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***The Epitome of an Oxymoronic Endeavour:
Collaborative performative photography between still and
movement artists***

***A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of***

Master of Fine Arts

***at Massey University, Wellington,
New Zealand***

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Abstract

'Attempting to capture this transience, this constant appearing and disappearing, through the medium of the still photograph might seem the epitome of oxymoronic endeavour'.

Michael Parmenter. (Parmenter, M. in McDermott 2015. p6).

An Oxymoronic Endeavour is the resulting artwork of a collaboration between photographer, Celia Walmsley, and New Zealand dancer/choreographer (dance maker), Jessie McCall. It combines two oxymoronic (apparently contradictory) art forms where one artist is also the subject of the resulting images. McCall and Walmsley co-author the development of the artwork and Walmsley is the author of the exegesis.

Through this production collaboration Walmsley and McCall explored the oxymoronic relationship and use of photography and movement. The resulting artwork is not a recording of a performance that will be repeated. The choreography and performance occurred only for the purpose of creating the images and exist only in the resulting 'performative' (Baker. S. & Moran. F. 2016) photographic work and its associated writing. The work breaks with the traditional style of dance photography, and with the conventional role of 'still' photography in relation to dance, as the 'revelatory authority' (the power of the camera to show what has been) of other artists' work. (Reason. M. 2004).

Use of and the critique of, collaboration and co-authorship are essential elements in the artwork's process, form and outcomes. This reflects Daniel Palmer's (2017) proposal on the move away, since the 1960s, from the 'art-world trope' of sole adventurer photographer towards collaborative work. Issues of agency, power, and the link between authorship and authority, also influenced the work.

Through the essential component of collaboration *An Oxymoronic Endeavour* developed into 'performative' photography between photographer and choreographer/dance artist. The work contributes to the sparsely populated field of collaborative 'performative' photography which also represents a paradigm shift in the way that photography and dance are created, presented and consumed.