceptions, values, sense of self, sense of world. A constant experiential fluidity replacing fixity in every space, place and time.

I must also at this point make mention of my father who, in his way, helped establish in me the seeds of an ever-opening-out, of movement-through conceptualised perceptions appearing fixed to alternative possibilities, suggesting creative limitations were in my mind.

During my MFA project I encountered Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s *Finding Flow*⁸⁴ and other of his works that helped connect these orientations toward fluidity of perception, thinking and action in an Academic context.

Manning and Massumi address this perceptual mode in great detail and with deep background research making their philosophical structure, processes and indeed mode of communication embody fluidity, exemplifying that all is in a process of constantly becoming.

This makes communication challenging if we are not moving from one fixed concept to another, but on the other hand attempting to embody, to encode in the text, in the transmission of concept, the fundamentally fluid and provisional nature of all perception before us and within us. In this I find a direct correlation to texts within Zen Buddhism (and other Oriental and Occidental traditions) that attempt to transmit the illusory nature of our perception of reality, primarily through meditation practice and the koan story, and more logically in supporting, explanatory texts.

78 Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, *Thought in the act: passages in the ecology of experience* (London, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 123

79 *Ibid.*, 57–58

80 *Ibid.*, 58

81 *Ibid.*, 58–59

82 *Ibid.*, 59

83 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 63.

84 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997).

The paradox, the seeming contradiction of the defined meaning of a word being used to express, or indeed embody an experience of ceaseless fluidity that constantly collapses through the sieve of conceptual certainty, was introduced to me with great force in my mid-teens when my father handed me Paul Reps' compilation *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*⁸⁵ and has somehow highlighted life's yin and yang forces, challenging me to find the way to live with such understanding.

This classic from *The Gateless Gate*, 'Meeting a Zen Master on the Road'⁸⁶ always *struck* me

Goso said: 'When you meet a Zen master on the road you cannot talk to him, you cannot face him with silence. What are you going to do?'

Mumon's eventual comment, read:

Meeting a Zen master on the road
Face him neither with words nor silence.
Give him an uppercut
And you will be called one who understands Zen.

This thesis work reflects some of my solutions to polemics such as public and private, individual and social, independence and interdependence, control and no control, the grand gestures of my art heroes and the minor gesture of Erin Manning. By and large, to stay still, to stay-with, to listen, to wait, bearing the opposing forces until clarity arrives, is my *modus operandi*.

As each situation, each context is unique, so one's perceptions and even capacity is brokered anew. This is not denying previous knowledge and achievement, rather truly improvising with that material in an acknowledgment of the always unique, surging, overwhelming force of how and why I live and die, how and why I am conscious of a world of form, how and why I feel.

Both Massumi and Manning as all good academics do, ceaselessly cite their inspirations and philosophical forbears, in their case; Alfred North Whitehead, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, William James, Gilbert Simondon, Henri Bergson, Walter Benjamin amongst others.

Whilst I have made periodic attempts to investigate Manning and Massumi's direct philosophical influences, during the course of my candidature the most compelling and relevant philosophical material for my work belongs to this pairing of thinkers. They are the filter of information, of knowledge to which I have found access and to some degree, comprehension of what seems to me, at the most, an effort through the intellect to come to terms with the nature of existence, and at the least, a conceptual framework for an expanding arts practice.

My work is making, with that is thinking, and with that is being. If the philosophical analysis can move with the work, it is then practical and can dance with the making-thinking-being. I do not need more than I need when such quality is present.

85 Paul Reps, Nyogen Senzaki (compilers), *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (Great Britain: Penguin, 1957).

86 Reps & Senzaki, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*, 122.

In searching for the roots of influence and to contextualise the thesis' work, manifesting as it does through an inner architecture, I trace my exposure to local artists undertaken in an environment of comparative isolation from the materials of interest locally and elsewhere in the world.

It took a lot of work for a teenager in Melbourne in 1970, to glean any information or knowledge on experimental art (I use this term to cover improvisational music, visual practices and performance making). An occasional radio program, library books, expensive contemporary magazines (such as *Source*⁸⁷), equally unaffordable audio recordings and arthouse film would give a glimpse of a thoroughly marginal activity carried on in other parts of the world.

Eventually, I found the New Music Centre⁸⁸ in Flemington (Melbourne) run by Ron Nagorcka, Peter Mumme and Chris Mann amongst others, which was very exciting and made a great impression; the physical presence of artists performing suddenly and powerfully affirmed my initial curiosity.

I then discovered other venues such as LaMama Theatre⁸⁹ where I encountered NIAGGRA⁹⁰ performances, surrealist plays and more, opening my eyes and ears to unanticipated ways of putting sounds together and widely varying performance practices.

In 1972, Art school began to give me more access to knowledge of the "avant-garde", yet again mostly non-Australian and so lacking the physicality of presence. But soon I would connect with active practitioners who were teaching at Preston Institute of Technology Art & Design course, such as my mentor David Tolley⁹¹, and visual and performance artist Domenico deClario⁹², among others. These artists were actively practicing and grappling with their own dilemmas exposing and exemplifying to the students the complexities and seriousness of creative decision making. There were constantly 'visiting artists' and lunchtime performances that revealed a wide range of aesthetic approaches throughout rock and electronic music to film, poetry and performance.

I began developing my own practice joining theatrical pop band Millionaires and starting improvisational music group Yellow Yachts. A venue where we performed regularly was the foyer of the Albion Hotel (opposite LaMama theatre) sandwiched between heavy drinkers, angry poets, hippies and ruffians. It was an extraordinary context for discovering what it was to make up 'music-on-the-spot'. During this period, I regularly attended the T(oo) F(ucking) Much Ballroom equally exciting and impressive venue where you would hear any type of music combined with comedy, poetry readings, theatre and dance performances all in the one night.

87 Larry Austin and Douglas Kahn (eds.), *Source: Music of the Avant-garde, 1967-1973* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2011).

88 For further information on NMC and its context see Robin Fox's article *Experimental Music in Melbourne: A Definition and Historical Overview (The Early 1970s and Ron Nagorcka)*, and Warren Burt's article *Some Musical and Sociological Aspects of Australian Experimental Music (Melbourne 1972-1980)*.

89 LaMama Theatre in Faraday St. Carlton was since the 1960's, and continues to be, a crucial part of an 'experimental' theatre and music community in Melbourne. <https://lamama.com.au>

90 New Improvisation Action Group for Gnostic and Rhythmic Awareness. Refer to Burt's *Some Musical and Sociological Aspects of Australian Experimental Music (Melbourne 1972-1980)*.

91 David Tolley was an early adopter of electronic music commissioning a custom designed and built synthesiser which he used in performing solo, in duo with Dur-é Dara, his group *False Start* and other contexts. He also was a sculptor and painter, teaching Sound and Drawing, and a significant contributor to the course creation of Art & Design at Preston Institute of Technology (now RMIT).

92 <http://domenicodeclario.com>

A little later, local performances by Al Wunder's Theatre of the Ordinary⁹³, visual poetry group AXLE⁹⁴ and artists such as Stelarc⁹⁵ would continue to exert immediate impact on my developing sensibilities. Whilst increased access to documentation of events, performers and their work in other parts of the world enabled intellectual stimulation and harboured the possibility of affect, these influences could often feel indirect and remote compared with real world performance. Art School triggered the in-depth study of the documented work and writing around many powerful figures who clearly inspired and aided my motivations; Marcel Duchamp, Cage/Cunningham/Rauschenberg, Antonin Artaud, Allan Kaprow, Yvonne Rainer, Franz Kline, Cy Twombly, Francis Bacon, Augusto Boal, Joseph Beuys, Miles Davis, Frank Zappa, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Luis Buñuel and later the sonic worlds of Iannis Xenakis, György Ligeti, Krzysztof Penderecki and the brutal, physical imagery of Antoni Tàpies amongst others.

As an electric guitarist, Jimi Hendrix, John McLaughlin and later Allan Holdsworth exerted their influences upon me.

I was introduced to these performers through the medium of audio recording, but this listening experience is fundamentally different to that of being in the same physical space with a musician as they make their sounds. Here, every element of the occurrence is being negotiated by listener and musician, nothing is yet stable. Listening to sounds is only one facet of the performance, all senses are employed by the listener in the perception of what is unfolding, what is being communicated, what is felt, and all this perceptual information informs my subjective interpretation. Listening to only audio recordings of an artist means that all the present and contextual information occurring at the time of their performance is unavailable to my perceptual experience.

An audio recording allows for repeat listenings of the same performance. Music made for the purpose of a commercially disseminated artefact is often chosen, deemed the 'best version' from a number of recordings, and so objectively considered; quite different from the high stakes, high risk one-off performance.

In witnessing the performers physical presence, I am present to the birth of the performer's sonic expression, the music's production is embodied and in a state of flux. In listening to their recording, I am listening to its representation, objectified, abstracted. Two vastly different listening experiences.

In only listening, repeatedly, to the performers recordings I developed an idealised, abstracted template of the disembodied music's production. The recording object stands-in for the artist in my subconscious.

Much more direct information surrounding the music's production is available when I am present to the musician's performance. The more occasions and variations of witnessing the performer, the more I come to know the shades of their humanity that sustain the artistry.

93 During the early 1980's, I performed on a number of occasions at Al's events at Cubitt St. Richmond with my then partner and dancer Cherie Whittington's groups *RITUAL* and *The 100th Monkey*, <http://www.theatreoftheordinary.com>

94 Tony Figallo organised AXLE meetings at Fruscolino Cafe near East Richmond station, also performing at LaMama theatre and elsewhere on occasion. Some other participants were Lloyd Jones, Frank and Leonie Osowski, Peter Murphy, John Zzys and Warren Burt. <http://www.warrenburt.com>. Thanks to Warren Burt for this information.

95 <http://stelarc.org/projects.php>

I have experienced, over decades of listening, that the recorded music's artefact can be imbued with the same or more sacred reverence and god-like qualities than the actual performer of the music.

What is the relational situation of the artist and their work and me, the listener, the student? Where do I situate myself and my work, given these two different listening experiences of another artist's work?

Initially I thought that not having direct access to the source of the music that 'knowing' an artist only through their few recordings was a fundamental impediment to my experiential development. I no longer interpret that as such, rather I acknowledge that the mode of the listening experience exerts an influence upon me and contributes to what I hear, feel and imagine. Experiencing an artist's work in any format, performance or recording, is not the same as knowing the person. I may imitate the formality of the work that motivates and inspires me, but I cannot imitate its genesis. To know how the essence of my work relates to the essence of another's work will take a direct and sustained interpersonal sharing.

My imagination fills in the gaps made by this disembodied artefact, (the vinyl record, magnetic tape, CD disc, digital file) by creating its own stories around the physically absent performer. Particularly in the twenty-first century, there is much information readily available on any performer even of a specifically personal nature and yet it is all mediated, filtered indirectly to the listener, as the passive receiver who only reacts, does not exchange or negotiate with another human presence.

I claim this perspective as a proviso in situating my work amongst those whom I do not personally know, but with whose work I have significantly engaged.

Early listening experiences to John McLaughlin recordings provided the example of how separation of the listener from the physical source of a work, situates an abstract relation with the document of an experience, allows for me the listener, to imagine anything as the physical source and context of that work. I discuss a fundamental episode in listening to his recordings in my MFA Appendix B⁹⁶ in 1973.

By way of illustrating the scope and limitations for subjective experience in comparing encounters with the physical artist at work and the resultant documentation of that work, I will relate three stories.

96 I include this MFA Appendix B extract to convey to the reader the potency of the experience; *"In that moment, a template was created for me, the aspiring guitarist, I was unable to ignore what I heard, and what would drive me for decades; a highly idiosyncratic, refined musical construct, driven by intense passion and disciplined work ethic. Somehow this experience created a musical vision that I made my own. Indeed it was supplemented and modified over the years, informed by new inspiring events and musicians, but this ecstatic experience had an enduring influence, emotionally and formally. I tried to contextualise the experience by telling myself this all had to do with McLaughlin's context, conditions, and life, and that it was fine to be motivated by his music, but I had to find a way to be myself as he was himself, not to be an imitator. This was not an easy task and led to much soul searching over many years. Often, I only saw the gap between my instrumental and expressive abilities, and those of McLaughlin's (or those of other newly acquired heroes)."*

In 1975, I sat a few feet away from a John McLaughlin concert performance. It is challenging to compare the fundamental transformative, even devastating, listening to his recording of 1973⁹⁷ and this 1975 encounter. The first, unique experience will always seem to carry more weight, but this event was equally potent in its affect on my being and practice and affirmed, justified and in a sense extended the earlier experience.

The second event of significance occurred when in 1978 I received a message that my band was invited to play on the same bill as McLaughlin's group. A few days prior to this announcement, I told all my co-performers that I was ending the group after 3 years.

We re-formed !

Listening to John on two consecutive evenings, I discovered that what I previously heard as, thought of as improvising made-up-on-the-spot, was in fact based on a very legible and replicable musical formula. I was both shattered and liberated.

The third event occurred recently when upon listening to a McLaughlin YouTube interview, I was struck by the following excerpt from a story of his past

I moved to Belgium in '68 to play with a free jazz group, I mean free jazz just like anarchy, which (Schroeder; and you still weren't making any money), no, I was surviving though, um, and I realised that free jazz was not for me because unless you're a perfect man and a perfect musician it's a lot of self-indulgence, and it doesn't work, I like discipline⁹⁸

In this instance, I was hit by what 'could' amount to a revelation that my presumptions of John's roots and relation to his art were anathema to mine, embodied in his sweeping judgment. At this stage of life, it is no surprise, but a worthy anecdote.

Of course, all experience is subjective, interpretive, and difference abounds everywhere naturally and acceptably. But I am highlighting the complexity of how one might situate one's activity through declared association to an artist's work and/or documentation and the unpredictability of the physical presence or absence of that performer's, or of that work's, ultimate effect on my own process.

Another example; over the course of a few years I had been told that my guitar playing owed much to the influence of the English guitarist and key figure in European Free Improvisation, Derek Bailey, a prominent radio DJ (Gerry Koster from ABC-FM) declaring to me he 'could not believe I was not influenced by Bailey'. Thanks to Koster I heard Bailey's music in 2005 and indeed recognised Bailey's promotion of the usually excluded materials of the guitar as something we shared in common.

Knowing of Bailey's work changed little within my own approach to guitar and performance. Perhaps if I had known of Baileys work previously I may have avoided moving down the path I did, but ultimately the objectifiable stylistic concerns and mannerisms of my making of sounds on the guitar are fundamentally concerned with how those sounds are put together and how they connect with the felt within. We all share the same materials but how we employ and connect with those materials defines our uniqueness.

My work in all its variants, would not be what it is without the direct or indirect inspiration supplied by all the artists listed here and those that are not, from my father and visual artist Wes to the participants of GAIP and THIS Ensemble to the virtuosic musicians such as Stephen Magnusson, Judith Hamann, Dave Beck, Erkki Veltheim, Scott McConnachie, Scott Tinkler, Simone de Haan and many others not named. I reaffirm the gratitude I believe I have expressed to all my co-performers for the time we have shared in sculpting our work as individuals together.

Of course, from the mid-twentieth century and earlier until today, there have been numerous and powerful figures operating in the world of (experimental) improvisational music and performance practice. It seems I have required only a small portion of those artists to feed and develop my practice in all its facets.

Instead of listing the practitioners whom have pre-empted my work and those that are contemporary and may well have extended and deepened their own practice well beyond my efforts, I clearly re-state that my concern is not in comparative philosophy or arts practices, that what is offered to the interested party is constituted in and around the textual telling of an individual's processes, context, stories and relations, but equally in the media artefacts and residue that carry qualities of the vital, lived experience.

That this attitude appears to conflict with the criteria of the Academic system in whose context the work has evolved, is for those that represent this system to decide.

It is my understanding that most, if not all, of the land that the performances discussed in this document were enacted within, belong to the Boon Wurrung and Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) peoples of the Kulin Nation surrounding Melbourne, the Dja Dja Wurrung of central Victoria and the Djab Wurrung, the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagik nations of the Wimmera and southern Mallee, the Latji Latji of north-western Victoria, and the Maraura, Paakantji, Barindji of south-western New South Wales.

We (the performers and GAIP participants), acknowledge past and current injustices inflicted upon these peoples and aim to tread with respect and care upon the country that is inseparable from them and to exercise due diligence in redressing the current and historical imbalance caused by the illegal appropriation of Australia.

97 Mahavishnu Orchestra, *The Inner Mounting Flame*, Columbia 31067, 1971, vinyl LP.

98 'Conversations with John McLaughlin', NYU Steinhardt Jazz Interview Series with Dr. David Schroeder (pub. January 31, 2017). Excerpt begins at 29:20; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VlIdJhIFSE>