

**EXPLORING THE ABSTRACT LANGUAGE OF  
CONTEMPORARY DANCE IN ORDER TO CREATE  
EMOTIONAL STATES/NUANCES**

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## KEY WORDS

Abstract movement language, artistic practice, choreographic processes, contemporary dance, emotional states/nuances, performer/space object relationships.

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates how a choreographer, through the abstract language of contemporary dance, generates emotional states/nuances which can be recognised but at the same time allow for ambiguity in the reading of the work. This investigation was addressed through a series of performance projects, culminating in the final dance work *Inhabited Space*. The setting for the work, triggered by Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, became the imagined spaces of a domestic urban environment, specifically the lounge and bedroom. In order to create a work reflecting emotional states and nuances, a range of choreographic processes were explored to inform the construction of movement vocabulary, framed by performer/space/object relationships. This studio-based study with performative outcomes was supported by a hybrid methodological approach of predominantly practice-led research, incorporating aspects of action research and phenomenology. Findings and understandings emerged from reflective practice in the exegesis but were primarily embedded within the creative work itself.

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

“The work contained in the thesis has not been previously submitted for an award at this or any higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.”

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## CHAPTER ONE

# CHOREOGRAPHY AND COMMUNICATION

During the span of my professional career as a dancer, teacher and choreographer, the art of making dance (choreography) has been an area with which I have been repeatedly associated on differing levels. I have pursued my choreographic career intensively over the past twenty years, culminating in the creation of twenty-seven major works for both professional dance companies and tertiary institutions within Australia and overseas. What has become increasingly significant for me, as I have matured as a choreographer, has been the importance of clarity of communication and intention in my work. In pursuing this clarity I have also increasingly wanted to create work that reflects emotional states/nuances.

The purpose of this investigation is to gain a more informed understanding, through physical exploration and contextual research, on ways to successfully communicate themes dealing with human interaction and emotion, capturing this emotion through movement sourced from intention rather than narration. Through a series of developmental choreographic works; *sheCOUCHhe*, *Inhabited Space #1*, *Inhabited Space #2* and *Inhabited Space #3*, I have employed the abstract language of contemporary dance to develop movement vocabulary in such a way as to endeavour to capture an emotional intention.

My role in this investigation is as participant/observer, through both the creation of choreographic works as an artist, and as researcher, reflecting on and analysing these works.

## **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1.1 Modern and contemporary dance – approaches and styles**

There has been much debate as to meanings surrounding the term ‘contemporary dance’ and ‘contemporary styles’, with diverse interpretations and definitions among dance practitioners, academics and scholars. Dance theorist and Associate Professor of Dance at Oberlin College, USA, Cooper Albright (1997, xiii) states that “contemporary dance foregrounds a responsive dancing body, one that engages with and challenges static representations of gender, race, sexuality, and physical ability, all the while acknowledging how deeply these ideologies influence our daily experience”. The Queensland School Curriculum Council defines contemporary dance more broadly as:

Recent dance techniques and choreographic approaches used to interpret movement in an innovative way or to express current issues or ideas that reflect on contemporary life. Derived from and often inclusive of modern dance techniques developed by artists including Martha Graham, Jose Limon and Alwyn Nikolias. (Queensland School Curriculum Council 2002)

Foregrounding its historical antecedents, Bassett (cited in Preston-Dunlop 1998, 18) describes contemporary dance as “a genre which includes the

techniques of the American and German modern dancers (e.g. Graham, Cunningham, Leeder) and the developments of the modern dance, Post-modernism, avant-garde dance and the New Dance of British choreographers who use release techniques” of whom a leading exponent is British choreographer Siobhan Davies. Davies’ (cited in Preston-Dunlop 1998, 192) interpretation of ‘release work’ states that it is:

... a way of working in which the misuse of tension built up in a body can literally be released; a process by which the geography of the body can be seen more clearly, can tell more, instead of having a hard muscular barrier between the dancer and the audience. (Preston-Dunlop 1998, 192)

This remains arguably the most common approach to contemporary training in Australia and much of Europe, but its antecedence in modern and post-modern dance still maintains a strong presence historically and in more hybrid current training.

The early modern dance styles, which predominately were developed in America, such as those of Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Jose Limon and Merce Cunningham became codified and were regarded as techniques. These seminal artists developed their own personal movement vocabulary often taking inspiration from other forms of dance and previous teachers. Graham, for instance, took inspiration from her mentor, American choreographer Ruth St. Denis. St. Denis formed her own teaching school and performing company (*Denishawn*) with husband Ted Shawn in 1915. St. Denis had a fascination with the East, and she

immersed herself in Oriental philosophy, constructing many dances upon Asian myths and symbols (Anderson, 1997, 37-39). St. Denis became well known for her re-creations of mystical oriental rituals, which Graham experienced during her time as a dancer in *Denishawn*, dancing interpretations of dances from Egypt and Asia, particularly India.

Upon leaving *Denishawn*, Graham began formulating her own style and means of expression. She devised a series of exercises which began with sitting on the floor in the lotus position (an arrangement introduced to her by St. Denis, who discovered this position through Yoga) and concentrated on articulation of the torso; for she believed that emotion starts, or is visible, in the torso first. Robertson and Hutera (1988, 66) in their description of Graham technique say, “its basic motor principle focuses on the centre of the body as source of both energy and emotion”. Graham developed a personalised movement vocabulary for her own body and codified this into a technique, which in its myriad versions continues to be taught around the globe, being still particularly strong in some Asian countries such as Taiwan.

Owing to an ensemble of American choreographers known as the Judson Dance Theatre, Post-modernism surfaced in the early sixties as a rebellious response to the stealthy codification being experienced in modern dance thus far. The ‘Judsonites’, according to Robertson and Hutera, believed that:

... stultification was to be avoided at all costs and they created their rupture by re-thinking, sometimes eliminating, the very framework of dance. They travelled even beyond Cunningham by refusing to accept the notion that someone became a dancer through mastering a dance technique. (Robertson and Hutera 1988, 192)

One of the leading Post-modern choreographers to emerge from this ensemble was Trisha Brown. McDonagh (1990, 123) says Brown was not so concerned with the niceties of technique; her interest lay in the exploration of movement, for she believed it was a form of sensuous play. Post-modernism embraced more pedestrian movement, stripping dance of technique and emotional qualities and minimising the differentiation between man and woman. Brown commonly practiced the notion of non-gender dance, as McDonagh explains:

... for Brown and for many of the newer choreographers, sexual differences inhibited choreography. If the male dancer had a special vocabulary of movement and the female had her own vocabulary of movement, the problem of bringing them together became more and more difficult. One of the solutions was to handle men and women as if they were the same physical machine and to emphasize the similarities rather than the differences. (McDonagh 1990, 124)

These similarities between men and woman were of interest to Brown and led to the materialisation of work that gave the impression of being uni-sex dance. Post-modernism continued to be practiced through the seventies by choreographers such as Twyla Tharp and Lucinda Childs, eventually leading to the emergence of a new genre; that of 'release technique' or 'release work'.

To comprehend the term 'release technique' one should first have an understanding of ideokinesis and imagework, processes that play fundamental roles in the technique. Thompson, in her explanation of ideokinesis, states:

Kinesis is the motion, here defined as physical movement induced by stimulation of muscles and characterised by qualitative and quantitative positional changes of the skeletal parts. Ideo: the idea, the sole stimulator in the process, is defined as a concept developed through empirical mental processes. (Thompson 1985, 7)

Thompson (1985, 7) describes imagework as being “concerned with intuitive modes of exploration of the creative thought process” and continues, “release technique involves allowing the desire to move and the image informing the ideokinetic process to produce movement in space”. For example, an image is imparted to the dancer, such as an athlete running a 100 metre sprint on the verge of breaking through the finishing ribbon. The dancer immerses him/herself in the imagined situation, and through his/her creative thought process the movement is executed with the energy and quality that would be experienced in such a circumstance.

'Release technique' also uses imagery to evoke a sense of groundedness, which in this context refers to lowering of one's centre of gravity, enabling the dancer to move easily and efficiently in and out of the floor. In 'release technique', movement tends to have a continual flow and is relaxed, emanating from the core (the abdominals). The technique



focuses on the releasing of energy through the body and the notion of releasing the weight of the body through space. It is concerned with the body moving efficiently with greater economy. Australian artists who employed facets of this technique in the eighties included Leigh Warren and Nanette Hassall.

Twenty years on, there is a new generation of artists tapping into a diverse range of movement techniques, mixing a range of techniques and influences to form a new cocktail of contemporary dance.

North (1998, 544) describes contemporary dance, as “styles of dance technique and of choreographing which include mainstream American and European work and the more recent innovations of individual artists; styles which, although clearly different from each other, are seen as a group distinct from the classical ballet technique and way of choreographing”. To expand on North’s analogy, I believe as a choreographer that contemporary dance is a nexus of many styles of dance that the choreographer may have experienced or may wish to utilise, mixing these techniques to form a new fusion. This hybridisation contributes to the emergence of a personal and individual movement vocabulary, which is employed in choreography particularly to communicate an idea/intention. Contemporary dance is a form of dance that is created in the present day, often reflecting, responding to, and making comment on current issues, and, in a digital world, conceivably

employing new technologies to enhance intention and the environment in which the dance takes place.

### **1.1.2 Communicating an idea/intention**

In my view, the primary objective of art-making, particularly in the area of contemporary dance, is to communicate an idea/intention to the onlooker; the movement vocabulary providing the key vehicle for the choreographer's artistic expression. How clearly that idea/intention is communicated becomes problematic with an abstract symbolic language. Mackrel (1997, 1) states that at "any dance performance there will always be one person, and probably many more, enthusing how beautiful or interesting the movement is, how skilled or extraordinary the dancers, but muttering that they have no idea what it all means". The abstract nature of contemporary dance frequently brings up this dilemma. The repertoire of Western ballet is also abstract in its movement vocabulary but is highly codified by gesture to inform a narrative. Langer refers to gesture as vital movement, elaborating that:

... to the one who performs it, it is known very precisely as a kinetic experience, i.e., as action, and somewhat more vaguely by sight, as an effect. To others it appears as a visible motion of things, sliding or waving or rolling around - it is *seen and understood* as vital movement. So it is at once subjective and objective, personal and public, willed (or evoked) and perceived. (Langer 1953, 28-29)

The marriage of gesture and movement vocabulary works hand-in-hand to express idealised notions of human conduct, to convey (in most instances) a narrative. There are many elements associated with ballet that contribute to guiding the onlooker. Often the onlooker may identify with the dance through the presentation of a well-known story/fairytale where rituals, myths or religious events are topics that are easily recognisable. Iconic characters, themes dealing with identifiable emotions, as well as the dressing of the work, through the aid of costumes, jewellery, sets, props and lighting, facilitate the delivery of the narrative. However, it is the gesture within the movement vocabulary that attempts to provide markers to the onlooker in order to communicate through the body an intention or idea.

Contemporary dance, on the other hand, normally communicates its intention through the use of the personalised movement vocabulary of the choreographer, and it is this abstract language which becomes the primary means of communicating an idea or intention. The choreographer's own experiential knowledge will evidently inform the direction they might take in representing a ritual, myth, or religious event, the way they embody a character, how they convey an emotion and by what means they perhaps stage and present the work, which in turn, might lead to a representation that is not predictable. It is this absence of predictability that appeals to me and, for that reason, I prefer ambiguity in the reading of my own work, and others.

The development of a personal movement vocabulary presents several challenges. The diversity of choreographic expression will inevitably mean that the same emotion will be expressed in many ways. Is there a universal choreographic device that a choreographer may employ to communicate the same emotion? And is this desirable? Would it not lead to another set of codifications? In my view, we do not want to mimic what has happened with the codification of ballet. It is the diversity and fluidity of choreographic expression that can provide contemporary dance with rich and ambiguous layering.

Mackrel (1997, 6) suggests that, “if each style proposes its own ideal viewer, then each viewer proposes his or her own ideal dance”. The viewer brings with them their own paradigms, prejudices, preferences and experiences, which assist in informing their reading/interpretation of the dance. Instinctively the viewer will begin to interpret his/her own narrative in experiencing the dance, be it literal or symbolic. This idea I find exciting in that it allows the viewer to become a part of the work, and by that I mean they become the author, creating and formulating their own narrative. Blom and Chaplin state:

In art, each perceiver imaginatively grasps the symbolic abstraction that the artist puts forth. The specific meaning of the art work (symbol) is not set or consequently agreed upon. It is expected that each viewer will interpret it from his own frame of reference. (Blom and Chaplin 1989, 124)

I believe that the ambiguity of reading contemporary dance is a strength. However, as a choreographer who wishes to create emotional states/nuances that can be read, in at least a broad sense, I face the dilemma of how to achieve a choreographic intention through employing the abstract language of contemporary dance, which guides the onlooker to a particular experience.

This study does not deal with the psychological affects of emotions on human beings but rather, attempts, through artistic practice, to create a performative environment where recognisable emotions can be expressed in dance.

Through the creative project of this study, I am exploring ways in which the audience might connect with emotion through movement. The study therefore deals with the processes by which the choreographer attempts to create broad emotional states/nuances through the dance and with the dancer. This is the primary focus of the study, rather than how the audience receives the work or any emotional meanings it might read, which is beyond the scope of this research.

After experiencing a plethora of choreographic work over the past two decades I have found myself on numerous occasions uttering the words of Mackrel; *I have no idea what it all means*. This reference would not be so concerning to me if I felt some connection with what I had viewed. However, I have often not only been bemused after viewing some

contemporary dance works, but have equally felt a sense of detachment from what I am viewing. This detachment arises from what I see as a disjuncture between explanatory program notes and the viewing of the work itself. This response has led me to question my own choreographic work and led to a desire to explore strategies where emotional intentions could be elicited, albeit in an abstract way.

## **1.2 FORMATIVE ARTISTIC INFLUENCES**

Contemporary dance and its creation has been, and continues to be, my key mode of artistic expression and communication. My artistic practice was initiated through choreographic opportunities made available in the early eighties by *Australian Dance Theatre* based in Adelaide. My early dance background was in ballet and national character dance, with additional training occurring at the Australian Ballet School (Melbourne) between 1981-1983 where I studied ballet, modern dance (Graham and Cunningham techniques), character dance, pas de deux, repertoire (Australian Ballet), art appreciation and history (Australian and European), music appreciation and theory, and Benesh notation (a form of documenting movement on paper).

As a dancer with *Australian Dance Theatre* (1984-1995), I experienced the work of numerous highly respected national and international dance makers, including Glen Tetley, Graeme Murphy, Graeme Watson, Douglas Wright and William Forsythe. These experiences influenced the

development of my own choreographic work in terms of themes explored, music chosen and the staging of the work. During this period, aspects of release technique, such as the releasing of energy through the body and the notion of releasing the weight of the body through space, were introduced to me by Leigh Warren, Artistic Director of *Australian Dance Theatre* (1987-1993) and Wendy Wallace, Rehearsal Director of *Australian Dance Theatre* (1987-1993). The accumulation of experiential dance history in my body along with the influence of release technique, contributed to the varied palette of techniques and styles on which I drew in formulating the initial development of my own personal movement vocabulary as a choreographer.

Although my earlier works attempted to deal with human emotions and everyday life experiences, my focus at the time was pre-occupied with developing a personal movement vocabulary. This was achieved through constant solo exploration of movement on my own body in a studio setting. In hindsight, I look at that period of development as being quite contrived in the sense that I was obsessed with manufacturing movement to suit a particular aesthetic. This aesthetic comprised of the amalgamation of the formalism of classical ballet line and the presentational shapes of Graham with more free-flowing release technique. I also relied heavily on the mirror as a visual tool to inform the creation of this personal movement vocabulary, subconsciously creating two-dimensionality for a three-dimensional environment. Emotional

content was not fully explored, nor clarity of communication developed, until later in my career.

### **1.2.1 A profound experience - Jean-Claude Gallota**

In 1997, whilst living in Adelaide, I viewed the live work of Jean-Claude Gallota, Artistic Director of the French dance company *Groupe Emile Dubois*. The company presented two works, *Mammame* and *Docteur Labus*. *Docteur Labus* was the first dance work I had ever viewed where I had been subjected to such overwhelming emotions. I compared the experience to a profound film, which takes the viewer on a roller coaster ride of emotions, such as *Steel Magnolias* in which I was subjected to the extremities of tears through to laughter. Viewing *Docteur Labus* left me exhausted, emotionally drained yet incredibly inspired, and resulted in me wondering how could this experience be replicated in my own work in contemporary dance?

The work investigated four different stages of relationships and was divided into four male/female duets, which, to my mind, explored the excitement of first love; violence associated with domestic abuse; a father and daughter relationship; and everlasting love of a long-term relationship. The ideas explored all dealt with recognisable emotions experienced in life; love and hatred in its many forms. What appealed to me was how two bodies communicated with each other. I was fascinated with the way Gallota utilised the physical space between bodies; the way



bodies touched, and the dancers' relationship to each other and in space. In retrospect, I see the influence of this in the duet work I now create, with the focal point of spatial relationships between two bodies guiding the dance making process.

Further examination of how such emotion was portrayed in *Docteur Labus* resulted in me looking at other devices used by Gallota, in particular, the music. The sound score accompanying the dance assisted in the delivery of emotion by providing an atmosphere pertinent to each duet, reflecting the emotion presented but not prescribing it. Gallota is fortunate in that he has had a long association with French composers Henry Torgue and Serge Houplin, writing music exclusively for his work. Hayes, in her discussion of satisfying collaborations between choreographer and composer, states that it is:

... usually dependant on good communication. If the choreographer has some fluency in the language of music and a familiarity with traditional music forms, he will have a much simpler time explaining what the movement needs in terms of musical support. Likewise, if the composer has done some dancing or at least attended dance concerts, the collaboration will go that much more smoothly. (Hayes 1993, 149)

Through this union I understand that concepts and emotions of each work are discussed between the artistic team; the dance inspiring the composers; the music inspiring the choreographer; both working hand-in-hand to inform the creation of the work. While this synergy was impressive to me, what was of more significance was the body and space

relationship and how Gallota brings this into play in his work. The experience of viewing *Docteur Labus* became my springboard to pursuing and developing work that speaks emotionally to an audience and I became obsessed with the relationship between moving bodies.

Two other seminal figures that directly inspired me were Pina Bausch, Artistic Director of *Wuppertal Tanztheater* and William Forsythe, former Artistic Director of the *Frankfurt Ballet* and current Artistic Director of *The Forsythe Company*. Bausch and Forsythe, although coming from dissimilar dance backgrounds, present work that share some commonalities. Not only do they deal with finely crafted performer/space/object relationships but they create work which often has a strong emotional impact leaving me deeply moved after viewing their work.

### **1.2.2 The power of emotion - Pina Bausch**

The intensity I found in Bausch's work was something I wanted to emulate in my own work. However, I was not drawn to moving into the style of expressionistic dance theatre; the content for Bausch's work. For me the important thing was her presentation of everyday bodily experience, male/female relationships and the raw and powerful energy of the performance. Carter elaborates on both the effects and processes used by Bausch stating:

The daily experiences of the individual, the physical constrictions and restrictions, even reaching the point of tragicomic self-regimentation, are demonstrated on stage by means of provocative repetition, duplication, etc, and are made experienceable. The point of departure is authentic, subjective experience, which is also demanded of the audience. Passive reception is impossible. 'Theatre of experience' mobilizes the affects and the emotions because it deals with undivided energies. It does not pretend. It is. Because the viewer is affected by the authenticity of these emotions. (Carter 1998, 38-39)

This notion of 'theatre of experience' led me to realise what I am trying to instil in my own work in order to affect an audience. My intention is to subject the viewer to experience emotional states/nuances, through the choreographer's tools of space, time and energy. On questioning how Bausch produces such intensity in her work, it is my understanding, through colleagues who have worked for Bausch, that the dancers are taken through extreme creative processes. When workshopping ideas, Bausch requires her dancers to go to a very deep place in their emotional psyche, extracting these experiences in order to develop the work, resulting in such strong emotions seemingly evoked by the movement on stage.

### **1.2.3 An assault on the senses – William Forsythe**

Another different but equally powerful impact on me has been Forsythe's physicality and staging, which is an assault on the senses. I first encountered the work of Forsythe in Reggio Emilia, Italy, whilst taking a sabbatical from *Australian Dance Theatre* in 1990/91. The work viewed

was *Limbs Theorem*, a full evening piece in three parts incorporating *Enemy in the Figure*. This work left me electrified at the conclusion of the performance. What I had experienced was not just the dance, rather the overall work of an animate piece of art. The synthesis of the dance, the music, costumes, stage design and lighting contributed to this overwhelming feeling. Furthermore, the precise execution of movement, danced with brutal conviction kept me riveted. When analysing the components that produce such a powerful effect, several factors come into play. Firstly, it is Forsythe's deconstruction of the ballet vocabulary and the way he has turned it upside-down, literally. Mackrel (1997, 67) talks about his works made in the eighties and states "this aesthetic involved wrenching classical positions apart at the joints, shoving them off balance and turning them upside-down". This aesthetic appeals because the movement vocabulary appears unpredictable and arresting. Secondly, it is the mastery with which Forsythe manipulates time, energy and space, creating a sense of frenetic activity and moments of tranquil serenity before subjecting the onlooker to a maelstrom of activity again; all of which play on the senses.

An additional element that played on the senses was the gripping music with which Forsythe engages. Like Gallota, Forsythe has forged and maintained a strong association with a composer, in his case Dutch composer Thom Willems, as a close-knit artistic team working together to create original scores for the majority of Forsythe's works. Fischer (2000) talks about their fourteen-year association and states, " ... they have

modified sounds and movements to such an extent that one barely recognises the sources”. This marriage of modified sounds and movement vocabulary promotes unpredictability but at the same time a mutual synergy, frequently taking the viewer by surprise in both a visual and auditory sense. Following this experience of viewing *Limbs Theorem*, I was cast in a Forsythe work in 1992 when *Enemy in the Figure* was remounted on *Australian Dance Theatre*. It was during this rehearsal stage that I learnt Forsythe’s processes of manipulating movement vocabulary.

Forsythe has developed a series of improvisational techniques that assist in the development of unexpected movement vocabulary. Driver (2000, 4) states, “Forsythe has taught classical dancers to generate their own material by applying structural devices to their familiar technique. Drawing upon the theories of Rudolf Laban, which Forsythe has carried forward in what he calls ‘Improvisational Technology’”. Two of these techniques are Universal Writing and Nine-pointing, which I experienced first-hand during the re-mounting of *Enemy in the Figure*. The concept behind universal writing looks at the dancer writing letters (both in cursive script and block form) in space with different parts of the body, for example; the letter ‘A’ with the elbow; the letter ‘B’ with the nose; the letter ‘c’ with the heel and so on. The focus is not directed to the body part writing the letter, rather what the rest of the body is doing to achieve the writing. With this improvisational approach, the scope for varied movement vocabulary appears limitless. How this manifests itself will

depend on the individual, since each dancer carries with them their own body of experiential movement knowledge.

Since being introduced to Universal Writing, I have employed this concept in my own work. However, rather than directly imitating the process, I have sought to introduce new ideas such as, altering and shifting between imagined writing surfaces and, selecting words that describe the emotion I am trying to achieve in the dance, requesting the dancer to write out these words in such a way as to physically emote the feeling of the word.

The influence of Gallota, Bausch and Forsythe has significantly contributed to the methods I use to formulate movement vocabulary, explore emotional content and stage my work. I am intent on exploring performer/space/object relationships, drawing on everyday bodily experiences to inform content and utilising the choreographer's tools of space, time and energy in order to manipulate movement vocabulary. This will allow me to pursue, in more depth, the construction of a dance and the emotional states/nuances within them. To further develop these processes I undertook a series of investigative creative projects to explore how this might be achieved, culminating in the final dance work *Inhabited Space*.

### 1.3 HISTORY OF THE STUDY

*Inhabited Space* evolved over four stages and was inspired by Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*. I first came across *The Poetics of Space* in 1999, taking inspiration from Bachelard's concepts of internal spaces to create a dance work for the 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary season of Dance at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Although the work focussed on spatial aesthetics, delineated predominately by light and the dancers relationship to space, it was not until I revisited the book four years later, that I began to think more deeply about the relationship of people to internal spaces and objects. The intimacy inherent in domestic spaces provided the catalyst for my exploration into emotions surfacing from within these spaces and how this might be captured through a dance work. The research question that emerged is:

*How can the abstract language of contemporary dance be explored to create emotional states/nuances?*

My enquiry was designed to answer this question through a series of investigative artistic projects culminating with the dance work *Inhabited Space*, sharing my findings with other researchers and choreographers through public performances and reflective writing. The following two objectives became starting points for my research:

- communicating themes dealing with the human condition;

- developing movement vocabulary which realises the emotional intentions of the work.

The creative practice component of this study took place over a period of two years, with several elements informing the investigation. It was divided into four stages, *sheCOUCHhe*, *Inhabited Space #1*, *Inhabited Space #2* and *Inhabited Space #3*. A significant component of the three versions of *Inhabited Space* occurred in a collaborative context. This included working with Taiwanese choreographer and former Head of Dance at Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA), Ming-shen Ku; ten dance students from TNUA and two cohorts of third-year dance students from Creative Industries Faculty at QUT. The majority of the study took place in Australia, with one component occurring in Taiwan.

The creative practice component of the study was supported through a qualitative research design foregrounding artistic practice as research as discussed in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER TWO

### RESEARCH DESIGN

In designing the research strategy to support the artistic practice component of the inquiry, and, as a choreographer connected with artistic practice, a hybrid methodology arising from qualitative research concepts evolved as the most appropriate framework. In defining these concepts Haseman states:

Within the qualitative tradition, there are well established strategies and methods designed to investigate and understand ... these are *practice-based* research strategies and include: the reflective practitioner (embracing reflection-in action and reflection-on-action); participant research; participatory research; collaborative inquiry and action research. (Haseman 2006, 2)

Unlike the quantitative researcher who is concerned with collecting numeric data, the qualitative researcher shares his/her findings based on social, cultural, aesthetic, symbolic and experiential values. Burns (2004,14) points out that “Qualitative reports are not presented as statistical summations, but rather in a more descriptive, narrative style”, in most cases via a written thesis. However, a new generation of researchers associated within the creative industries is moving beyond the constraints of qualitative research, towards research findings validated through non-theoretical forms; in this case choreographic creative work. Haseman (2006, 3) makes an interesting point that, “practice-led researchers insist that research outputs and claims to

knowing must be made through the symbolic language and forms of their practice”. An artist, in this case a choreographer, is continually undertaking a form of research in order to produce an outcome; a work of art, which is shared by the public. However, this form of research any artist undertakes to create their work is not the same as the added layer of contextualisation which practice-led research requires.

Consequently, this study as practice-led research, encompasses a contribution to knowledge through a creative work, the findings of which is shared by means of live public performances, supported theoretically by the exegesis.

Whilst the general principles of qualitative research form a background to the study, the focus of the inquiry is artistic practice as research; the research being in the practice rather than about the practice.

## **2.1 ARTISTIC PRACTICE AS RESEARCH**

As visual artist and academic Dan Mafe (2004) states, “In its simplest terms, artistic practice as research is that which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners”.

### **2.1.1 Designing a framework for Artistic practice as research**

It could be argued that artistic practice itself is a form of research, whether the artist is consciously aware of it or not. In the field of dance, for instance, the choreographer conceptualises an idea, the idea is then explored by him/her in a process with the dancer/s through movement, viewed and finally analysed; in most cases this process occurring in a dance studio setting. However, this process is largely intuitive. After reflective analysis, findings are discovered, further insights are revealed and the process starts all over again. One could look at this procedure as encompassing aspects of ‘the action research spiral’ (Zuber-Skerritt, 1993, 47) as well as a reflective practice circle of inquiry, both of which will be discussed later in this chapter. The choreographer at this point in the creative process acquires a more informed understanding of the choreographic elements (time, space, energy) of his/her craft that shape and influence movement. Blom and Chaplin discuss this process in terms of separation of the choreographic elements as an analytical tool:

In building an understanding of these parts – the concepts fundamental to choreography – it becomes necessary to focus on one at a time. While we separate in order to analyse, we know that any one aspect does not exist independently of another; you cannot deal with time in movement without involving space and energy as well. (Blom and Chaplin 1989, 3)

It is these choreographic tools that help shape, or possibly detract from, the realisation of the choreographer’s idea. Theoreticians and scholars consciously deconstruct the elements of dance, choreographers use

these elements intuitively, sometimes deconstructing them in a reflective process between rehearsals to further develop the work although not all choreographers undertake such analysis.

### **2.1.2 Artistic practice as a research strategy**

As a choreographer, my artistic practice normally takes place in a studio setting, and this becomes the laboratory for my research. Within this laboratory, experiments are conducted, movement vocabulary is formed and the research findings presented as a dance work via live public performances. In this study, aspects of two other dominant research strategies have been drawn upon to weave into my artistic practice; action research and phenomenology.

Janesick (2000, 379) states “A good choreographer captures the complexity of the dance/story by using rigorous and tested procedures and in fact refuses to be limited to one approach of choreography”. So it can be said that the practice-led researcher (in this case the choreographer) may utilise other research strategies to inform and complement the study; in this inquiry, aspects of action research.

## **2.2 ASPECTS OF ACTION RESEARCH AS A SUPPORT STRATEGY**

Action research is primarily associated within educational contexts with the aim of improving learning from experience and reflection, the outcome

of the findings made public, normally through publication. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005, 561) state that, “Action research typically involves the use of qualitative interpretive modes of inquiry and data collection by teachers (often with the help of academics) with a view to teachers making judgments about how to improve their own practice”. Zuber-Skerritt defines Action Research as:

Collaborative, critical (and self-critical) enquiry by reflective practitioners who are accountable and make the results of the enquiry public. They evaluate their own practice and engage in participative problem-solving and continuing professional development. (Zuber-Skerritt 1993, 47)

It can be argued that a group of artists converge (in this case the choreographer/researcher and dancers) in order to engage in a form of “action research” with the aim to create and refine an artistic product. The collaboration is the key element in this process, Greenwood and Levin (2005, 54) point out “The relationship between the professional researcher and the local stakeholders is based on bringing the diverse bases of their knowledge and their distinctive social locations to bear on a problem collaboratively”. In both cases, through a cyclic process of action and critical reflection, the group expects to achieve improved creative outcomes. The team repeats this cyclic pattern of plan, action, observation and reflection, otherwise known as ‘the action research spiral’ until the project is considered complete. Aspects of action research (essentially the cyclic characteristic) were employed throughout the inquiry to inform the development of both movement vocabulary and staging of the dance, with the choreographer in the role of ‘the

professional researcher’ as well as being together with the dancers as a ‘local stakeholder’.

As a choreographer, this structure of the ‘action research spiral’ has also allowed me to articulate better that which I have subconsciously practiced. For instance, throughout this investigation I began rehearsals with a concept, discussed the concept with the dancers and then began workshopping the idea. Movement vocabulary was constructed around given ideas and images. With the dancers engaged and articulating their responses to these ideas/images through the body, a phrase of movement began to emerge. Once constructed, each individual dancer performed their phrase whilst the remainder of the team observed their actions, after which the team reflected on and analysed the movement vocabulary viewed. This, in turn, was followed by discussion regarding elements that supported or detracted from the realisation of the concept. The procedure was repeated until all the dancers had the opportunity to perform their phrase. At this point the next process of the action research spiral began, allowing for revision and further development of the original phrase.

As the choreographer of this process I have a directorial role in the inquiry, and so whilst feedback from the team was taken on board, the results after each cyclic process were controlled and manipulated by myself, in order to achieve an outcome that was appropriate for my vision for the work. This was accomplished by structural manipulation of the

resulting movement, through further instruction based on findings made from previous showings. My role was therefore more intrusive than a facilitator in an educational action research setting. Whilst collective, the process also had a strong directorial input.

Action research often consists of an initial exploration of the research problem, called the pilot study, and after applying the action research spiral a list of new questions arise to be developed into the case study. Gray (2004, 26) states that, “the main action research medium, however, is the case study or multiple case studies”. *sheCOUCHhe* became, in this sense, a pilot study from which the subsequent creative projects (case studies) developed, culminating in the final dance work *Inhabited Space*. As the researcher within the research, I was dealing with action research in a collaborative setting to reflect, revise and further develop movement vocabulary, as well as stage the evolving variations of *Inhabited Space*. This cyclic approach was designed in four stages consisting of two pilot studies and two case studies as outlined below.

### ***sheCOUCHhe***

#### Creative development: (Pilot study 1)

March – May 2004, Creative Industries (Dance), Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

#### Performances:

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> – Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2004. “The Loft” Creative Industries Precinct, QUT, Brisbane, Australia.

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### ***Inhabited Space #1***

#### Initial project: (Case study 1)

June – July 2004, Creative Industries (Dance), Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia and Taipei National University of the Arts, Taipei, Taiwan.

#### Performances:

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2004, Dance Hall, Taipei National University of the Arts, Taipei, Taiwan.

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### ***Inhabited Space #2***

#### Creative development: (Pilot study 2)

September – October 2004, Creative Industries (Dance), Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

#### Performances:

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2004, Gardens Theatre, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

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### ***Inhabited Space #3***

#### Final creative process: (case study 2)

March – May 2005, Creative Industries (Dance), Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

#### Performances:

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> – Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2005, Gardens Theatre, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

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The cyclical process contributed significantly towards the building and refinement of movement vocabulary and the layering of emotional intention, leading to the development of the final dance work *Inhabited Space*. It provided the opportunity to reflect on, and re-develop sections of the dance, which I felt were not successfully realised, as discussed in Chapter Four. During all stages of the investigation finding ways to elicit



emotional states/nuances were the primary intentions, drawn from my own experiences of every day life and subsequently that of the dancers. Denzin and Lincoln (1994, 199) state that, “Qualitative researchers self-consciously draw upon their own experiences as a resource in their own inquiries ... they seek strategies of empirical inquiry that will allow them to make connections among live experience”. These personal experiences, the lived experiences of the participants involved in the study, as well as my observations of people in domestic environments were resources (primary data) that contributed to the informing of the study. Due to the experiential nature of the inquiry it became apparent that an additional strategy would employ aspects of phenomenology.

### **2.3 ASPECTS OF PHENOMENOLOGY INFORMING THE PRACTICE**

Gray states that:

Phenomenology holds that any attempt to understand social reality has to be grounded in people’s experiences of that social reality. Hence, phenomenology insists that we must lay aside our prevailing understanding of phenomena and revisit our immediate experience of them in order that new meanings may emerge ... phenomenology becomes an exploration, via personal experience of prevailing cultural understandings. (Gray 2004, 21)

As a choreographer I am continually observing actions, events, what people are doing and the decisions they are making, especially via their movement language and gesture. As Hitzler and Eberle (2004, 67-68) state, “Phenomenology begins with experience of the individual and

develops this in a reflexive form”. In my own work I draw on my individual experiences but equally look at the experience of others. I frequently look at everyday life experiences to stimulate my thoughts and ideas for choreographic works investigating the human condition, in a way that is emotionally charged. It is this stimulus that drives me to create work that reflects, questions and investigates contemporary issues of the day. This is translated into an abstract movement language that is ambiguous and open-ended and becomes far removed from the literal original event, which triggered the initial idea.

Smith (2005) says “phenomenology studies the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire to bodily awareness, embodied action and social activity”. Throughout the inquiry I drew on these various types of experience to provide both context and content for the pilot and subsequent case studies, and inform the creative process and development of movement vocabulary. In addition, I relayed my own experiences to the participants in order to refine movement qualities and develop their individual characters and persona. Smith (2005) considers some typical experiences one might have in every day life such as, “I imagine a fearsome creature like that in my nightmare”. This example is a simple form of phenomenological description and one that was similar to a description given to the dancers in the development of *bedroom* as discussed in Chapter Four.

Dance itself is a lived experience; an embodied experience that is in the foreground of my practice. Therefore choreographic practice sits within existential phenomenology, which is not merely observational. Fraleigh (1987, xiii) states “ ... dance is in essence an embodied art, the body is the lived (experiential) ground of the dance aesthetic. Both dancer and audience experiencing dance through its lived attributes – its kinaesthetic and existential character”. In these terms a form of existential phenomenology is fundamental to my process and practice.

## **2.4 DATA COLLECTION ASSOCIATED WITH ARTISTIC PRACTICE**

In my study, this ‘embodied experience’ is the core of the research, and so it is the creation of movement with the dancers which is the primary source of data collected throughout the inquiry. Movement data was created via two means; tasks<sup>1</sup> and improvisations<sup>2</sup>. The tasks and improvisations I set, and the movement phrases that were created from these processes, became the building blocks for the work. However, there is a problem with this form of data in the fact that dance is ephemeral and so the data is lost once it has been performed. To overcome this obstacle, I looked at recording on a mechanical device – digital videotape. The benefits of digital recording are that it is relatively inexpensive and data captured is encoded in minute detail. Gray

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<sup>1</sup> Tasks are a choreographic tool that assists the choreographer in the creation of movement vocabulary; these being practical exercises that the dancers carry out through the body based on information/stimulus provided by the choreographer.

<sup>2</sup> Dance Improvisations fuse creation with execution. The dancer simultaneously originates and performs movement without preplanning. It is thus creative movement. Improvisation emerges as an inner-directed movement response to an image, an idea, or a sensory stimulus. (Blom and Chaplin, 1989, 6)

discusses how this form of media benefits the research process and states:

These media can be used either to stimulate discussion or recall events during the research process, or as a means of capturing evidence in data gathering. In the case of the research process, participants may sometimes need visual evidence to remind them of a situation or just to stimulate ideas. Photographs or video can be used to present evidence of changes that perhaps the action research project has achieved. In the case of video, this is particularly true if we are talking about changes in human behaviour. (Gray 2004, 385-386)

Data was captured during different foci of the inquiry; of myself after formulating phrases on my own body; whilst dancers were improvising to given stimuli and after participants had created phrases of movement vocabulary derived from task based instruction. Having captured data on digital videotape provided invaluable in terms of data analysis, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Several additional methods of data collection, pertinent to the creative practitioner, include the following:

#### Primary sources

- movement material – devised, manipulated, refined;
- observation – both participant and non-participant;
- interviewing – structured and unstructured;
- personal choreographic journals – the researcher;
- questionnaires – dancers.

### Secondary sources

- texts of various kinds such as
  - theoretical writings on dance
  - fictional works that have influenced my artistic practice, (for example, Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*)
- participants' journals
- films related to the research such as: *What Lies Beneath*, *Eyes Wide Shut* and *Sleeping with the Enemy*.

## **2.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

Digital videotape was the predominant tool for analysis of movement data captured during both studio sessions and live public performances. Video made it possible to view the data more than once and to freeze frame or play sections of the work in slow motion to facilitate microscopic viewing. It was accessible to the dancers associated with the inquiry, allowing them to self-evaluate their contribution, upon which discussion occurred thus allowing for revision and further development.

Additionally, notes from my choreographic journal, personal journals of the participants and questionnaires, allowed me to reflect on the processes and outcomes surfacing from the artistic practice, and provided diverse points of view regarding others 'lived experience' of the project.

## 2.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As a researcher working with human subjects in a creative and collaborative environment and through embodied processes, sensitivity, ethical issues and the welfare of participants need to be considered.

Hanstein states that:

...the risk to subjects as a consequence of participating in a research study may be physical, psychological, or social, ... the researcher has an ethical responsibility to provide subjects with a true and accurate statement of the purpose of the research, the conditions under which data will be collected, and how the results of the research will be made public. (Hanstein 1999, 55)

As the research involved participants from two countries (Australia and Taiwan), I was aware that inquiry into religious and political beliefs and some kinds of personal information, may be seen as an invasion of privacy. As Kumar (1996, 190) points out, “In collecting data you need to be careful about the sensitivities of your respondents”. When requesting participants to workshop ideas or during interviews, there were no direct references made to religious or political beliefs. It was clear to the participants that they could withdraw from the project at any stage. However, this did not occur, as all participants remained fully engaged and committed to both the process and content of the creative projects.

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained through QUT’s University Human Research Ethics Committee and was approved.

### 2.6.1 Cultural and training differences

In this study, movement language and spoken language were two issues for consideration. Despite the obvious similarities, aesthetics between Australian and Taiwanese contemporary/modern dance contain visible differences, due to dissimilar methods of technical training and cultural backgrounds. Australian dancers, in particular students from QUT, train equally in ballet and contemporary dance, with additional training occurring in the genres of tap, jazz, hip hop and various ‘world dance’ styles such as Latin dance, leading to the emergence of an ‘all-rounded dancer’. The Taiwanese students at the national training institution TNUA undertake training in ballet, Tai Chi and modern dance (Graham technique). Preston-Dunlop (1998, 71) points out that “Dancers carry in their bodies an acquired technical capacity according to the styles in which they were trained”. Therefore, the experiential knowledge of techniques ingrained in one dancer’s body is quite different from another, as is his/her experience of enacting and performing roles. This in turn, leads to the dancer placing focus on certain elements associated with his/her training and previous performative experience. For example, during the remounting of the ‘couch duet’, the Taiwanese dancers focused on achieving technical accuracy such as shape and line, and what appeared to me as an over-dramatisation of emotion in the dance (a trait associated with Graham technique). This was executed through exaggerated bodily movements and facial expressions, rather than exploring more layered and subtle emotional nuances through the entire

body. A contributing factor to this may well be due to the fact that, unlike the original Australian cast who worked intimately with me over a period of time, workshopping original ideas and privy to in-depth knowledge about the concept of the dance, the Taiwanese cast learnt the work from video, with limited information pertaining to the concept of the duet. However, through working together (once rehearsals began in Australia), and providing visual and verbal images and examples, these students did finally convey my intentions whilst retaining their interpretation, which further enriched my work with an interpretation different from that by the Australian cast.

### **2.6.2 Language difference**

Mandarin is the mother language of the TNUA students, and although some of the students had an understanding of English, I relied heavily on Ming-Shen Ku, my co-choreographer from Taiwan (who is bilingual) to translate information given by myself, as well as responses received from the Taiwanese students, during the two creative development periods in which they were involved. Additionally, several Taiwanese QUT students (involved in the project) were also bilingual and assisted in translating; predominately between QUT and TNUA students.



### **2.6.3 Safe dance procedures**

Another consideration that requires to be addressed in this type of research, is minimising the risk of physical harm or discomfort. As the majority of the research involved dancers, physically workshopping ideas in a studio context, as well as sharing the findings of the research via live public performances, there was the potential risk of participants sustaining physical injury. To minimize this potential risk, I followed a set of guidelines known as ‘Safe Dance Practice’ which encompasses a code of ethics and safe dance procedures in relation to physical harm. These guidelines provide essential knowledge for teachers, choreographers and students in relation to practicing safe warm-up/cool-down (preparation prior to and after physical activity), identifying risk factors in technique, safe dance environments and implementation of current injury recovery and rehabilitation procedures (Ausdance, 1998, 29 – 35). Throughout the research I adhered to and applied ‘Safe Dance Practice’.

### **2.6.4 Participant consent**

At the beginning of each stage of the investigation participants signed Statement of Consent forms that recognised their contribution to the inquiry as well as ensuring that any data involving them would only be used for the purposes of the written exegesis and the final DVD to accompany the exegesis. A proforma of the consent form is to be found in Appendix 3.

## 2.7 BIAS OF THE STUDY

Any research strategy will present its own strengths and weaknesses particular to that strategy. In artistic practice, the researcher is also the research subject. Whilst insights into the creative process is a strength, the deep immersion of the researcher in his/her own practice can be observed as a weakness in terms of a lack of objectivity. It is important to recognise the subjective nature of that experience and to seek other inputs of the creative practice to produce a multiplicity of external views of the work. In order to provide this diversity, several mechanisms were put into place. Peer feedback from other artists and academics played a significant role. This occurred in the form of regular invitations for peers to attend studio rehearsals and live public performances in order to view the creative work and provide constructive feedback. I also ensured that a broad mix of peers attended so that information/feedback given came from numerous perspectives. For example, I invited an educational dance academic who understood principles of action research; an academic involved with dance research; people from both contemporary dance and ballet backgrounds; as well as practicing artists from other disciplines. Throughout the course of the inquiry, participants involved in the research provided valuable feedback through open discussions as discussed in Chapter 3. I also viewed the work of other artists working in similar genres, which provided me with the opportunity to analyse their approaches/techniques. This provided a form of triangulation to ensure

the analysis of the creative project was not one-dimensional, or entirely based on my own experience.

Thus, although artistic practice was the dominant methodological approach, key aspects of qualitative research, specifically action research and phenomenology also contributed to support the inquiry. This resulted in a hybridisation of research methods to frame both the practice and the contextualisation of that practice. What follows is the analysis of the creative processes and primary data leading to the final creative practice project *Inhabited Space*.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESSES

Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* in which he explores the nature and effect of domestic spaces on the human psyche, was the trigger point for looking at performer/space/object relationships and the emotional connection emanating from these relationships, in the creation of *Inhabited Space*. The extract below provided a context of domestic space as a framework for the work's spatial structure.

The house quite obviously, is a privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space, provided, of course, that we take it in both its unity and its complexity, and endeavor to integrate all the special values in one fundamental value. For the house furnishes us dispersed images and a body of images at the same time. (Bachelard 1994, 3)

This concept of fragmented yet connected images became a source of inspiration throughout the work, particularly in informing the development and staging of the *bedroom* section, which is discussed in Chapter Four. In exploring emotional content within these imagined spaces, I drew upon images of, and in, domestic urban spaces to inform the study. The notion of studying the intimate values of inside space and the rooms and everyday objects we utilise within these environments provided the overarching stimulus for *Inhabited Space*.

In exploring notions of domestic space through abstracted image-based movement, *Inhabited Space* was conceived in four sections – *living room*, *bedroom*, *kitchen* and *hallway*. The urban dwelling presents the inhabitant with rooms of varying size and shape, spaces that radiate their own ambience, subconsciously affecting our psyche. In the development of the work, *living room* became a contained space; *bedroom* a series of intimate spaces; *kitchen* a communal space and *hallway* a transient space. My collaborative choreographer Ming-shen Ku and I shared these ideas via email correspondence and sending videos of each other's previous work. After discussion, we decided that Ming-shen would further develop (in Taipei) a previous work based on teacups, which would comprise *kitchen*, whilst I would investigate and develop *living room* and *bedroom* in conjunction with the QUT students, in Brisbane. The two versions of *hallway* were created collaboratively, firstly in Taipei and then in Brisbane between Ming-shen, the students from QUT and TNUA and myself.

For the purposes of this exegesis, I will only explore and analyse the two sections (*living room* and *bedroom*) which were my own work, and not the collaborative sections (*kitchen* and *hallway*) that were created with my co-choreographer Ming-shen Ku.

In the first version of *Inhabited Space*, Ming-shen's *kitchen* section became the prologue to the work and set up a communal shared space in which the dancers moved on and around a series of chairs. Movement

was developed incorporating the use of teacups, through both the sharing and exchanging of these objects amongst the group whilst seated. This notion of sharing and working with an object as delicate as a small Chinese porcelain teacup, resulted in the performers interacting in a careful and caring manner through passing each other the teacups in a sense of community. The sense of compassion engendered was in contrast to the opening of the work proper – *living room*, which was intense, intimate and isolating. This contrast with the prologue had the effect of heightening emotion inherent in the *living room* duet.

With *living room* and *bedroom*, I was interested in investigating people's connection with these spaces and associated objects found within these rooms, and the human emotion and interaction that surfaces from the human activity taking place in these spaces. I drew on my own personal experiences of urban living, specifically, my period of residence in Hong Kong, to conceive and inform the development of the pilot study of the inquiry – *sheCOUCHhe*, which formed the *living room* section.

### **3.1 *sheCOUCHhe* - CONCEPT**

*sheCOUCHhe*, developed during March/April 2004, dealt with the interplay of personal emotions between two individuals. Experiencing such high-density living during my three years in Hong Kong, I was privy to witnessing the myriad of interplays (from my apartment window) that occurred between couples and families in their respective apartments.

The development of *sheCOUCHhe* was informed by this experience, and in particular, from observing one such couple. Their interplay occurred on a white couch, primarily in the evening, the illumination from a television providing the only light source in the room. It was clearly evident that the physical activity occurring on the couch between these two individuals was not one of affection, but rather of tension and aggression.

To begin the investigation of the pilot study, I drew on four prime elements related to this experience, in terms of performer/space/objects relationships. These elements were: the couple (performers); the living room (space); the lighting (representing the television); and the couch (object).

The couch framed the movement vocabulary within a living room context. The principal challenge at this stage of the inquiry was to choreograph a ten-minute dance duet on the couch, with as much movement vocabulary (as possible) executed on that object. Stewart (2004) in her review of *sheCOUCHhe* states “ ... it reveals a couch as anything but cosy for a couple at war. It’s a battlefield where bodies are weapons launching precise manoeuvres, assaults and withdrawals”. I was interested in delineating the space through confining the environment; this evoked a sense of entrapment from which both individuals had nowhere to escape. The couch also took up much of the available dance space, enclosed and delineated by a square of light, resulting in limited areas for escape, aiding in the realisation of confinement. Resulting from my direct

observation of the Hong Kong couple over a period of time, the notion of mutual entrapment was a fundamental concept that I wanted to capture in the duet. I set myself the challenge of containing movement within a limited domain; the couch and a small area in front of and behind the couch. This strategy aided in, and informed emotional concepts that I was exploring in that the spatial confinement was a metaphor for being trapped in a claustrophobic relationship.

### **3.1.1 Lighting as an integral element**

Lighting further enhanced this emotional state. As Preston-Dunlop (1998, 182) states, “Lighting also sets an emotional temperature, creates virtual architecture, divides the space into separate domains”. By utilising particular stage lighting in performance, I wanted this device to facilitate in the delivery of emotional intensity to an audience; visually enclosing the couch and the performance space. My intention was not to allow the onlooker’s eye to wander, but rather, to force him/her to observe the two performers, consequently generating a focussed intimacy. To facilitate this idea, and in considering lighting concepts, I drew upon the notion of illumination from a television. The introduction of static, cast onto the performers and the couch via overhead projection, delineated the space dramatically, framing the object and performers, and this became the opening image of the duet. I used the concept of static to depict tension, relying on the constant flickering of static as a metaphor for internal bodily tension; generating a sense of underlying festering, to which the viewer



was first exposed. Apart from one section in the duet, the cold colours found in static became the colour palette for the lighting design and the starkness, served to symbolically strip the characters of any sense of intimacy, despite their constant physical contact.

### **3.1.2 Performers embodying the concept**

In placing the performers in such an exposed setting, I needed two dancers who were physically compatible in terms of strength and who were willing to explore emotional, as well as physical parameters of this idea. It was also important to me that the two dancers possessed a positive working manner, would be focussed, committed, had strong technical skills and whom I felt had the potential maturity to carry out this investigation. The dancers chosen were Vanessa Sew Hoy and Richard Causer, both third-year Bachelor of Fine Arts students undertaking their final year in Dance at Creative Industries, QUT. Like Bausch, I wanted the dancers to attempt to go deep within their emotional psyche; to extract experiences in order to workshop ideas. Preston-Dunlop in her evaluation of what choreographers look for in dancers states:

Choreographers want particular things from their casts. Energy is one. Commitment to the low or high energy requirement is essential, even if it means sweat, pounding heart, gasping breath, or holding back with profound delicacy. Daring is one. You may be asked to do things you have never done before, things requiring emotional exposure. (Preston-Dunlop 1998, 60)

In *sheCOUCHhe*, I required this emotional daring from Vanessa and Richard, in terms of abstracting and revealing the scenes observed in Hong Kong, through movement that would expose the emotional intensity of a dysfunctional and potentially violent relationship. However, the dancers were young and did not have much life-experience. To embody and portray the emotional intensity I required in the duet, I asked Vanessa and Richard to write a fictitious scenario based on tension between two people in a relationship, along with descriptive words and whatever else they felt like writing in response to the idea of emotional tension. The purpose was to enable them to think of and place themselves mentally into a particular situation, with the hope that they might gain a deeper understanding of how to portray the Hong Kong characters. “The persona you have to become may be a character ... the way in may be through research into who, why, when and what ...how he fits into the plot, with whom or with what idea he creates a tension” (Preston-Dunlop, 1988, 61). Through this exercise, as well as providing visual imagery, characters were developed and a narrative emerged, assisting the dancers in developing their individual persona, as well as their persona as a couple.

### **3.1.3 Workshop processes**

Initial rehearsals were focussed on workshopping concepts that surfaced during my preparatory research, such as entrapment, as well as emotions associated with my interpretation of the Hong Kong couple’s interplay on the couch. Ideas/concepts that contained inherent emotional content and

were central to the formation of the duet consisted of tension, power-play, aggression, frustration, manipulation and sexual connotations. I also concentrated on equality of power between the individuals, this idea being imperative because I did not want one individual to be predominating throughout the work whilst the other individual was portrayed as the victim.

In identifying with these emotional descriptors, I was able to start workshopping ideas and develop movement from them; internally driven by strong emotional feelings. Each rehearsal was centred around exploring and developing one emotion. This was achieved through exploration with my own body and the couch. For example, the initial development of frustration (which led to the formation of Richard's solo) began with experimenting with ways of throwing myself onto and pushing myself off the couch. This was done on my own, in the studio. I was interested in Richard taking out his frustration on the couch rather than on Vanessa. What was of significance to me in this section was giving the impression of Vanessa being oblivious to what Richard was experiencing (as if she had lost all sense of caring towards him, feeling quite detached). This was achieved by creating the bulk of Richard's solo first; followed by placing Vanessa in a sitting position on the edge of the couch; her body facing away from him, where she remained motionless throughout his solo; juxtaposing the contrasting energy of movement and stillness from movement to create an emotional void between the two

dancers. This idea of stillness was also used in the opening image of the duet to evoke unresolved tension.

The notion of tension between the two dancers was achieved by employing several devices. In order to set up the opening, I envisaged the image of a couple having just argued, resulting in a standoff. I explored creating an imaginary line between the two bodies by placing Vanessa in a standing position in front of the couch and Richard diagonally across from her, sitting on the couch, creating a sense of tension through spatial positioning. I looked at body language that tends to be recognisable, employing physical gestures associated with daily life, both literal and abstracted. By placing Vanessa's back towards Richard and through the physical gesture of her arms crossed, I wanted to represent the notion of being closed off to communication. Concurrently, by placing Richard in a sitting position, head tilted down, I was seeking a sense of contemplation on the preceding argument (see figure 1). One reviewer commented on this aspect of the work stating, "Causer and Vanessa Sew Hoy's bold duet is a mesmerising, consummate display of body language" (Stewart, 2004). Although there were obviously recognisable images throughout the duet, there were also subtleties embedded in the work to create emotional nuances. For instance, I used the image of Richard discreetly playing with his thumbs to evoke a sense of contained anger. However, in order to prevent this reading as boredom, the application of tension and tightening of muscles throughout his body was exercised. Through both dancers being relatively

motionless over a period of time (approximately forty-five seconds) I was hoping to build accumulated tension, out of which an explosion of actions would occur.

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Figure 1  
Dancers: Vanessa Sew Hoy & Richard Causer / Photographer: Ian Hutson - 2004

### **3.1.4 Variants of anger**

Throughout the duet I was juggling pre-meditated and spontaneous anger, as well as the intensity with which such anger was conveyed.

Ekman elaborates on the word anger, stating:

... anger covers many different related experiences. There is a range of angry feelings, from slight annoyance to rage. There are not just differences in the strength of angry feelings, but also differences in the kind of anger felt. Indignation is a self-righteous anger; sulking is a passive anger; exasperation refers to having one's patience tried excessively. Revenge is a type of angry action usually committed after a

period of reflection about the offence, sometimes of greater intensity than the act that provoked it. (Ekman 2003, 112)

The duet contained many variants of anger, in particular the notion of revenge, which was portrayed frequently throughout the work. For instance, the leaping attack from Vanessa towards Richard in the beginning of the duet (see figure 2), and the slap across Richard's chest, were moments of spontaneous action, arising from rage and a desire for revenge.

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Figure 2  
Dancers: Vanessa Sew Hoy & Richard Causer / Photographer: Ian Hutson - 2004

In contrast to spontaneous action, I looked at including moments of pre-meditated action. An example of this was when Vanessa's hand entered Richard's personal space. "The region around each of us, our personal space we treat as if it were part of our body substance. If anyone intrudes into that space without approval we react as though invaded" (Preston-Dunlop 1998, 85). This act of invasion was counteracted by Richard

removing Vanessa's hand from his personal space; a pre-meditated action, deliberate, slowly executed with controlled force (see figure 3).

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Figure 3  
Dancers: Vanessa Sew Hoy & Richard Causer / Photographer: Ian Hutson - 2004

Another example was the moment of compressing Vanessa's face into a confined space on the couch; evoking both emotional manipulation and physical violence.

### **3.1.5 Divergence from the couch**

Essentially, the most physically violent part of the duet occurred off the couch and on the floor, in a segment entitled the "rug". This became the only moment in the duet where both dancers left the couch for an extended period of time. The idea of a rug in front of the couch (metaphorically delineated by overhead stage light), provided me with a new space in which to work. With the freedom of not being bound to the

couch, I developed movement vocabulary on a horizontal plain and on the floor; notions of combat and escape informed the creation of this movement. One could relate to this as being the “fight-or-flight” response, in which the body prepares for either combat or escape from potentially dangerous situations. The notion of fight-or-flight was evidenced through the physical rage in Richard’s body during his leap at, and over Vanessa, and Vanessa’s fear in her attempt to escape by desperately scurrying backwards on all fours. The concept of being on all fours led to primal and animalistic movement qualities, in which both bodies exerted high levels of physical energy towards one-another; bodies engaged in both trapping and fleeing (see figure 4).

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Figure 4  
Dancers: Vanessa Sew Hoy & Richard Causer / Photographer: Ian Hutson - 2004

I used the notion of trapping and fleeing as metaphor for a cat and mouse game, from which I took the associated physical aspects of action and reaction to develop material. At all times during the creative process I was



juggling with both male and female roles, in terms of developing separate movement phrases for Vanessa and Richard, and then teaching this vocabulary to them. The idea of action and reaction led to a section of movement on the couch comprising of pushing, kicking and hitting; reflecting a sense of verbal sparring. Throughout the creative process, several other choreographic tools were sourced to enhance emotional states/nuances in the duet, primarily timing, dynamics, focus and music.

### **3.1.6 Layering the duet**

Reflecting back on how Forsythe manipulates time, energy and space to create an assault on the senses, I developed moments of intense activity, followed by sustained, prolonged movement, before subjecting the dancers into frenetic activity again. I was interested in playing with the extremities of speed, so as to colour the work, ensuring that the duet was not void of dynamic range, leading to unexpected moments. Eye focus was an imperative aspect in the duet in terms of communicating intention, with countless hours devoted to investigating how this may enhance intention. As Preston-Dunlop states:

Focus in dance is hugely important...the direction of gaze, to which distance, with what intent and with what dynamic change, focused or glazed, directed or averted...Focus gives potent communication for focus is created by intention and intention speaks. Focus is reflected in shadow moves of posture and gesture and that enhances feelings. (Preston-Dunlop 1998, 8)

In searching for ways to convey emotional intention through focus, I played with variations of eye focus (directed towards and away) between Vanessa and Richard as they danced the movement phrases. This was accomplished with all sections of the duet (in the studio), until I found appropriate combinations which reflected the emotional intentions I wanted to communicate. For instance, in reproducing the notion of 'staring someone out' and in turn, producing feelings of anxiousness and unease, I directed Richard to keep his eyes fixated on Vanessa whilst he stepped over the arm of the couch, eventually placing himself beside her (see figure 5). I conveyed the image of an animal after its prey, which resulted in his movement taking on a predatory quality. Aware of Richard's impending presence, Vanessa remained motionless, her eyes staring straight out, the energy of tension running up through her body until it was released via a sudden leap, culminating in a defensive crouched position.

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Figure 5  
Dancers: Vanessa Sew Hoy & Richard Causer / Photographer: Ian Hutson - 2004

It was not until the final week of rehearsals before moving into the performance venue, the Loft, for the inaugural showing of the duet, that the dance was set to music. This is in contrast to the method I have employed in the past in the development of all my choreographic work where music has always influenced and dictated the way my work has been structured. Although I had identified a piece of music for *sheCOUCHhe*, I was reluctant to start creating to it, since I was more concerned with investigating movement vocabulary derived from emotions/feelings, that unfolded organically, from experimentation with the couch and dancers, rather than the music influencing the creation. However, I was influenced by the power of Gallota's work, in particular how he enhances emotional states/nuances in his work through the aid of music. In selecting the sound score to accompany the duet, I chose a piece of music (*Fog Tropes* by Ingram Marshall) that I felt provided an

atmosphere germane to the duet, reflecting the emotion presented but not prescribing it, rather providing an aural texture to the overall environment.

### **3.1.7 A cyclical ritual of habitual behaviour**

To reflect the cyclical nature of actions carried out by the Hong Kong couple, I re-introduced movement sequences from the beginning of the duet, which formed the final two minutes of the work. Originally I had envisaged the conclusion of the duet moving off the couch and onto the wall – so as to represent the development of this interplay shifting into another space (the bedroom). However, although I had developed some interesting movement on the wall, my intuition led me back to the couch. I also felt that as the majority of the duet was centred on and around the couch (which had become such a potent symbol of the emotional landscape of this couple) and the immediate space surrounding this object, that introducing a new space at the end of the work would have been like introducing a fresh idea into the conclusion of a thesis. Rather than simply reflecting an ongoing cycle of destructive behaviour in the relationship, my intention was to reveal a decisive outcome for the closing stages of the duet, which could be read as both “moving on” and continued entrapment; this was accomplished physically and through lighting. Once Richard had repeated the flip upside-down on the couch, I directed Vanessa to walk in front of him rather than walking behind (a departure from the original movement vocabulary), resulting in her

stepping backwards onto and over the couch; her body facing him at all times (see figure 6). At this point, a new space was created through the delineation of stage light, resulting in a corridor of light that cut the couch in half, leaving Richard in the dark.

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Figure 6  
Dancers: Vanessa Sew Hoy & Richard Causer / Photographer: Ian Hutson - 2004

### 3.1.8 Symbolic images as metaphors

Establishing the corridor provided me with a means for Vanessa to walk away from the couch, eventually disappearing upstage. In the concluding stages of the work a myriad of symbolic images were presented, which to me were representative of differing metaphors. These were:

- Richard motionless in an upside-down position – *trapped in an emotional maelstrom from which he could not escape;*

- Vanessa deliberately stepping over the couch in a crouched manner – *the fear of leaving, yet fulfilling her desire to leave;*
- cutting the couch in half by light – *the separation of this relationship;*
- the light on Richard dissipating – *left behind to sulk;*
- the corridor of light leading upstage – *providing Vanessa with a new path to travel along in search of a better future.*

### **3.1.9 Dramatic and spatial structure**

As the weeks progressed, numerous sections (patches) were created based on differing emotional concepts, leading to a substantial body of movement vocabulary. In the final week of rehearsals, before moving into the Loft, these 'patches' were sewn together to form a quilt (the dance). I accomplished this intuitively, looking at how easily one 'patch' organically flowed into the other. This resulted in the structure of the work being unfamiliar to the dancers, which in turn gave the work an edge, as the dancers were not overly rehearsed to the point where the duet became predictable or stale. I expressed to Vanessa and Richard that the interaction carried out between them, should be enacted as though it was the first time they are experiencing these emotional and physical dealings with each other, which also assisted in avoiding predictability and gave a sense of reality to the duet.

The dramatic, emotional and spatial structure of the resulting couch duet became:

1. Tension and power play – *minimal physical contact (restricted to couch)*
2. Manipulation and aggression – *physical contact (on couch)*
3. Frustration – *male solo (primarily on couch)*
4. Aggression – *physical contact (on floor in front of couch)*
5. Sexual connotations – *physical contact (on couch)*
6. Manipulation – *(on couch)*
7. Repeat of tension and power play – *(on couch)*
8. Resolution of relationship impasse – *(Vanessa's departure from the couch to space upstage of couch)*

From this initial pilot study, *sheCOUCHhe*, which formed the body of *living room*, was presented to an audience through several iterations within the larger work of *Inhabited Space*. As *living room* was now placed between two other sections and no longer existed as its own entity, I needed to get both the dancers and couch off stage quickly before the following section began. I retained the original concept of the couch cut in half by overhead light and Vanessa walking upstage in the corridor of light. However, rather than Richard frozen upside-down, he rolled off the couch to standing, after which both the dancers and couch separated in three unconnected directions; the stage light fading to black. Utilising a second data projector to project digital video imagery of apartment blocks lit up at night, was introduced in the final version of *Inhabited Space* to reflect the surroundings of my Hong Kong experience; adding another visual layer to the work. There were no major structural changes made to

the original duet in subsequent versions, with only minimal tweaking to the movement vocabulary during the following creative development periods. Despite different casts (the Taiwanese casts being Yi-ling with Zhi-yong and Kuan-ling with Xuan-jun), dancing the roles of Vanessa and Richard in the final version of *Inhabited Space* (as mentioned in Chapter Two), no significant modifications were made. This was in complete contrast to the several evolutions that occurred with *bedroom*, which is discussed in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESSES (*BEDROOM*)

Dissimilar to *living room*, which retained (for the most part) its original structure and movement, *bedroom* underwent a number of transformations over the course of the inquiry, due to several contributing factors as discussed in this chapter.

Of all the rooms within the urban dwelling, I felt the *bedroom* was by far the most private and intimate space; a place to which one retreats to take refuge under the covers, to rest and sleep and to be intimate with one's partner. It is a space where our body language takes on a tactile, almost cat like existence. Bachelard states:

... both the house and the bed chamber bear the mark of an unforgettable intimacy. For there exists no more compact image of intimacy, none that is more sure of its centre, than a flower's dream of the future while it is still enclosed, tightly folded, inside its seed. (Bachelard 1994, 24)

The poetry within these words provided the inspiration to explore the notion of dreams. As human beings, our bodies are like the seed, tightly enclosed and buried under the bed sheets, our minds drifting into a world where our dreams unfold like Bachelard's 'flower', taking us on journeys

of unforgettable experiences. These experiences can be both pleasurable and unpleasant; often at the same time.

#### **4.1 *BEDROOM* – INITIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Unlike *living room*, where I placed myself in both male and female roles to create the movement, *bedroom* was developed entirely with, and by, the first cohort of third year QUT dance students. In this phase of the inquiry, I took on more of a directorial role in terms of providing the group with verbal information and imagery in order to workshop ideas rather than choreographing the movement on my own body as in *sheCOUCHhe*. The notion of immersing oneself in bed, onto the pillow, and falling asleep were concepts that I was interested in exploring. However, before commencing any movement development, I requested the group to individually research these ideas by sourcing literature pertaining to sleep and dreams; visual images to provide stimuli; and to write a narrative relating to a dream they could recall. Upon gathering the data, it was fascinating to discover that the overriding theme emergent from the majority of the group was the notion of nightmares.

Working with this idea, I divided the group into pairs, after which they began to workshop ideas based on one person being passive (the sleeper) and the other, active (the dream). The notion of active and passive served as an apt vehicle into developing duo work centred on counter-balance and contact work. I focussed on descriptors such as

falling and drifting, in order to inform the quality of movement vocabulary the dancers were creating, using the image of the active person representing a pillow (the support), into whose body the passive person immersed himself or herself. This provided the dancers with an inroad to begin forming movement vocabulary, some choosing to start standing and others on the floor. This process of data generation was employed over several rehearsals until enough movement vocabulary had been created, from which I started to direct, manipulate and piece together the individual duets. Notions of restlessness, entangled and trapped in bed-sheets and suffocation, were physically embedded into the movement. An example of this occurred particularly in Jessica Kloster's movements, where she identified with her experiences of insomnia to give the feel of restlessness. Although the five duets were dissimilar, they also shared similar somnambular qualities, resulting in little dynamic range, with the danger of bordering on monotony.

#### **4.1.1 Music selection**

In selecting the music to accompany *bedroom*, I decided on an atmospheric score with the underlying pulse inherent in the music creating a sense of calm. I wanted the music to furnish the "sleepers" with auditory notions of rest, drifting, falling and sleep, as well as provide an atmosphere within the dance, reflecting these notions. Unfortunately, the nature of the music did not aid in alleviating the lack of dynamics inherent

in the duets. Rather, it assisted in magnifying the problem resulting in *bedroom* becoming hypnotic and even sleep-inducing.

## **4.2 *BEDROOM* – STAGE TWO**

Analysis of the first showing of *bedroom*, revealed several problem areas which I felt impeded my realisation of creating emotional states/nuances to reflect my intentions for *bedroom*. These were, the omission of an object; a lack of certain dynamics in the movement vocabulary; generalised stage lighting; and the choice of music.

### **4.2.1 Pillow as a metaphor for *bedroom***

I looked at an appropriate object as a metaphor for *bedroom*, which became the pillow. The inclusion of actual pillows with which the dancers interacted, led to new possibilities in terms of developing movement vocabulary. I retained the notion of passive (sleeper) and active; however, the active character evolved into more of a manipulative figure, taking on the persona of a nightmare. Rehearsals were centred around workshopping ideas explored in the first iteration of *bedroom*, such as the idea of two bodies becoming ‘immersed’ in each other.

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Figure 7

Dancers: Hui-chun Peng and Jessica Kloster/ Photographer: Sonja de Sterke - 2004

In the second version, I also began to experiment with a greater range of dynamics, shifting between moments of falling and luxuriating (see figure 7) to wrapping and becoming tangled, playing with differing speeds. The pillow provided a physical and visual means to reflect concepts such as suffocation, as well as assisting the active characters to move the sleepers.

#### **4.2.2 Notions of nightmares**

The notion of nightmares was further developed through the formation of two trios, informed through recollection of my own recurring dreams, in which I was the hunted, unable to run from my attacker, screaming out for help with no sound emanating from my mouth, these being experienced as 'real', and awakening to feel distraught. To exemplify this emotional

experience through abstract movement, the trios incorporated concepts of the dreamer unable to escape, being manipulated, tossed and turned by two dancers. This was the one time during the creative process of *bedroom* where I physically created the movement and then taught it to the dancers. To reflect the nature of recurring dreams, I chose to repeat the trio, with movement vocabulary and spatial directions slightly altered and with a different dancer performing the 'sleeper' character. This was done to depict the same emotional feeling (fear), which every person may experience at some point, even if the events and environments within the dream are different. Repeating the trio resulted in this section becoming overly prolonged, with the effect of a climax diminishing.

I was conscious at all times to avoid creating another monotone section by instilling greater dynamics in the movement. To facilitate this, a different piece of music was chosen that I felt had a sense of drama inherent in the score which was similar to the drama felt in my recurring nightmare. However, in my efforts to avoid dynamic tedium, the richness of the music overpowered the dance, taking it to the other extreme. This resulted in the work appearing overly dramatic.

### **4.3 *BEDROOM* – CONCLUDING VERSION**

Embarking on the final creative development of *bedroom*, I was faced with the dilemma of how to find a better balance between music, space,

lighting and movement, as well as working with a new cohort of third-year QUT students, who had not been through the original creative process.

I decided to start from scratch, discarding all previous movement vocabulary yet retaining the pillow. This group underwent a similar process as the first cohort in terms of researching the notion of dreams, and then workshopping these ideas in pairs in the studio. Discussion centred on developing a relationship between sleeper and manipulator, in order to establish a common idea between the pair so as to embed a shared understanding of movement intention. Once again, I provided the dancers with aural and visual imagery. One example was images of gargoyles, crouched and hovering, an image derived from observing the gargoyles on top of Notre Dame in Paris. I relayed my experience to the dancers that these gargoyles had such an effect on me that I was reluctant to enter the cathedral out of fear. This emotional memory led me to investigate a nightmare figure (similar to the gargoyles) in taking on a more sinister and evil persona (see figure 8).

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Figure 8  
Dancers: Michelle Elphinston and Elizabeth McDonnell / Photographer: Sonja de Sterke – 2005

Literature and images that surfaced from the dancers research were used to stimulate their thoughts in terms of writing fictitious narratives. These 'narratives' were used as a starting point to physically workshop ideas and develop movement phrases. Findings emergent from the dancers research included:

- sleep disorders (*Renee Currie*)
- perceptions of the bedroom in other cultures (*Elizabeth McDonald*)
- poetry associated with dreams (*Hannah Kelly and Carolyn McKelliff*)
- children's fairy tales (*Hui-ching Pai*)
- images of the moon (*I-pin Lin*)
- images of glass (*Alice Hinde*)



This was an invaluable exercise in terms of the dancers mentally immersing themselves into concepts of sleep and dreams, providing ideas and feelings with which to develop material.

In discussing with the dancers their findings, Alice Hinde's interpretation of glass as fractured dreams, was an image to which I was drawn, and seemed to appropriately relate to Bachelard's notion of 'dispersed images'. This led me to consider how this might be achieved theatrically.

I chose to attempt this through stage lighting, delineating several spaces that became imagined beds/mattresses on which each couple danced. These dispersed images revealed the couples enacting dreams through bodily impressions of differing feelings, using lighting to expose and conceal each pair before revealing the next couple. I used this as a metaphor for one person experiencing a multiplicity of dreams during the course of one night. This concept led to the development of a solo to conclude *bedroom*, using movement which encapsulated the myriad of notions investigated during all stages of *bedroom*. This culminated in the dancer waking-up with a jolt, physically exhausted and feeling distraught. Unlike the previous versions of *bedroom*, where lighting illuminated the entire stage revealing the performers in various sleep positions, redesigning the lighting into these metaphoric bed/mattress spaces seemed to aid in creating the sense of intimacy, which Bachelard illustrates in relation to the bed chamber. This provided an intimate

focus, amplifying the actions of the dancers in their private world of dreams.

I worked individually with each couple, altering and/or eliminating movement, changing the spatial relationships between the performers and objects, and directing them in focus and intention.

For a second time, a new score was chosen, one that I felt contained appropriate nuances to enhance feelings inherent in the movement. From early on in the development of this stage of *bedroom*, music was played at a low level during workshopping. I thought this might subconsciously affect the dancers in terms of movement they were developing, as well as provide me with time to evaluate whether a successful marriage between the score and movement could occur. This proved valuable and facilitated in determining the resulting structure of the work.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### OUTCOMES OF RESEARCH

As discussed in the preceding chapters, in order to create a work reflecting emotional states and nuances, a range of choreographic processes were explored, which informed the construction of movement vocabulary, framed by performer/space/object relationships. My role as researcher and choreographer took on a dual identity in terms of facilitating movement creation and structuring the work. These were as a choreographer, physically exploring and creating movement vocabulary on my own body, prior to teaching this movement to the dancers, and as a directorial figure, eliciting movement material from the dancers, by providing verbal and visual information and subsequently shaping and developing their vocabulary. Findings and understandings emerged from reflective practice in the exegesis as outlined in the two preceding chapters, but were primarily embedded within the creative work itself.

#### 5.1 EVALUATION OF PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

Reflecting on the choreographic outcomes of both *living room* and *bedroom*, I believe *living room* addressed my objectives more successfully than *bedroom*. This was due to several contributing factors.

### 5.1.1 Few participants versus many

*Living room* was developed through an intimate, creative development period with only two dancers, whom I had selected. The cohesion amongst the team provided for a relaxed working atmosphere, facilitating effective investigation. This was due in part to the trust between the performers and their positive attitude and commitment to the context and content of the work, their willingness to be conduits for my ideas, but also to the fact that I had the luxury to create and evolve a concept (over ten-minutes) for only two people. This was in stark contrast to *bedroom*, where I worked with a larger group (eight dancers being the original cohort and ten dancers in the following cohort) to create a ten-minute section. As the original and following cohort (involved in *bedroom*) were enrolled in a project unit (of which I was the unit coordinator), I used this unit to facilitate the first and subsequent case studies. Through these circumstances, I encountered challenges that affected the choreographic processes undertaken. I was obliged to work with a larger group rather than work intimately with another couple, which I most probably would have chosen to do in an industry rather than student environment. With *bedroom* I was conscious of ensuring each student was given equal amount of attention, time and quality exposure in performance, which resulted in the various duets being short-lived. I was unable to invest as much time as I did with *living room* as I was dealing with so many dancers and a shorter development time. This resulted in outcomes of concepts not being fully realised. Therefore, I chose to travel along the

path of Bachelard's notion of images fragmented and dispersed, in order to structure *bedroom* and try to make some sense of emotional intention and intimacy in this section. Juggling between short intensive rehearsal periods with each individual pair, and ensuring the other couples were kept engaged in the process even when they were not working directly with me, produced moments of anxiety within myself, contributing to times of distracted and fragmented focus.

### **5.1.2 Real versus surreal**

With *living room*, I drew upon my own experiences and emotional feelings to inform the creation of movement, in contrast to *bedroom* in which concepts were sourced through the dancers' research and imagery that I gave, which was then abstracted. This contrast in processes led to different outcomes; *living room* becoming realistic (although abstracted) in terms of simulating and representing my concepts, as opposed to *bedroom*, which had a surrealistic ambience. Identifying this in retrospect has identified an emergent area of future research.

### **5.1.3 Choreographic versus directorial approach**

Relying on the dancers to generate data for *bedroom* produced a rich array of movement vocabulary. Although I had control over directing and shaping this vocabulary, the creation of content was largely given over to the dancers. The process of engendering emotional states/nuances into

these duets I found difficult, due to not having created the movement myself, unlike *living room*, in which I felt I could easily integrate all aspects of the development of the work. The immersion of myself in the creation of movement, and the experiential knowledge of feeling the emotion through the language of contemporary dance, radically informed the development of *living room*, assisting the dancers to interpret the material and layer it with their own emotional intentions rather than creating the movement itself.

#### **5.1.4 Findings**

Through this study, several factors emerged in relation to developing choreographic work that sought to portray emotion through abstraction, and these findings have brought up important considerations in terms of the future direction and development of my own creative work, which may also provide useful insights for other choreographers and researchers into processes that can be employed and developed in order to make contemporary dance that evokes an emotional landscape.

Ironically, in creating work that reflects emotional states/nuances through the abstract language of contemporary dance, I used the power of narrative from which to extract essences of emotional states. To embody and portray the emotional intensity I required, the dancers sourced literature and visual images to trigger ideas and stimulate their thoughts and feelings, at times through writing fictitious narratives or recording

dreams. These ‘narratives’ provided starting points from which to physically workshop ideas and develop movement vocabulary. I engaged primarily with final-year undergraduate students who had limited life experience in terms of intimate relationships and this process served effectively to assist these young dancers to:

- produce and manipulate movement vocabulary pertinent to the concepts being investigated;
- structure the dance;
- elicit maturity in performance through layering their experiences to support the works’ emotional intentions.

In contrast to the process undertaken by the dancers, I found that as a choreographer, drawing on my own experiences and inner feelings was more effective in creating both the environment and content for the work, rather than over-reliance on literature and visual stimulus. Experiencing and observing events and associated emotions produced more directly, the kinetic material (within myself) which shaped the works.

Rudolf von Laban (cited in Blom and Chaplin 1989, 8) states: “Choreography is brought into the world in a number of ways: through the senses or the mind; through the heart or the gut; into the fingers or the eye or the backbone or the legs.” I connected with Laban’s words “the heart or gut”, as I was internally driven by strong emotional feelings during the creation of the *sheCOUCHhe* duet.

Throughout the study I employed a number of processes to create movement. In particular, identifying with emotional descriptors such as, aggression, frustration, manipulation and more abstract movement-based descriptors like falling and drifting. These evocative action words served to refine the textures of the movement and informed the quality by which movement was executed.

In creating abstract movement, I employed the improvisational techniques of William Forsythe, in particular, Universal Writing. Drawing on my experiences and then taking it further, I adapted Forsythe's method by altering and shifting between imagined writing surfaces and selecting words that described the emotion I was exploring. Although the dancers produced fresh and innovative movement vocabulary it seemed to me to contain little emotion embedded within the material. I found that by requesting the dancers to write out these words in such a way as to physically emote the feeling of the word, it dramatically changed the way in which the movement was executed, and read.

Relationships between performer/space/objects were germane to embedding emotion in the work. Delineating the space through confining the environment allowed for movement to be contained within a limited domain, aiding in concepts such as spatial confinement and entrapment. This was achieved through lighting, which transpired as a powerful tool throughout the work. Performers and objects became visually enclosed within or divided across the performance space, and delineating the



environment in this way facilitated in the delivery of emotional intensity; an example being the introduction of static to depict tension. The constant flickering of static became a metaphor for internal bodily tension; generating a sense of underlying festering. Lighting also enabled me to direct the viewer's focus, consequently generating a focussed intimacy.

The physical space between two bodies; the way bodies touch; and the dancers' relationship to each other and in space, and the objects with which the dancers inter-acted was explored extensively, which assisted in embedding notions such as tension, frustration, aggression and power play. I also investigated the area of body language that tends to be recognisable, employing physical gestures associated with daily life, both literal and abstracted.

From this study, it has become clear that in creating dance work, I prefer to engage with an intimate group of people as opposed to larger numbers. I am constantly drawn to choreographing work, which deals with themes based on human interaction and in particular relationships between two individuals. This by nature lends itself to working with smaller numbers. The creation of *bedroom* would have been less problematic if I had been able to work with fewer dancers. I eventually solved my dilemma of creating intimacy with a large group through a series of intense duets which were isolated in space and encased in their own light.

A future practice-led research challenge would be to undertake the same creative process albeit with professional dancers of greater maturity and life experience, in order to explore what differences in choreographic and performative outcomes might arise and whether in this context, emotional states/nuances might be fused into the work in a different way within a larger group.

Clear intentions of the choreographer, experiencing the 'doing' in order to create movement; employing music that assists in providing an atmosphere pertinent to the topic of the work but does not dictate or overstate the atmosphere; including stage lighting and a functional and meaningful use of props and sets play significantly in communicating intention and creating an emotional nuance, whilst still providing room for the audience's individual reading of the work. As Preston-Dunlop states:

The choreographer and co-operating team have something to say, or something to share. Their medium is dance, that is movement by performers, with sound and in space into which, with which, they put their ideas to make a dance message, spectators receive it, variously. (Preston-Dunlop 1998, 8)

Although the viewer brings with them their paradigms, prejudices, preferences and experiences, which inform their reading/interpretation of the dance that is transmitted, it is ultimately the choreographer through the investigation of his/her craft, combing through, and implementing the myriad processes that best serves his/her needs in conveying his/her intentions, that directs, shapes and infuses the viewers' experience.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **CREATIVE ARTISTS**

- a) Major creative artists**
- b) Australian participants**
- c) Taiwanese participants**

**APPENDIX 1 (a)**

**CREATIVE ARTISTS**

**Major creative artists**



## **CSABA BUDAY – Choreographer**

Dip ABS

A graduate of the Australian Ballet School, Csaba performed with the Australian Ballet, the Sadlers Wells Royal Ballet and the Australian Ballet Dancers' Company before joining Australian Dance Theatre (ADT) in 1984. During his 9 years with ADT he danced in numerous works by notable Australian and International choreographers including world acclaimed dance maker William Forsythe (Frankfurt Ballet). Csaba joined Dance North in 1993 and remained with that company until the end of 1994. In 1995 he returned to Adelaide to become a member of Leigh Warren and Dancers and continued to be a dancer with the company until September 2000.

Professional companies Csaba has taught for include: Australian Dance Theatre (Australia), Dance North (Australia), Vietnam Opera Ballet (Vietnam), Cloud Gate Dance Theatre 1 (Taiwan), Cloud Gate Dance Theatre 2 (Taiwan), Leigh Warren and Dancers (Australia), Expressions Dance Company (Australia), Chunky Move (Australia), Modern Dance Company of Beijing, (China), City Contemporary Dance Co (Hong Kong) and Bangarra Dance Theatre (Australia).

Since 1984 Csaba has choreographed a total of 32 works for both professional dance companies and tertiary institutions within Australia and overseas. He has also been commissioned to create work for youth companies and independent project groups as well as remounting existing works for both professional companies and tertiary institutions. His works have been presented throughout Australia as well as in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Macau, Vietnam, Israel, Scotland, Belgium, Vienna and at the Danses de Mai Festival, Paris (2002).

He is a 1999 Choreographic Fellowship recipient (Australian Choreographic Centre, Canberra).

Between 2000 and 2003 Csaba held the position of Artist-in-Residence at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.

Csaba joined Creative Industries Dance Faculty, QUT, as Lecturer in Contemporary Dance and Resident Choreographer in July 2003 and has since choreographed *West Side Story* for the Brisbane Riverfestivals' *Riversymphony*, *Altered States* for Creative Industries 2003 Dance Graduation season, *Inhabited Space* for Creative Industries (Dance) involvement in the 2004 World Dance Conference, Taipei, Taiwan and *Inhabited Space* for Creative Industries 2004 Dance Graduation season and 2005 Dance Bytes season.

Csaba is currently undertaking postgraduate studies through an MA (Research) at Creative Industries, QUT, Brisbane Australia.

**MING-SHEN KU – Co-choreographer**

BA (Dance), Chinese Culture University. MFA (Dance), University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana.

An active dance teacher, choreographer and dancer, Ming-Shen Ku was born in Taiwan in the Republic of China. She received her MFA degree from the University of Illinois.

Ku's works are influenced by many Western and Eastern dance styles, a merging development from her diverse background. In 1989, her work *Bamboo Grove* was notated into Laban notation. For the past ten years, Ku has been invited as a guest artist to perform and teach in many universities and dance companies around the world.

In 1991-1992, Ku received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to advance her study in the United States. She became deeply involved in contact improvisation and brought the practise back to Taiwan.

As a renowned choreographer in Taiwan she has collaborated with many dance companies and arts events in Taiwan and Hong-Kong. Her solo performance has been invited to tour the United States, Europe, Australia, Tokyo and Hong-Kong. The latest tour was to the Biennale du Val-de-Marne, France in 2002.

She founded her dance company, *Ku & Dancers*, in 1993 to present new works and promote the concept of improvisation. As the only professional dance company that has devoted itself to improvisation works, *Ku & Dancers* has presented several structured improvisation projects touring Taiwan in the past few years. Since 2000, the company has organised Taiwan Dance Umbrella, of which Ku is the producer, to provide opportunities for young and innovative choreographers to have their works put on stage.

In 2001, Ku collaborated with *Image in Motion Theatre Company* to put on stage a dance performance combined with computer-animated images in *Not a Love Story*. It was the first of its kind in Taiwan. Ku has also started the exploration of dance and technology, collaborating with Hollywood computer animation specialist Yan Chen. The exploration continues with the production of *@Dream*.

Ku is currently a senior member of the dance faculty of the Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA).

**JASON ORGAN – Lighting designer**

AssocDipAT, BCAE

Jason graduated from Brisbane College of Advanced Education, now QUT in 1988. He is a co-founder of JLX Productions, a Queensland based design and technical consultancy, whose clients stretch from community theatre groups, major arts organizations and festivals, to corporate presentation and events. Jason's design credits include *Figaro Variations*, *Power and Sonata for Ten Hands* for Rock and Roll Circus; *The Little Mermaid*, *Giselle* and *E-motion* for Queensland Ballet; *The Tale of Monkey* for Grin & Tonic Theatre; *The Road To Mecca* and *Sitcom Festival* for Queensland Theatre Company; *Seems Like Yesterday* and *Yarnin' Up* for Kooemba Jdarra and *Way Out West*, *Svetlana in Slingbacks* and *Scar* for La Boite. For the last two years Jason has been lighting designer for all of Creative Industries Dance showcase seasons.

**ROSA HIRAKATA – Costume designer**

Trained as a fashion designer, Rosa has been involved with theatre since 1995 freelancing as a costume designer and maker. In 1996, she was awarded a professional development grant from Arts Queensland. She has worked with Queensland Ballet, Expressions Dance Company, Queensland Theatre Company, La Boite, Zen Zen Zo, Rock and Roll Circus and Brisbane's Major Festivals.

Since 1997 Rosa has held the post of wardrobe supervisor for drama and dance at QUT.

Her recent costume design credits include *Dance Bytes 2003*, *West Side Story* for Brisbane Riverfestival's 2003, *Riversymphony*, and in 2006 *Accented Body* for the Brisbane Festival.

**APPENDIX 1 (b)**

**CREATIVE ARTISTS**

**Australian participants**

<b>Artist</b>	<b>Projects undertaken</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>Contribution</b>
Chafia Brooks	<i>Inhabited Space #1</i> – Brisbane, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Richard Causer	<i>sheCOUCHhe</i> – Brisbane, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #1</i> – Brisbane, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Han-shao Chen	<i>Inhabited Space #1</i> – Brisbane, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Hsin-ju Chiu	<i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Pei-chen Chou	<i>Inhabited Space #1</i> – Brisbane, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Natasha Cudilla	<i>Inhabited Space #1</i> – Brisbane, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Renee Currie	<i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Michelle Elphinston	<i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Alice Hinde	<i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Danielle Hocking	<i>Inhabited Space #1</i> – Brisbane, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Hannah Kelly	<i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Jessica Kloster	<i>Inhabited Space #1</i> – Brisbane, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004	Dance Student	Choreography Performance

## APPENDIX 1 – CREATIVE ARTISTS

<b>Artist</b>	<b>Projects undertaken</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>Contribution</b>
I-pin Lin	<i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Elizabeth McDonnell	<i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Carolyn McKelliff	<i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Gemma Nicholas	<i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Brisbane 2004	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Hui-ching Pai	<i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Hui-chun Peng	<i>Inhabited Space #1</i> – Brisbane, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Stephanie Pokoj	<i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Brisbane 2004	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Ian Rendell	<i>sheCOUCHhe</i> – Brisbane, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #1</i> – Brisbane, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Technical production	Digital video imagery
Vanessa Sew Hoy	<i>sheCOUCHhe</i> – Brisbane, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #1</i> – Brisbane, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Joshua Thomson	<i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance

\* All dance students were 3<sup>rd</sup> year students at Queensland University of Technology, Creative Industries Faculty, Brisbane, Australia, at the time of their contribution.

**APPENDIX 1 (c)**

**CREATIVE ARTISTS**

**Taiwanese participants**

<b>Artist</b>	<b>Projects undertaken</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>Contribution</b>
Xin-yi Cheng	<i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Zhi-yong Fang	<i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Shao-qing Hong	<i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Xuan-jun Lai	<i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Li-chung- Lin	<i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004	Lighting designer	Lighting Design
Yi-fen Lin	<i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Yi-ling Liu	<i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Jia-ying Sun	<i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Kuan-ling Tsai	<i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Yuan-li Wang	<i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance
Yen-Fan Yu	<i>Inhabited Space #2</i> – Taiwan, 2004 <i>Inhabited Space #3</i> – Brisbane, 2005	Dance Student	Choreography Performance

\* All dance students were undertaking studies in dance at Taipei National University of the Arts, Taipei, Taiwan.



## APPENDIX 2

### PROGRAMS AND MEDIA

- a) ***sheCOUCHhe*** – QUT, Creative Industries, Dance, Post-graduate season 2004, Brisbane, Australia
- b) ***Inhabited Space*** – International Dance Conference 2004, Taipei, Taiwan
- c) ***Inhabited Space*** – QUT, Creative Industries, Dance Graduation season 2004, Brisbane, Australia
- d) ***Inhabited Space*** – QUT, Creative Industries, Dance Bytes season 2005, Brisbane, Australia

**APPENDIX 2 (a)**

**PROGRAMS AND MEDIA**

***sheCOUCHhe*** – QUT, Creative Industries, Dance, Post-graduate season 2004, Brisbane, Australia

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**APPENDIX 2 (b)**

**PROGRAMS AND MEDIA**

***Inhabited Space*** – International Dance Conference  
2004, Taipei, Taiwan

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**APPENDIX 2 (c)**

**PROGRAMS AND MEDIA**

***Inhabited Space*** – QUT, Creative Industries, Dance  
Graduation season 2004, Brisbane, Australia



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**APPENDIX 2 (d)**

**PROGRAMS AND MEDIA**

***Inhabited Space*** – QUT, Creative Industries, Dance  
Bytes season 2005, Brisbane, Australia

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## **APPENDIX 3**

### **CONSENT INFORMATION PACKAGE FOR PARTICIPANTS**

## **Consent Information Package for Participants**

### **Project Title**

***Inhabited Space:*** A practice-led collaborative performance project investigating how rooms and objects within an urban dwelling subconsciously affect our interaction with these objects and/or individuals in these spaces

### **Researcher**

Csaba Buday

Student no: n4997492

MA (Research) - Choreography

Faculty: QUT, Creative Industries

Department: Dance

Phone: +61 7 3511 1433

Mobile 0423 5999 74

Email: [c.buday@student.qut.edu.au](mailto:c.buday@student.qut.edu.au)

### **Supervisor**

Associate Professor Cheryl Stock

Head of Dance

QUT, Creative Industries

Phone: +61 7 3864 3397

Fax: 07 3864 3734

Email: [c.stock@qut.edu.au](mailto:c.stock@qut.edu.au)

## **Consent Package Contents**

### **Contacts**

- Researchers name and contact details
- Supervisors name and contact details

### **Project title**

### **Project description**

- QUT involvement
- Aims
- Expected outcomes
- A/V recordings
- Confidentiality
- Questions and further information
- Concerns and comments
- Feedback

### **Consent form**

### **Question sheet**

## **Contacts**

**Researcher:** Csaba Buday, MA (Research) – Choreography, Creative Industries Faculty (Dance), Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

Phone: +61 7 3511 1433

Mobile: 0423 5999 74

Email: [c.buday@student.qut.edu.au](mailto:c.buday@student.qut.edu.au)

**Supervisor:** Associate Professor Cheryl Stock, Head of Dance, Creative Industries Faculty (Dance), Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

Phone: +61 7 3864 3397

Fax: +61 7 3864 3734

Email: [c.stock@qut.edu.au](mailto:c.stock@qut.edu.au)

## **Project title**

***Inhabited Space:*** A practice-led collaborative performance project investigating how rooms and objects within an urban dwelling subconsciously affect our interaction with these objects and/or individuals in these spaces.

## **Project Description:**

### **Queensland University of Technology involvement**

This research is being conducted as part of my MA (Research) in Choreography, in the Creative Industries Faculty at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

### **Aims**

Exploring the abstract language of contemporary dance to create emotional states through the creative practice project ***Inhabited Space***.

The purpose of the study is to:

- Gain a more informed understanding through physical exploration, and academic research of how to successfully communicate themes dealing with relationships – capturing emotion through the abstract language of contemporary dance – sourced from intention rather than narrative.
- Develop movement vocabulary which realises the emotional intentions of the work ***Inhabited Space***.
- Survey the field of contemporary dance practitioners with similar aspirations.
- Integrate digitalised imagery in live performance to enhance emotional content, without dictating meaning or overpowering the live performance.

### **Expected outcomes**

As practiced-led research, the expected outcomes include a final performance presentation, a written exegesis and an edited DVD of the final performance.

### **A/V recordings**

A component of this project will involve visual recording of participants. These recordings will take place on separate occasions in order to serve two purposes:

- To assist in my data collection – movement vocabulary that is created in the studio (based on tasks given) will be captured on digital videotape providing the building blocks in order to shape and inform the work. This is the normal process involved in any choreographic project.
- Documentation – recording of the live performance, which would then be edited and burned onto DVD.

This final DVD will be created primarily for my own archival records, as well as a component of the MA (Research) exegetical submission.

### **Confidentiality**

Your identity will be revealed in the process of questioning, peer feedback, audio/video recordings and program notes.

**Process of gathering information:** Audio/video recordings will be taken of you during the rehearsal process. However, your views and any documentation of studio rehearsals will be used solely for the purpose of this research. The audio/video recordings will not be used for public broadcast or commercial enterprise.

**Prior approval:** The final edited DVD of the performance, subject to your approval and revision, may be archived at the Queensland University of Technology Library as an educational reference for students and lecturers at the university.

### **Risks**

In order to minimise physical risks to performers, this project will follow safe dance and performance practises as found in the Australian Standards for Dance Teachers – National Competency Standards document, developed by the profession in 1998.

### **Questions and further information**

If you have any questions regarding the nature of this project, please contact me on +61 7 3511 1433, 0423 5999 74 or by email at [c.buday@student.qut.edu.au](mailto:c.buday@student.qut.edu.au). Should any concerns arise regarding the content and purpose of this study, my supervisor, Associate Professor Cheryl Stock, may be contacted on +61 7 3864 3397 or by email at [c.stock@qut.edu.au](mailto:c.stock@qut.edu.au)

### **Concerns and comments**

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the nature of this project or about ethical conduct of the research, please contact the Research Ethics Officer on +61 7 3864 2340 or [ethicscontact@qut.edu.au](mailto:ethicscontact@qut.edu.au)

### **Feedback**

As a participant in this research, you will be engaged in the normal feedback mechanisms of a professional creative project. You will be given access to the transcripts of interviews/questionnaires (verbal or written). If you are cited in the final thesis, proofs of the final thesis will be sent to you for your comment and approval prior to submission of the thesis. You will have access to the complete thesis following final examination.

## Statement of Consent

### **Project title**

***Inhabited Space***: A practice-led collaborative performance project investigating how rooms and objects within an urban dwelling subconsciously affect our interaction with these objects and/or individuals in these spaces.

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read the information sheet and the questions in this consent form and that you understand the nature of the research project.
- Are fully aware as to the details relating to your involvement/participation in this research.
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the researcher and/or supervisor.
- Agree to the inclusion of either interview, video footage, creative/rehearsal notes and/or written transcriptions relating to the creation and production of *Inhabited Space* as it appears in Csaba Buday's exegesis and final DVD, after first being contacted for approval prior to the exegesis being submitted and the video footage being edited and transferred onto DVD.
- Understand that it will be possible to identify you from the data collected to be used in the written exegesis and final DVD.
- Understand that copies of the exegesis and DVD will be held at QUT's library for bona fide research, subject to Australia and International copyright laws.
- Understand that if you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project that you may contact the researcher or the Research Ethics Officer on 61 7 3864 2340 or [ethicscontact@qut.edu.au](mailto:ethicscontact@qut.edu.au)
- Agree to participate in this project

**Name of participant (please print)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of participant** \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Questions**

- How far did you experience the creative process as a collaborative one?
- In which artistic areas did you work and in what capacity?
- Have you made any discoveries in relation to the artistic outcomes of the project?
- Additional comments, experiences or observations gained from participating in this project.



## **APPENDIX 4**

### **VISUAL IMAGES OF *INHABITED SPACE***

- a) *Living room***
- b) *Kitchen***
- c) *Bedroom***

**APPENDIX 4 (a)**

**VISUAL IMAGES OF *INHABITED SPACE***

***Living room***

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Please consult the hardcopy thesis  
available from the QUT Library

(Dancers: Vanessa Sew Hoy & Richard Causer / Photographer: Ian Hutson – 2004)

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available from the QUT Library

(Dancers: Vanessa Sew Hoy & Richard Causer / Photographer: Sonja de Sterke – 2004)

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Please consult the hardcopy thesis  
available from the QUT Library

(Dancers: Vanessa Sew Hoy & Richard Causer / Photographer: Ian Hutson – 2004)

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(Dancers: Vanessa Sew Hoy & Richard Causer / Photographer: Ian Hutson – 2004)

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available from the QUT Library

(Dancers: Yi-ling Liu and Zhi-yong Fang / Photographer: Sonja de Sterke – 2005)

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(Dancers: Yi-ling Liu and Zhi-yong Fang / Photographer: Sonja de Sterke – 2005)

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(Dancers: Yi-ling Liu and Zhi-yong Fang / Photographer: Sonja de Sterke – 2005)

**APPENDIX 4 (b)**

**VISUAL IMAGES OF *INHABITED SPACE***

***Kitchen***

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(Dancers: 3rd year QUT students / Photographer: Sonja de Sterke – 2004)



**APPENDIX 4 (c)**

**VISUAL IMAGES OF *INHABITED SPACE***

***Bedroom***

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available from the QUT Library

(Dancers: Jessica Kloster & Hui-chun Peng / Photographer: Sonja de Sterke – 2004)

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(Dancer: Jessica Kloster / Photographer: Sonja de Sterke – 2004)

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(Dancers: Hsin-ju Chiu & I-pin Lin / Photographer: Sonja de Sterke – 2005)

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(Dancers: Hsin-ju Chiu & I-pin Lin / Photographer: Sonja de Sterke – 2005)

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(Dancers: Michelle Elphinston & Elizabeth McDonnell / Photographer: Sonja de Sterke – 2005)

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(Dancers: Alice Hinde & Carolyn Mckelliff / Photographer: Sonja de Sterke – 2005)