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An Intimate Spectacle Dispersing the Theatre

An essay presented in partial
fulfillment of the degree of Master of Design

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New Zealand

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Abstract

An Intimate Spectacle examines the intersection between the spectacle of the theatrical event and the subjective experience of the audience member or 'participant'. Departing from the dynamics of spectatorship prescribed by the traditional theatre, this exploration begins to wander through the rough and surprising terrain of the city in search of an intimate form of participation.

This body of work has been explored and disseminated through a series of urban workshops and performances in which a solitary participant is guided on a self-directed exploration of the city. Equipped with sound (mp3 players) and material (objects and suggestions) the individuals are invited to conduct interventions that cause them to perform a personal relationship with their urban surroundings. Participants become tourists of the everyday, dispersing traces of performance that reveal a mythic dimension in the habitual city.

Theatre is typified by binary distinctions: the stage and the auditorium, the fictional and the real, the prop and the object, and the actor and the audience. As this discourse moves outside the theatre, these distinctions begin to dissolve. The roles of the actor and the audience are disestablished through the design of performances comprised solely of participants who conduct their experience through interventions and enactments.

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A Note to the Reader:

Embedded within this PDF are buttons which allow you to listen to sound-scapes which are an integral part of the events described within this essay. To hear a sound-scape sample press the ((Listen)) button. Many of the tracks use binaural recording which is best heard on stereo headphones to provide the full three-dimensional effect. This feature requires Adobe Acrobat 6 or later.

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Fig. 1: Follow (detail)

Sarah Burrell
Photographic Series
A narrative investigation that
follows an enigmatic woman in
red as she moves through the
city's streets
August 2010.

Introduction

We must try to construct situations,
that is to say collective ambiances,
ensembles of impressions determining
the quality of a moment.

Guy Debord (qtd.in Sadler 18)

—

When stripped of dramatic trappings and conventions, performance, in its barest form, is an act of calling deliberate attention to life. Whether attended or carried out, it is a liminal space within the real dedicated to conscious enactments. In this extended conception, performance acquires the ability to encompass and transform the perception of everyday events revealing their inherent theatricality. Guy Debord, core member of the Situationist International, advocated the constructions of 'situations' as a means to engage the individual in transforming the "temporary settings of life to a higher and passionate nature"(Ibid. 50). Situations were considered an antidote to the disassociation of the individual caused by the spectacles of modern society.

A 'spectacle' – etymologically associated with the act of seeing – is defined as “a visually striking performance or display” and “a performance or event on a large scale with striking effects”, both deriving from the Latin *specere* 'to look' (Brown 357). The notion of the spectacle has long been associated with the theatre as the creation of illusion through the use of effects. In Aristotle's *Poetics* he describes scenography as the creation of “spectacle”, the least important in the hierarchy of dramatic elements, the most being “the primacy of the plot” (Collins and Nisbet 140). Through the use of lighting, projection, backdrops, and costume the theatre can, at times, become a place of visual effects concerned with transporting the audience outside the present through dazzling visual display. Yet performance design is more than the construction of artifice that has come to be associated with the theatre.

An Intimate Spectacle is a performance design project that seeks to examine the intersection between the intimate and embodied experience of the individual and the spectacle of the theatrical event. This is explored through the design of situations that involve the audience as participants in uncovering the everyday as a site for transformative encounters. The events within this body of work create an itinerary for the solitary participant to negotiate a self-enacted performance in the urban landscape. These situations use designed objects and a mobile audio-scape to accentuate the underlying performativity in the spaces we encounter daily. This project seeks to become active in questioning what theatre is now, what spaces it may inhabit, and what forms might it take while still maintaining its definition. These performances create an ambiguous form

of theatre, unsettling the binary distinctions that have come to characterise the medium: the stage and the auditorium, the fictional and the real, the prop and the material object, and the actor and the audience. As these distinctions are stripped away, the theatre becomes strange, allowing new contracts to be negotiated between the individual and the event. The notion of an intimate spectacle emerges, which instead of performing, presenting, watching, and staging for an audience, engages the individual as a participant in effectuating their own performance.

The auditorium, as the 'proper place' of theatre is an environment imbued with codes of social interaction that promote default relationships between the audience and the event. By exchanging the coded space of the theatre for the terrain of the city, a productive lack of a frame of reference is created. While the city is also a coded space, its codes concern acts of living, inhabitation and consumption. The city presents a dense cluster of readymade situations with the potential to be harnessed and implicated through performance. In his study of human behavior *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman states, “The stage presents things that are make-believe; presumably life presents things that are real and sometimes not well rehearsed.” (v). As a site for performance this sometimes rough and surprising world of the everyday opens up the possibility for performance to become a material and directly affecting experience.

In site-specific practice, the transformative space of the stage and the everyday world of the audience tend to intermingle, losing their clear distinctions in “an interpenetration of the found and the fabricated” (Pearson



Fig. 2: (above) Watersiders
 Alexander Turnbull Collection
 'Wharfies' gather to protest
 labor conditions at Post Office
 Square, Wellington
 Circa 1913.



Fig. 3: (below) Side Street
 Alexander Turnbull Collection
 A man wanders down a service
 lane adjacent to Willis St., Wellington
 Circa 1913.

211). Real and imagined, seen and unseen, present and absent synthesise to create combinations between time, the body and place. This conflation of real and constructed situations acquires the ability to peer beneath the façade of the everyday city to reveal it as a zone for transformative encounters.

—

The wordless histories of walking, housing, cooking... such are the work of urban narratives. To the visible city they add those "invisible cities" Calvino wrote of. With the vocabulary of objects and well-known words, they create another dimension in turn fantastical, delinquent, fearful, and legitimating. For this reason, they render the city "believable". They affect it with unknown depth to be inventoried, and open it up to journeys. They are the keys to the city, they give access to what it is: mythical.

(de Certeau 2: 144).

—

In their chapter *Ghosts in the City*, scholars Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard speak of the underlying 'uncanniness' that resides beneath the habitual façades of the city. The *uncanny* is a Freudian concept that describes perceiving an object that is at once familiar and foreign, creating a sensation of uncomfortable strangeness. This 'otherness' resists the homogeneity of the habitual and spectacular city, opening up the possibility of alternate interpretations and subjectivities that are incited by forgotten spaces, discarded objects, and memories. Writer Italo Calvino describes the profusion of alternate

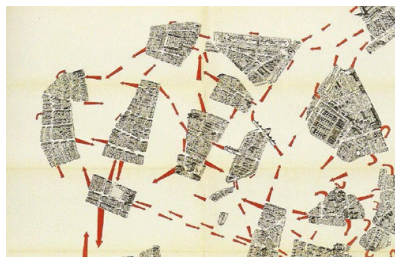


Fig. 4: Wonders of Weston
Wrights & Sites
A collection of 41 Signs installed
in Weston-super-Mare, UK.
2010.

Fig. 5: Psychogeographic Map
(*Guide Psychogeographique de Paris*)
Guy Debord
A psychogeographic collage which
depicts pedestrian movement between the
twenty arrondissements of Paris
1955.

readings of space as *Invisible Cities*. In his book of the same name Calvino describes a collection of fragmentary urban impressions. The cities he details are paradoxical and strange, full of contradictions and fantasy. They are equally stories about a collection of imagined places, and the multitude of possible forms a city might take. Contained within every city are a myriad of latently residing narratives. The city is a complex text of memories and gestures that can be ‘read’ and uncovered through performance.

Embodied inquiry into the city has a legacy of avant-garde urban interventionists who use ambulation as a way of delving into the built environment. At the forefront of these precedents is the Situationist International (SI), a group of artistic and political stirrers active in France between 1957 and 1972. Led by Guy Debord, author of *Society of the Spectacle*, their programme consisted of creating situations defined as “a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organisation or a unitary ambience and a game of events” (qtd. in Ford 18). As with Swiss cultural theorist, Johan Huizinga, the SI looked to play and spontaneity as necessities of everyday life. As well as the construction of situations, the Situationist International developed the practices of the *dérive* and *psychogeography* as a way of engaging the walker in “discover[ing] the potential richness of reality” (qtd. in Sadler 80). *Psychogeography* is a term originated by the SI to describe the group’s ongoing studies of urban living and chance encounters. *Psychogeography* was often documented in maps and drawings that refigured the totalized grid of the urban planner, seeking instead to depict the urban environment’s effects on the body moving through space.

The primary method of psychogeographical inquiry is the *dérive*. Debord described the *dérive* (drift) as a method of stepping outside habitual modes of moving through the



Fig. 6 Slow Parade of Big Weather Balloons

Allan Kaprow

In this Happening participants roll oil drums connected to weather balloons through Central Park, New York 1972.

city and allowing oneself to be drawn by the topography of the city and the episodes encountered there. In contrast to the idle stroll of the flâneur who wanders disconnected, the *dérive* sought to actively engage the walker (*dériviste*) in experiencing the embodied effects of urban space. The value of the drift as a performative practice lies in its ability to involve the individual in an alternate exploration of the city, directed by their response to the dense cluster of situations provided by the urban context.

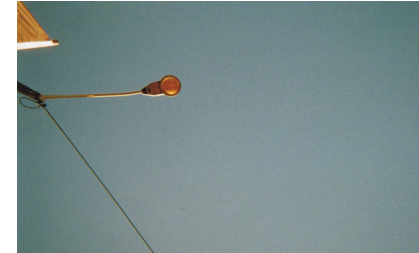
'Neo-situationists' Wrights & Sites adopt the *dérive* in order to posit the mis-guide. As a departure from the tourist guidebook, the group's publication *A Mis-guide to Anywhere* puts the directions in the hands of the general public, inciting playful participatory exploration of the city. The various mis-guided walks propose ludic suggestions for exploring the urban environment such as using the windows of the city as if they were movie screens, navigating your town with a map of Moscow, and creating a museum from objects found on the street. The mis-guide is a form of urban tourism that reveals the personal, imagined, and fantastical within the city. Wrights & Sites have adapted the Situationist pursuits, which required specialized knowledge and introduction, and have made them accessible to the general citizenry through their published mis-guides.

Within this project the notion of eroding the boundary between participant and performance, as well as between representation and the everyday is largely indebted to the 'Happenings' of artist Allan Kaprow. Taking place from 1957 onwards, these events dissolved notions of audience and performer and drew attention to the strangeness of the quotidian. Kaprow was concerned with the experience of art rather than its status as an 'art object' and so found his materials in the "circumstances that arise from the particular situations of everyday life" (Bishop 15).

As well as avant-garde practitioners, this research draws on the performances of contemporary theatre-makers who use the city as a site for performance, often challenging conventions of theatrical performance through their work. The key precedents in this grouping are UK-based Blast Theory, British Director Deborah Warner's *The Angel Project* and the audio-walks of Janet Cardiff. The work of these practitioners have been singled out for the shared characteristics of using a solitary participant, often no actors (the participants interaction is then with materials and space), ambulation and mobility, and the use of the city as a key 'character' in the performance.

Despite differences in practice, these precedents share an insistence on direct engagement. Their performative practices encourage the adoption of identities and modes of being that are different from the habitual. As participatory events they actively seek to inspire and incite interactivity, problematising the role of the passive spectator. Unsettling the traditions of representational mediums, these practitioners refute the socially coded spaces of the theatre and gallery in favor of the conditions of the quotidian environment.

This project has engaged in embodied research through the practice of performances that utilize the city as a studio, informed through literature and contemporary performance practices. A series of three workshops and urban performances carried out in Wellington structure this project as a model of performance as research. More than figuring as creative production, these events offer critical inquiry and insight, entwining "modes of being and knowing" through a heuristic cycle of development, presentation, and reflection (Hunter 4).



Figs. 7 & 8: Participant Photographs

Images captured on disposable cameras during the second performance workshop, *Tourist of the Everyday* June 2010.

In each weeklong workshop period I and my collaborators, sound designer Andrew Simpson and performance designer Jon Coddington, utilised the city as our studio. Delving bodily into urban space, we conducted walk-investigations, tested material interventions, and recorded environmental sound. At the end of the workshop period the material we had developed was crafted into a performance inquiry for a small group of participants who, as a co-creative audience, extended our circle of collaborators: their explorations and feedback productively informed the direction of the design process.

Acting as a travelogue, this document charts the journey of a body of work as it moves from the interior of the theatre, out into the spaces of the city, transitioning from the static body of the spectator to the mobile participant. This shift is paralleled in the performative use of active verbs in the chapter headings: reading, framing, affecting, and participating. In each chapter I discuss a binary characteristic of the traditional theatre that has problematised the participant's experience of the event: the stage and the auditorium, the fictional and the real, the representational motif and the material object, and the actor and the spectator. I offer alternatives, which emerge from a gradual dispersal of these distinctions, revealing an alternative model of practice, which I define as the 'intimate spectacle'. This journey is discussed through relevant theory, the practice of precedent designers and artists, and my own work, intertwined to create a whole. The structure of this text reflects the arc of the design process employed in this project, which begins from a response to site, frames the encounter, adds material interventions, incorporates the experience of the participant, and concludes with the synchronous implementation of these elements in performance.

In *Reading the City*, I discuss the divided space of the traditional theatre building, seeking to dissolve and disseminate it into the everyday, offering the city as a unified terrain for performance and participation. As this discourse moves away from the theatre, the urban landscape is revealed as a zone of intimate encounters and latently residing narratives. The stationary body of the seated audience member is contrasted by the mobile figure exploring the urban landscape. Situationist strategies of the *dérive* and *psychogeography*, and their contemporary parallels the *mis-guide* and *mythogeography*, provide models that engage the participatory body in uncovering the mythic nature of the city. My involvement in urban dance-event Tongues of Stone provides a departure point for the creation of an ambulatory performance that unearths the hidden narratives of the city. Approaching urban space as an entry point to this investigation, I reflect on initial design practices that respond to site using ambulation as a key method of inquiry, supplemented by acts of mapping and photography.

Framing the Everyday examines the frame as a material and conceptual structure that heightens experience and orients the subject in relation to the event. The explicit frame of the proscenium arch in the theatre imposes a distant and static relationship between audience and action. Contemporary theatrical discourse and practice unsettles the fixedness of the frame, allowing it to become a transient structure that operates in relation to the body in motion. Building upon the notion of journey discussed in the previous chapter, the frame is set in motion through the first performance workshop *Tourist of the Everyday*. What emerged from this test was the ability of the sound-scape to become a powerful framing device, immersing the participant in an extensive performative space they extend with them as

they move through the city. Janet Cardiff's audio-walk *The Missing Voice: Case Study B* is discussed to illustrate this shift.

In *Affecting Objects*, I contrast the theatrical object as a 'prop' with the materiality of the object when situated in the everyday. In the theatre the prop serves to support action, whereas in lived space objects perform action. I reconcile these disparate readings with the notion of the 'affecting object' that contains tacit potential for performance, which is acted upon by the participant. The affecting object is used to perform a connection between the individual and their urban environment, unleashing the potential to 'make strange' the everyday. This is explained using the Russian formalist concept of *ostranenie* (making strange). This chapter is discussed through the material interventions of Belgian artist Francis Alÿs and two micro-acts that occur as research investigations conducted between workshops. In the first act I leave material traces in the urban landscape to be encountered by the audience of the general public. In the second act this is subsequently translated into actions carried out by participants to open up the role of the individual as an intervener in the everyday.

Participating Bodies considers the dual role of the participant as the enactor and recipient of the performance. In this project the actor and the audience have disappeared in favour of performances solely comprised of participants. The individual does not become a traditional performer, because their actions are a performance for the self; nor are they an audience, because their actions bring the work to life: they are both and neither. This section draws from the Situationist notion of the *viveur*, and the role of the participant in Kaprow's 'Happenings'. The chapter is illustrated using Blast Theory's work for cyclists, *Rider Spoke*, and the second 'performance inquiry' *Wish You Were Here*.

In the final chapter, I describe the cumulative notion of *The Intimate Spectacle*, a sublime moment of heightened reality and immersion in the lived experience. This section examines the quality of performance created by synchronous implementation of the aforementioned elements. In illustration, I discuss Deborah Warner's *The Angel Project* and the final performance event of this project: *Hidden City Maps*.

Reading the City

I stand at the mouth of an empty street. Factories and mechanics shops in various states of disuse stare hollowly back at me. How many times have I passed this street? I have no reason to go here. I pull my camera up to my eye. It shields me from inquisitive gazes and legitimises my strangeness. I begin to walk, slowly. I intend to snap a photograph for every time my eye blinks. I continue walking and feel the air starting to dry out my cornea, at first resisting the urge but then giving into the relief of moisture...Click...My body becomes full of sensations, not only those in my eyes; but of my breathing, which at first fluctuates but steadies as I bring my awareness to it...Click...I play a game with myself, trying to pinpoint the exact moment when I can no longer resist closing my eyes...Click...I hold the camera up in readiness to capture that instant...Click...I make a slow one-person procession down the street, stopping and moving the aperture of the camera down and up in synchronicity with my eyelid...Click...The rhythm of these actions becomes a ritual I must complete...Click...I pass no one, and no one sees me...



Fig. 9: Sky Detail

Sarah Burrell
Research Image
Collected during a photographic
exercise which sought out alternative
perspectives within the city
May 2010.

**The Auditorium and the Stage:
Dispersing the Theatre into the City**

—

The theatre as a building and a housed art form is imbued with a legacy of cultural expectations that frame the performance. As director Peter Brook states, the ritualised conventions of the theatre have come to define it: “Red curtains, spotlights, blank verse, laughter and darkness, these are all confusedly superimposed in a messy image covered by one all-purpose word” (Brook 11). This assertion reflects the expectations and associations conjured by the word ‘theatre’. Whether used or rejected by modern practitioners, the trappings of the traditional theatre space continue to define the medium.

This chapter is concerned with the conventional division of the audience from the stage, delineating the performance space from the auditorium and creating distinct zones of representation and reception. The auditorium is a static space, deliberately withholding the possibility of an embodied experience. The divided theatre is a space in which “where you come from tells you what you are”, imposing a hierarchy of action maintained by the figure of the actor (Kaprow 181). Although audience response may be incorporated into the performance, or the actor to occupy the seating area, each are acutely aware of their roles in the situational contract they have entered into. While the audience may be allowed onstage for a time, they are bound to return to their seats once their temporary role has been played out. In Allan Kaprow’s essay *Participation Performance* he recognises, “They will return, sooner or later, to their seats. In fact, in their thoughts they never leave their seats” (ibid.). The latter portion of this statement illuminates the disposition of the audience ingrained by their spatial condition.



Fig. 10: City Traces

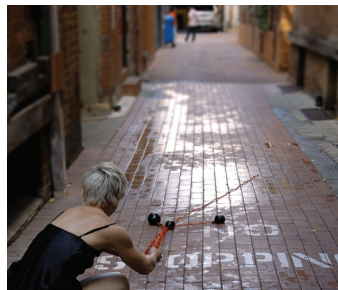
Sarah Burrell
Research Image
Tire marks seen from a rooftop
June 2010.



Fig. 11: Follow (detail)
Sarah Burrell
Photographic Series
A narrative investigation in that follows the passage of an enigmatic woman in red as she moves through the city's streets
August 2010.

When performance situates itself in the spaces of everyday life the distinctions between the stage and the auditorium are collapsed, freeing the audience from the seat and setting the body in motion. The city offers a potentially borderless arena for pervasive theatricality. Without the boundedness of an interior space, the implications of the performance and what it encompasses extends to the total area traversed by the participant. As the individual walks through the city they carry the performance with them, establishing the mobile body as the site of performance.

In his chapter "Walking in the City" Michel De Certeau describes the city as a text written by urban pedestrianisms. He begins the section with a description of the view of Manhattan from the 110th floor of the World Trade Centre. From this voyeuristic and god-like position the city becomes legible. Gazing down at the "ordinary practitioners" of the city who walk the "thicks and thins of an urban 'text'" the city becomes discernible as a complex myriad of intersecting 'writings' created by the wanderer (1: 93). This view privileges the readable and the visible, reflecting the scopic all-seeing gaze offered by the proscenium arch of the theatre and the ordered perspective of the city planner. It is this distance that facilitates the act of 'reading' and that aestheticises and renders the individual a voyeur. In consideration of this statement, walking emerges as a form of embodied reading, one that simultaneously responds to and writes the urban text while discovering it. The embodied reading of walking is offered as an alternative to the reading enforced by the proscenium arch. Ambulation reclaims the city for the small scale, the subtle, and the one-to-one interaction and privileges the lived experience. It becomes a way of inquiring into the environment that surrounds us and positions us as, not removed, but in relation and reaction to it.



Figs. 12 & 13: Tongues of Stone

Dorita Hannah & Carol Brown
 Photograph by Sarah Burrell
 Perth, Australia
 April 2010.

Tongues of Stone

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Tongues of Stone is a multi-site event planned for April 2011. It utilises 18 dancers to lead a “diverse mobile public” (Brown and Hannah 2010) through laneways and marginal urban spaces, unearthing the forgotten histories of the city of Perth, Australia, through sonic, material, and movement interventions. Co-conceived by performance designer Dorita Hannah and choreographer Carol Brown, the performance is produced in association with STRUT Dance Company. In April 2010 I assisted Hannah in a research and development workshop conducted with STRUT dancers towards the final performance of the work in 2011. My role was to research local histories and source materials for the performance workshop as well as document the process. As an initial stage of my research *Tongues of Stone* introduced notions of the itinerary, the sound-scape, and the city itself as a diverse text that can be read through performance: concepts that continued to be relevant throughout the maturation of this body of work.

The ‘stone tongue’ refers to Hannah and Brown’s notion of “making space speak” through a synthesis of memory, myth and dialogue with past and present inhabitants. The ephemeral actions of performance draw out narratives embedded in the urban landscape. The city of Perth is built upon reclaimed wetlands that were formerly the “fluid gathering grounds” of the indigenous Noongar people (ibid.). With colonisation and subsequent urbanisation, the network of tributaries were built upon, burying the varied histories and mythologies of the area.

The participants will be led on a journey through the marginal and forgotten spaces of Perth to encounter performance situations that expose underlying currents

of urban memory. This planned audience engage in the theatrical world of Tongues of Stone through a recorded sound-scape, played on mp3 players, composed by Russell Scoones. As the performance weaves through the arteries of the city, planned audience and incidental spectators alike are provided with an alternate itinerary by which to re-encounter the city.

The workshop used materials and the participatory bodies of the dancers to inquire into the numerous dramaturgies of urban space. Working on-site, a fluid dialogue emerged between movement, design and landscape; fusing site and event. Upon returning to New Zealand this mode of embodied inquiry was implemented in my own practice towards the development of a participatory itinerary within Wellington.

The Drift

—

Walking in the city has emerged as a strategy of inquiry into the diverse mythic topographies of the urban landscape. The initial phase of each workshop consisted of several experimental drifts that were directed by the features of the terrain and in some cases used material catalysts to break habitual patterns of moving through the city's streets. In this body of work ambulation has been harnessed both as a research tool for the designer and a way of linking the participant bodily to the world of the performance, becoming an act of storytelling. The action of walking links the body to place, place to story, and story to time in what Mike Pearson describes as "a spatial acting out, a kind of narrative, and the paths and places direct our choreography. This regular moving from one point to another is a kind of mapping, a



Fig. 14: Münster Walk

Janet Cardiff
Audio-walk
Münster, Germany
1997.

kind of narrative understanding" (Pearson & Shanks 138). These methods of walking uncover the narratives of urban space, as well as serve to research actions and itineraries for the participants in the performances. In designing an exploration of the city the role of the performance designer then becomes not of creating a backdrop for performance but devising a series of constructs by which the participant can engage the terrain of the city. The city, as a backdrop in everyday activity, then comes alive.

In the course of conducting site investigations within Wellington I re-performed Vito Acconci's 'Blinks' Photo Piece, originally conducted in 1969. Acconci employed a devised method of documenting his passage down an industrial street in Manhattan, New York. More than merely documenting, he created a way of heightening his awareness of his progress and facilitating a particular quality of interaction with the act of walking and the

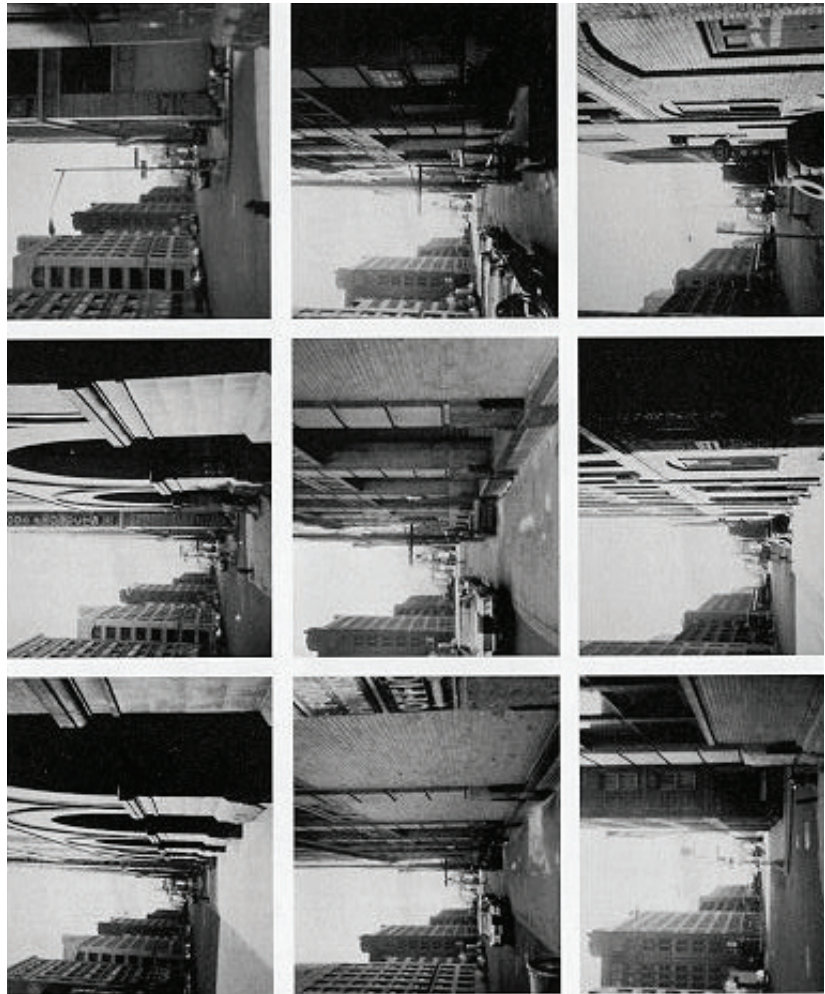


Fig. 15: Blinks
 Vito Acconci
 Photographic Walk
 Manhattan, New York
 1969.

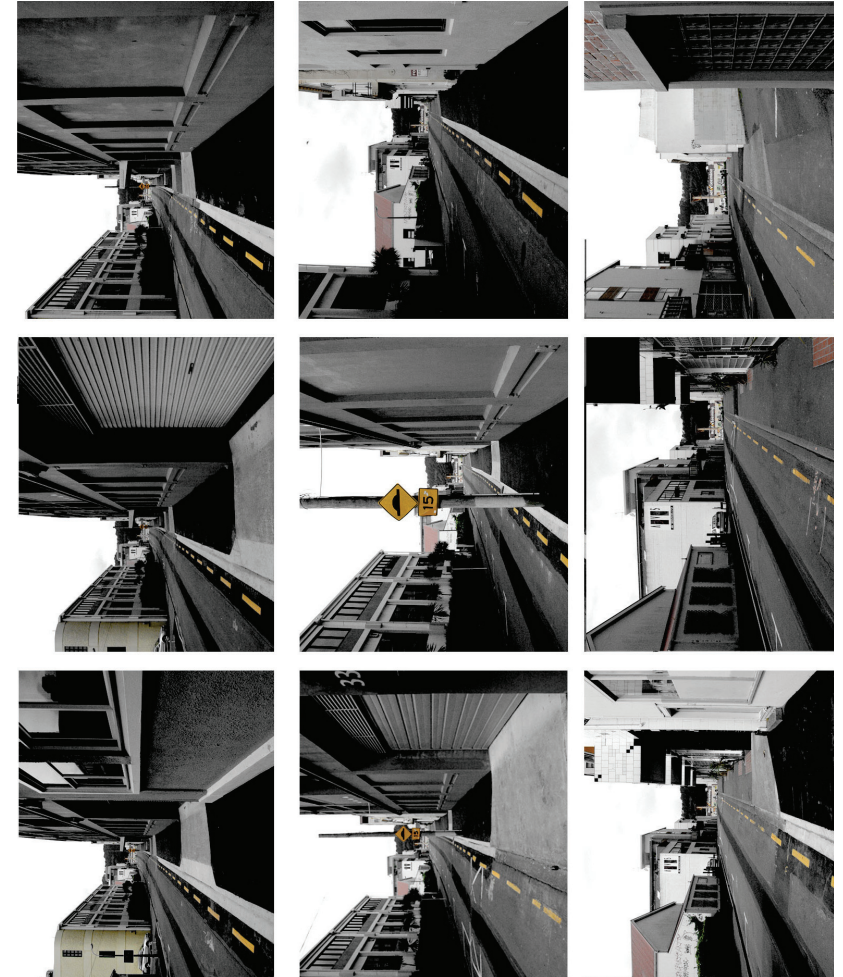


Fig. 16: Photographic Dérive
 Sarah Burrell
 Photographic Walk
 Wellington, New Zealand
 May 2010.

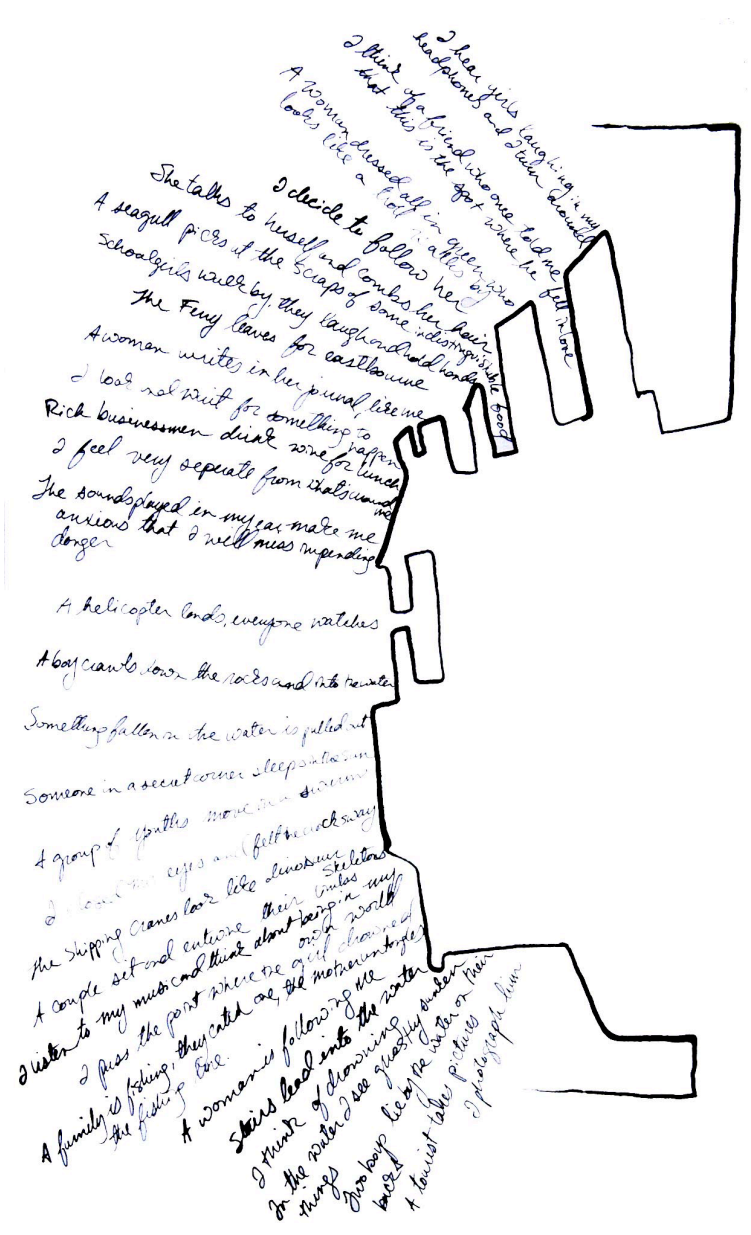


Fig. 17: Memory Map
 Sarah Burrell
 Wellington Harbour
 June 2010.

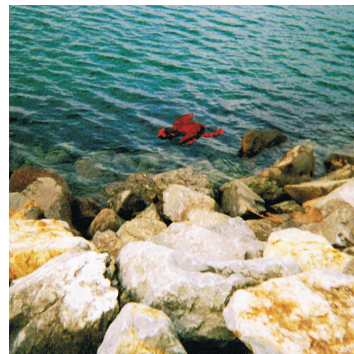
environment. I re-performed this photographic drift through Frederick Street, Wellington, some fifty years later. Although it appeared a simple process, the strategy gave me a heightened awareness of my body and the resulting images composed a 'map' of moving down this particular street. This act seeded the aim of developing processes that engage the participant in consideration of their movement through urban space. The exercise conflated the three practices of walking, mapping, and photography that were used in the design process to develop an initial response to site.

Mapping

This 'memory map' was created during a study of the Wellington waterfront and sought to document the associations conjured while walking through the Wellington waterfront as a starting point for constructing a narrative experience for performance. Initially I sought out a text incorporate into this project but as I got involved in walking, the city emerged as its own rich text. Motifs and materials emerged as I walked along the waterfront noting down sensations, sights, associations, and trains of thought on the spots where they arose.

Psychogeography or 'memory mapping' emerged as a method to structure the walk inquiries and to document the sensations, ambiances and ephemeral occurrences encountered during the research walks. *Psychogeography* is defined by Debord as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (qtd. in Ford 34). Uniting a quasi-

scientific approach to documentation with the subjectivities of urban inhabitation, the term *psychogeography* can be unpicked as uniting the psychology of the individual with the geographic features of the urban landscape. While maps traditionally represent the ordered city, these emotionally tinted cartographies defy the primacy of the municipally endorsed map and reflect the intimate experience of the inhabitant, revealing alternate paths and hidden structures. As an alternative form of site documentation, psychogeography seeks to gain insight into the movement of bodies within public space and how the urban environment both attracts and repels the walker from entry and exit to certain zones. This offers an insight into the choreography of bodies in urban performance as well as a way of highlighting how the performative and subjective resides in the homogenous city. The linking of the tangible and imagined is key to devising site-specific performance that plays between the archaeology of site and the associations it conjures. Drifting, psychogeography, and 'reading the city' provide active strategies in this ongoing exploration of the urban environment.



Framing the Everyday

I arrive at the railway station. I was told to meet a man named John. He's there, sitting in the grand foyer, reading a newspaper with a battered old suitcase containing a handful of disposable cameras. He hands me a camera, its cover decorated with drawings of the city, a map and a list of words. "Find the fantastical hidden in the everyday"... I walk outside to the front of the railway station. As I sit and fumble with my mp3 player people pour in and out of the station and disperse into the city's streets. I put my headphones on and I'm enclosed in my own world. I hear a rushing and whirring as city sounds become audible. I begin walking...I want to use the camera but wait to find something worthwhile. I look for a long time and don't see anything. Then, while crossing the road I come across a blanket in the middle of the street, discarded and flattened from being run over by numerous cars. I wonder who it belonged to and take a photo. A forgotten thing among forgotten things...I hear a runner approaching from behind and turn to step out of the way but it is only in my headphones. I resume walking, unsettled...

Fig. 18: Participant Photographs
Images captured on disposable cameras during the second performance workshop, *Tourist of the Everyday* June 2010.

The Fictional and the Real:

Mobilising the Frame

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Performance unsettles the boundaries between imagined and everyday, illusory and real, and past and present. This negotiation is mediated by the theatrical frame — a conceptual, and at times material, structure — that implies the boundedness or unboundedness of the line between the factual and the constructed. The frame can also be conceived of as a framework that orients the subject in relation to the event. In the gallery, the cinema and the opera house an explicit architectural frame directs the attention of the spectator. This could be a white wall, a black curtain or a raised floor. In the traditional theatre the proscenium makes material the delineation of the space of enactment (the stage) and the space of reception (the auditorium). The body of the audience problematises the aesthetic delimitations of the frame through its unpredictability, which disrupts the carefully orchestrated show. Even in non-traditional and site-specific theatre the ghost of the proscenium remains — through visual, spatial and embodied demarcations — distancing the audience from the space of transformation and enactment by forming an invisible barrier between actor and patron.

The frame is also an immaterial feature found in everyday life that sets apart certain situations so they may be read as performance. The everyday can be understood as all that remains once specialised activities are taken away, leaving the tasks necessitated by living. Frames proliferate in the material world — explicitly in signage, windowsills and in

architecture that organises the movement of bodies in space — and implicitly in spatial and social practices that order behavior. In *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* Erving Goffman discusses the performance of individuals as they consciously organise their behaviour to suit the requirements of their present company and circumstances. In this sense performance can be defined as an action, operation or behaviour consciously enacted, affected and altered by the presence of another individual. Attending a theatrical performance is merely an event more explicitly framed as an occurrence set apart from everyday life that also implies a code of behaviour. The frame is present whenever an individual consciously attends a performance. This becomes a useful characteristic as it designates a liminal zone conducive to the transformation of quotidian experience. Mike Pearson notes:

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“[p]erformance is a special world set aside from everyday life by contractual agreements and social suspensions, not entirely hermetically sealed, but a devised world. Since we know we are entering a performance, we are more receptive to the sorts of creative displacements and symbolic potentials of what we observe and experience.” (Pearson and Shanks 27)

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The frame of the theatrical becomes an interesting material and conceptual metaphor in relation to participation. The frame exacts distance and negotiates what is included and excluded, but a frame can also become a transient structure that guides and initiates varying degrees of focus. It becomes useful in structuring the participant's experience



Fig. 20: The Missing Voice: Case Study B

Janet Cardiff
Audio-Walk: Liverpool, UK
1997.

Janet Cardiff The Missing Voice: Case Study B

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Canadian artist Janet Cardiff creates ambulatory audio-walks for a solitary listener. Similar to the format of an audio-guide the participant is given a portable listening device and told to go to a particular spot and press play. Within the audio Cardiff's voice instructs the participants to 'turn left' or 'go through that gateway'. Layered behind the voice are ambient sounds of traffic or snatches of conversation recorded on the route where the walk takes place as well as various sound effects. The layering of pre-recorded and actual sound creates a seamless and unsettling parallel of worlds. As well as giving directions, the walks dramatise their surroundings through ambiguous narratives that create a fantastical dimension that resides alongside the everyday. Real and imagined situations overlap and colour the participant's perception of the experience in "[i]nterpenetrating narratives [jostling] to create meanings [and] multiple meanings; and readings of performance and site intermingle, amending and compromising one another." (Pearson and Shanks 23). The format of the audio-walk is a highly choreographed experience, asking the listener to synchronise their footsteps with the sound of a walker, thereby creating uncanny overlappings in temporalities and blurring distinctions between the live and orchestrated.

The Missing Voice (London, 1999) was a response to Cardiff's experience of being a woman alone in a large and unfamiliar city and the anxiety this incited in her. The walk parallels the movements of a woman followed by an unnamed threatening presence. As the woman (and participant) walk through the streets of London, she narrates, in a stream-of-consciousness style, the dark scenarios invented in her head as they move through alleyways and side streets. As the performance progresses the dialogue in the audio-scape grows increasingly paranoid.

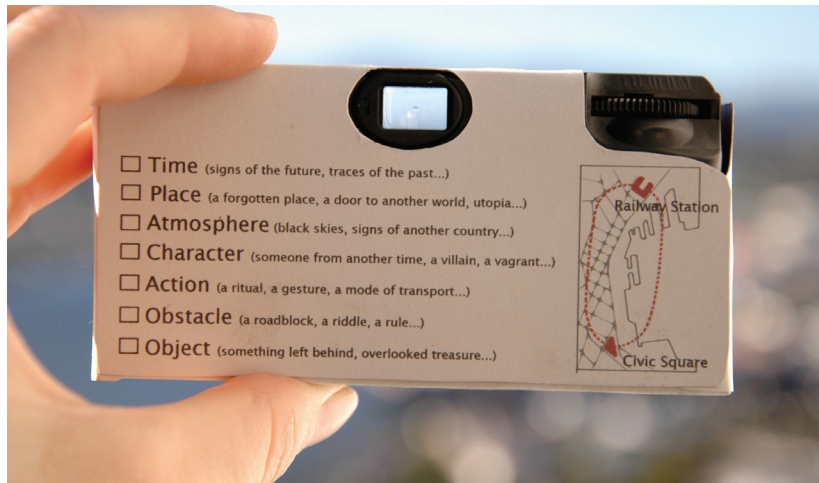


Fig. 21: Modified Disposable Camera

Burrell, Coddington, and Simpson
 Cameras given to participants in the performance workshop, *Tourist of the Everyday*, featured instructions for capturing a narrative of images from a walk through the city June 2010.

and disjointed. The walk ends at the Liverpool train station when the woman being shadowed disappears into the crowd, leaving the listener alone to walk back and return the headset to the art gallery. This ambulatory performance reveals a sinister dimension in the seemingly banal sights of the streets the walk follows. Cardiff describes the walks as a need to dramatise and narrate her life, “making it real by making it cinematic.”

Workshop 1 Tourist of the Everyday

((Listen))

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The first workshop performance examined the theatricalised urban event as a lens that is placed over multiple everyday situations in order to lend them heightened performativity and significance. Equipped with the lens of the camera, participants were invited to step into the role of the tourist, dropping their habitual patterns of moving through the streets to allow themselves to be drawn by the city’s chance encounters. Participants were invited to look at urban space with a gaze of possibility, seeing not only the apparent but also what might reside beneath the habitual façade. They were asked to locate elements of the city that evoked other places, characters, and times; thereby discovering traces of other worlds that might exist in the everyday. The performance provided the individual participant with the tools to conduct an alternative exploration of their urban surroundings, and gave deliberate space to engage in an act apart from the usual flow of the city.

The workshop aimed to test the ability of solitary participants to direct their own exploration of the city while immersing themselves in an experience that is framed as performative. The frame (defined by the workshop) allows the participant to isolate and piece together moments significant to them from the superfluous barrage of stimuli of the city. We provided the participants with two focusing devices: a headset and a disposable camera. The act of putting on headphones automatically immerses the individual in a self-contained world through which your lived experience is filtered, while the camera becomes a transportable frame, operated by the mobile body of the individual.

The performance began at the Railway Station, an urban entry point for thousands of commuters and travelers each day. Upon arrival the participants were briefed and given a disposable camera and an mp3 player. The cameras were furnished with custom-designed covers that depicted a checklist of the fundamental components of a narrative: *time, place, atmosphere, character, action, obstacle* and *object*, as well as suggestions for ludic and poetic interpretations of these elements. The participants were given the basic suggestion to allow themselves to be drawn by the attractions of the city and be open to detours and encounters. Primarily the instructions were contained in the camera as a device that instilled a mode of looking and collecting. Once equipped with the disposable cameras and headsets, the participants were sent off to complete a solitary journey to the centre of the city and back, during which they captured a narrative of images articulating their drift through the city.

Andrew Simpson created a sound-scape from atmospheric noises harvested from a site-research walk we had conducted earlier along the same route. The sound-scape



heightened and distorted the noises of the city, feeding an amplified experience of the real back into the ears of the participant. The sounds of a walker heard in the recording added an overlapping temporality that unsettled the experience of the listener, causing them to question which were the natural sounds of the environment and which were recorded.

The objects used to guide the participant's experience in this performance were not out of place in the city, the mp3 player and the camera are common companions for both the commuter and the tourist. However, in this context they are utilised to involve the user in an act apart while traveling amidst the urban setting. The camera's frame drew focus, allowing particular moments to be isolated within the overwhelming amounts of stimulation and spectacle that the city contains. Here the performative framing devices of camera and sound-scape gave the quotidian the space to become estranged from its everyday capacity. The camera facilitated an alternate way of experiencing the city, involving the participants in looking again at the surroundings, rendered mundane through routine passage. The camera lens became a theatrical frame, an absurd translation of the proscenium arch, which lent heightened significance to the real and made the live interesting. As a device, the camera implied a scenario that allowed the participant to become involved in the mode of tourist, who travels among the urban setting, isolating and appropriating the multiple spectacles of the city. This allowed them to step outside their usual patterns of moving through the city and be "drawn by the attractions of the terrain" (Debord qtd. in Ford 24).



**Fig. 22: (Previous Page)
Participant Photographs**

Tourist of the Everyday
Wellington, New Zealand
June 2010.

Fig. 23: Participant Photograph

Tourist of the Everyday
Wellington, New Zealand
June 2010.

While the camera successfully engaged the participant in a performative situation, the literal structure of the frame continued to impose a distance between the individual and the 'directly lived'. Photographer Susan Sontag discusses tourist practices that foster "dependence on the camera as the device that makes real what one is experiencing" (Sontag 9). The camera involves the user in a state of distraction, paradoxically disassociating them from the present as they attempt to master it. However, the sound-scape emerged as an evocative and immaterial frame that immersed the individual in a transportable theatrical world as they moved through the streets. The act of putting on headphones complements the insularity of the solitary experience, enveloping the individual in a self-contained sphere that colours their surroundings. As sound is not a material structure it is a means to extend the implications of performativity beyond its direct location, allowing everyday occurrences to become transformed through this subjectively tinted framework.



Fig. 24: Sand Trail
Sarah Burrell
Trace resulting
from *Material Gesture 2*
July 2010.

Affecting Objects

I open the first packet and read, "Each night I have the same dream" ...I look at the photo and think perhaps my street is not as interesting as the one in the image. I walk forward anyway, trailing the sand behind me as I go until it runs out. I stop to open the second envelope and read, "I am in a strange city, walking among its high walls and narrow streets" ... Looking at the photo of the girl walking in the distance I am certain my street is not as good as the one in the picture and perhaps I am not as interesting as this girl... but it does feel good pouring this sand... sort of subversive and I can see someone watching me... "Something compels me to move onward, urging me to round the next corner" ... I hear a tui sing as I pour the sand and everything is sounding and looking different - shifted slightly - I am entering a parallel world..."I become lost"...Is there anyone else about also pouring sand? (I look around)..."Then I see her in the distance"...I always find it hard to sit when I am out walking - just to look - just to make time to stop, to listen..."I do not see her face, only her long black hair falling down her back as she walks away"...I think of my own projects. If I was also beautifully dressed would I meet the girl in the photo or if I too was wearing a red dress would things alter? ..."Now in every city I look for her, but find only my own image. Desires reflected in the shop windows, the very city is alive with it."

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(adapted from a response written by
Catherine Bagnall)

The Prop and the Object:

Material Affects

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There are two meanings to the word 'performance'; one refers to the presentation of an act of artistry - a play, recital or dance presented before an audience; and the other refers to the carrying out of an action, task or function usually related to the fulfillment of one's role. The two meanings of the word performance reflect the contrasting treatment of an object when it is positioned in an art or theatre context and the object when located in the everyday world. When an object is placed on stage its role as a signifier eclipses the task it performs, it becomes something to be considered. Prague School theorist Jiri Veltrusky wrote in his influential article *Man and the Object in Theatre*, "[A]ll that is on the stage is a sign" (Garvin 84). The act of placing bodies and materials onstage leads to a disassociation from their immediate faculties for use. Cultural theorist Umberto Eco refers to this phenomenon as *ostension*, which he defines as "de-realizing a given object in order to make it stand for an entire class" (110). What gives the object this set of immaterial quotation marks is the frame of the performance, which gives space to the object, allowing it to stand apart from daily life. This can be likened to the Russian formalist concept of *ostranenie* (making strange). Including an object in a performance estranges it from its habitual and automatic use, transforming it into the 'theatrical object'.

The potency of everyday objects tends to become diluted through habitual use and we lose our sense of wonder in apprehending them. Objects - things we desire, purchase, lose, and discard - inhabit the spaces of our everyday lives. They are seen for their use function as well as their role as status symbols or as things that facilitate the performance

of an action. By placing performance in the external environment these various stances can be reconciled and used to form a tangible link between the participant and the event. The object has the ability to imply a situation, as Hannah and Harslof observe, "[w]ithin them stories are told, forces are harnessed and roles are played out." (11). Objects do not merely support actions, but elicit them through the scenarios they contain. Transposing the performative object to the city extends the heightened awareness of the real that lingers from the performance context, navigating the 'slips of the tongue' between familiar and strange in a "suddenly recognised peculiarity of the everyday" (Brown 4). By combining the *ostranenie* of the performative object with the implicit action of the humble 'thing' the participant may become involved in 'making strange' of the everyday, thereby uncovering of the mythic qualities within the habitual city.

We tend to regard the performance object in relation to the figure of the actor or artist, but a more spontaneous interaction between material and participant necessitates a fresh consideration of the association between object and action. While the actor performs a premeditated action with the object, individual participants can be confronted with the object as a situation to which they must decide how to respond. Because the object in the everyday is recognised for its use, it contains a language and a scenario that may be harnessed to lead the participant through a self-enacted performance. Theorist Bill Brown defines objects as 'things', describing the thing as "[w]hat's encountered as opposed to what's thought" (Brown 4). Through the participant's interaction with the material this scenario can be drawn out, simultaneously discovered and performed. Participants develop a heuristic relationship to material, allowing them to unfold and tease out the performance in the discovery of the action the object initiates.

To affect is “to produce a material influence upon or alteration in” or “to act upon so as to produce a result”(Brown 102). Affect implies the action of a stimulus that can produce a response or reaction. In this definition lies the notion of the affecting object as catalyst. The objects used in this project become a material language that leads the participant through their interaction with the work. Like parcels of potential, they contain within them a performance that is unleashed by the participatory body of the audience.

To affect is also to evoke a strong emotional response. These objects provoke a personal relationship between the participant and place. Objects in the theatre are used as effects, while objects in the everyday acquire the ability to affect the way the participants engage with the city.

**Francis Alÿs,
The Green Line**

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The practice of Belgian artist Francis Alÿs takes the form of acted-out metaphors that fuse object and body-in-motion to probe the underlying psychology of the cities in which they take place. A close observer and intervener of the everyday, Alÿs enacts encounters between the individual wanderer and the city by employing quotidian objects and simple actions to make political realities poetic. Favoring the subtle, these acts are not immediately obvious to the public around him but unfold through the duration of his journeys.

In a work called *The Green Line* (2005) Alÿs walked through the centre of Jerusalem carrying a can of paint punctured with a small hole that dribbled a thin green trail onto the

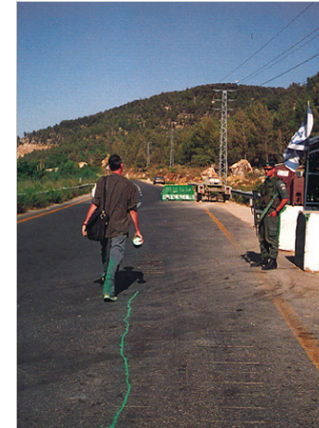


Fig. 25: The Green Line
Francis Alÿs
Jerusalem, Israel
2005.

pavement as he walked. This small gesture that often escaped notice, has far reaching implications. The material green line left by Alÿs traced the boundary of the 1949 armistice agreement established after the Arab-Israeli war and troubles the land now under the control of Israel. This use of material makes visible the structures of power that control the movement of bodies within city. There is a productive disparity between the scale of this gesture and the volume of the statement it creates. Through the use of simple means Alÿs is able to perform an action that has far reaching implications that extend beyond the scope of its direct location.

Material Gesture 1

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In a period between workshops two micro-acts were conducted to introduce materials into the development of the project. In the first of the micro-acts I and my collaborators, Coddington and Simpson, conducted a series of material interventions that were left in the landscape to be encountered by the audience of the casual passer-by. These traces of the performance created a one-to-one map that was left within public space, becoming signposts to an 'other' city. There is ambiguity in the encounter of the stranded performative object, the discoverer must piece together what has happened, capturing their imagination and inciting new narratives. These traces continued to perform as a residue of the gesture, implicating the passer-by in the event. Simple materials such as sand, string, chalk, and tape were used to direct attention to the existing features of sites within the city. These unassuming materials became strange when strategically placed within public space, drawing attention to the overlooked. The red materials became especially conspicuous within the Wellington landscape, a city composed of grey and blue,

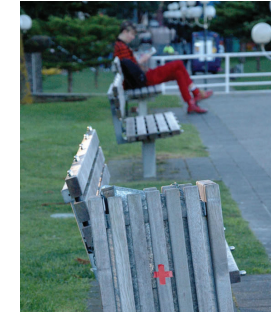
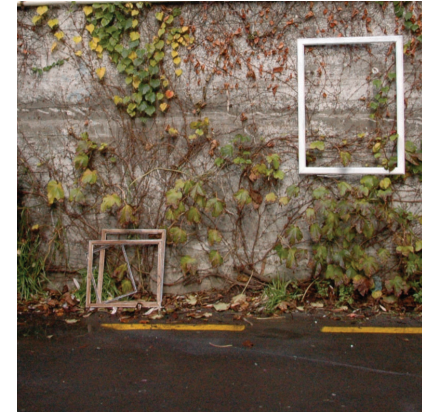


Fig. 26: Material Gesture 1

Burrell, Coddington, and Simpson
(Clockwise from top left): Frames placed in various locations, a collection red crosses interspersed through the streets, red sand highlights existing characteristics of urban architecture
July 2010.



Fig. 27: Material Gesture 2

Sarah Burrell
Participants were given a series of manilla envelopes to open while walking down a street of their choosing July 2010.

hinting at a visceral dimension underlying the urban facade. When encountered in isolation these traces seem a chance occurrence but by placing them along a route they begin to form a narrative language and compose an itinerary that guides attention and creates a material thread to lead the individual through the city.

Material Gesture 2

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In the second micro-act the role of the interventionist was transferred to the figure of the participant. A small group were given a series of brown envelopes; each containing a handful of red sand, a piece of poetic text, and a photograph of an enigmatic woman in red walking through an urban environment. The individuals were instructed to position themselves at the beginning of a street of their choosing that seemed forgotten, strange or to belong to another place or time. Standing at the mouth of the street the individual began to open the envelopes, finding the lines of text and progression of images enclosed. After reading the line they would then walk further down their chosen route, emptying a trail of sand behind them as they walked. This was repeated until all eight of the envelopes had been emptied. The sand acted as a narrative device that linked the sequential elements of the text and images through a performed action. The journey of the walker was paralleled by the story of a man wandering through an unfamiliar city, pursuing a woman with long dark hair, presumably the woman seen walking into the distance within the photographs. This spatial and material itinerary simultaneously involved the walker in a narrative, structured experience and a self-led exploration of public space.



Participating Bodies

The chair sits near the ledge, facing the water... a jacket draped across the back. Who was here?... Looking around I see no one else. Upon lowering myself into the chair the seat gives off a phantom warmth. Who has been here? Is someone watching? In the pocket of the jacket there is a postcard, blank, with a stamp already attached, on the front an image. It shows a long tunnel inscribed with indentations, marks, and lines of colour receding into space. I recognise it as the slide in the park below, from the outside a respectable child's plaything, the interior revealing illicit correspondences. Why do you show me this?... I turn the card over and read, 'Where do you go to be alone?' I am often alone, surrounded by people...I begin to write....

Fig. 28: Footsteps

Sarah Burrell
Research images
September 2010.



Fig. 29: 12 Pictures (detail)
Vito Acconci
Photographs of an audience
in a Manhattan comedy club
New York, 1972.

The Audience and the Actor: Participatory Enactments

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In participatory performance the role of the audience shifts, losing definition in an interplay between action and reception. The performances discussed within this body of work provide a role for the individual that is neither the audience nor the actor. In *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman maintains, “the audience constitutes a third party to the interaction [of the performers] - one that is essential and yet, if the stage performance was real, one that would not be there” (xi) The significant phrase is *if the performance was real*. It is the presence of collective body of observers that delineates the event from the everyday. The presence of an external audience is a defining characteristic of theatrical performance, designating the roles of the watcher and the watched. In the theatre, we look to the actors to show us something, to put the event in motion. By acknowledging their presence and mastery over the situation we defer to their authority, but by dissolving the defined roles of the actor and spectator the individual is caused to productively reappraise their position in relation to the event.

There are no longer an actors or spectators in this project; instead the performances are comprised solely of participants who are ‘(en)actors’. The role of the (en)actor is akin to Augusto Boal’s notion of the ‘spect-actor’, the term designated to participants within Boal’s Invisible Theatre. Boal’s spect-actor is concerned with disrupting the hierarchies of power enforced in the theatre as well as within society. Both terms dissolve the figures of the spectator and actor through the creation of performances that are simultaneously performed and received by the individual.



Fig 30: Pulling a Shoe on a String Through the City

Allan Kaprow, Happening
Manhattan, New York
1989.

The spectator is considered to be less than human, stripped of their powers of physicality. To humanize the spectator they must be restored to their full physicality and capacities for action. “The body is the means then by which we experience and go into the world; the senses act to inform presence and engagement to constitute a ‘being-in-the-world’” (Edensor 100). Tim Edensor’s concept of *being-in-the-world*, also credited to Heidegger, is a phenomenological paradigm that reveals the individual to be in a state of flux with the tangible environment in which “the senses both experience and structure space” (ibid.). Debord and the SI offer another category that emerges through the disappearance of the audience, that of the *viveur* (one who lives). Rather than seeking to engage in any forms of artistic representation the SI sought to engage the public as participants in the sheer act of living. Debord asserts:

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“A situation is made to be lived by its constructors, the role of the ‘public’, if not passive, at least a walk-on, must ever diminish, while the share of those who cannot be called actors but, in a new meaning of the term, ‘livers’, will increase.” (Bishop13).

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The ‘Happenings’ of Allan Kaprow were situations that sought to communicate their meaning through experience rather than observation. Through a combination of action, object, and reframing the quotidian; Happenings created a performance that, in fact, could not be received by any means but enactment.

When 'Happenings' were in their infancy they were conducted in artist lofts or gallery spaces, and maintained the audience as a feature of the performances. Allan Kaprow expressed a frustration with the 'dead space' the audience created in the centre of the room. "It follows that the audience should be eliminated entirely. All the elements – people, space, the particular materials and character of the environment, time – can in this way be integrated. And the last shred of theatrical convention disappears" (qtd. in Bishop 103). Following this shift Happenings involved the audience as participants in the performance of actions that effectuated the performance.

The artists, designers and practitioners discussed in this text have created works that equip the individual with the means to enact a directly lived performance. Many of these situations send the participant out into the city as a solitary agent to conduct performances and interventions in the urban terrain. In the absence performers, and even the community of the audience, the spectator becomes the outsider, the tourist, the archeologist, enactor, or the *dériviste*, as well as a particular type of performer negotiating between the theatrical and the quotidian.

Blast Theory: Rider Spoke

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The work *Rider Spoke* (2007), by UK-based practitioners Blast Theory, explores the intersection of isolation and intimacy in public space through a performance for cyclists, which challenges common conceptions of theatre. In their practice, Blast Theory utilise the technologies of a



Fig. 31: Rider Spoke
Blast Theory, Performance
The Barbican and vicinity
London, UK
2007.

media-saturated culture to provoke intimate discourses between audiences across media platforms. Their work re-contextualises the city as a zone for new encounters, using play elements to question the ideological implications of urban living and ubiquitous technologies. In *Rider Spoke* poses further questions about "where theatre may be sited and what forms it may take" (blasttheory.co.uk).

In *Rider Spoke* participants cycle through the city with handheld computers mounted on their handlebars, looking for 'hiding places' to leave their answer to an intimate question posed by the Blast Theory group. The cyclist's screen shows a GPS map displaying each rider's position and alerts them when they are near a designated hiding spot. The rider then records an answer to the question on the device before continuing to search for the hiding places of other players and listen to their personal reflections in turn.



Fig. 32: Wish You Were Here
Burrell, Coddington, and Simpson
Performance Workshop
July 2010.

In *Rider Spoke* the unpredictability of the work and high threshold of participation demanded from the audience is an essential part of the performance. This was vital to the theatrical work of the historical avant-garde, including that of Erwin Piscator, Bertolt Brecht, Antonin Artaud, and Tadeusz Kantor. Their practice involved shocking the audience: stirring them into action and forcing them to reconsider what they were watching. However contemporary participatory practitioners, such as Blast Theory, attempt to create work where people are unsettled in a less confronting way, taking care of participants and providing a safety net. Janet Cardiff's audio-walks also accomplish this successfully; through the intimate voice in your ear a strong personal relationship of trust is developed between her as the narrator and the individual. The participant understands they will not be made to do something dangerous, but also the work builds up of the threshold for participation throughout the dramaturgy and design of the piece.

Workshop 2

Wish You Were Here

((Listen))

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The second workshop performance (July 2010) expanded on the notion of the journey central to *Tourist of the Everyday* by building in methods to structure the dramaturgy of the individual's experience. A narrative thread was woven through a series of sites within the city, asking the participants to link these sites through walking and establish their individual bodies as the locus of the performance. The work aimed to facilitate a personal dialogue between the individual and a public space, opening up the city as a place

of intimate encounters and reflections.

In Wish You Were Here participants were invited to search the streets for an enigmatic figure, claiming to be an old friend who had just arrived back in town. A series of pre-addressed postcards were hidden in locations to be discovered by the participant – in the phone booth at Post Office Square, on the roof of a parking garage, on the top of a playground slide and in the basket of a bicycle on the end of a wharf. Each postcard gave the clue to the next site and also posed intimate questions such as, “Where do you go to be alone?” The questions provoked a personal relationship to the site in which they were found. This performance featured a sound-scape that immersed each participant in an insular space and enhanced the sounds of the city. As they walked through the city during the performance, the participants received texts on their mobile phone that created another poetic layer of narrative. Through the multiple layers of communication and displacement the piece was imbued with a profound sense of absence through the layers of memory and distance.

Site 1: Post Office Square

Before the performance each person received a postcard at his or her home or office that read, “I’ve come home, it’s been so long. Let’s meet like we used to...” instructing them to meet at Post Office Square. When they arrived at the square it was empty, but the image on the card led each player to the ceiling of the phone booth where the next postcard was placed, posing the question: “If you could call anyone who would you call?” and referring to the context of the phone booth. The answer was to be written on the back of the postcard (with stamp and postal address) that included an instruction to begin an audio track, which they had been sent via email to download onto their mp3 player

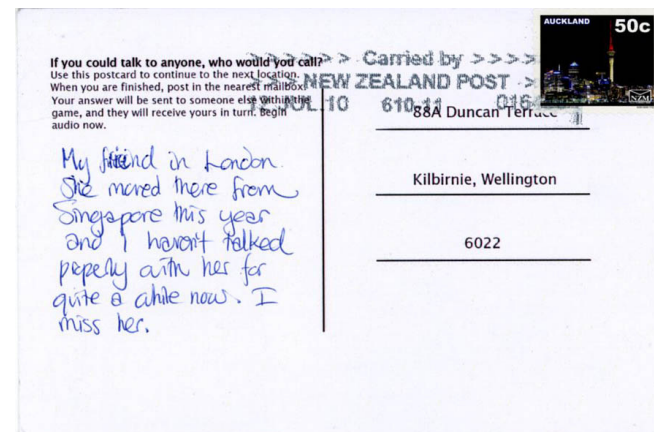
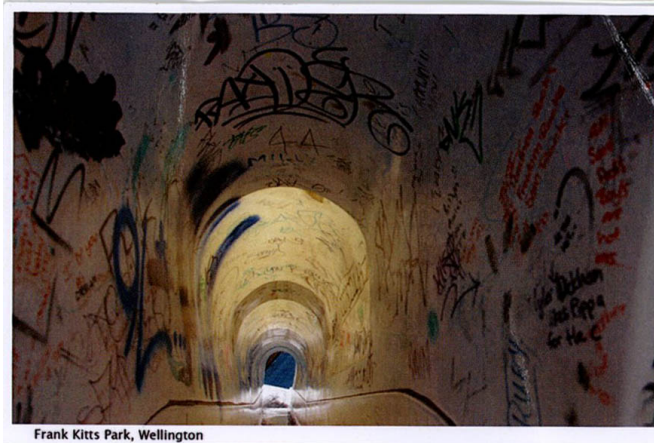


Fig. 33: Postcard 1, Post Office Sq.

Burrell, Coddington, and Simpson
The postcard found on the ceiling of the telephone booth led participants to the roof of a parking garage July 2010.



Frank Kitts Park, Wellington

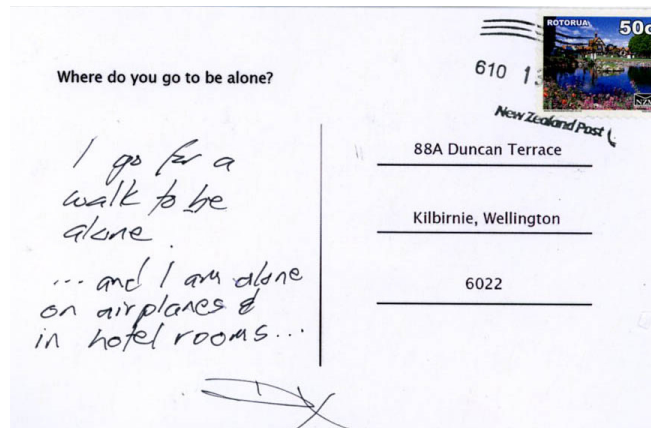


Fig. 34: Postcard 2, Victoria St. Parking Garage

Burrell, Coddington, and Simpson
 The postcard found in the pocket of a jacket left on the rooftop led participants to the interior of the slide at Frank Kitts Park July 2010.

before the showing.

Site 2: Victoria Street Parking Garage

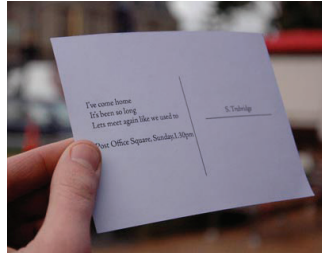
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The postcard from the phone booth led each participant in search of a sign located on the roof of a parking garage overlooking the harbour. Near the railing was a chair with a black jacket draped across the back of it, as if the wearer had just vacated the seat. In the pocket of the jacket was the next postcard. It read, “Where do you go to be alone?” and on its front was an image of the inside of the children’s slide at Frank Kitts Park, which was visible from the seat. Standing alone on the rooftop each player received a text that read, “ Do you remember when we stayed up late, and danced across the rooftops?” This message provided another ghosting from the person who is missed: although they may not remember it, they can imagine it.

Site 3: Frank Kitts Playground

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The postcard hidden above the slide in Frank Kitts Park made it necessary for the participants to go down the slide after retrieving it, unless they waded through the children



climbing up the ladder. This encouraged the individual to get out of their comfort zone and to engage with play. For some it seemed too far out of their scope of behavior and caused a consideration of how we can allow for different levels of comfort or willingness to engage, or how someone is warmed up for such a task. The postcard, showing a distant wharf, read “Who was your best friend when you were little? Where are they now?”

Site 4: Overseas Terminal

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The postcard from Frank Kitts Park led the participants to the final site, which was the Overseas Terminal wharf, where an old bicycle was leaning against the end of the jetty. In a basket on the back of the bicycle was a final postcard, preaddressed to another player within the performance. The postcard posed the question “What can you tell a stranger that you couldn’t tell a friend?” This opened a space of dialogue between participants by facilitating an anonymous confession to a stranger. On the last postcard was an old panoramic image of Wellington from the top of Mt. Victoria. On reflection this ending lacked a sense of finality or discovery. It would have been preferable to find some



Overseas Terminal, Wellington

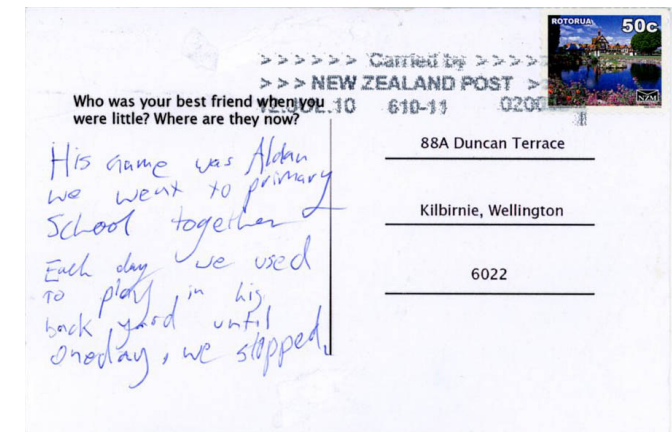
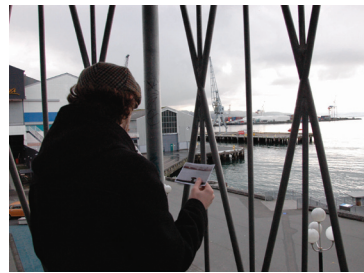
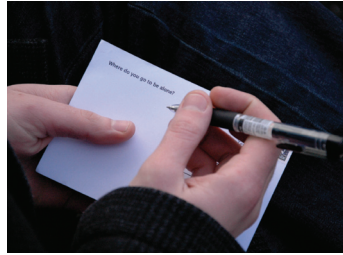


Fig. 35: Postcard 3, Frank Kitts Park

Burrell, Coddington, and Simpson
The postcard found in the slide at
Frank Kitts Park led to the end of the
Overseas Terminal wharf
July 2010.



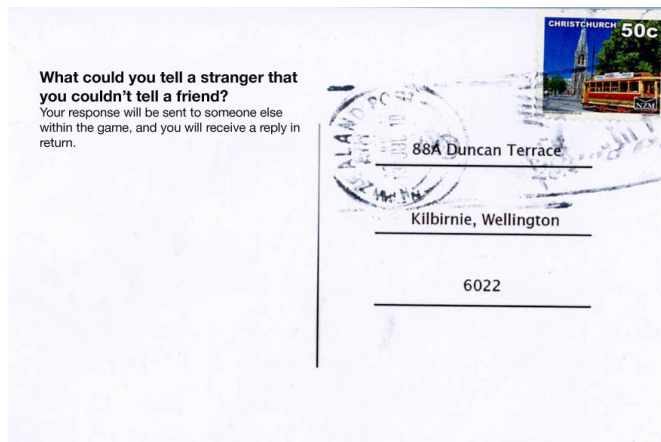


Fig. 36: Postcard 4, Overseas Terminal

Burrell, Coddington, and Simpson
 The postcard was found in the basket of a bicycle at the end of the wharf and ended the piece by opening a dialogue between the participants July 2010.

definitive trace of the person whose journey they'd been following, to achieve a sense of closure of the experience.

Wish You Were Here sent each participant out as a lone agent in the city. This was a potentially risky strategy, but it successfully led individuals through a process of discovering the work as they performed it. Although they are sent out on their own there is an umbilical connection through the sound-scape, the postcards left behind, and the anonymous text messages, creating a productive tension between absence and presence.

This performance provided a solitary and intensely personal journey for the participant as they moved through the city, writing postcards to strangers. As performance designers we were focused on facilitating an environment where people might disclose what they otherwise might not say. By asking questions prompted by the places in which they were found, the postcards drew on the associations and possible memories contained within a site.

Another concern was maintaining of the performative thread as the participants moved between the sites. The sound provided a way of carrying them through the world and enclosing them within a performative state. At times this state was disrupted through long gaps between two of the locations or atmospheric interferences. The uncertainty of knowing where exactly the participant would be while performing an action or listening to a piece of sound was at times a challenge, while at others it provided a blurring of the imagined and actual. This unsettled the boundaries and demarcations between visible and invisible, creating an interlacing of real and constructed situations that produced a sensation of sublime synchronicity.



Fig. 37: Envelope 5
Hidden City Maps
Wellington, New Zealand
November 2010.

The Intimate Spectacle

I walk heel, toe...heel, toe... the same as always, but different as well. Emerging from the streets, the city opens, expanding into the harbour... "where the streets end there is only sea and mountains"...I stand close to the water...my feet heavy on the ground from ambling. I am breathing slowly... listening to the voice speaking softly in my ear...I sit to open the last envelope...I find a red umbrella, a strange thing on such a clear day...opening it, I am told to look for others... the wind batters me, defiantly I wait and scan the shoreline...my mind drifts to the restaurant where my mother worked when I was a child, the smell of rain in the air, the people drifting around me...no one appears...I turn to leave...as the sounds start to fade I look up: a bright point of red in the landscape...

Intimacy and Spectacle: An Invisible Theatre

—

In the first manifesto of *the Society of the Spectacle* Guy Debord declared, “The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that was once directly lived has become mere representation.” (57). While the act of seeing is privileged in the theatre, in the terrain of the city images multiply - billboards, lights, signage and façades - in what Christine Boyer calls “advertising dramaturgies and architectural scenographies” (Boyer 75). When Debord made his assertion in 1967 he could not know how pertinent it would become in our current time. The individual is subsumed by the de-centred sprawl of the contemporary city of spectacle. Within the performance situations of this project the individual is given an itinerary by which to navigate the experience of urban space, peering beneath the spectacular façade to engage with the actual landscape.

The theatre and the city can inform and destabilise one another, necessitating a paring back of the theatre and the artifice of spectacular society in order to provide the individual with the space and time to engage in being-in-the-world: a sublime experience of the moment at hand. The situations facilitated in this research project cultivate an interplay between the spectacular nature of the city, the theatre, and the intimate experience of the individual. This paradox places the personal on par with the municipal, the subtle with the dramatic gesture, and the small scale with the larger-than-life. In the search to give the participant a role within the performance, and the inhabitant a place within the city, we have facilitated the conditions for an intimate spectacle to take form in urban space, creating a theatre within the everyday.



Fig. 38: Flash Mob in the Underground

Over 4,000 people participated in a 'silent disco' where individuals gathered with portable music devices and began dancing to their music at a set time Victoria Station, London, UK 2006.

**Deborah Warner
The Angel Project**

—

In 2003 British director Deborah Warner staged *The Angel Project* in Manhattan, New York, creating an itinerary that led participants on a solitary pilgrimage through various interiors where, through a series of performance installations, they encountered tableaux and the occasional silent performer placed as an “angel” in the architecture. Following a guidebook, participants traveled between the locations on foot, in public transport and in one instance in a golf cart. They were instructed to speak to no one and if they were to encounter a fellow participant, not to acknowledge them in order to maintain the lone journey.

The various sites included a near empty apartment on Avenue of the Americas, the Roosevelt Island F Train platform, and the 63rd floor of the Chrysler Building. One of the venues was a derelict Peep-O-Rama, filled with piles of books with theological themes, another was the former Warner Bros. Studio Store at 1 Times Square where the theme of omniscience was made explicit through the use of surveillance monitors, echoed by the painterly gaze of the participant. Ambiguous narratives run through *The Angel Project*, clues given through the correlation of object and site, but the participant is left with the responsibility of ascribing significance to the experience.

Warner’s work shows that performance is at its most affecting when the worlds of the real and imagined overlap. Some of the most intriguing moments of *The Angel Project* occurred in the spaces between the installation sites where the city was perceived through the lens of the performance and questions arose as to what was ‘real’ and what was orchestrated: occurrences such as a nun standing in Times Square, a man kneeling to propose to his girlfriend or a pure white feather drifting to the sidewalk acquired new layers



Fig. 39: The Angel Project
Deborah Warner
An installation of lillies and salt (above)
and bird cages and electric fans
(below) at 1 Times Square
Manhattan, New York
2003.

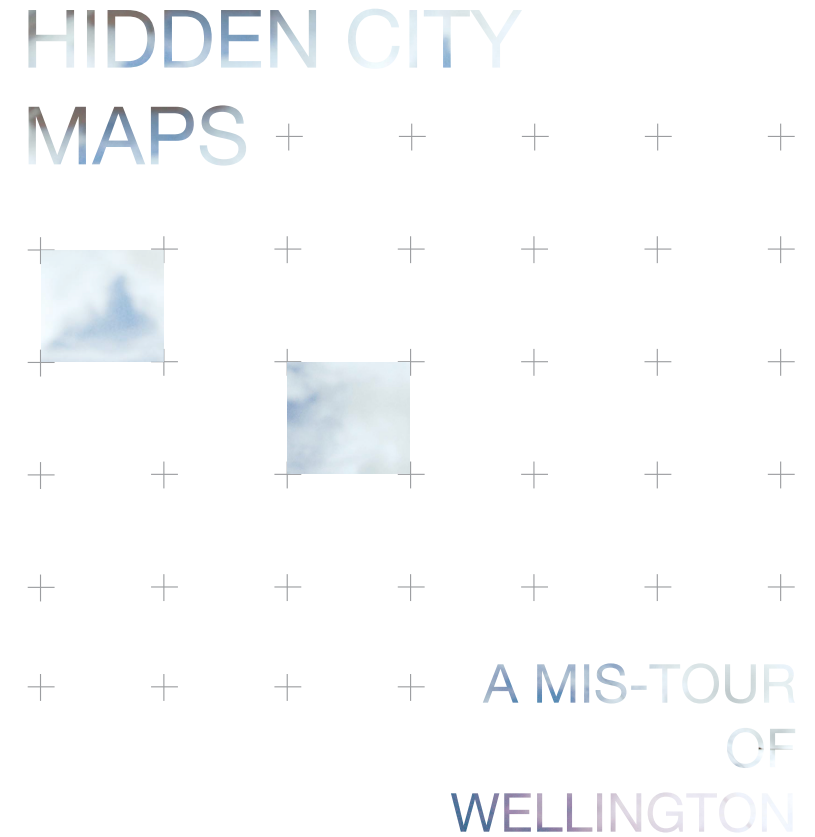
of significance. Were these coincidences part of a highly orchestrated experience or beautiful synchronicity? Through the frame of the theatrical the participants looked again at their everyday environment. As in Shakespeare's well-known soliloquy from *As You Like It*, all the world became a stage and occupants were acknowledged as 'players' (Taylor and Wells 666).

Hidden City Maps

—

Whereas previous workshops placed emphasis on discrete facets of performance, the final event in this collection examined the cohesion of ambulation, sound, and material enactments. The role of the participant as the enactor of the performance became prominent. Returning to the gestures discussed in *Affecting Objects*, material interventions were reintroduced to the project to give the participants situations to play out and provide a tangible connection to the event. Through the combination of objects and written suggestions the individual was led to perform the event while simultaneously discovering it. The interventions carried out as part of the performance caused participants to become interveners in the everyday, dispersing traces of performance throughout the city.

The event *Hidden City Maps*, was a performance walk presented in November 2010 as part of Massey University's *BLOW Creative Arts Festival* and the *PQNZ 2011 Design Laboratory*. In this final workshop individual participants were led through Wellington's urban spaces in a self-directed walk that used sound-scape, ambulation, and participatory enactments to involve the players in a reconsideration of the city through performance. As a 'mis-tour' – appropriating of the term 'mis-guide' widely used by Wrights & Sites – we provided participants with the tools to involve themselves in an alternative exploration of the city.



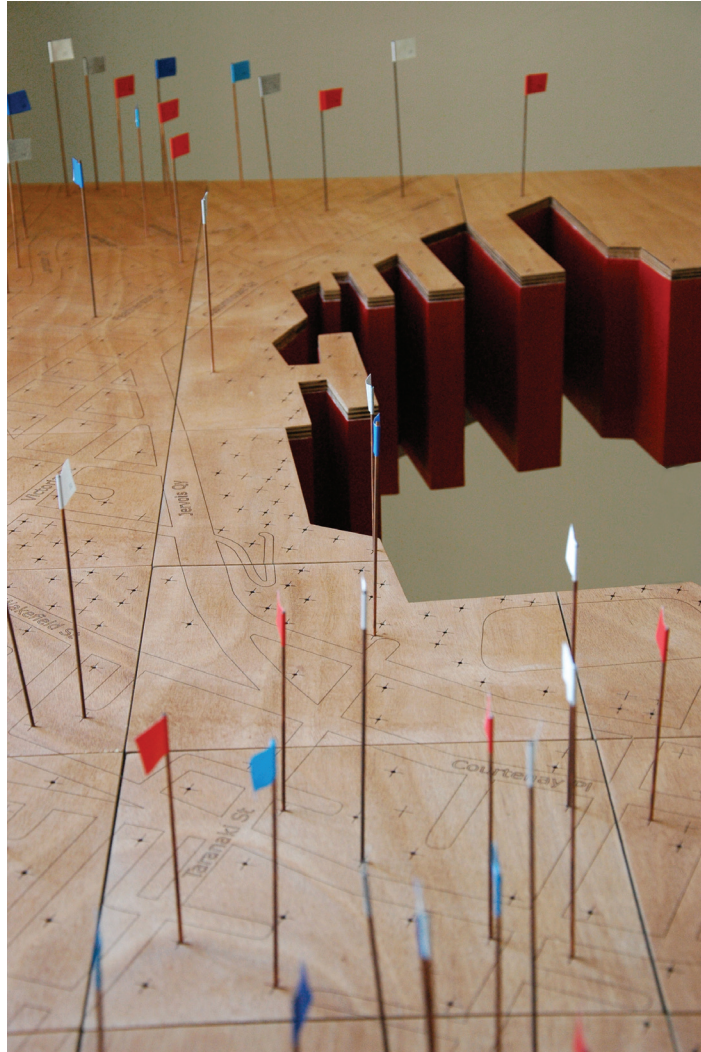


Fig. 40: Map Table
Hidden City Maps
Wellington, New Zealand
November 2010.

The walk placed the fantastical, personal and temporal on par with the factual and historic narratives of the city. Unlike tourist practices that focus attention on the spectacles of the city's significant historic and cultural attractions, this walk exposed the overlooked possibilities for ludic interaction that reside in the places we pass through daily – the marginal, overlooked and forgotten.

The mis-tour departed from a performance station, sited within the Old Dominion Museum. The station was composed of a stand, where the participants were greeted and briefed by a member of our company, and an interactive Map Table depicting the city of Wellington. The Map Table was a living archive that grew throughout the performance, accumulating memories and recollections associated with urban space. The participants and members of the general public were invited to mark the map with a flag and record a corresponding recollection in one of the field books on the table. The table could be used prior to the performance, by inspiring a visit to a site described within one of the books, or after the walk to contribute an experience encountered during the event.

After being briefed on the specificities of the event participants were equipped with a 'performance kit' that included an mp3 player and a series of envelopes containing materials and suggestions. The materials within the performance kit directed the participants through their journey and provided each of the interventions that were carried out as a part of the work. The packets, each containing objects and instructions, act as a series of performative catalysts. They provide the participant with a number of situations in which they must find an appropriate place to respond to the directives. In this way the players effectuate their own *mise-en-scene*, exploring the city in an individualised way. The participant was given the experience of inhabiting the quotidian environment, but experienced it from a wholly unaccustomed standpoint.



Fig. 41: Envelope 1
Hidden City Maps
Wellington, New Zealand
November 2010.

The sound-scape (overlaid with a text I had written, performed by actress Helen Grant) was utilised to structure and frame the event. The audio's constant presence maintained the performative atmosphere, carrying the participant through the work. It provided an enveloping layer that altered and heightened event's reception, making-strange the familiar environment. As the participant walked they listened to a woman's voice that softly related stories, memories, and instructions. For this performance binaural recording was used to gather the audio content from the environmental sounds of the city. Binaural recording uses two small microphones that are placed in the ears, producing an accurate spatial representation of sound when played back over stereo headphones. This creates an uncanny layering of real and imagined, heard and un-heard, seen and unseen, turning subjectivity back onto itself. The use of binaural recording confuses your perceptual abilities, causing the listener to rely on more than their hearing -- a whole body of senses must be employed.

Envelope 1: Seeing Cities

((Listen))

—

To begin the performance the participant was instructed to find a quiet place to sit in front of the Old Museum and turn on their mp3 player. As the sound-scape slowly rose, a woman's voice asked them to close their eyes for a moment. This action was designed to cause the participant to shift their focus from happenings before the event and through turning their gaze inwards, establish their body as the locus of the performance. Then opening the first envelope they found a note suggesting that they allow themselves to get lost and begin the walk by letting the streets lead them. As



Fig. 42: Envelope 2
Hidden City Maps
Wellington, New Zealand
November 2010.

the initial and most passive of the gestures, this envelope established the participant in the mode of walking and the role of the tourist, and its alternative the *dériviste*. As they walked the voice within the sound-scape related memories of being a stranger in this city, walking without orientation or purpose. After five minutes the narrator asked the participant to find somewhere to sit down, wherever they might have found themselves, and watch the happenings that unfold around them.

Envelope 2: Memory Cities

((Listen))

—

As the participant took in their surroundings they were asked to open the second envelope. Inside was a stick of white chalk with a note that encouraged them to find a nearby place that held a personal memory and inscribe their mark using the chalk. This gesture engendered the conception of the city as a lived space that is inhabited by unseen memories and personal associations. As the participant walked, they listened to the narrator recall temporal moments sited in specific points within the city. The tense within the sound-scape then shifted to the present by saying “Here is where my father worked as a boy” and “Up ahead is where I was last kissed”, implicating and shifting perception of the spaces surrounding the walker.

Envelope 3: Forgotten Cities

((Listen))

—

The third packet contained a handful of bright-red stones and the suggestion to “find a forgotten place outside the usual flow of the city”. Once they had found a site, the stones were dropped by the participant as they walked away, revitalising the space by potentially capturing the imagination of the casual passer-by with the trail of strange pebbles. The sound-scape told an allegorical story of walking in a forest and happening upon a dilapidated house. The metaphor of the city as a forest was evoked by Walter Benjamin when he wrote “Not to find one’s way around a city does not mean much. But to lose one’s way in a city, as one loses one’s way in a forest requires some schooling.” (Berlin Childhood 1). As they moved between the buildings, leaving trails of berry-like pebbles, participants became involved in exposing the overlooked spaces of the city.

Envelope 4: Lofty Cities

((Listen))

—

Resuming walking, the participant heard the bells of the Carillion Tower, playing a fugue in the audio. They are asked to open the fourth envelope, which is filled with downy white feathers, and are told to find a ‘lofty perch’ from which to



Fig. 43: Envelope 3
Hidden City Maps
Wellington, New Zealand
November 2010.



Fig. 44: Envelope 4
Hidden City Maps
Wellington, New Zealand
November 2010.



Fig. 45: Envelope 5
Hidden City Maps
Wellington, New Zealand
November 2010.

gaze down at the city and disperse the feathers. The fourth suggestion lifts the participant to another strata of the city, lifting them from the “thick and thins of the urban text” described by de Certeau in his chapter *Walking in the City* (1: 93). From above the city takes on another quality and become’s “legible” (ibid.). The act of floating feathers down to the city becomes a sublime gesture, the materiality of the object causing it to perform on the Wellington wind.

Envelope 5: City Spectacles

((Listen))

—

The final gesture of the performance caused the participant to step into the role of the performer. The voice within the sound-scape asks the walker to head in the direction of the waterfront to open the final envelope. Standing at the water’s edge, they opened the packet and found a red collapsible umbrella and a note asking them to open the umbrella and gaze out at the harbour. Because of the Wellington waterfront is a scopic expanse, anyone standing at the water’s edge within the central city is visible. The notion of the collective was elicited after the participant had undergone their personal and solitary journey through the city. Though this was not consistently materialized, the moment when the individual becomes aware they are part of a community of interveners remained a significant turning point in the dramaturgy of the performance. As well as serving as a signal to other participants, the umbrella turned the walker into a performer for the passer-by as they wielded their bright-red umbrella on a rain-less day. Through making a quiet spectacle of themselves they become signposts to an ‘other’ city.

Field Notes	
11	I climbed the pohutukawa tree next to the church. As I began to let the feathers go one by one, Samoan children in their Sunday karakoras spilled out into the carpark jumping and laughing and trying to catch the feathers as they fell to ground
12	I have also had a white feather fall from the sky-
13	got told off at Moore Wilsons for bring feathers into FRES!! AND again for littering the sky with feathers on the roof.
14	3 MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL DISTRICT AIR FORCE BAND WERE IN FULL UNIFORM. IT LOOKED TOO HOT.
15	As I walked down Toiyast a creepy street-man (I heard his name is Nathan) walked past dressed as a clown, tooting a rubber horn at people

When the participants returned to the performance station they were invited to add their experience the Map Table. The flags and their corresponding books related to the five packets that were opened during the performance and the modes, roles and spaces they instigated. Each one is a 'hidden city' that is uncovered in the habitual terrain: Seeing Cities, Memory Cities, Forgotten Cities, Lofty Cities, and City Spectacles. Akin to Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, they evoke the 'other' spaces that can be drawn from the landscape of the everyday city, and are actively sought out through this performance. Returning to the table after walking through the city, the participant is raised back to the scopic gaze encountered in the fourth gesture of the performance. They are faced with the journey a second time through retracing their passage. Leafing through the field books, they uncover the experiences of others who have taken the same elemental performance to entirely individual places. Reading back through the booklets moments of overlapping experiences emerge. One participant recounted having seen a feather fall from the sky before conducting the walk. That chance occurrence was reframed as they became the one throwing feathers at the passersby down below. The table became a place for dialogues between the participants to emerge, growing to become a repository of the city's happenings, told by the individuals who inhabit it.

From *Hidden City Maps* emerged the notion of the theatre as an intimate spectacle. Moving through the city, encompassed by a sonic frame the individual is involved in theatrical world set apart from the daily happenings surrounding them. The performance exists for them alone but its echoes continue into the landscape in the form of material traces and the 'strange' performance of the individual. The other meaning of spectacle is to make a show of oneself. The gestures of the wanderer cause them

Fig. 46: Field Book
Hidden City Maps
 Wellington, New Zealand
 November 2010.

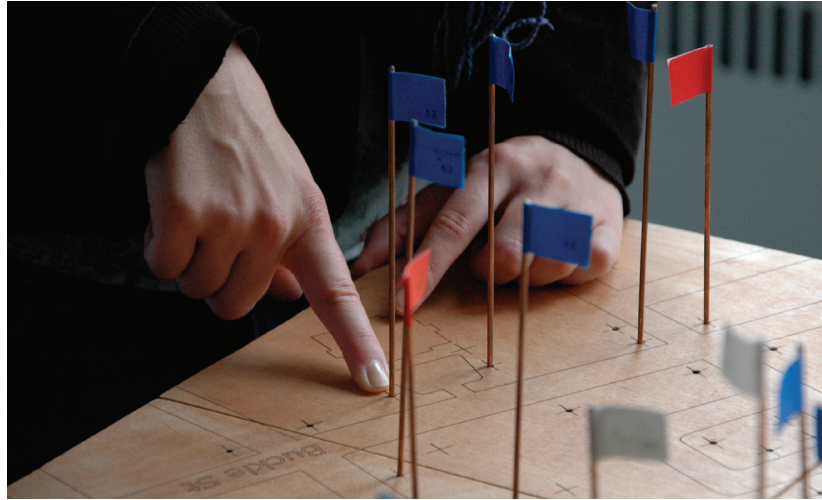


Fig. 47: Map Table
Hidden City Maps
Wellington, New Zealand
November 2010.

to stand apart, incurring curious glances from the public as they make a quiet spectacle of themselves. The unseen and permeable boundary between the performance and the everyday is a form of 'invisible theatre,' a term widely used by theatre director Augusto Boal. Boal's invisible theatre is refers to theatrical gestures performed in public space, disguised as real events and enacted before the unwitting audience of the general public. Their aim was to incite social dialogue from the passer-by through performing situations that provoked a response through their political undercurrents. While Boal's conception is concerned with disrupting the structures of power, my conception of the invisible theatre is a spatial invisibility. The theatre loses form and moves through the city unseen, enveloping the walker and extending its implications out into the terrain.

The participants check in and are briefed. They are given their satchels and mp3 players and are instructed to walk out to the front of the building and find a quiet place to sit down and then turn on their MP3 players.

Part 1 (0-15 minutes):

Sound of Sea

Slow fade in and heightening of noises around them, sounds gradually coming into focus.

In a Close/Direct voice: "Close your eyes."

① **Recollecting/Musing voice (sounds further away):** "When I close my eyes tightly and press them with the heels of my palms at first I see nothing...then, out of the darkness appear tiny pinpoints of light. They slowly grow and dart around my field of vision, becoming a sea of brightness. Then I cup my hands over my ears and I hear the hum of a distant city."

Close Voice: Open your eyes slowly.....when you are ready open the first packet.

They reach into the satchel and open the packet marked with a '1'. Inside is a piece of paper, which reads:

To begin with, let's get lost
Walk against the grain
Duck and weave down alleyways...
Let go of the idea of a destination and
Let the streets take you for a walk

*diverged
recollecting
coming in*

The participants begin walking. Sounds of city rhythms, pulse, and footsteps.

② **Musing voice:** "When I first came here I was a stranger. I didn't know where anything was; I didn't know where to buy a stamp or how to take the bus so I would walk. I had no work and spent most days drifting through the city without destination because I didn't know where I was to begin with so I would make a game of it. Every man with a hat and glasses that passed I would follow, when a lady carrying shopping would pass I would change direction and follow her. I hitched myself to other people's lives: their purposes and directions, imagining where they were going and what they were like. There is a certain pleasure in being lost."

Close voice: Find somewhere to sit down... look at where you have found yourself. Watch what goes on here. ~~one minute~~

Part 2 (15-25 min)

*fast steps & pull of
cars sound &
1. keratin*

Open the second packet.
They open the second envelope, which contains a piece of chalk and reads: 'Find a place where a memory resides...inscribe your point of view.' The participants are instructed to find a place of personal significance and chalk their memory on that spot.

③ **Musing Voice:** ...and today while walking down the quay I heard a man with headphones on, singing at the very top of his lungs. Everyone on the street turned to look at him but he kept on singing as if he were alone.

Three weeks ago an old man walked into Post Office Square and set down a radio and began to play Nat King Cole songs.

It was night, as I walked down Frederick Street I came across a small church tucked amongst closed factories. A red light bulb hung above the door, which was open a crack. Someone inside was singing, I sat on the front steps and listened.

I passed a traveller at the railway station, he looked lost I asked him if he needed directions, he smiled politely and shook his head.

A woman on Vivian Street running through the rain suddenly stopped, folded her umbrella and let the rain drench her.

On the bus a father explained to his son why rain falls from the sky.

Last Sunday while walking down Tory St, a pure white feather drifted out of the sky and landed by my feet.

Close voice: Here is where I last was kissed...On the next corner I dropped my glasses and they were crushed under the wheels of a courier truck...to the left is where my grandfather worked when my father was a boy... up ahead there

Fig. 48: Sound Score
Sarah Burrell & Andrew Simpson
Hidden City Maps
Wellington, New Zealand
November 2010.

used to be a block of apartments where I lived when I first came here.
Every street, windowsill and grating contains a moment that is untold.

Part 3: (25-35 min)

Close Voice: Open the third packet

The participants open the third envelope, which reads:
Find a forgotten place...
Somewhere overlooked, outside the usual
Flow of the city
When you leave this place
Drop a stone with every few steps you take
To create a trail to lead others here

Musing voice: I'm in the forest behind the house where I grew up. There's a point in the yard where the wild takes over and the pine trees block out the light. Its quiet under here, and somehow far away, the wind can't reach and everything grows strangely still. The only sound is the dry snapping of twigs and rustling of pine needles. I make my own path deeper into the woods, twisting between the trunks. It's hard to move, the branches grab at my clothes.

There it is up ahead. I found my way here as a child. What once was a house and now only the foundation remains. You can see the outlines of the rooms. This used to be a kitchen; a broken pipe sticks out of the ground, now the bedroom...

Close voice: I've tried to go back since, but only found myself wandering through the trees, wishing that I had left a trail of bread crumbs to lead me back.

Part 4: (55-49 min)
The participants begin walking again. After a while...

Close voice: Open the fourth packet.

Inside is a note that reads: Find a nearby lofty perch...
Somewhere up high to gaze down on the rest

When you reach the top begin to release
The feathers one by one
See if anyone looks up

Recollecting Voice: Lately I've been dreaming that I'm flying over a town. From up here it could be any place. I do not really fly, but more like hover in the air, suspended in one spot, looking down on at the cars and people. The forms of the streets become abstract shapes; I see a slowly moving snake carving pathways out of the earth.

I can see into the houses as if they have no roofs. A father sits up late at the dinner table. He looks up. The houses softly stir as if kissed while asleep, slightly shifted.

Close Voice: Let's keep walking towards the water.

Part 5: (45-35 min)
The participants walk towards the waterfront, when they get near...

Close Voice: Open the fifth packet.

Inside is a note that reads: Make your way towards the water's edge
Walk as far as you can
As you take in the horizon open the umbrella
Look out for other umbrella carriers

Musing Voice: As the city breathes the tide rises, <<breath in>> and falls <<breath out>>, everything winds up at the shore's edge. The shipping cranes tower like skeletons, hauling up the remains of a strange city. The streets empty out into wide-open water and sky. Where they end there is only sea or mountains.

Close Voice: Open the umbrella and stand gazing out at the harbour, try to pin point the exact spot where the city ends on each side.

Close Voice:
Please walk with your umbrella out back along Tory St. and return the headset to the Old Museum.



Fig. 49: Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)
 Transparency in lightbox
 Jeff Wall
 1993.

Conclusion Dispersing the Theatre

—

An Intimate Spectacle is a body of performance explorations and events that leave the confines of the theatre to wander. In moving through quotidian landscapes we have dispersed the theatrical distinctions of the stage and the auditorium, the fictional and the real, the prop and the object, the actor and spectator, and the notion of the grand spectacle. This unsettling of theatrical conventions allows theatre to expand and acquire alternate definitions and incite new encounters. The theatre is inherently ambiguous, it may transport through dazzling displays that enthrall and subsume the present, but it can also become a less-defined structure that involves the individual in uncovering the revelatory possibilities contained within everyday life. The nature of theatre is to reveal and conceal: to transform and to present unrepeatable moments of existence. If metamorphosis is a distinguishing feature of theatre and the 'tricks' for this are stripped away we must ask: what remains of the theatrical to be revealed?

From this research, qualities and strategies have emerged that unsettle both the conventional theatre and quotidian urban landscape, which work between the notion of intimacy and spectacle. The mobile and participatory body has emerged as the principle site of performance. This is activated through sound and by performing enactments in which lone participants drift through the city. As they move they extend a dynamic field of performativity that implicates the urban environment as a complex performance space. The power of the sound-scape to shift the participant's perception of the event has positioned it as a primary framing device. In opposition to a static frame that imposes distance, the mobile framework of a sound-scape allows an interrelated sense of place and temporality, infusing the actual with the fictional. Many of the performative actions within this body of work 'leak' into the participant's quotidian life; shifting, unsettling, and stretching performance's

capacity to affect and permeate the everyday. Theatrical constructions and real situations overlap causing the individual to question what is part of the performance. In this state the everyday can be reframed and begin to perform.

The understanding of the theatre as an intimate spectacle has developed from the notion of a performance comprised solely of participants, who conduct solitary explorations and perform interventions, dissolving the role of the audience member and actor. With no default position, the individual is compelled to discover their place within the work. The various performances undertaken in this research resist the grand spectacle of the theatrical production, instead privileging the small-scale, the subtle, the intimate, and the one-to-one. It posits a theatre that gives space to the memories, gestures, and performance of the individual. Siting the participant at the core of this lived theatrical experience produces a moment of heightened reality that reveals the multiple performative possibilities contained in daily existence.

Though its form may be disrupted, the theatre still resides in this project as the origin from which it departed. Though it was not fully achieved in this iteration of the work, the relationship between the individual and the community remains a rich territory for further exploration. Within the theatre and the city resides the paradox of community. In the contemporary city of the spectacle, what remains is pure visual form “a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (Debord 12). The agora of the city has been replaced by a centreless sprawl amongst which the collective becomes fragmented, producing a society entirely composed of individuals. Likewise, in the theatre that privileges the simulacrum of the spectacular show, plunging the audience into darkness, there is no room for dialogue. Yet, theatre remains the only place where individuals can consciously encounter themselves as part of

the collective.

The capacity of the theatre to transform remains vital in uncovering the mythic qualities of the everyday city. To marvel in the quality of the light, and the fineness of the forms of the buildings as they stretch across the horizon, to move, enjoying a walk without a destination. To encounter the city not as you would ever find yourself on that particular street in any other circumstance. Therein lies the theatre and the fiction within this research: to recognise the city as performance.

The idea of dispersal implies a process of distributing things and people across a wide area, and the splitting of a group of people causing them to leave in different directions. To disperse the theatre, and scatter its trace throughout the city, is to extend the influence of the event to enfold the situations of the everyday and reveal the urban landscape as a space of performative encounters. The theatre does not disappear but instead is made strange, its borders unsettled, slightly shifted; to engender an encounter between the individual and the event that must always be performed afresh.

Figure Sources

Unless otherwise stated all photographs and images are the work of Sarah Burrell.

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Appendix 1

ODDSPOTS

Follow the trail

Those who read their fairy stories properly will remember the woodcutter's children Hansel and Gretel laid white pebbles and crumbs to foil their nasty stepmother's attempts to lose them in the forest. There may be something similar happening in Wellington. Small (manufactured) red berry like pebbles are appearing on the footpaths in odd spots: Elizabeth St, Brougham St, Frederick St, Tory St, a cache on the corner of Jessie St and Cambridge Terrace. Perhaps left by older children to find their way home after a hard night on Courtenay Place? Or maybe there's or another witch out there we should be helping into the oven.

Traces of Hidden City Maps

Several weeks after the performance, an article appeared in the local newspaper, *Capitol Times*, remarking on the strange red stones seen throughout the central city.

Appendix 2



Thesis DECLARATION

Sarah Burrell
An Intimate Spectacle: Dispersing the Theatre
ID # 05044790
Master of Design
2011

Except where specific reference is made in the main text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material extracted in whole or in part from a thesis, dissertation, or research paper presented by me for another degree or diploma and has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work (published or unpublished) has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

Availability of Thesis

I hereby consent to the above report being consulted, borrowed, copied or reproduced in form time to time in accordance with the provisions of the Library Regulations made by the Academic Board. YES NO

The Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Research) has approved an embargo for this thesis. Note: The period of the embargo will not exceed two years from the date on which the thesis is presented in its final format. During the period of the embargo the thesis will be treated as confidential and access restricted to supervisors, examiners and student. The Library will hold the completed thesis securely until the end of the agreed period; it may be released earlier with the approval of the Post Graduate Director or nominee. YES NO

Candidate name: Sarah Burrell

Candidate signature: *Sarah Burrell*

Date: 26.2.11

Appendix 3

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This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Profesor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

