

Ong Cheryl, La Manufacture, Mémoire - Bachelor Work 2019.

T E R R A I N C O G N I T A
For the taste of a naked land

real-time composition

*a practice of non-judgement,
acceptance,
and cultivating (trust in) a thinking body*

Thank you,
to my dearest parents
for their endless love and support,
and to every soul who has shared with me the warmth of humanity,
so that I could go on.

A swimming flow of thoughts

THE SEEDS	P3 - 5
REAL-TIME COMPOSITION	P5 - 8
AN UNEXPECTED BREAK. breaking or bending?	P9 - 10
FROM A PLACE OF RELAXATION	P11
GIVE ME A LITTLE TIME & SPACE, folks	P12 - 14
MATERIAL	P14 - 15
TRYING OUT SCORES	P16
ATTENTION, I'LL GO WHERE YOU GO	P17
NOT SO BLACK & WHITE	P18 - 20
small DISCOVERIES	P21
ENDNOTES	P22
REFERENCES	P23
A GIFT FOR YOU	P24

*"And with listening,
not the ear that hears,
organ that performs the
It is the total person
skin seems to be the
prickles and thrills,
silence; or the
how it bursts into
listens and then
language, its forms,
To be open to what we
we say..."*



*too, it seems to me, it is
it is not the physical
act of inner receptivity.
who hears. Sometimes the
best listener, as it
say to a sound or a
fantasy, the imagination:
inner pictures as it
responds by pressing its
into the listening clay.
hear, to be open in what*

Mary Caroline Richards (Centering: In Pottery, Poetry, and the Person)

T H E S E E D S

what interests me is a sense
of wild and free spirit
perhaps that same feeling that fills me
when I am in the mountains and in water
(improvising gives me this same feeling as I work with my creative energies)

/but composing is different
composing in the here and now
is...

perhaps, above all,
an act of being receptive/

roaming, travelling, and being,
simply as you are
very freely
and from this place of freedom can emerge many things
and possibilities

the possibility to guide my experience(s)
to experience time fully
to feel myself in space truly

and I like the feeling of travelling, of being on a journey
discovering the different tastes of life as they chance upon us
like chancing upon
wild blueberries and strawberries in the mountains

how to be as naked as the lake? as water? as my skin is one with water?
to be naked; vulnerable with myself and others

I would like to travel together with whom I share
together we fly we cry we scream we explode we sit still we feel the raindrops we
breathe we experience our whole being...

how to make the inner landscape come alive?
how can I create a physical landscape?

#1 "How will you go about finding that thing the nature of which
is totally unknown to you?"

#2 A body in space can
speak for itself

So I turned to seeking advice from Julyen Hamilton, who has dedicated his whole life to the practice of instant composition. I first took his workshop, 'The WORKING of TIME', in 2017. He remains an influential figure for me ever since. And his response gave me direction.

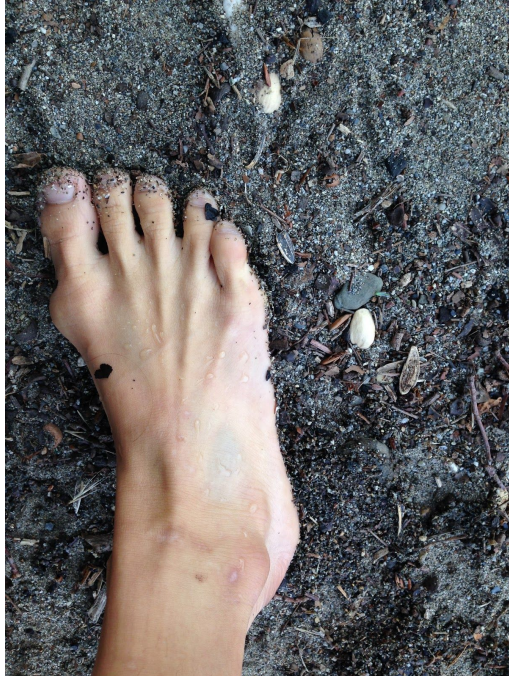
my road is the very ground i'm walking on right now..."

He also shed light that adequacy grows from how I "work the material as it is spontaneously arising so that the piece made has its due fullness and character, timing and quality."

- 1) what conditions do I need in order to work well?
- 2) what are the possible ways and settings for practice?
what are the different ways to access the river of creativity, of being?
- 3) what in life inspires and speaks to me?

Undoubtedly, the investigation also takes place through my way of living.

As well as this very *mémoire* in your hands right now. Exploring how flows of thoughts can be expressed in different ways, like dancing, allowing you to follow through in time and space.



AFTER SWIMMING IN THE LAKE

R E A L - T I M E C O M P O S I T I O N

one. a practice of non-judgement and acceptance

Acknowledging a highly critical mind and demanding self-expectations, composing and creating in the here and now is a vital way for me to practise making choices without overthinking. To learn to trek the unknown while cultivating trust in the self, and giving room for anything and everything to happen. To be with what is and move with it.

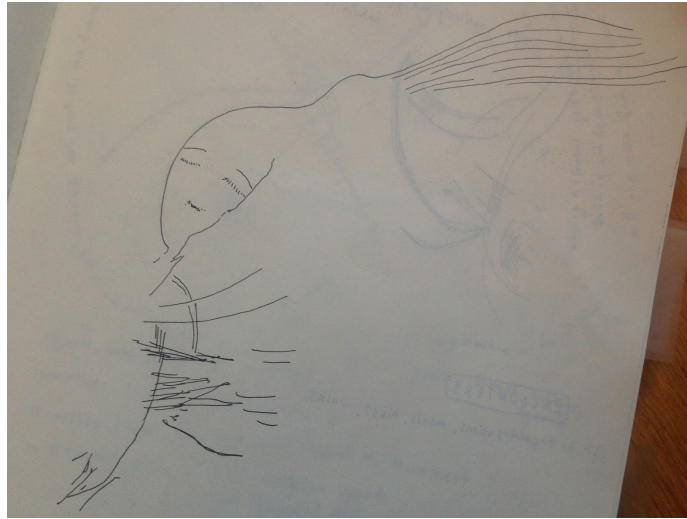
Accepting, embracing.

"An improviser learns early on that resisting or disapproving of your body is resisting or disapproving of yourself and does not lead to long-term health or creativity. Instead, we learn to not just accept, but to find joy and inspiration in what we have available each day."

Kent De Spain (Landscape of the Now: A Topography of Movement Improvisation)

When performing, I see it as sharing a gift for us all who are in the same moment and place - the time, space, and silence for noticing the life around us, and flowing through us.

Experiencing the power and light within henceforth.



DRAWING FROM MY NOTEBOOK #2 FOR THIS BACHELOR WORK

John Cage and Zen Buddhism

have been influential in awakening me to the possibility of changing "the responsibility of the composer from making to accepting". John Cage (Kay Larson)

*"When a com-poser feels a responsibility to make,
rather than accept,
he e-liminates from the area of possibility
all those events that do not sug-gest
the at that point in time vogue of profound-ity.
For he takes himself seriously,
wishes to be considered great,
and he thereby diminishes his love and
in-creases his fear and concern
about what people will think... And what,
precisely, does this, this beautiful profound object,
this master-piece, have to do with Life? It has
this to do with Life:
that it is separate from it."*

*"To accept whatever comes
re-gardless of the consequences is to be unafraid
or to be full of that love
which comes from
a sense of at-one-ness with
whatever."*

He also mentions the importance of giving up value judgements, "either composition, performance, or listening."

*"The value judgement when it is made
doesn't exist outside the mind
but
exists within the mind.
It's a decision on the part of the mind
when it says, "This is good and that is not good."
It's a decision to eliminate from experience certain things.
Suzuki said Zen wants us to diminish
that kind of activity of the ego and
to increase
the activity that
accepts the rest of creation."*

Applying this to movement as he applies to making his music, I attempt to perceive all movement as equal. This lifts off the pressure that I have to create something "good". When I practise not judging my movement and choices, I also practise accepting myself. Then I realize that what I am looking for is not movement, but experience.

It is much easier to focus on the experience when I do not judge between good and bad.

*"Perhaps this is improvisation's paradox:
the only moment when you really fail
is when you don't accept failure
as part of
the experience."*

Meg Stuart (Are We Here Yet?)

However, dancing with his music does not speak to me as much as gaining insights into his way of thinking about life and music.

WHAT DO YOU HEAR, THEN?

I realize, imagination is my music.

There are moments in life when I catch myself humming joyfully after having spent time with close friends. In these instances, I am struck by how my friend(s) gave me a song. So during my practice of real-time composition, sometimes I like to imagine and hear the song that is singing itself in the space that I am in, during both solo practice and open sharings. *And I sing through my movements for you...*

Listening to the sounds and silences of my body is too, like a guiding thread. What kind of music do I hear and can create? The sounds of my weight are also rich forces to play with.

“... listening – not just dancing, but also the act of listening, being *part* of the music-making.”

Barbara Browning (Sound Tracks: An Interview with Simone Forti)

(practising interconnectivity and independence)

As much as this work is about moving and being with what is around, I also recognize the importance of retaining an inner centre. To be free in this close attention to my environment, I put equal emphasis on making and developing choices. Not all impulses have to be taken, not all information has to be acted upon.

*“characters
moving and being
not only in reaction to things,
but also independent, having their own life”*

Claire de Ribaupierre (from an individual sharing session, 11th March 2019)

two. cultivating (trust in) a thinking body

*“...AND I PURSUE THE SPECIAL ORDER OF THOUGHTS THAT COME OUT OF THE BODY IN MOTION AND
WHICH SEEM TO BE ONE WITH THE MOTION ITSELF”
Simone Forti (Handbook in Motion)*

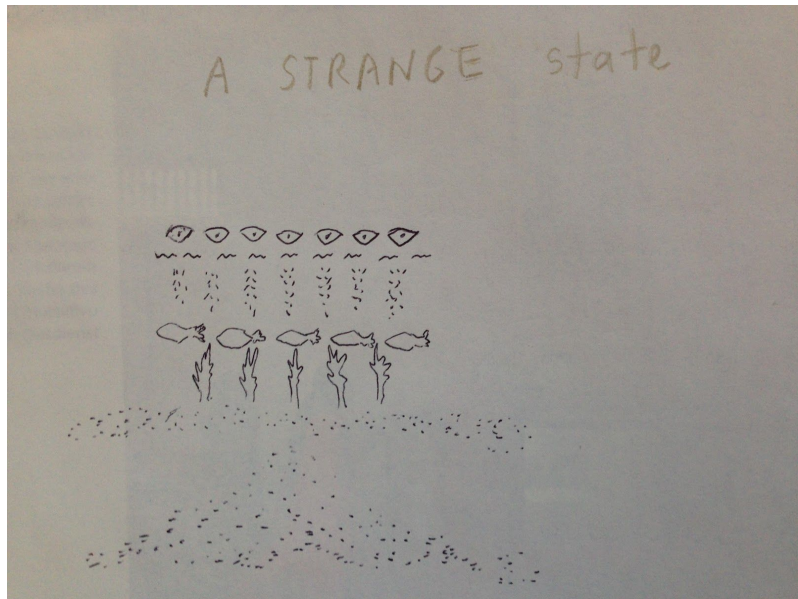
My analytical mind easily takes over the practice. In wanting to achieve breakthroughs, almost impatiently, I tend to be reflecting on what and how I compose, instead of experiencing the experience.

“Drop your goals, just come back to the practice.” Oli Doyle

To bring my attention back to the physical sensations, as warm-up, at times I would play an album that I feel like listening to on that day, and move with my eyes closed. Simply following my sensations, I create space for myself to not be limited by what I perceive visually of my moving body. Not moving on the rhythm of the music, having and following another rhythm/s, I open up my body and imagination. I practise awakening to the intelligence of my body and being.

Allowing myself to indulge in a kind of pleasure dancing brings me further in the work later on.

A N U N E X P E C T E D B R E A K .
breaking, or bending?



DRAWING FROM NOTEBOOK #4

"... a painting you would make
out of your own silence"

Mary Caroline Richards (The Fire Within)

One week of medical leave from my psychologist led into another, and another, eventually adding to slightly more than a month of pause from school and working physically on this solo.

A temporary death, a huge learning of life. I remember that intense helpless feeling of wanting to drop everything. Emotional pain from self-hatred, physical discomfort from chronic abdominal tension, heaviness from life - I lost the strength to go on.

Losing the rhythm of a regular schedule, every single day became an instant composition. What do I do with my time?

Accepting my fragility was the toughest part. But in acknowledging that the process of healing and transformation takes time, I learn to face what I am experiencing deep within with guts, love, and patience. Changing my geographical situation would not necessarily improve my internal landscape. I learn to acknowledge depression as one of all the emotions that pass through me.

*"Breakdowns are great; it means that something has to be given up.
You are lucky, because some people hold on tightly to certain things their whole life,
never being able to let go."*

Dominique Falquet, teacher of Shao Lin and Tai Chi at La Manufacture

Being kind with oneself is part of work, and clearly, life as well. So I begin to discover other healthy ways than dancing to digest my experiences. Movement is an essential way for me to circulate the energy within, spreading the center from my thoughts to my body -

SWIMMING

YOGA

MEDITATION

SHAO LIN

TAI CHI

WALKING

Ways of quieting the mind, and of centering. A journey inwards to go outwards again was revealed to me. An inner work of self-acceptance intertwines with the physical practice of real-time composition. How do I live with myself?



DRAWING FROM NOTEBOOK #3, WHILE CRYING ON A TRAIN TO GENEVA

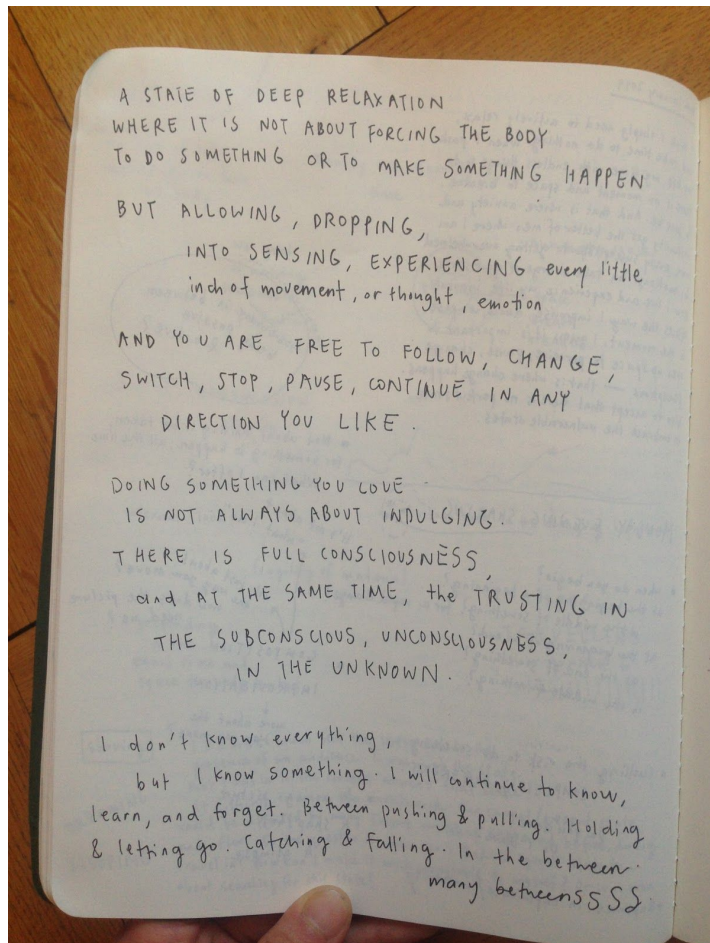
Another essential question was, how to not overwhelm myself as I begin to work again?

*" ... and I have come to long not to see new places
but to return
and know the old ones
more deeply, to see them again."*

Rebecca Solnit (A Field Guide to Getting Lost)

I can build upon what I already have and found. To travel sustainably for a lifetime, I do not have to strive to make new discoveries each day. Progress is not a linear accumulation of experience.

FROM A PLACE OF RELAXATION



SOME THOUGHTS FROM NOTEBOOK #3

An important lesson from the break was how to live and create in a sustainable way. What do I need to make my mind, body, and soul feel good, so that I can go deeper into the work with a healthy spirit?

I continue my daily practice of 10 minutes of meditation and usually 30 minutes of yoga - a grounding and centering practice to set me off into the rest of the world and day. Swimming remains my favourite exercise, to release physical and emotional tension, and to enjoy the sensation of moving through water. Together with Shao Lin and Tai Chi, it guides me on how to truly be in a dialogue with my body, to move more efficiently. These are indispensable practices that help me in my dancing, especially when I want to allow creativity to flow through and out of my body.

Being available to sense the life of sensations and movement travelling through my body, so that I can ride on them, follow through, or divert. Movement should not be forced, and I would like to continue exploring different pathways to unblock places in my body and being.

Whenever I can, I also walk to travel from place to place. It allows me to digest thoughts, emotions and experiences. It also serves as a breathing space in between events.

GIVE ME A L I T T L E TIME & SPACE, folks

written on Wednesday, 20th March 2019, 12:16 AM

a map that I weave every day - how do I feel today? what do I need today?

finding a new way of discipline
that comes from
listening, and developing a fluid structure:
every day, an instant composition

GO AT YOUR OWN RHYTHM

COME AS YOU ARE

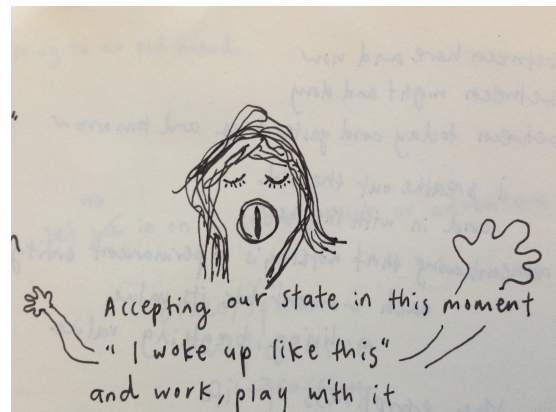
MOVE WITH YOURSELF

Searching, creating and developing my own tools, methods as I go along

"The state in which you begin work affects the quality of material found."

Miranda Tufnell, Chris Crickmay
(Body Space Image: Notes Toward Improvisation and Performance)

I ensure that I do not enter working in a haphazard and stressed manner. Cleaning and clearing my working space is already the beginning of the process - connecting to the place I am in - and also embracing my present emotional and physical state.



NOTES FROM NOTEBOOK #3

+ warming up

training my kinesthetic sensing:
in silence, or to an album that comes to my mind (not composing, merely improvising - so that I can simply enjoy the experience of moving)

Meredith Monk

Laurie Anderson

Liam Ó Maonlaí

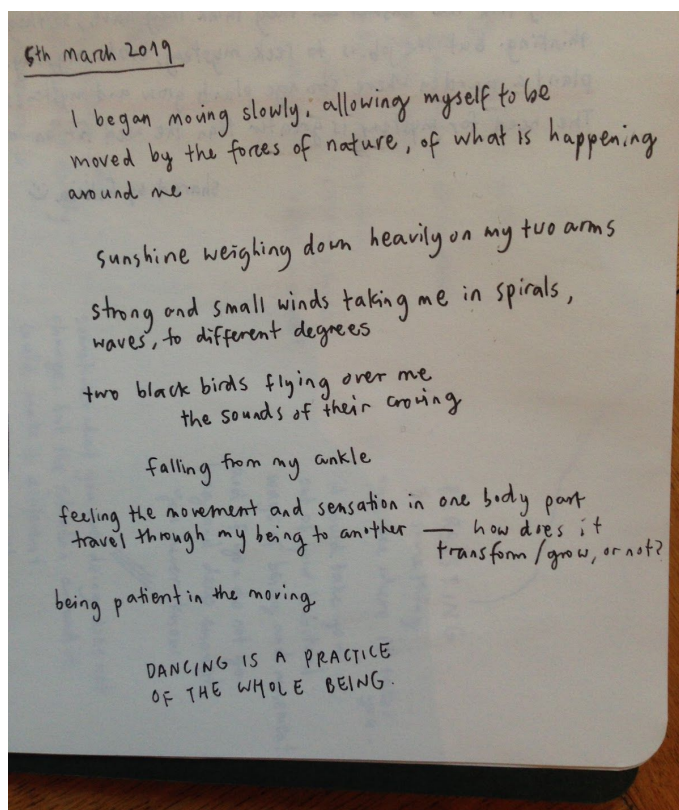
The Gloaming

(I practise with music owning soundscapes that intrigue landscapes of imagination, as opposed to music with regular rhythms)

with closed or open eyes

or perhaps a movement direction, such as, 'embodying myself in space'

+ opening up possibilities of the body
dancing outdoors



NOTES FROM NOTEBOOK #4

Our environment affects the way we relate to ourselves and others, time, space, and hence the way we move. Sometimes I am bored within the confines of a studio. I explore other spaces in school - the carpentry room, the open space near the garden, and the carpark. Even the temperature of the air makes a difference!

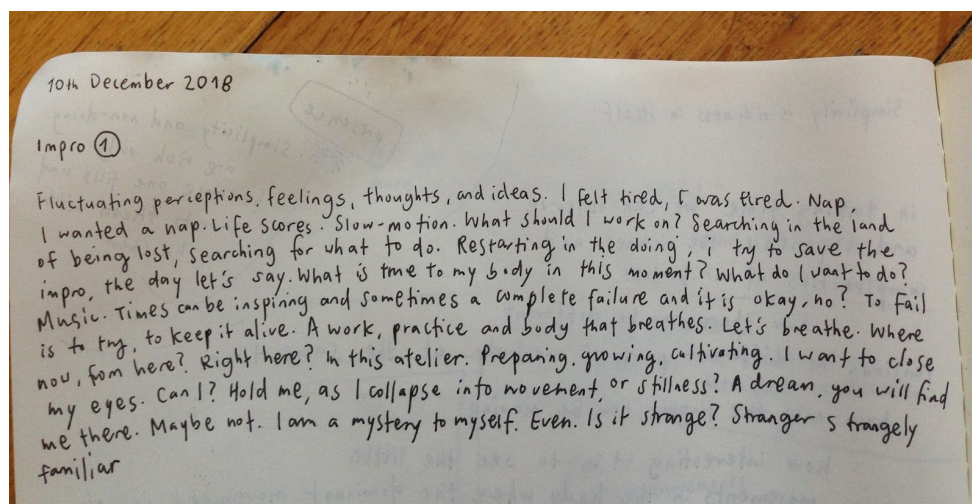
Note: my working space is often improvised too, due to the limited availability of studios and my wish to break free of a structure. In this way of searching, I uncover an inner expanded space to make do with what I have at every moment.

+ working rhythms

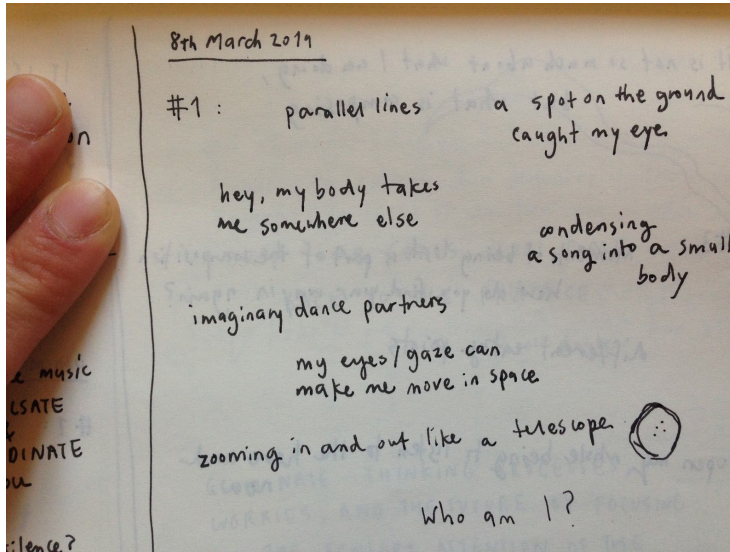
I work better in the mornings, and the weekends when there is more calm and quiet in school. In the evenings, I prefer taking time to rest, read, and digest the day. I acknowledge my needs and give myself the right to pursue them.

+ reflecting

I used to practise automatic writing for 5 minutes after every real-time composition. However, after the break, this proved too stressful and analytical. Instead, without any time limit, I now pen down words and phrases that remain of my experience.



BEFORE: AUTOMATIC
WRITING



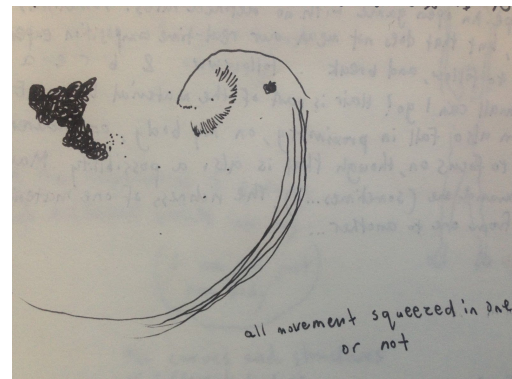
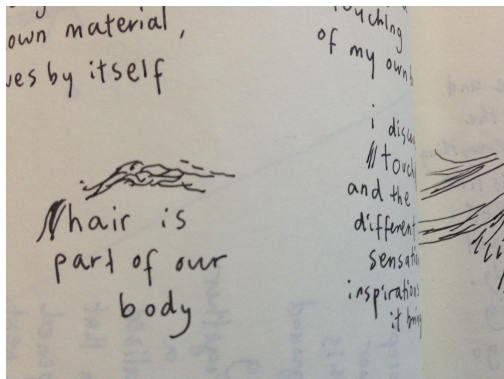
WAY OF REFLECTING NOW

THE MORE I COLLECT, THE MORE I
NEED TO FORGET AND LET
INTEGRATE IN THE DOING AND
BEING

M A T E R I A L

"The clay is given
and the roundness is given, but
the individual shape is one's
own creative doing."

Mary Caroline Richards (Centering: In Pottery, Poetry, and the Person)



NOTES AND DRAWINGS FROM NOTEBOOK #3

My body is a material that is determined in the moment

Silence and stillness have a material of their own

You, at once the witness, participant, and creator,
are also part of the material of what we are making together
(Kirstie Simson, from a mentoring session, 20th March 2019)

Creating understanding
through the experiencing

Moving in space, through space, leaving traces
Every stroke, brush, line, curve, blot, dot, image, ...
Has its size, weight, colour, texture, rhythm, speed, thickness and taste
Tracing back and forth in time

With the powers of attention, I can play
with the material I have placed in space (Simson)

A moving sculpture
Weight, breath, shadows, light
substances
Touch also a component
our skin and hair

Take me through the landscape of your being
As I take you through the landscape of what we call, now

Decompose stretch float melt burn scald freeze flow chop
and drop
unforming to form again

Every craft needs and takes time
In my belief, a l i f e t i m e

Valuing quality time over quantity with our being

Imagination is always there
But to consciously use and shape it

.
. .
.

this
is
a
daily
practice



COOKING IN SCHOOL

T R Y I N G O U T S C O R E S

*- There is no other moment and place I should be in
other than the one I am in now -*

Recognizing that I cannot rely solely on my imagination to discover more possibilities of my body - I turn to scores.

Score #1: taking the first movement/impulse/image that comes as the seed for the whole composition

- following it through
- guiding ≠ controlling
- possibility of returning to it from time to time
opens up room to develop something fully
- on days when I see no structure in the composition,
how do I open my eyes again?
- translating first image in other parts of the body,
allowing other interpretations,
sizes, qualities, and rhythms

Like planting a garden, I can allow things to bloom and die away from this
first seed.

Score #2: taking myself by surprise

- there is a usual speed of changing quickly that comes with surprising myself -
what other pathways are there? - for example, radical changes can take place in
emotional states and facial expressions
- I do not have to return to home (a neutral position) all the time - where can I
go with where I am,
right here, right now?

TAKE ME AWAY

A photograph showing a single, bright red flower bud at the tip of a green vine. The vine is climbing a light-colored, textured wall. The base of the plant is surrounded by a dense layer of green ivy and brown, fallen leaves. The image is framed by a white border.

Are you following?

N O T S O B L A C K & W H I T E

1. Unconscious Conscious

As much as it is important to train one's consciousness,
it is also essential to rest with the understanding that not everything can be grasped
with the conscious mind and body.

Trust that experiences settle in the being, get digested, and are transformed into
knowledge and awareness through
the silent great unconscious.

Shake it up when it gets overwhelming!

Also, to realize the trap of thinking "I know it all". The more I discover, the more
mysteries there are. What I know are just some ways of perceiving. There will always
be more to experience through sharing with others. It is a delicate balance to manage
between trusting in what I have and not becoming complacent.

*"The unknown becomes a friend,
absurdity is worn well, fear is gently smiled at.
The making-a-fool quality is always present
when you stand at the edge of the empty space
and... willingly take the first step."*

Barbara Dilley (This Very Moment: teaching thinking dancing)

2. Invisible Visible

Allowing the visible to be noticed
and the invisible to emerge

invisible forces: embracing and diving into multiple individualities
welcoming different spirits, states
the different presences of the audience
relationships / distances
the forces of nature
(and more to be discovered)

What moves me? Why am I moving?
Illuminating the in-between / relationships between the things that move me
(sensations, perceptions, ...) and I who moves

"It's not just about the person who moves."

*Julien Meyer, a Master in Theatre student (2017-19) at La Manufacture
(from a sharing session, 16th March 2019)*

3. Presence

Absence

Disappearing

but still there

Making space for the existence of what and who are here

Presence is what connects us (Claire de Ribaupierre)

And let it also meld with some soft emptiness

4. Solo practice

Open sharings

Space to go deeper alone

Working on the specifics

It will never be perfect

But share it anyway from time to time

Seeing through the eyes of others

What am I constructing?

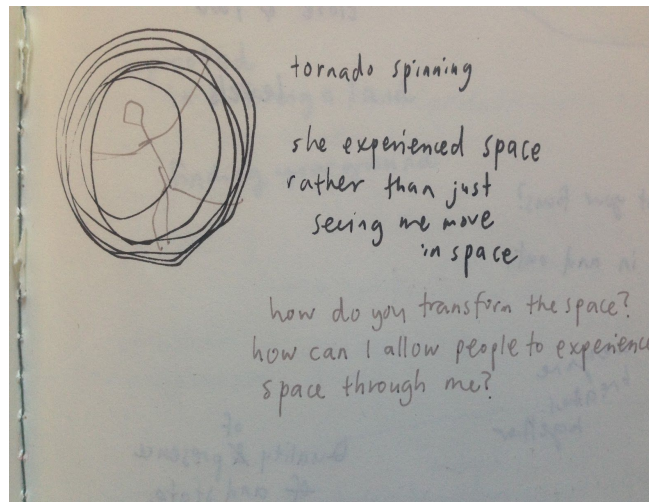
How can I build on the good?

How can I work with the blind spots?

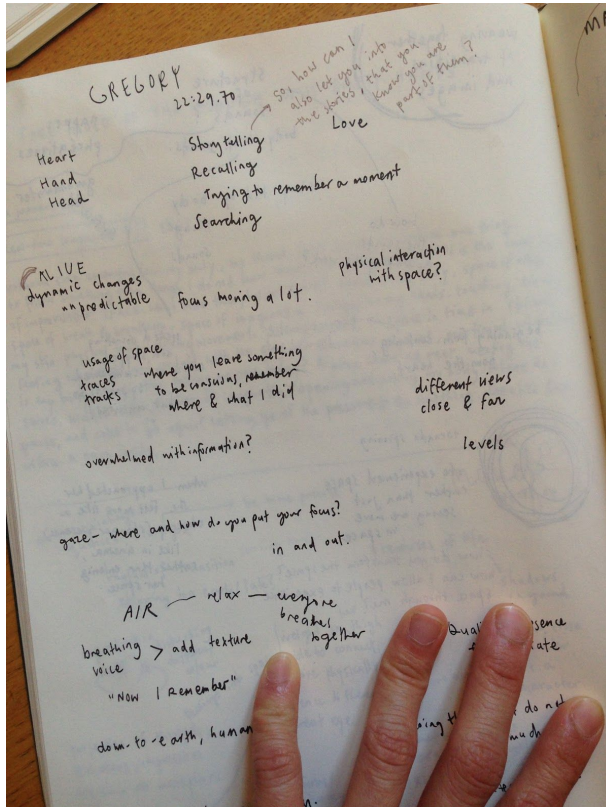
Vulnerability is a gift we share

Together we go further, one foot at a time

Thank you all, for your time



FEEDBACK FROM MERIEL KENLEY, MY FRIEND,
DURING A SHARING SESSION



FEEDBACK FROM GREGORY STAUFFER,
ONE OF MY MENTORS, DURING ANOTHER SHARING
SESSION

*"The choreography reveals
the determination, the failure, the
vulnerability of
the attempt at the same time."*

Meg Stuart (Are We Here Yet?)

5. Zooming in Zooming out

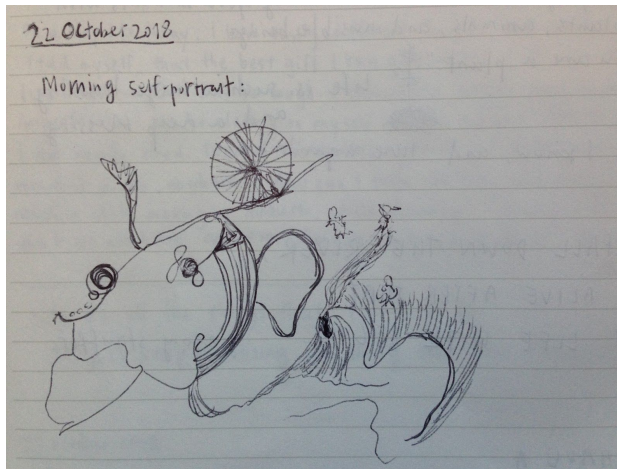
Where do you put your focus?
Adjusting the periphery
of perception
of projection
of realization

6. Inside eye Outside eye

How can I be attentive to my inner impulses
while noticing the drawing that I am making with you?

In a way
No difference between
Performer and audience
All wearing several hats at the same time
- Creator - Participant - Witness -

*"... And as a mature artist, when I improvise I keep that spilt going. And when I do an
improvisation that's not so good, it's sometimes because I'm just completely in my
outside eye, and nothing is happening desire-wise."
Simone Forti on "a split self" (Kent De Spain)*



s m a l l D I S C O V E R I E S

Self-humour and playfulness help keep the work light

Surrendering to my current state with the awareness that it can be transformed

All my environment is part of me

DRAWING FROM NOTEBOOK #2

Making space for the craziness and silliness in me
[there is a place for every trait]

I experience movement as a full-body experience
Visual, aural, sensual, textural, cultural, imaginal, ...

*"let your sensibility be physical / architectural / musical / graphical / political /
emotional / social....."*

Julyen Hamilton

Between home and foreign land,
magic landscapes stories encounters people

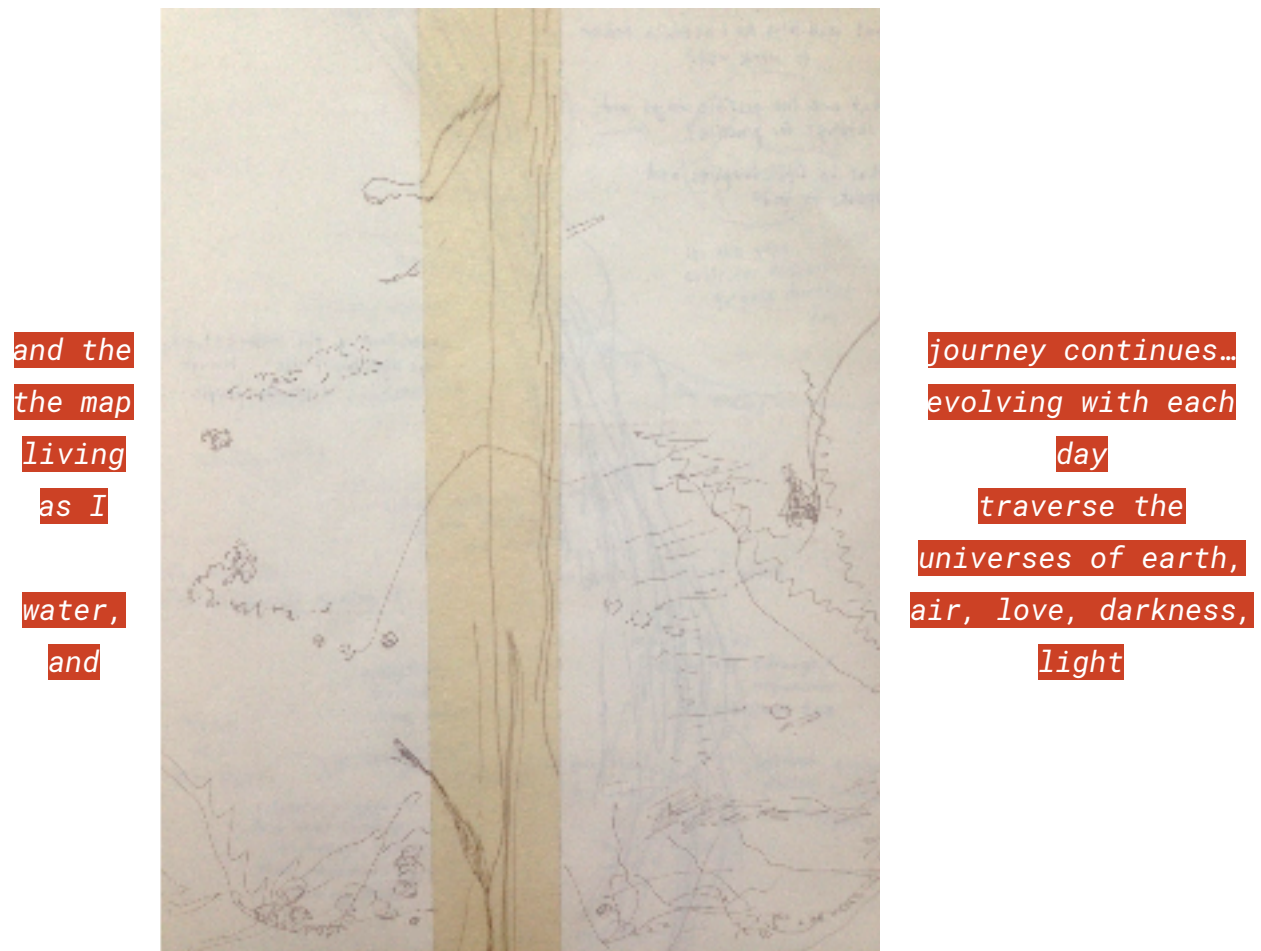
Allow the inhabiting

I find home in my body and the creative practice
Nowhere else to go
Here and now is your abode
My noisy mind might be a gift after all
Thanks to its relentless haunting
I appreciate more to just go,
to just try, to simply experience fully with my body

// What makes the gold is not purely gold //

"The answer is never the answer.
 What's really interesting is the mystery.
 If you seek the mystery instead of the answer, you'll always be seeking.
 I've never seen anybody really find the answer.
 They think they have, so they stop thinking.
 But the job is to seek mystery, evoke mystery,
plant a garden in which strange plants grow and mysteries bloom.
 The need for mystery is greater than the need for an answer."

Ken Kesey (Tias Little)



"I learned how to travel with
 just what I could carry
 towards the vast unseen and the great unknown
 the map of a heart is all that we own

Leaving safety to chance and reason behind
 x marks every spot I thought I'd lost my mind
 I didn't think that I could but I couldn't stop trying"

Mary Chapin Carpenter, singing 'map of my heart'

REFERENCES

Barbara Browning, *Sound Tracks: An Interview with Simone Forti*, The Paris Review, 4 May 2018,
<https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/05/04/sound-tracks-an-interview-with-simone-forti/>.

Barbara Dilley, *This Very Moment: teaching thinking dancing*, USA, Naropa University Press, 2015.

Kay Larson, *Where the Heart Beats: John Cage, Zen Buddhism, and the Inner Life of Artists*, USA, The Penguin Books, 2013.

Kent De Spain, *Landscape of the Now: A Topography of Movement Improvisation*, USA, Oxford University Press, 2014.

Mary Caroline Richards, *Centering: In Pottery, Poetry and the Person*, Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 1989.

Meg Stuart, *Are We Here Yet?*, Presses Du Reel, 2011.

Miranda Tufnell, Chris Crickmay, *Body Space Image: Notes Toward Improvisation and Performance*, London, United Kingdom, Dance Books Ltd, 2014.

Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, Great Britain, Canongate Books, 2017.

The Fire Within. Directed by Richard Kane and Melody Lewis-Kane, appearance by Mary Caroline Richards. Kane-Lewis Productions, 2018. Vimeo,
<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/mcrichards/255470507>.

Simone Forti, *Handbook in Motion*, Northampton, Massachusetts, Contact Editions, 1998.

Tias Little, *Yoga of the Subtle Body*, Boulder, Colorado, Shambhala Publications, 2016.



thank you for inhabiting this time
twenty-five pages

and space of