

INVESTIGATIVE STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

Victoria Edwards and Ina Johann
Collaborators



/intə'rupt/



/intə'sekt/



/in'tuhprɪt/



/'ɪntəpleɪ/

Space

Sites have an aspect of liminality; Beach as a liminal space, ~~where~~ nomads (passing through) these spaces. Temporary intervention ~~in space~~: claiming spaces with particular emotional intensity ~~(that we build on and work with)~~, exciting spatial configuration like the circle/ellipse ~~(which we build the work)~~, engage with the existing structure of the space to fabricate the work (~~outdoor~~ Shakespeare/~~Spanish~~ bullfight/~~theatre stage~~ ~~reports~~ Stadium); ~~Weather~~. Natural elements carefully considered like weather, light/shadow/wind/blue sky ~~(in the clouds)~~, colour palette ~~of existing structures~~ (natural and manmade); ~~Site specific~~, site selected for its potential to play (out/with/against); Relationship to the space tightens ~~and becomes more knowing and~~ accountable ~~with~~ ~~progresses from~~ performance ~~in space~~ to video ~~piece~~.¹ Space in relation to trace ~~that's left behind~~ (rice); Costumes ~~are built for their~~ sculptural and spatial potential (~~high hat~~, things that pierce the space – ~~give the figures an alternative presence~~); Aspects of the costumes are a set of visual interventions like in the theatre to enable the figure to ~~develop and engage its character through~~ time and space; Core driver for ~~what we do together~~ collaboration ~~in this~~ concept ~~of~~ unknown space – a questioning.

Drawing

Drawing in all its diversity is an integral part of our collective practice. It is a kind of drawing that corresponds without fear of touching or reaching into various media. It opens up potential and possibilities within our collective practice. Performance activates the space where ~~without it~~ the black tape is just material on a spool. The linear element of the ribbon, the black line, becomes an outline of a sculptural form fleeting and ephemeral in nature. We utilize existing fixtures and materials in these selected sites and ~~in occasion~~ leave a trace by brushing ~~the~~ ~~floor~~ with ~~chalk~~ or throwing ~~floor~~. Our practice, including our drawing strategies, investigates methodologies of mapping the terrain. Play is an integral part of the activity of drawing during the performances and ~~we link the space~~ between the movement of the characters, the materials that we utilise and the ideas which evolve during the performance itself. "This room becomes a place of play and invention where the space of the studio and the space of the page become psychologically linked. In this arena, drawing and movement become work that is only fully realised in the process of it's own making. The choreography of what goes on is both research and event"²



Performance

The duration of the activity, the video recording and the adjusted/alterd/manipulated replays are shards or stations in our walking process. Role of performative action played out; navigation – slowness; engaging with place and memory of place; neither making nor thinking. "Walking makes one aware of one's own body in motion (kinaesthesia is the sixth sense) and accentuates all the other five senses."³ Setting a framework: developing characters, researching a site, site selecting a site, pre performance which includes a test shoot (photo and video), costumes and props, recording equipment; not use hands but body to collect material (intuitive performance process); stepping into another space. Outside our own reality – creating a window to an unknown space that may be a thinking, poetic, emotional, philosophic and/or historical space/place which may be experienced in various combinations of the above, not necessarily all at the same time

Human beings as part of this world, relational communicators are looking at the world but we are looking beyond the worlds as well, that our work evokes questions and the practice and resulting work does not attempt to describe or to provide answers or offer solutions. Our ancestors that we are engaging with in the historical sense open new spaces and discussions around what is not known rather than what is known. "This form is content, content is form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all. It is not to be read – or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. The writing is not *about* something, *it is that something itself.*"⁴

Tensions

The starting point - the intentional engagement between two characters. The arrangement of emotional space involves the found baggage of existing memories. This history of place and the two characters' interaction within the multiple possibilities of the context is the site on which we play out our activities. We harness these tensions and utilise them to negotiate and pilot a new ground. Tension plays another character in the scenario. A deliberate meeting, resistance, negotiation, navigation and anticipation.⁵ Tensions of the body in space are extended through the use of black bias cut tape. Here they are visible suspensions between things, frictions that can be felt. They interrupt, breaking in and through space. An engagement in the form of performative drawing, which shifts and changes space as this fragment of the work materialises.



Victoria Edwards is a New Zealand-born artist who has exhibited extensively nationally and internationally and has been involved in art education since the 1970s. She was awarded her doctorate in 2006 and is currently a full time practitioner living in Christchurch. She works primarily in new media as well as in drawing and photography. She has engaged in collaborative practice for a number of years. Edwards's work explores role play and social conventions in relation to individual and collective identity.

Ina Johann is a German-born artist. She uses a range of media from drawing to digital stills, photography and video to create multi-dimensional installations. Johann lectured for a number of years both in New Zealand and Germany and is currently a full-time practitioner living in Christchurch, New Zealand. Her work in the last five years has involved collaboration with artists, writers, poets and musicians. Johann has been exploring a form of navigation and mapping. As a migrant and traveller between cultures and worlds, she is working with strategies of surveying, observing and fragmenting. Her work reflects upon becoming and belonging, emptiness, loss, coding and de-coding.



All images from Victoria Edwards and Ina Johann, *Fishing in a Bathtub: Tormenting Luxury*, video installation in four chapters, 2007-08. A moving image file is included on the online version of this journal. See www.thescope.org

- 1 "...you realise, quite consciously, that what you see in the frame is not limited to its visual depiction, but is a pointer to something stretching out beyond the frame and to infinity; a pointer to life." A Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema* (London: The Bodley Head, 1986), 117-118.
- 2 Rachel Gibson, "Archaeology: Drawing Interventions in Time & Space". See: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ac/tracey/perf/gibson.html> as last accessed on 12 April 2008
- 3 "It leads one, metaphorically and literally, through place and time; and is the most natural accompaniment to thought". Here Tony Godfrey references Janet Cardiff's "The Missing Voice" (Case Study B). See "Tony Godfrey Walks with Mnemosyne", *Contemporary Visual Arts*, 1999, 25: 44.
- 4 Samuel Beckett on Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*: Dante. See: http://www.themodernword.com/beckett/beckett_quotes.html as last accessed on 14 April 2008.
- 5 "What is particular about drawing is the procedure of addition and erasure, of gesture and change, of instinct and thought." Jane Tormey, "How To Do Things With Drawing." See: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ac/tracy/perf.html> as last accessed on 14 April 2008.