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*polyrhythmic
landscapes*
BODYDRESSCITY

lauren skogstad
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for the degree of Master of Design At Massey University, Wellington New Zealand

foreword

Lauren Skogstad explores the disruptive monumentality of a female figure wearing an extraordinary red dress of epic proportions, as she encounters the everyday world of the city.

The wearer of the dress inescapably undergoes a metamorphosis to become a character from a fantastic, dream-like or folkloric world – and simultaneously, as we witness the spectacle of the dress, the world of our imaginations fuses temporarily with the world of the everyday.

There is something fundamentally synchronous between Lauren's work and the city of Wellington – it is as though she has pierced the skin of the city to reveal its bloody interior, alive and pulsing, as she wanders, an exotic *flâneuse*, through its heart.

Framed by the black uniformed workers in the CBD, the monumental dress becomes extra vivid, acquires greater dramatic potential to change the way we think about ourselves as city-dwellers and to add to the vocabulary of cool when thinking about ways to describe the city of Wellington where such sights are made possible.

Wrapped, mummy-like, she is Palaeolithic, a 30,000-year-old Willendorf Venus, referencing the oldest sculpture on the planet, but alive and present, she is unignorably contemporary.

Maybe, under electric skies, the glamour of the night-time city is the least startled at the sight of this monumental feminine.

Review: Val Diggle



figure 01. *The Monstrous Red Dress: Mount Victoria*

abstract

Polyrhythmic Landscapes: BodyDressCity explores the performative contiguity of body, garment and environment to reveal, frame and question how the city can be understood as a 'space-in-action', constructed of multiple rhythms and temporalities that occur in a multitude of places. Polyrhythm is a musical term for the simultaneous occurrence of two or more independent rhythms. This research seeks to fuse Bernard Tschumi's *event-space* and rhythm, through an understanding of Henri Lefebvre's '*rhythmanalysis*' (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 1). In this project, I spatially conceptualize the combination of these terms as a polyrhythmic landscape. As a spatial designer I construct a series

of embodied spatiotemporal interventions that employ performance as a dynamic, active, operative and responsive medium to reveal, frame and comprehend how the city can be a 'polyrhythmic landscape'.

The design-led project probes the disruptive effect of a female figure dressed in a monumental ten-metre red gown on the temporal condition of the city. As the public bears witness to the metamorphosis of the female figure, the spectacle of the dress confronts the everyday patterns and movements of the urban fabric. Has this glamorous *flâneuse* punctured the rhythmic skin of the city to reveal a polyrhythmic landscape?



figure 03. The Monstrous Red Dress: Wellington Harbour

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Each dress requires a team of people to assist the wearer in moving through the city. I wish to express my appreciation to Siana Kate Butterfield, Waimatao FAMILTON, George Duncan, Shaun Sexton, Shaun Clifford and Sean Meredith and to my friends who have made this project come to life. I also commend Sky Smale and Elizabet Elliott for their courageous performance in *Becoming*.

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