NSCD.

Souvenir.

This presentation takes the form of a talk, screening and audio-led outdoor workshop.

Created under the restrictions of the 2020/21 lockdown, *Souvenir* investigated how site-dance choreography might be employed as method to address pressing question of how we respond to ,and engage with the environments in which we live.

*A souvenir, is a memento of an ephemeral but significant engagement with a place. It communicates an intensity of feeling about the place and has the intention of connecting people, who are perhaps absent, to them.* (2020)

The project was directed via improvisational scores that each addressed a specific, somatically informed, relationship to landscape. Each score was audio-recorded and sent to the twelve dancers living in the UK and Portugal who were participating in the project, to follow in an outdoor location of their choosing. Dancers were at liberty to interpret the scores in their own way ,and were instructed to video-record short segments of their dancing in order to document their movement responses. Once each score was completed, the dancers sent the video to the choreographer who edited it into four short site-dance films that form, *Souvenir* (running time 20 mins).

Anthropologist Tim Ingold’s notion of correspondences was of particular relevance to the research. The notion of correspondences challenges the traditional view that artistic and creative processes entail the projection of an idea onto materials in order to represent thought. For Ingold, corresponding involves a process of ‘joining *with*’ the movement of things in order to achieve a mutuality that produces the artefact themselves (2017:12). Ingold claims that corresponding is a form of *thinking through making*, where in the movement of our imagination joins the dynamics of the materials being used to generate the product (ibid). In *Souvenir,* corresponding was approached via dancing tuned to the dynamics of the site, as well as method for choreographer and dancers to work together despite being absent to each other. Through correspondences of bodies and places, place to audio- recording, audio-recording to dancing, and video editing to composing, the choreographer was able to remotely direct the production and shape the video material into a record of our body/site engagements. The result is a collection of films that reveal

an intimacy between the dancers’ interior perceptual landscape and the exterior, topographical space.

Working in this, enabled investigations into how dancing in outdoor sites reconfigures the norms of space, and, as professor of site-dance sense Vicky Hunter proposes, might imbricate an increased sense of agency and belonging there (Hunter 2015). On an immediate level, the work aligns with Michel de Certeau’s assertion that pedestrian acts (such as dancing), bind bodies and places together, like, ‘lovers in each other’s arms.’ (1984:93), and, I note, reveals a poetics that articulates an innately felt sense of reciprocity and care for ourselves, and the world around us.

The scores created for *Souvenir,* each initiate a specific type of correspondence between the choreographic ideas, the dancers’ physicality, the site, and the process of documenting practice. My intention when creating them was to establish a spoken language for the audios, that would lead the dancers’ in finding their own relationship to the phenomenon found in the site without dictating a stylistic or visual outcome. To dance with phenomena as they manifest, the elements that constitute them must be unmasked and observed without culturally informed bias (Merleau Ponty, 1962, Sheets, 1966, Horton Fraleigh, 2004). Merleau -Ponty terms the state of awareness that enables this immediate encounter, pure significance, and ‘brute’ or ‘wild’ , perception (1968:212) ,and although he asserts that this state is ‘ultimately ungraspable’ (1968:150), explorations of it in practice, aided me in forging conceptual links between wildness as an interior, perceptual state, and wildness in association with exterior topographical, landscapes. Furthermore, by following the intention to enable the dancers’ to find their own ,’wild’ unconditioned response to the places that they visited, the research began to reveal dancing, itself, as a phenomenological presence (Sheets-Jonstone, 2009). That is evident in the documentary material shot by the dancers which I edited into the four short dance films, that are each set to a piece of music by the composer, Frances Poulenc (1962).

The audio-scores that make up Souvenir, but most noticeably Audio-four, are informed by Chris Maekers, 1983, experimental documentary, *Sans Soleil* (Sunless). Maeker’s film delivers a cinematic meditation on the nature of human memory in association with places and people that are encountered by a female narrator whom we hear reading letters supposedly sent to her by a (fictious) camera man whilst on her travels through Japan, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Paris, Iceland and San Francisco. *Sans Soleil,* raises questions about authorship, authenticity, nostalgia, and the singularity of love, death, time and place.

Scores.

*Audio One, Landscape as Score*, investigates a view of the body as a perceptual tool that is enfolded, through dancing, with a rural, natural site. In the score, the dancers are directed to link their physicality to what they notice (Doughty 2019) in the site and to follow in movement the dynamics found there, as one type of movement in dialogue with another. In *audio one, Landscape as score*, I direct the dancers to shift their focus between self and other, and to incorporate in movement the idea that self is ‘ being-becoming-being’ in relation to the place that they are in (Reeve, 2015: 312).

**(SHOW A1. Film 4.30 mins.)**

*Audio 2: Body/Object score*, directs dancers to find a semi-rural/urban, ‘edge-land’ site (Farley and Roberts, 2012) and to discover similarities and spatial relationships between the objects and materials that they find there and their material bodies.

In the score I suggest that they:

*…see, touch, smell, taste,*

*concrete, wood, metal, plastic,*

*what about bone, flesh, grass, leaf.*

*Imagine your body as part of this landscape, as one of the materials found in this place. (Audio 2, June 2020).*

Later in the score, as a method for cultivating an awareness of the similarity between materials the dancers were instructed to gather objects found in the area and to organise them into three dimensional assemblages. At first these assemblages formed sculptural pictures, but as the audio -progresses, the dancers incorporated their own bodies into the arrangements.

**(SHOW A2 film:2.56 mins.)**

In *Audio three – lines score*, dancers are invited to find an urban street setting, with buildings, shops or houses in. Here they are directed to move in relation to the lines, planes and pathways that define the layout and structures of the buildings and land around them. The aim of this audio is to connect the dancers’ movement to the structures and construction of the place they are in; its’ dimensions, design and use, and to explore in movement travelling through, sheltering and dwelling here, in regard to the notion that dancing delivers a poetics that expresses an alternative sensibility and reading of place.

**(Show A3 film:6.44 mins)**

*Audio four: Souvenir*, directs dancers to imagine themselves composing a movement postcard from the location that they are in to an imagined correspont via gestures emerging in relation to the words they might write as well as the characteristics of the site.

The Video edit of the material gathered by the dancers from this engagement, has been composed into a film edited via linking the dancers’ movement to generate a continuity between them This style of edit presents a somewhat romantic whole, that communicates a nostalgia for places, such as is felt in relation to places and people, who have been loved in the past.

**(Show A4. Film 3:43 mins.)**