polyrhythmic
landscapes
BODYDRESSCITY

lauren skogstad
2010

foreword

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

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

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

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

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

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

Review: Val Diggle

figure 01. The Monstrous Red Dress: Mount Victoria

Figure 19: The Monstrous Red Dress: Town Belt

abstract

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

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

figure 03. The Monstrous Red Dress: Wellington Harbour

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INTRODUCTION

The scan of the city indicates a straight horizontal line. Nothing's happening. / Suddenly the line shows a peak, a rising point. / An event has just been detected. / An event in architecture is like a beat in the heart. / If it doesn't happen, we're in bad shape. / But they warn us: A. Artaud, S. Eisenstein, B. Tschumi.

Enric Ruiz

figure 04: Wellington Rhythm Sketch

This performance design project utilized embodied action to consider and explore the temporal nature of the city, introducing performative disruptions that reveal its multiple rhythms. In the epigraph to the left, from *The Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture* (2003), architect Enric Ruiz provocatively describes the critical role of the urban event as asserted by performance theorist Antonin Artaud, Russian film theorist Seigi Eisenstein and architect Bernard Tschumi. Tschumi insists, "there is no space without event" (Tschumi, 1996, p. 139); cities and architecture cannot prevail without movement, action and moments of shock. He defines the event as 'that place of shock', a 'turning point for culture and society' and 'the invention of ourselves' (Tschumi, 1996, p. 258). Eisenstein believes theatre has the ability to mould its audience in preferred directions by utilizing what he deems as a *Montage of Attractions* (Eisenstein, 1995, p. 88), in which attractions are "aggressive moments in theatre" (Eisenstein, 1995, p. 88), causing the audience "emotional or psychological influence, verified by experience … to produce specific emotional shocks" (Eisenstein, 1995, p. 88). Artaud believed in the significance of employing violent disruptions as a device in theatre, referring to his concept of the "Theatre of Cruelty" (Artaud, 1970, p. 84) in which he intended to hurl the audience into the centre of the action, compelling them to absorb the performance on an instinctive level. For Artaud the disruptive act was essential to shock the spectator out of their complacency,

> Artaud sought to remove aesthetic distance, bringing the audience into direct contact with the dangers of life. By turning theatre into a place where the spectator is exposed rather than protected, Artaud was committing an act of cruelty upon them. (Jamieson, 2007, p. 23).

As indicated by Ruiz, Tschumi, Eisentein and Artaud advise us on the importance of the shock – an event that has the ability to jolt people out of an uncritical contentment with their environment. Cities rely not only on the event, but the catastrophic to produce change and awareness. Foucault believes an event is not simply a logical sequence of words or actions but rather "the moment of erosion, collapse, questioning, or problematization of the very assumptions of the setting within which a drama may take place – occasioning the chance of possibility of another, different setting" (as cited by Tschumi, 1996, p. 256).

Performance designer Dorita Hannah describes the city as *event-space* constructed of "multiple shifting moments negotiated by fragile bodies on the move" (Hannah, 2008, p. 1). Derived by Tschumi, the term event-space is a coupling of performance and architecture rendering a 'space-in-action' bound to time, emergence and change. The city as event-space is a complex web of events that disrupt, disfigure and "simultaneously, reconfigure, providing a rich texture of experiences that redefine urban actuality: city-events, event-cities" (Tschumi, 1994, p. 13). Cities exist through a complex system of simultaneous relationships and events, offering a multilayered network – a Metapolis or multicity.

A city is not homogenous, nor is it static or stable. In *The Metapolis Dictionary* (2003) Manuel Gausa reconsiders the city as a multicity. This is the Metapolis. Federico Soriano reinforces this deeming the term city as an "old word" (Soriano, 2003, p. 111), inferring one, single place while the multicity suggests a "place of places" (Gausa, 2003, p. 431). A multicity consists of numerous connections and interactions between people and objects that operate simultaneously across a multitude of times and in both digital and physical locales. In the *Metapoles ou l'avenir des villes* (as cited in Gausa, 2003, p. 430) Francois Ascher defines the modern multicity as a Metapolis advancing a new type of urban environment made of multiplied heterogeneous spaces and relationships (Gausa, 2003, p. 430).

Acknowledging that the city is a Metapolis – an amassing of multiple places occupied by coinciding events – is critical to this thesis as a design-led study that explores urban temporality and rhythm. The thesis unifies the concepts of event-space and rhythm, to assert the spatial concept of a *polyrhythmic landscape*, established through Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre's methodology of 'rhythmanalysis' (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 1). This method was introduced in *The Production of Space* (1991) and further explored in his last book *Rhythm analysis: Space Time and Everyday life* (2004). I argue how the city can be understood as a polyrhythmic landscape through performance. Additionally I question whether performance reveals latent rhythms of the city? In asking these questions I in turn consider how the city is a Metapolis.

I define the concept polyrhythmic landscape as simultaneous occurrences of contrasting multiple rhythmic and temporal events, movements, actions and moments of shock that produce and shape the urban environment. The city is defined not as the buildings and objects within it but as a space of action – an event-space. To perceive the urban environment as polyrhythmic is to understand it through a manifold of locales, times and events. The term polyrhythmic landscape employs *polyrhythm*, as this word refers to the simultaneous occurrence of two or more different rhythms as opposed to *multirhythms* or *multiple rhythms* purely referring to numerous or many.

The city is comprised of multiple types of actions or movements, which are understood as diverse rhythms, beats and events. This activity is continuous forming multiple beats in the Metapolis. Lefebvre believes that events that occur in the Metapolis are produced rhythmically through space and time as multiple rhythms,

> Rhythms in all their multiplicity interpenetrate one another. In the body and around it, as on the surface of a body of water, or within the mass of a liquid, rhythms are forever crossing and

recrossing, superimposing themselves upon each other, always bound to space. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 205).

Through close observation Lefebvre reveals the complexity of rhythms that fabricate the city. Movement is a component of rhythm but does it does not determine it. Lefebvre refers to the 'beat' as the 'measure' *[la mesure]* which can occur slowly or rapidly – "it is the measure that specifics the rhythm" (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 58) for example the uniform beat of official time structure.

At first glance the city may seem to lack rhythm, appearing to be chaotic, however, by watching the environment closely the "noises distinguish themselves, the flows separate out, rhythms respond to one another" (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 28). Through his extensive descriptions of the environment one can begin to observe and conceptualize the complexity of the rhythms in the city. He believed rhythms are all around and ever present, "everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm" (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 15). To perceive rhythm in a vivid way Lefebvre suggested watching the surface of the sea,

> Waves come in succession: they take shape in the vicinity of the beach, the cliff, the banks. These waves have a rhythm, the sea that carries them, that brings them… But look closely at each wave. It changes ceaselessly. As it approaches the shore, it takes a shock of the backwash: it carries numerous wavelets, right down to the tiny quivers that it orientates, but which do not always go in its direction. Waves and waveforms are characterized by frequency, amplitude and displaced energy. (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 79).

The rhythmic city is composed and characterized through a plethora of temporal events found in the recurring daily cycle structured by the beat of official time. Occupants move in and out of the city,

often oblivious to their urban environment, such pulsing actions of the city form 'cyclical', 'linear' and 'alternating' rhythms (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 39). Lefebvre believed that everything derives from two main types of rhythm the cyclical and the linear each of which are bound to time and space. "Time and space, the cyclical and the linear, exert a reciprocal action: they measure themselves against one another; each one makes itself and is made a measuring-measure; everything is cyclical repetition through linear repetitions" (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 8).

'Cyclical' rhythms refer to the cosmic, in nature: day, nights, to reoccurring social patterns consisting of large, simple intervals such as the regular movement of school children (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 30). These relate to alternating rhythms which contain brief intervals such as pedestrians or cars at traffic lights. City events are structured by a multiplicity of cyclical rhythms such as work routines such as the prominent nine till five regime, schedules and seasonal shifts. These rhythms are social organization manifesting itself.

'Linear' rhythms refer to human activity; they are the daily grind consisting of the journey from one place to another interfering with cyclical rhythms. Some of these linear rhythms are routine and predictable whereas some are more random or less patterned. Operating simultaneously is what cultural geographer Mike Crang regards as "public demons" (Crang, 2001, p. 191) working outside of the nine till five regime, through the night. Crang reminds one that the Metapolis is not all operating rhythmically at the same time but through a multiplicity of different times overlapping each other.

As with the environment Lefebvre explains how the body is polyrhythmic. Each micro movement or gesture made by arms, legs, hands, and fingers and every organ has its own rhythm. The organs that give evidence of rhythm are the lungs and the heart. Both can be modified through emotional and activity, responding to the environment. However Lefebvre's

rhythmanalysis does not address the body's capacity to adjust physiologically its internal environment – termed homeostasis (Jänig, 2006, p. 2). The liver, the kidney and the brain establish stability in response to fluctuations in the surroundings such as the weather. In addition the body endures shocks to its rhythmic patterns caused by external and internal forces, which can be physical or psychological, such as a heart attack or death of a loved one. Lefebvre maintains that the body is important in understanding the polyrhythmic metropolis – it provides a constant point of reference. Combined to ensure bodily functions there are various biological events that occur, such as menstruation and ageing that are less predictable and some less patterned.

Lefebvre believed rhythms embody a repetition of movements, gestures and actions with interferences of everyday cycles, each framed by a "birth, growth and peak, then decline and end" (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 15). Rhythms therefore contain a narrative albeit a multifarious one. Utilizing music as a metaphor, a piece of music is different from the sum of its parts - in the same manner all the various parts of rhythm that characterise the city, for example people going to and from work, each have their own narrative.

Lefebvre maintains that the city is not of a singular tempo or a quickening, but an assemblage of beats. Consider the city as an orchestral performance; it is more than simple beats and notes, it is the way these are assembled together as a collaboration of various instruments, a considered arrangement of rhythms to form a polyrhythmic landscape.

To explore the city as a polyrhythmic landscape I required a medium that would contest in scale and rhythm and operate through space and time. It was necessary for the medium to be fluid and temporal, as sensational and monumental and as ephemeral as the city. Sensing rhythm comes from acute observation. Lefebvre believed that no camera or series of images can show spatial rhythms.

"It requires equally attentive eyes and ears, a head and a memory and a heart" (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 36). In addition to observe the various rhythms occurring in the city Lefebvre asserts that one must be detached or separated from the event. Lefebvre achieved this by simply watching the activity out of a window, above the city. This thesis explores other ways in which to observe and interact with spatial rhythms through performance as embodied design research.

Design is utilized as a diverse tool to probe the city. I follow Elizabeth Grosz's, philosophy of "to think while making or rather while doing: to think as doing" (Grosz, 2001, p. 58). I believe this approach produces a productive design process that occurs throughout the research. This project strives to couple the often-unpredictable nature of performance design with a diverse critical response to generate provocative conclusions about social spatial practices.

In the project I develop a series of spatiotemporal performance interventions utilizing Wellington city as the core case study. I move through a series of performative approaches to understand and explore the city as rhythmic: action, performativity, and theatre. These three main chapters represent the incremental progression of the design, each picking up and elaborating upon the previous, developing and transforming it. The structure is important to see how the research was developed through design and how the design has reshaped the theory.

I begin with micro acts in the city – ACTIONS that develop to incorporate garments. I then construct and explore an epic red dress that through action proves it PERFORMATIVITY to be monstrous. The spectacularly garmented body acts as a medium; a prop to explore the polyrhythmic qualities of the metropolis. My theatrical body becomes a framing device that engages with the city in a compound of configurations that produce multiple outcomes (see figure 5 & 6). Finally the monstrous dress is explored through THEATRICALITY in a professional site-specific performance in Perth *Tongues of Stone*, a tidal performance on Wellington's waterfront *Becoming* and at Te Papa National Museum negotiating the *Big Weather* of Wellington.

The performance interventions have been passionate, delightful, beautiful, growing, confused, red, painful, huge, monumental, monstrous, feminine, bloody, scary, uncomfortable, awkward, trampling, searching, new, reanimated, mismatched, uncertain, undead, soft, hybrid, and hopeful. In this research design process, the performing body and garment are utilized as active, dynamic and responsive to understand Wellington city as Metapolis through the polyrhythmic landscape.

figure 05. The Monstrous Red Dress: Cuba Mall

chapter 1

ACTIONS
noticing
rhythms

SHOPPING

POST NO BILLS   POST NO BILLS

This chapter explores the city as an event-space through my body in a series of sites. After examining precedent works by artists and designers I critique two micro acts *City Dining* and *City Sleeping* that aimed to operate in opposition to established rhythms (see figure 7). This is followed by an action titled *Body Gnomon* where I stood motionless revealing the surrounding rhythms. I conclude by examining a film study over five days of Wellington's waterfront observing natural and social rhythms.

In this chapter I employ ACTION to act upon the Metapolis causing a shift or disturbance in the daily grind of rhythms. The practice of ACTION through performance engages with the Metapolis as event-space. In the *Introduction to Performance Design* Dorita Hannah and Olav Harslof believe that "places and things precede action – as action" (Hannah & Harslof, 2008, p. 19). They believe this hypothesis is critical to performance design as an event-based happening. Actions harness the dynamic forces intrinsic to spaces and objects, insisting on the participation of the audience as 'players', engaging with the Metapolis as the multicity. Furthermore, "design artefacts are inextricably bound to performance through notions of embodiment, action and event" (Hannah & Harslof, 2008, p. 11). Every place, space, object and body is an active and performing entity. By considering artefacts as "*performative* (active) rather than *constative* (descriptive)" (Hannah & Harslof, 2008, p. 12) they can be perceived as fluid and eventful rather than static. This allows one to consider how bodies, spaces and urban artefacts operate in order to question established movement conventions and sociocultual codes.

figure 08. Everything #10 (2007): Adrian Piper

the practise of action

Embodied research has a legacy of avant-garde urban artists that utilize action as performance to act on the environment revealing aspects of the everyday. I employ this method as a spatial designer to reveal the temporal city as eventual. Belgium artist Francis Alys gathered 500 volunteers to move a sixteen-hundred-foot-long sand dune in Ventanilla about four inches from its original position in a work titled *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002) (see figure 9 & 10). The action "attempts to translate social tensions into narratives that in turn intervene in the imagined landscape of a place" (Alys, 2005, p. 1) intended to confront the anxieties of Ventanilla to restore faith and hope for the people. It was not how far they moved the mountain, but the fact it was achieved. Philosopher and artist, Adrian Piper has been exhibiting multimedia since the late 1960's addressing issues of race and gender. In her project titled *Everything #10* (2007) she instructed hundreds of New York people to write the phrase in henna *Everything Will be Taken Away* backwards on their foreheads (see figure 8). People were instructed to wear the statement until its fades for up to a year. Piper states, "The artwork forces you to pose the question wherever you go" (as cited by Lowenstein, 2007, p. 106). Both artists utilize the experience of a mass of people to put forward their concept. They employ both space and time producing a memorable event. In this project I utilize my own body to form events. Actions are powerful moments that shock people from their current social conditioning. They have the potential to reshape cultural beliefs and create change.

figure 09 & 10. When Faith Moves Mountains (2002): Francis Alÿs

figure 11. City Dining

As an initial investigation I conducted two micro acts in Wellington *City Dining* and *City Sleeping*. I consider these actions as a kind of sketch in the city shaping my understanding of rhythmanalysis, action and event-space. I was interested in how my performing body responded to the environment through my experience of the action. The actions attempt to disrupt or interrupt the rhythms of the Metapolis. I utilize performance by exploring the city – my own body actively engaging with place and time – to engage with spatial research as a presentational rather than representational mode of inquiry.

city dining

City Dining that took place in Wellington's civic centre renegotiates the rhythmic flow of people through the city (see figure 11). The action took into account the events that usually happen in the space, through a new and unexpected mode of inhabitation. The spatiotemporal intervention took place on Sunday 22 of February at 5pm. It involved two people dinning on a table covered in an unusually long red tablecloth. Although Wellington has numerous places to pause, rest, or ponder, *City Dining* creates a pause in a space designed for circulation. Placed in the centre of the square the intervention calls attention to its action as a staging. The familiar action of eating in a public space was rendered unfamiliar by virtue the central placement of the table and the long flapping red tablecloth forming a disruptive beat. By rendering the familiar unfamiliar,

the action attempts to both reveal and disrupt everyday rhythms.

After conducting this test I began to notice how my action of dining differed from the activity that already occurred in the space. Unlike *City Dining*, a table and chairs in the middle of the space on Sunday at 5pm, people tend to dine at the civic centre mostly around twelve and one, on weekdays, with a packed lunch and only on the seats surrounding the open space. This routine, not necessarily by the same people, forms a clear 'cyclical' rhythm in the space. Brief 'alternating' rhythms are formed by virtue of people walking through the space. The people working in the main business district approximately ten minutes away generally occupy the space. Along with the rhythmic behaviour

of inhabitants, the cyclical rhythms of plants occupied the space slowing changing as the seasons pass. The hours of City Gallery and the public library placed on the boundaries of the Civic Centre form structured cyclical rhythms, which cause increases in linear rhythmic activity by virtue of the increase of people. By noticing the manifold rhythms that occur in the space, one can inspect the multiple events that are shaped by these rhythms forming the city as event-space.

The test proved that a simple action could begin to unpack the urban environment as rhythmic. Through the unexpected action *City Dining* slightly modifies the surroundings shifting the familiar into the unfamiliar actions and disrupting regular movement systems in the everyday.

figure 12: City Sleeping

figure 13: City Sleeping

city sleeping

Although *City Dining* involved a slight alteration to a familiar environment and routine, though the placement of the action and the extended tablecloth, it was still quite static in that people could look and notice, or not, but weren't invited or required to make a response. The next action was designed to intervene more directly with quotidian urban action. Developing from *City Dining* I lay down on the footpath performing *City Sleeping* in the business district of Wellington, Lambton Quay at 4pm for five minutes (see figure 12 & 13). I immediately disrupted the rhythm of the Metapolis obstructing a footpath made for the constant flow of people. Many people approached the seemingly collapsed body concerned that I had fallen. To avoid the confusion of a collapsed instead of sleeping body, a pillow could have communicated the action as sleeping. It is interesting to consider whether the introduction of a pillow would have caused a more subtle disruption in the space with people continuing to walk by.

By rendering the familiar unfamiliar *City Dining* and *City Sleeping* enabled an exploratory critique of the rhythms in two Wellington spaces. However, the action and the documentation did not fully reveal or expose diurnal rhythms partly due to the brevity of the actions and that the event was only captured briefly through still photography. The tests revealed the action had to be disruptive – but not enough to completely stop the flow of people as with *City Sleeping* and to occur in a series of contrasting places and times allowing for an in-depth critique of spatial rhythms. This led me to consider the tool that reveals the passing of time – a *gnomon*, the part of the sundial that casts the shadow. How could one act as a gnomon to highlight the rhythms and temporalities around me? Could I extend the tests, to involve more time and activity?

body gnomon

As part of Lefebvre's method of rhythmanalysis he suggests procedures of the 'rhythmanalyst' (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 23). He maintains the 'rhythmanalyst' must reference the body as a position for study insomuch as one knows a rhythm in relation to other rhythms – the pace of the beating heart versus the pace of the traffic intersections (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 10). Following Lefebvre, I disengaged myself as a *Body Gnomon* from the surrounding environment to examine the rhythms around me (see figure 14). In this repeated action I stand motionless for ten minutes in an unusual yellow dress as a gnomon in numerous locations. I decided to begin with Lefebvre's method of observing fleeting spatial rhythms through a window or balcony. In this investigation the film became my window of enquiry.

Artist Helen Scalway expresses the challenge of standing still in a crowded space where one becomes an "obstacle in a path designed for circulation" (Scalway, 2006, p. 165). She believes the difficulty lies in the affect of 'embarrassment' that crosses the boundaries of gender. "Embarrassment is interesting: to stand still in the street is, among other things, to risk looking mad" (Scalway, 2006, p. 165). Not only was performing *Body Gnomon* certainly embarrassing with public approaching to prod, kiss and question ones sanity, in addition the stationary body caused tension with some people who were desperate to make me move.

The spatiotemporal intervention *Body Gnomon*, investigates the polyrhythmic qualities of five locales in Wellington. Firstly I compare the rhythms four spaces remaining motionless for ten minutes. Standing at ten-minute intervals over an entire day I then compare different time intervals to expose the rhythmic qualities of Lambton Quay – the business district of Wellington. While its homeostatic rhythms are still occurring, the outwardly still body emphasizes the complex movements within the space.

BODY GNOMON – EXPLORATION 1: FOUR SPACES

The first *Body Gnomon* exploration compares Cuba Street, Lyall Bay, the Railway Station and Waterloo Quay. I utilize video to capture the ongoing event details by recording each ten-minute performance. This provided me with a basis for exploring what the polyrhythm might be, within each test. In a film-editing program each recording was placed on top of one another to play the four recordings simultaneously (see film *BodyGnomon-FourSpaces.mov*). This enabled me to compare and contrast the rhythmic qualities of the four spaces. In addition to the video recording of the separate and combined events, I tried to capture some of the experience of being the performer (the woman standing alone) in written form. I found it useful to write in third person as a report considering the effect of the performance on the body and the surrounding space. The following are examples of the written account.

figure 14: Body Gnomon: Cuba Mall

CUBA MALL

LYALL BAY

CAMERA VIEW

CAMERA VIEW

section 1

section 2

Cuba Mall

The time passes quickly. Music and laughter fill the energetic space keeping the motionless woman from boredom. She listens to the layers of noise, from public remarks in her immediate space to the shouts of people far away. Her heart races as people come closer. There is a remarkable energy in the space that causes the woman to feel stimulated.

Lyall Bay

Standing on a slope she listens to the quiet ocean waves behind her. Nothing is happening around her. She has nothing to look at and nothing to think about. The waves become a soothing rhythm causing her heart to slow down. She feels relaxed gazing at the softly shifting strands of grass.

figure 15. Body Gnomon: Four Spaces, Sketch
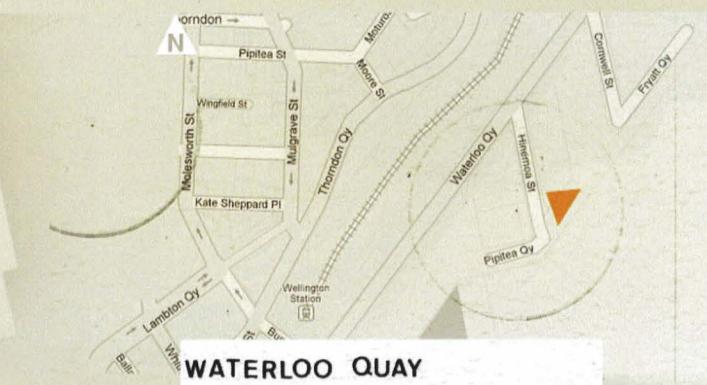
RAILWAY STATION

WATERLOO QUAY
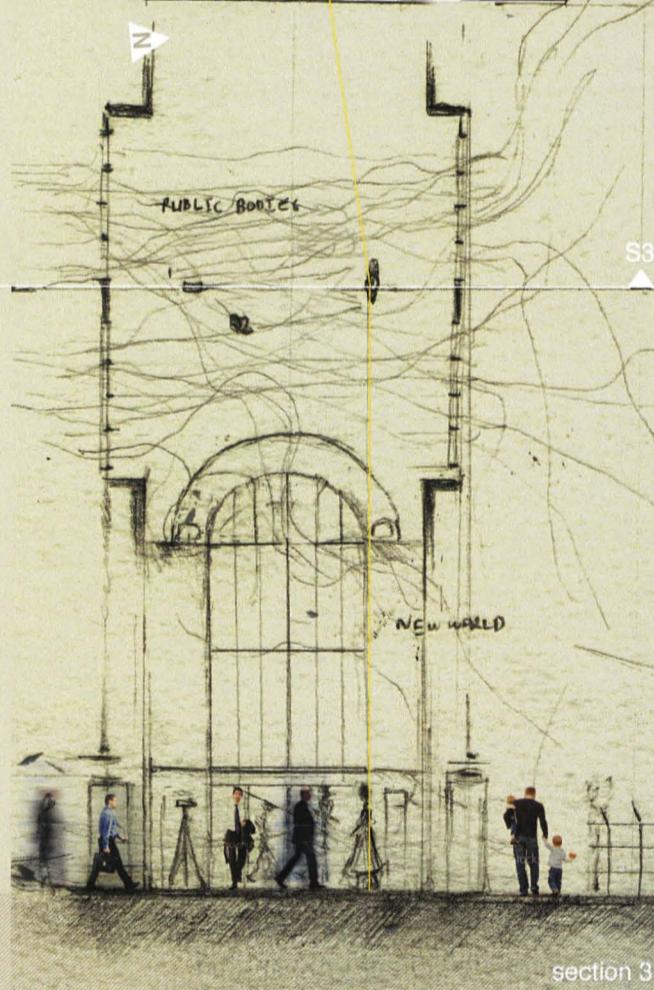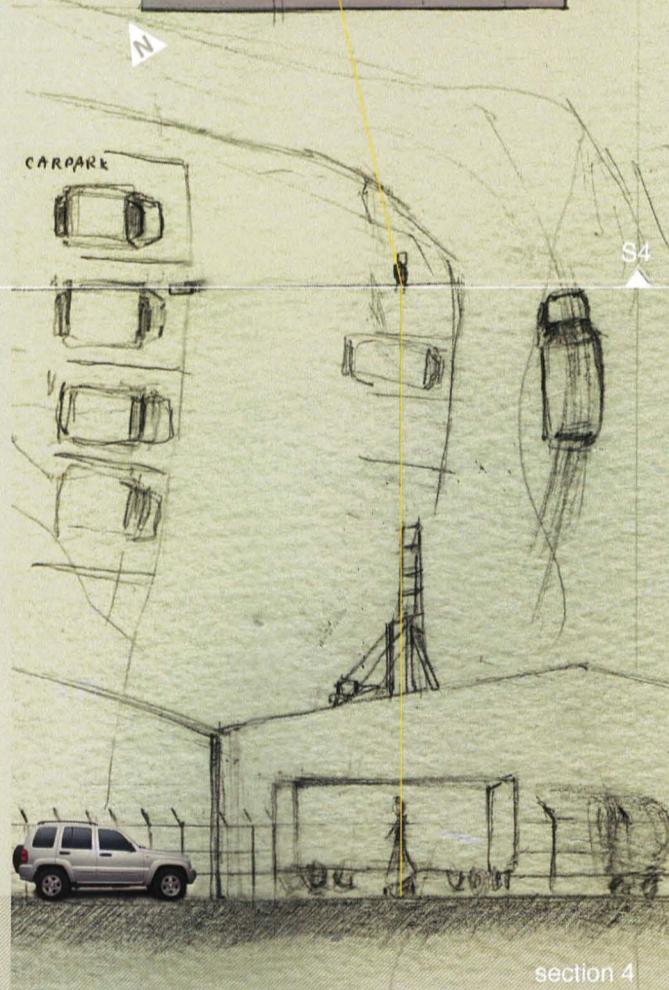
Wellington central railway station

In a sea of rushing people she remains motionless. They dash around her moving at an unstoppable pace, running to catch the next train. She feels more peculiar than usual, as barely anyone seems notices to her. Due to the amount of movement and action time passes by rapidly.

Waterloo Quay

The blazing sun in her eyes causes the stillness to become difficult. She feels time has slowed down – the ten minutes seems much longer. There is nothing happening for her to look at or listen to - no one arrives or sees her. She becomes irritated easily, desperate for the ten minutes to be achieved.

The four spaces contain different rhythmic conditions of and temporalities. The more event, movement and action in the space the quicker the time passed by. The rhythms of the body, my heart and breathing, slowed down or quickened responding to the rhythms in the surrounding space. Each space contained numerous complex rhythms all structured by the cyclical rhythm of the sun and the working day. Cuba Mall is constructed of constant brief linear rhythms produced through cultural activity. People move through the space mainly fulfilling their consumerist needs sometimes pausing to perform the daily activity of eating. Some wander aimlessly simply observing the spectacle of the city. At Waterloo Quay boats arrive with produce to be dispatched with trucks leaving into the city to disperse, forming infrequent linear rhythms. Cranes move intermittently shifting shipping crates as they arrive.

Conversely the constant pulsing waves at Lyall Bay created a calming rhythm. The space removed from the city is structured by the cyclical natural rhythm of the tide. This occurs simultaneously with linear rhythms of people and dogs enjoying the seaside. In contrast to this slow rhythmic space are the fast rhythms of the commuters at the main Railway Station. Multiple erratic linear rhythms of people walking at varying pace, wandering and sometimes running to catch the train. This action is inherent to their daily cyclic rhythm of working in the city and commuting from the outer suburbs. Each of these bodies has their own rhythm forming a multiple rhythmic landscape within the station. *Body Gnomon* reveals and frames the diverse rhythmic activity of four sites occurring concurrently in the polyrhythmic landscape of the Metapolis.

figure 16. *Body Gnomon: Lambton Quay 8.30am*

A woman stands on a busy street corner in a yellow garment, stationary, not responding to the environment around her throughout an entire day. Gazing at nothing in particular, she is acting as a gnomon. She is positioned near traffic lights within the flow of the pulsing public bodies in the cityscape as they perform their daily rhythms tracking space coming and going. Her seemingly static body is an anchor in the complex cityscape, activating the space by doing nothing.

figure 17. Body Gnomon: Lambton Quay 10.30am

BODY GNOMON – EXPLORATION 2: ONE SPACE, MULTIPLE TIMES

After examining four different locations I then moved to a more in-depth analysis of a single space. Lambton Quay, in the central business district became as the site for this test event where I stood motionless for ten minutes every two hours over a twelve hour time period (see film *BodyGnomon-OneSpaceMultipleTimes.mov*). This performance cycle was determined by rhythmic nine till five routine of the city and its inhabitants.

As a performative figure my body is strategically placed on a street corner. Traffic lights structure the spatial tempo of motorists, pedestrians, cyclists and those taking public transport, pausing and releasing the public into the city. Lefebvre provocatively describes this rhythmic activity caused by the traffic lights in his analysis of Paris,

> After the red light, all of sudden it's the bellowing charge of wild cats, big or small, monstrous lorries turning towards Bastille... The noise grows, grows in intensity and strength, and at

its peak becomes unbearable, though quite well borne by the stench of fumes. Then stop. Let's do it again, with more pedestrians. Two-minute intervals. Amidst the fury of cars, the pedestrians cluster together, a clot here, a lump over there; grey dominates, with multicoloured flecks, and these heaps break apart for the race ahead. (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 29).

A multitude of social cyclical rhythms; bus timetables, retail hours, lunchtime for business workers and natural cyclical rhythms; day, weather structure and characterise Lambton Quay, causing increases and decreases of people in the space. During the ten-minute period from 12.30 – 12.40 there was an increase in pedestrians due to the lunchtime rhythm. As all the shops had closed by 7.30 at night there were only few pedestrians off to the nearest club or restaurant.

The theatrical yellow dress shapes both a cultural barrier and a rhythmic barrier between the body and the moving world. Culturally, due to its exaggerated and dramatic qualities, the dress provides a dialogue with the public, suggesting some form of art practice.
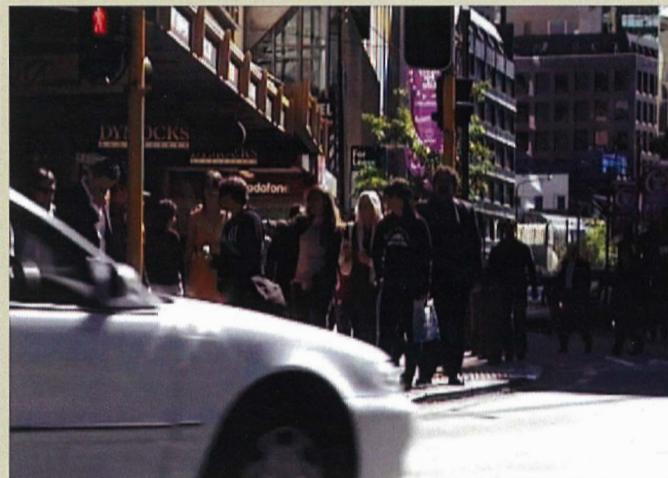
figure 18. Body Gnomon: Lambton Quay 12.30pm

figure 19. Body Gnomon: Lambton Quay 2.30pm

Rhythmically, it moves in response to the motions of the physical and social environment of bodies, traffic, cyclists, wind and light.

In the action *Body Gnomon* the public slip between roles audience and performers. This slippage causes them to be both active and passive players in the performance. In a paper titled *The Force of the moment* (2009) Chris Braddock discusses Alicia Frankovich's *Flying Fox* (2008), in which the artist invited friends and interested publics to an event where she placed her leg out a first floor office window on Ponsonby Road in Auckland for an hour. Braddock maintains that as Frankovich's action is "so slim and formless and yet so open to interpretation" (Braddock, 2007, p. 1) it relies on her audience to add value to her action, thereby creating an active audience. She regards her performance as 'lame' maintaining that the audience yearned for the body to move and complete the program (Braddock, 2007, p. 3). In this project Frankovich deals with an invited knowing public, whereas *Body Gnomon* deals with an unpredictable and often impatient public who, constituted as the city itself, are part of the event. My detached performance as *Body Gnomon* gave the unpredictable public an invitation to examine, prod and interrogate my body. Artists have tested the reaction to passive performance almost to its limits. Performance artist Marina Abramovic performs a daring act in *Rhythm 0* (1974). The public was given the instruction: "there are seventy-two objects on the table that one can use on me as desired. I'm taking the whole responsibility for six hours. There are objects of pain, objects of pleasure" (Abramovic, 2002, p. 30). Abramovic was violated; they cut her throat, drank her blood, and held a gun to her head, creating a very intense and aggressive performance. The artist's body became a site for violence and scrutiny, a ground for testing new relationships to objects, others and the environment.

The stationary figure of the *Body Gnomon* frames the sites through the unfamiliar presence in movement and clothing. People may routinely stand still – waiting for traffic lights and pausing for thought – but the lack of purpose and motive of the figure accentuates the repetitive actions of the public and vehicles that briefly occupy the space.
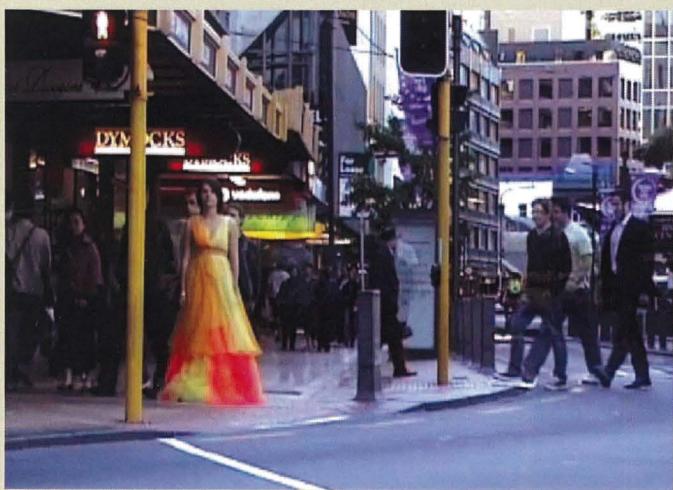
figure 20. *Body Gnomon: Lambton Quay 4.30pm*

figure 21. *Body Gnomon: Lambton Quay 7.30pm*

queens wharf
centre

sight line

wellington city

wellington harbour

*frank kitts
park*

● **camera location**

lagoon

civic centre

sight line

*museum of new zealand
te papa tongarewa*

figure 22. Wellington City: Site Map

wellington city:
five-day study of wellington harbour

Day 1   Day 2   Day 3   Day 4   Day 5

figure. 23. Film stills taken from study of Wellington Waterfront. Each distinct frame represents a different day.
Film captured for one hour at 4.30 over 5 days.

Moving on from the condensed space of *Body Gnomon*, I now turn to an expansive space to consider the city as active. For five days in June on Wellington's waterfront, a transitional and recreational space, I filmed the harbour for one hour at 4.30pm (see film *WellingtonWaterfront.mov*). This time of day was selected to capture the natural diurnal rhythm through the radical change in light and to capture the social rhythm of people returning home from work. Each piece of one-hour footage was stitched together present one space with multiple rhythms and temporalities across times. By placing one frame against another I was able to observe rhythms across times, thereby critiquing the city as a polyrhythmic landscape. Once again, video acts as a recording device and therefore a critical observation point to view the numerous rhythms that occur.

The filmic window framed Wellington City to reveal an intimate and intense relationship between landscape, cityscape and seascape. Directly off the harbour, northerly and southerly winds blustered through, sometimes restricting the city dwellers from standing upright. Wind highlighted the movement of air, light and clouds over the hilly landscapes. The natural

rhythm of tides very slowly moved in and out of the harbour. The water in the harbour softly shifted and moved as the wind blustered over it and the boats passed through it. The Bluebridge Ferry formed a cyclical rhythm arriving at the same time each day. At precisely 5.00pm the lights slowly turned on forming a cyclical rhythm of their own.

Narrow streets weave through the surrounding mountains, covered in a sea of quaint wooden houses. People move quickly through the transitional space between city and sea. They appear in clusters following a similar path of those who preceded them. Some pause for thought gazing over the harbour. They form a constant flow of linear rhythms moving from place to place. Cyclists and runners race through the space, their internal rhythms pacing faster than the wanders.

After watching the rhythms of the waterfront over five days I noted that each day was not the same nor was it predictable. The filmic study highlighted subtle shifts and changes between the days. The cyclical rhythm of daylight shifted a few minutes each day. On the first day the light disappeared at 5.35, shifting to 5.30 and so on. This was masked by the presence of dark clouds on

figure 24. Film stills taken from study of Wellington Waterfront

the third day. Each day the colour, intensity, brightness and temperature of the light changed, rendering the landscape a different colour. On one of the days it rained causing fewer people to walk home along the harbour. The rain transformed the concrete landscape in to a dark shiny surface. A book titled *Big Weather: Poems of Wellington* (2000), edited by Gregory O'Brien and Louise White, reveal how Wellington's weather as the ability to "quicken the steps and perk up the senses of the city's inhabitants" (O'Brien & White, 2000, p. 2) – providing a source for creative inspiration. Wellington often has extremely changeable weather with winds blowing up to one hundred kilometres per hour. This *Big Weather* is evident in the filmic study of the waterfront.

With this a five-day filmic study of Wellington, using the harbour as a focus and keeping the location and time of day constant, I was interested in what was directly observable, and how this might connect with broader notions of the Metapolis, such as an 'event-space'. The study revealed the similar, repeating patterns of people, their routines, and the environment also highlighting the subtle shifts in movement patters and the physical environment.

In addition, much broader, historical geographical forces in part shape Wellington itself. Its unique geophysical environment contains intricate explicit and implicit rhythms. The presence of major geological fault line sources heavy movements that places stress on the Metapolis as it constantly morphs and shifts. Indeed the architecture reflects that dimension, with tall buildings designed to move in the event of an earthquake.

The filmic study revealed Wellington's Waterfront as *active*, an event-space of multiple rhythms and temporalities. This location becomes the main case study for this project. As a disruptive the action *Body Gnomon* exposed a potential to employ dress and body as a multilayered device to measure and reveal the rhythms in the city and yet the static figure is not entirely obstructing or arresting the rhythms of the city allowing them to continue to flow around her. Exploring the city as event-space the next chapter extends *Body Gnomon* to form performances that are active and in turn put the city into action engaging with performative studies.

chapter 2

PERFORMATIVITY
mining
rhythms

figure 25. The Monstrous Red Dress: Wellington Waterfront

the monstrous red dress

On Tuesday 21st April 2009, a woman dragged a seductive 10-metre long dress through Wellington city. Extending from her body, this heavy garment spilled a blood red landscape into the city, forming a polyrhythmic space in flux; at one end a seemingly small female body is bound to cultural readings of femininity in space; at the other the body is overwhelmed by the large mass of fabric that deploys itself into the city forming new rhythmic spatial conditions and disrupting the cityscape. Ignited by the wind the long train, sometimes inhabited by the public, lights up the grey landscape.

This chapter explores the performative nature of a ten-metre long red satin dress as a medium to disrupt, form and inhabit spatial rhythms. I investigate my body in the monumental garment in a range of modalities focusing Wellington waterfront: against trees in the town belt, atop a high wall, creating shelter for the public and wrapped around my body, producing varying outcomes and conclusions. The garment acts as an extraordinary extension of my body, forming a fusion with the landscape.

German installation artist Rebecca Horn explores the "equilibrium between body and space" (Horn, 2008, para. 2) through her sculptural "body-extensions" (Horn, 2008, para. 2). Her sculptures form new relationships and interactions between body and environment. Projects such as, *Einhorn (Unicorn)* (1970) that protrudes a large horn from the headpiece (see figure 28) and *Pencil Mask* (1972), with straps attached to pencils to mark a wall (see figure 27), render the body as "not only surrounded by things or faced

with their phenomena, but is immersed in them. It is the body that has put itself inside objects" (Morales, 2004, p. 89). Horns body modification projects are performative as they are both active and activate the space they inhabit. Performative explorations are not only active but also activate space. They propel the city into a space of movement and action, an event-space for movement-architecture.

The task to mobilise a garment of spectacular proportion was altogether challenging. It is literally a dress connected to a heavy long train. The garment was constructed over three weeks in collaboration with fashion designer Hannah Rose Mitchell. Bearing the main weight of the train the waistband required additional strengthening. To fasten the dress to the hips eight traditional Elizabethan hooks and eyes were utilised instead of a zip. Every intervention in the city required a team of people to assist me in dressing and on-site whilst walking.

figure 26. *Handschuhfinger (Finger Gloves), (1972):*
Rebecca Horn

figure 27. *Pencil Mask, (1972):*
Rebecca Horn
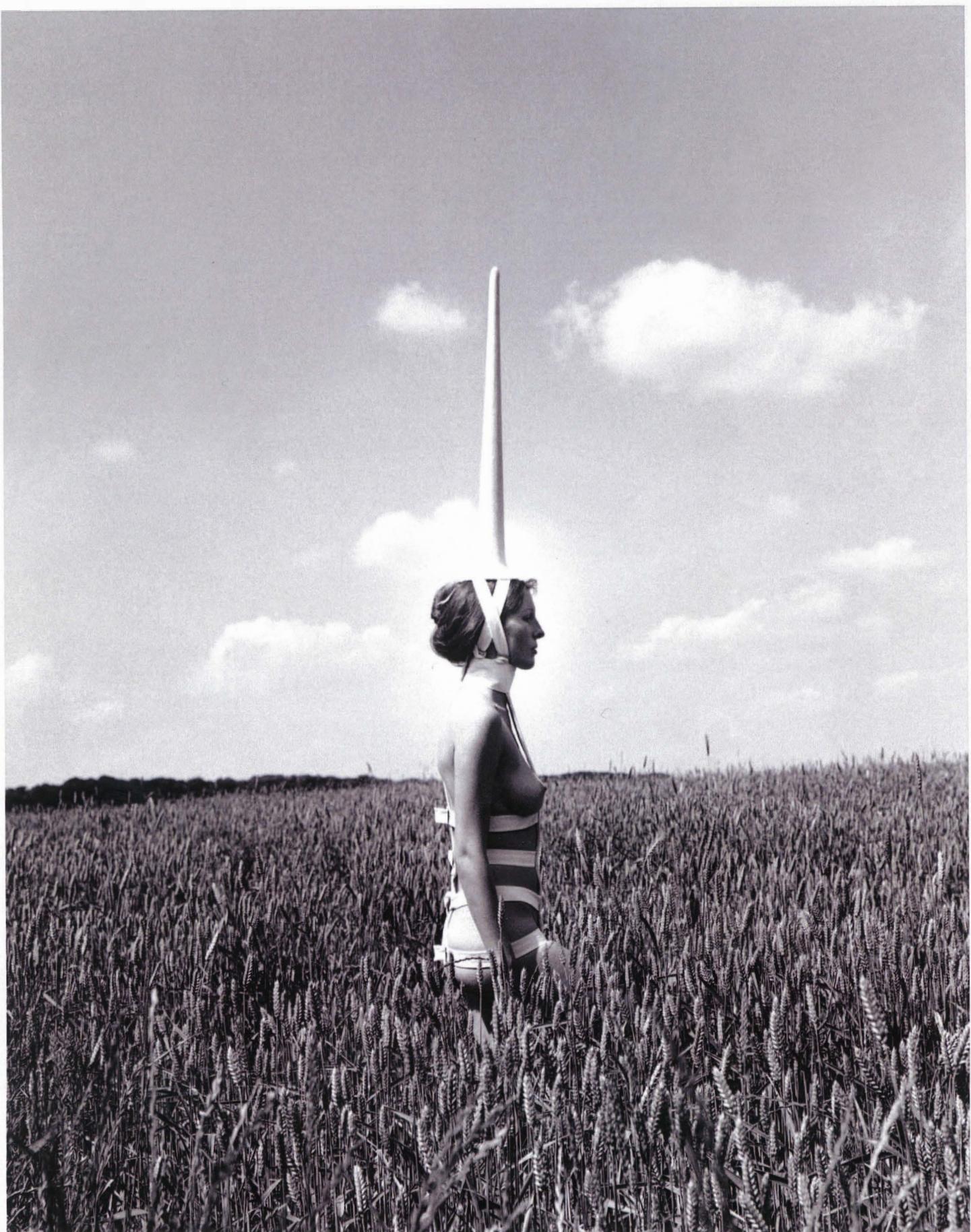
figure 28. *Einhorn (Unicorn), (1972):*
Rebecca Horn

the red dress

In this project the red garment becomes a tool to reveal and frame spatial rhythms and a metaphoric object redolent with meaning. The red dress is a sultry superficial symbol in popular Western media. For the feminists it symbolises self-empowerment, bravery and defiance (Belcham, 2004, para. 1). Red, a powerful and provocative colour is strongly associated with sexuality, especially female sexuality. It symbolises love and hate, passion, catastrophe and danger carrying connotations of violence.

The red dress is often worn in defiance, symbolizing the powerful woman. In William Wyler's film *Jezebel* (1938), the character played by Bette Davis shocked all by wearing a scarlet dress to a debutante ball when all the other girls wore virginal white (Steele, 2001, p.5). In the film *The Matrix* (1999) directed by Andy Wachowski a beautiful woman in a red dress appears in the midst of an ordinary urban crowd. Suddenly, however, she is revealed as a dangerous enemy agent – a vision that captures what is perhaps the essence of the red dress – the potent combination of seduction and danger, referencing the archetypal figure of the femme fatale. As Anaïs Nin describes in *A Spy in the House of Love* (1994),

> Dressed in red and silver, she evoked the sounds and imagery of the fire engines as the tore through the streets of New York, alarming the heart with the violent gong of catastrophe; … the tearing red and silver cutting a pathway through the flesh. The first time he looked at her he felt: everything will burn! (Nin, 1994, p. 7).

Japanese Artist Norico Sunayama explores the power of a woman in a red dress to seduce her audience in *A Sultry World* (1996 - 2009) internationally exhibited in France, Spain, Korea, Toronto and Japan (see figure 29 & 30). A woman sitting atop a three-metre high chair in a huge scarlet velvet dress that covers the gallery floor confronts the public. They are invited to crawl under the dress to inhabit the strange sensory space beneath the chair.

figure 29. A Sultry World, Toronto (2009): Norico Sunayama

figure 30. A Sultry World, Toronto (2009): Norico Sunayama

When entering the intimate space the audience experiences a strange shock discovering the awful smell of a skunk. The smell alludes to the potency of the vagina drawing on the power of the red dress to embody both seduction and horror. Chicago based performance artist Julie Laffin extends her garment explorations to the complex space of the city.

For almost twenty years Laffin has explored dresses of grand proportions. Her work not only includes the wearing of the dress but also the conception, design and construction. Laffin believes,

> Clothing not only engages the body in a direct way but is also encoded with existing meaning, often invoking class and gender politics. I couldn't agree more with feminist theorists who have pointed out that women's bodies are frequently the site(s) where ideologies get played out or "performed" in our culture. (Laffin, 2009, p. 1).

She operates on the boundary between "inverting stereotypical female iconography and reproducing it" (Laffin, 2009, p. 1) exposing meanings that are moderated by the female body. She transforms mundane sites into highly charged spaces. The artist often creates a spectacle to engage the audience; the spectacle of a woman adorned with a gown of enormous proportions, contiguous with urban architecture.

Similar to this project Laffin explores the relationship between body, garment and environment. She places her body in the garment in extraordinary positions scaling down the side of a building in *The Red Gown 2* (1996) (see figure 31). However the dress is often rendered as an inactive object lying flat on the ground. In this project through a process of interventions I not only examine the dress over multiple diverse forms but also in motion, as a fluid and shifting object. Unlike this project Laffin often draws attention to the overt femininity of herself in the garment, evident in her performance titled *Kiss Piece* (1996) (see figure 34).

figure 31. The Red Gown 2 (1996): Julie Laffin

figure 32. Site Unseen (2009): Julie Laffin

figure 33. The Red Gown Perpendicular (1996): Julie Laffin

figure 34. Kiss Piece (1996): Julie Laffin

wall

Draped over a high concrete wall the red dress reveals its monumental scale. Passers-by pause to view and inquire – the rhythm of the city is arrested. Undetectable to the public, the woman is in a state of tension, straining to grasp the weight of the dress from pulling her off her precarious stage. Her bare back in pain strains to maintain the burden as she balances battered by a cold sea breeze. Disrupting the monolithic grey wall, the striking fabric forms a temporal red skin.

figure 35_The Monstrous Red Dress: Wellington Harbour, Wall

monumental temporalities

With my body perched atop a high wall of a city park on Wellington's waterfront, the red gown forms a fabulous and uncanny scene in the cityscape (see figure 35). Folds in the fabric extend from my body looping back up and over the concrete wall. The seams of the three fabric panels form diagonal lines disappearing in the mass of the dress. The end of the circular train carelessly piles on to the dirty city floor. A small interior space - formed between wall and garment - is occasionally inhabited by curious city dwellers.

Over the wall the red dress is rendered both monumental and temporal. The garment is monumental in its sheer magnitude, weight and mass. As an epic object the gowned figure overwhelms the concrete structure with a scale that owns and controls the site, claiming the space. The garment's multiple temporalities occur dynamically as it shifts and moves, responding to the wind and light, the bystander who engages with it and my own body that precariously shakes nervously in the cold air and flimsy dress.

A stratum of elaborate rhythms orchestrate the tremendous gown and its surroundings - body within dress, dress spilling over wall, wall within architectural and social cityscape, and cityscape upon shifting landscape - each producing diverse gestures that construct the urban scene. The garment gradually gathers dust and dirt. These slow rhythms reflect the somewhat invisible morphing of architecture eroding over time. Hannah regards "architecture as slow performance" (Hannah, 2005, p. 186), a "dynamic organism that is both acted upon and acts on us through shifts in time and space" (Hannah, 2005, p. 186). This perception transforms the city from a stable entity to a Metapolis of multiple active spaces produced by rhythms and temporalities – what I deem as a polyrhythmic landscape.

The visible temporalities and mammoth monumentality of the red dress form a remarkable dialogue of stable and unstable spatial conditions also manifested in the

fabric installations of artists Christo and Jean-Claude. Draping masses of bright cloth over large structures and between landforms, they create seductive sculptures that consume the landscape. Christo expresses the highly temporal and transformative qualities of his art,

> The work is not about wrapping as much as it is about the use of the fabric, in the city or in a landscape, to bring about transformation [...] What intrigues me is the way nomadic tribes, like those in Tibet, can create, overnight, a giant city of tents - and then it vanishes. I attempt to relay in my work that same idea of transience and passing. (Christo as cited by Constantine, M., & Reuter, L, 1997, p. 137).

the monumental feminine

Extending the interpretation of the seemingly fragile body in a garment rendered both monumental and temporal, I now turn to the body in the dress as a *monumental feminine* (see figure 35). Consuming the wall, the immense garment cloaks the solid form, disrupting what Elizabeth Wilson regards as the 'masculine' city with its "triumphal scale, its towers and vista and arid industrial regions" (Wilson, 1991, p. 7). In comparison Wilson posits a 'feminine' city that forms an "enclosing embrace, in its indeterminacy and labyrinthine uncentreness" (Wilson, 1991, p. 7). Wilson describes how women have been regarded as an 'irruption' in the city, "a symptom of disorder, and a problem: the Sphinx in the city" (Wilson, 1991, p. 9). Exploring the tension between emotion and reason, feeling and doing, Wilson characterizes the feminine and masculine interaction with cities. She departs from conventional feminist readings, claiming that the city is a source of danger to men and freedom for women. The presence of the woman in a red dress seduces the over-rationalized and dominant order of the masculine city, disrupting its quotidian routines.

figure 36. Valley Curtain (1970-1972): Christo & Jean Claude

figure 37. The Umbrellas, Japan - USA, (1984-91): Christo & Jean Claude

figure 38. The Monstrous Red Dress: Wellington Harbour, Wall

The city is not only traditionally associated with the masculine but was once and continues to be a place for the freedom of men. Following her book *The Sphinx in the City* (1991) Wilson wrote a paper titled *The Invisible Flâneur* (1992), arguing the presence of the *flâneur* in the city – the archetypal figure representing the liberty of men. Originating from mid-nineteenth century Paris, established by Charles Baudelaire and later expounded by Walter Benjamin the archetypal figure of the *flâneur* portrays a public person who takes leisure in observing the spectacle of the city. Characterized as a man of pleasure who takes visual possession of the Metapolis the *flâneur* has emerged as the embodiment of the 'male gaze'. According to Wilson "he represents men's visual and voyeuristic mastery over women … the *flâneur's* freedom to wander at will through the city is essentially a masculine freedom" (Wilson, 1992, p. 98). The main purpose of the male *flâneur* is to wander, watch and document the city. Scalway exposes how woman predominately enter the city with a purpose exposing the impossible role of the contemporary *flâneuse*.

> They are everywhere, going about their business; their badge of respectability; […] always carrying or pushing something. This pushchair, bag, case or letter may aid the necessary self-permission for the idle, pleasurable intention of going for a walk. To stop safely, I have to buy space or look as though I am a potential customer. (Scalway, 2006, p. 166).

By performing in the city in an extravagant dress I become an exotic contemporary *flâneuse* transforming notions of monumentality and authority by claiming the space I inhabited. During the process of exploring the dress a *monumental feminine* was revealed that embodies both overwhelming scale and soft seductive qualities. The monumental feminine took on the seemingly impossible role of the *flâneuse*, embracing Wilson's desire to expose the city as a foundation of freedom for woman.

However, according to Crang, the contemporary Metapolis is becoming a place of anxiety for woman. In *The Rhythms of the City* (2001) he expresses the arrhythmic or non-rhythmic city as he discusses the 'polychronic' city, a city of multiple times, operations and errands (Crang, 2001, p. 191). He relates this directly to 'women's time' referring to the 'time bind' where increasing demands of work, commuting, domestic tasks and social expectations stresses the public, especially females (Crang, 2001, p. 188). Following popular belief Crang believes this is a result of an increasing pace in metropolitan life conveyed as an "urban nightmare of simultaneity, or real time connections and interactions overwhelming the city and individuals" (Crang, 2001, p. 188). The Metapolis becomes shattered with fragmented times where we see less rhythms than disjointed tempos – as principally women, multitask work rhythms, biological rhythms, school rhythms and domestic expectations (Crang, 2001, p. 192).

Crang believes the "tendency of these narratives of acceleration is, then, to replicate the association of feminised, cyclical time with immanence, place and the everyday while constructing the heroic, Western masculine narrative of time's transcendence over place" (Crang, p. 189). Wilson maintains that in spite of the bureaucratic conformity of rituals of transportation, clock watching and timetables the people are offered the opposite – pleasure, deviation and disruption (Wilson, 1991, p. 7). She believes "urban life is actually based on this perpetual struggle between rigid routinized order and pleasurable anarchy, the male-female dichotomy" (Wilson, 1991, p. 7).

Atop the wall a sculptural mast juxtaposes the woman in the dress. Cables under tension extend to hold the mast upright. The seemingly small powerless woman acts as the cable, a structural body anchor that braces the dress in place. I am statuesque gazing over the happenings of the city. As a spectacle, under dramatic skies, the glamour of the night-time city is the least alarmed at the sight of this monumental feminine (Diggle, 2009, para. 6) (see figure 38).

shelter

Bathed in evening light with not a breath of wind in the air, the woman in the red dress picks up the weighted fabric and ignites it into the cityscape. The dress moves fluidly in harmony, constructing multiple forms, one of which is captured by a photograph in a single moment. The seductive red dress lures in the excited public. Taking hold of the edge they dive in an out of the dress delighted by its warm mass. Passers-by watch captivated by and concerned for this strange object.

figure 40: The Monstrous Red Dress Wellington Harbour. Shelter

figure 11. The Monstrous Red Dress. Wellington Harbour. Shelter

figure 42. The Monstrous Red Dress, Wellington Harbour Shelter

dress as temporal space

In this exploration the public engages in, around and under the garment (see figure 39 & 40). The red dress in motion produces a polyrhythmic extension of the body, forming a liquid surface that intersects with the surrounding space. The body anchors the garment as its surface responds to the windy environment and the pulsing bodies around it. However, unlike a permanent structure, the moving body adapts to the wind allowing the dress to be a mobile agent that constantly shifts and transforms.

The sheer scale of the red dress suggests a spatial entity with potential inhabitation. It presents an unstable object that is responsive and rhythmic, constantly making and remaking itself (see figure 41, 42 & 43).

The gown suggests a spatiality that is fluid, temporal in its fluttering materiality. Through movement, the dress discloses multiple fluid forms that cause the body to appear and disappear. In a single moment the dress is absent of the singular body. The train of the dress becomes a space-in-flux. The red garment becomes spatially precarious and transportable, continually mutating as it dives in and out of the cityscape.
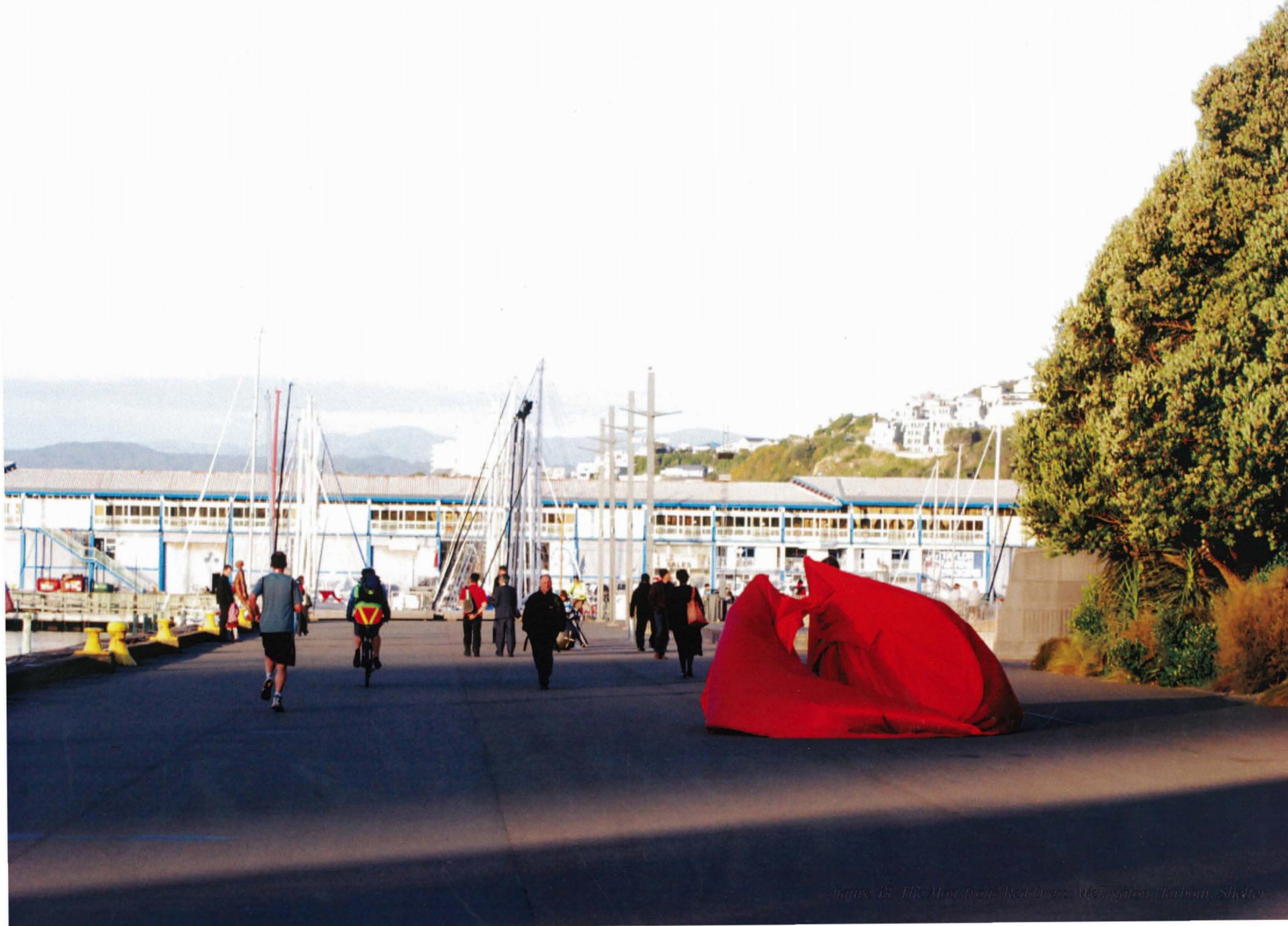
wrapped

The woman gathers the fabric around her forming a cocoon. Stripped of beauty, the wearer becomes a strange nightmarish body. For the spectator the woman in the dress is a seductive and peculiar object, yet for her the gown has become a grotesque ordeal. She is trapped in the garment; with its scale and mass psychologically weighing her down. It restricts her movement and strains her body. She has recurring nightmares of the garment dragging her body behind it as she swept away by wind or traffic. She is held captive in the red gown, which is not a stunning rhythmic arrangement but both a haven and a prison, consuming her body.
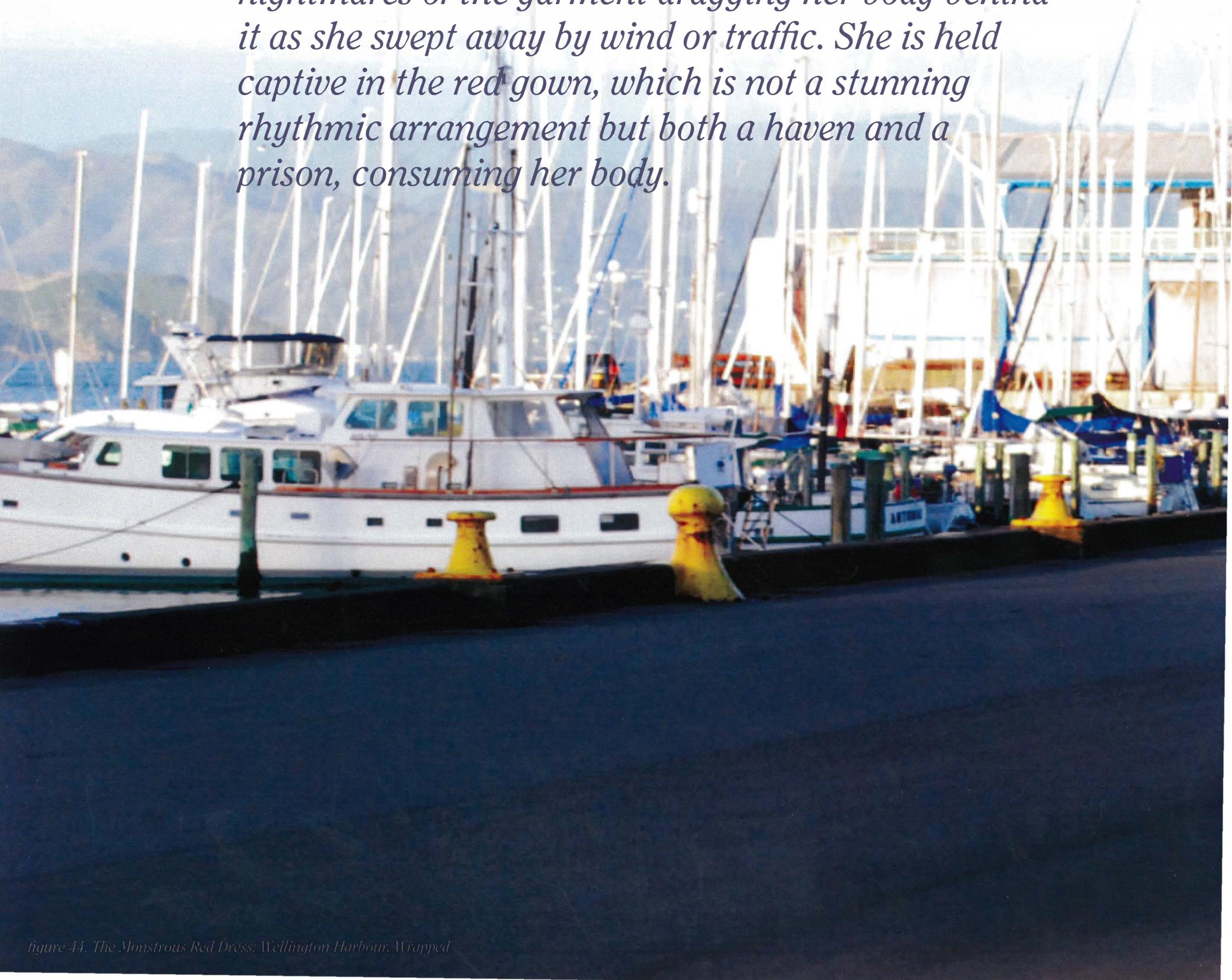
figure 44. The Monstrous Red Dress: Wellington Harbour. Wrapped

urban nightmares

Whilst conducting an exploration in the city I tore a muscle in my back. The immensely heavy garment acted against my body becoming monstrous. As with Sunayama's *A Sultry World* and the woman in the red dress in *The Matrix* (1999), I am rendered both seductive and dangerous – a monstrous feminine (see figure 44). Barbara Creed outlines the monstrous feminine in her book *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (1993). She states that although there is an abundance written on horror film, there has been very little on woman as monster. Most have regarded woman as victim of the male monster. Female monsters are present throughout many cultures and histories representing what men fear most – the alluring female taking him into her dark space – her vagina (Creed, 1993, p. 7).

Where Creed examines the monstrous feminine in film, I utilize the monstrous feminine as spatial concept referring to Wilson's Sphinx in the city. Departing from the city as structured Wilson considers the city as a labyrinth. In the centre of the labyrinth hides a Sphinx, a mythical creature that represents both the problem of woman in cities and the city as a place for the liberty of woman. Wilson utilizes the powerful figure of the Sphinx to explore the complex and multi sided narratives that form the current sociocultural conditions. "Myths are universal and timeless stories that reflect and shape our lives - they explore our desires, our fears, our longings, and provide narratives that remind us what it means to be human" (Atwood, 2005, p. iv). Beneath the surface of the everyday lie a plethora of urban narratives the form the mythical dimension of the city.

chapter 3

THEATRICALITY
Interfacing with rhythms

In this chapter I explore how theatricality can reveal or frame the city as a polyrhythmic landscape. The ten-metre long red dress is utilized in three staged performances: in a professional site-sensitive exploration in Perth – *Tongues of Stone*, in *Becoming* expressing a monstrous feminine in Wellington's harbour and lastly negotiating Wellington's *Big Weather* at Te Papa National Museum.

Theatricality takes previous performative acts into more overtly staged, dramatic and durational performances. Theatre can be defined as artificial alluding to the spectacular marked by an overstated self-display and unnatural behaviour. The word theatre derives from the Greek *theatron* meaning "place of seeing" ("Theatre", 2010, para. 1). Theorist Tracy Davis states, "although it obviously derives its meanings from the world of theatre, *theatricality* can be abstracted from the theatre itself and then applied to any and all aspects of human life" (Davis, 2003, p. 1). Davis believes theatricality "is a mode of representation or a style of behaviour characterized by historic action, manners, and devices, and hence a practise; yet it is also an interpretive model for describing psychological identity, social ceremonies, communal festivities and public spectacles, and hence a theoretical concept" (Davis, 2003, p. 1). This project seeks to consider how deliberately staged performances capture the inherent theatricality of place.

The red dress is inherently theatrical by virtue of its immense scale and vibrant colour. The woman in the monumental garment unavoidably encounters a metamorphosis to become an ambiguous character from a folkloric time forming a fusion of the everyday and mythological. Staged in the city the performances move beyond the traditional theatre environment. The city becomes a place of multiple stages capable of accommodating performances that reveal and play with its polyrhythmic landscape.

tongues of stone

Tongues of Stone (2009) is a site-sensitive exploration of the city through movement and action as a 'public dance-event' to be held in the Perth International Arts Festival in February 2011. Co-conceived by designer Dortia Hannah and choreographer Carol Brown the project utilizes dancers from Strut Dance company. In September 2009 Hannah and Brown held a workshop with Strut Dance to explore ideas for the final event in 2011. I assisted in this workshop and the red dress was utilized as a costume in the performance (see figure 45).

In *Tongues of Stone* Hannah and Brown aim to unearth the "rivers of song and memories" (Brown & Hannah, 2009, para. 1) embedded in the city of Perth. They follow Antonin Artaud who insists, "the problem is to make space speak, to feed and furnish it; like mines in a wall of rock which all of a sudden turns into geysers and bouquets of stone" (Artaud, 1958, p. 98). Hannah and Brown provocatively draw on mythology to mine histories embedded in our society to construct theatrical moments and transformation that make "urban space speak ... [mobilising] female energies to challenge the masculinity of a city built by construction and mining companies" (Brown & Hannah, 2009, para. 3).

The workshop occurred over three days with a one-hour concluding performance (see film TonguesofStone.mov). This performance utilized the myth of Philomena in the tale of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1955). In the tragic myth her sister's husband Tereus rapes Philomela (Ovid, 1955, p. 143). To keep Philomena from telling of her misfortune he cuts out her tongue (Ovid, 1955, p. 143). In *Tongues of Stone* the woman in the red dress is Philomela with the long 10-metre train her slithered tongue still flapping in the sand.

The one-hour workshop performance for *Tongues of Stone* utilized both interior and exterior spaces. The performance began inside with a chorus of singing dancers on a stairwell continuing to the woman in the enormous red garment, which filled a studio (see figure 46).

figure 45. Tongues of Stone (2009): Dorita Hannah and Carol Brown

In an alleyway directly outside the performance formed a fusion of body, garment and architecture. With the dancer placed high above the alleyway on a balcony, the red dress flowed into the narrow space adjoining to the building. Another dancer performed above her with more on ground level forming a multileveled performance of spatiotemporal flows. The rhythms of bodies and music echoed through the space awakening the city of Perth.

A selection of yellow chairs, yellow coats, black buckets along with a wedding gown, a ten metre long red dress and a chorus of dancers were designed and choreographed to create an unfamiliar environment (see figure 47). Emerging through space and time the powerful presence of the performance claimed the site creating a theatrical pause in the city. Captivated by the performance the accidental audience of the city's inhabitants of Perth interrupted their rhythms to gaze at the event.

PERTH VERSUS WELLINGTON

Drawing from these observations of the red dress in professional performance *Tongues of Stone* informed the next performance intervention on Wellington's waterfront. To consider how a site-specific performance could reveal the inherent theatricality of Wellington I compared and contrasted the nature of Perth to Wellington referring to the *Tongues of Stone* event. Perth is constantly changing through industrial reconstruction evident in its skyline cluttered with cranes. This constant rebuilding has caused difficulty for Hannah and Brown to place their final site-specific work in 2011. Any location they choose may have been radically altered by 2011. In contrast the architecture of Wellington is modified over a very long period of time. However the possibility of an earthquake looms over the city with the potential to completely reconstruct the city. In 1848, an earthquake with a magnitude of 8.2 caused a heavy shift in the landscape raising the Wellington coastline up to one and a half metres. Seismic activity still causes Wellington's landscape to morph slowing, which corresponds to the slow shifting of Perth's ephemeral landscape of sand. In addition Wellington's *Big Weather* causes radical changes in the Metapolis. Winds blow through at extreme speeds completely transforming the nature of the space. I will now discuss two performances that capture with the theatrical nature of shifting the tidal-zone as *Becoming* and Wellington's *Big Weather*.

figure 46. Tongues of Stone (2009): Dorita Hannah and Carol Brown

figure 47. Tongues of Stone (2009): Dorita Hannah and Carol Brown

Adorned over rocks her dress bleeds a red dye into the harbour. Negotiating in-between land and water she becomes intertidal. Boulders shape jagged new forms beneath the dress that laps between firm terrain and liquid sea; a fabric seam that measures and reveals the time of body, city and ocean as a polyrhythmic landscape.
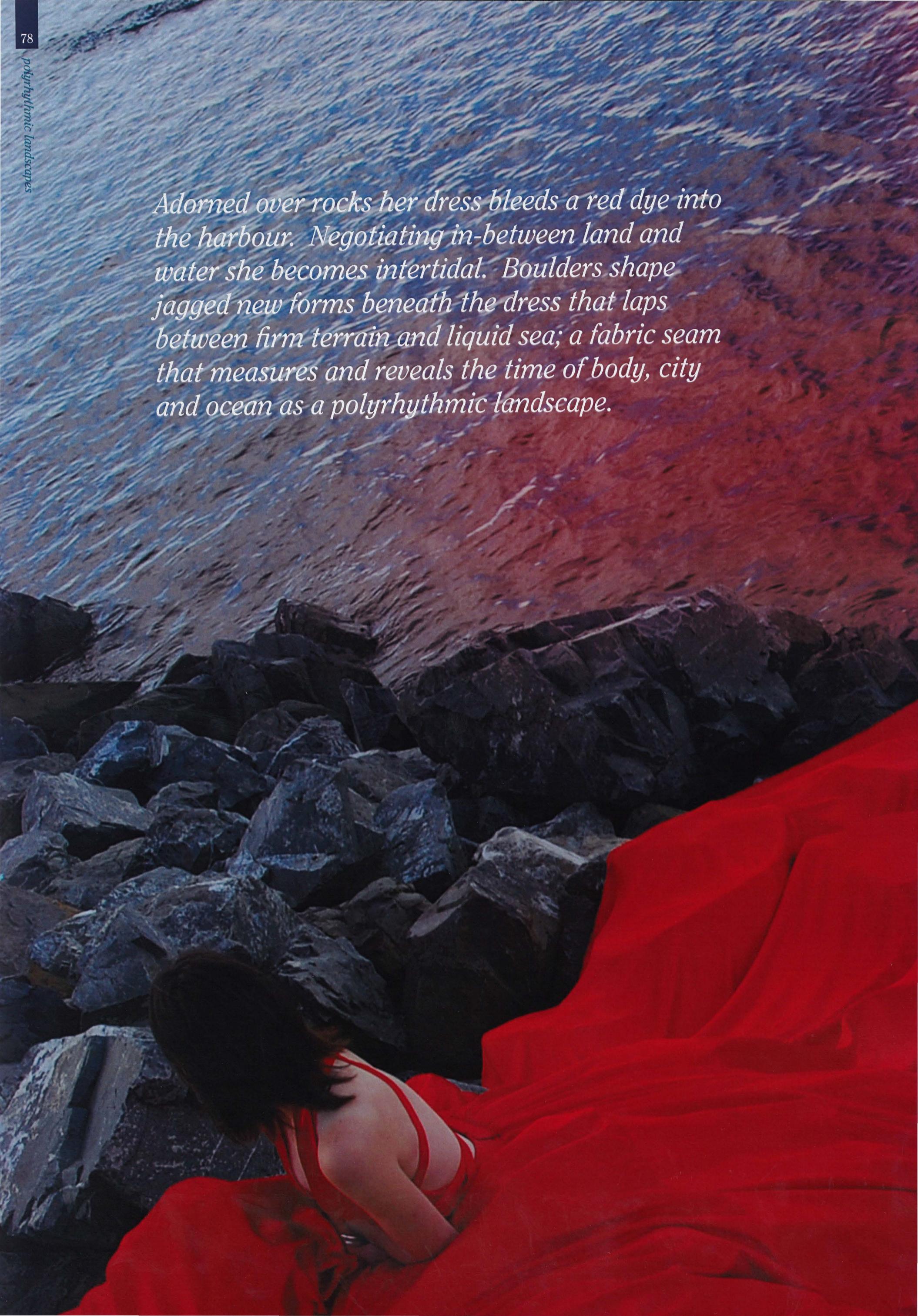
becoming

The site-specific *Tongues of Stone* workshop in Perth enabled me to understand how durational performance can awaken spaces and reveal polyrhythmic landscapes. Drawing on this experience I created an event on the lagoon at Wellington's waterfront titled *Becoming* attempting to explore the inherent theatricality of the place and its multiple rhythms.

Becoming extends an early performative exploration where I draped the garment over rocks and into the ocean, to connect city and sea displayed in this image (see figure 48). Utilizing Photoshop I dyed the surrounding ocean red, which formed the proposition that led directly to this event. The red water became an extension of body and garment intricately fusing them to the Metapolis through time and movement. Recognising that places 'precede action' through action the image suggests a space in flux bound to notions of embodiment and movement. In addition *Becoming* explores the concept of the monstrous feminine discovered in previous explorations, during the slow transformation of both body and environment becoming monstrous through the diffusion of dye into the sea.

figure 48. Proposal image for Becoming – Photoshop rendering of dye

On Monday 19th of October at 6pm at Wellington's waterfront at the lagoon near Frank Kitts Park a woman emerged from the centre of the Metapolis of Wellington pulling a ten-metre long grey garment to the edge of the lagoon. The garment blended into the primarily monochromatic landscape. Upon reaching the water she heaved her heavy train into the water and waits. On the other side of the lagoon, the woman in red moves down to the waters edge where she throws out her long skirts and sits on the rocks releasing a blood red dye into the water. For over twenty minutes both invited and accidental audiences observe the slow performance of the dye dispersing into the ocean.

figure 49. Becoming

figure 50. Becoming

As an ephemeral performance *Becoming* explores the space in-between landscape, cityscape and seascape creating an event-space at the city's tidal zone (see film *Becoming.mov*). Occurring in the mouth of the lagoon on Wellington's waterfront, the performers negotiate a place of transition. A bridge and tiered concrete steps to the lagoon produced a natural auditorium for the passer-by who formed an instant community observing the spectacle. The presence of the two women in the overtly theatrical garments renders the immediate environment unfamiliar drawing attention to the harbour as a polyrhythmic landscape (see figure 49, 50, 52).

Becoming interfaces with the rhythm of the tide as the blood red dye slowly shifts from one place to another. Long after *Becoming* had concluded traces of the dye moved and blended into the rhythm of the lagoon and then out to the harbour revealing the continuous performance of space through time and movement – revealing the landscape in a constant state of becoming. This transformation through time causes a spatiotemporal effect – an event-space, a 'space-in-action'. Event-space reveals the eventual nature of the environment – shifts in space and time are made present in the performance of *Becoming*. As the dye exposed the spatial shifts of the tides, its existence combined with the presence of the women and the

invited audience formed a spectacle, prompting several people to pause. This pause exposed the constant flow of human activity, composed of linear rhythms, fluctuating through the space.

Artist Olafur Eliasson created a similar spatiotemporal artwork dispensing a bright green dye into rivers in Tokyo, Japan (2001), Stockholm, Sweden (2000), Los Angeles, USA (1999), Moss, Norway, (1998) and in Bremen, Germany (1998), titled *The Green River* (see figure 51). Eliasson states that he "wanted to make [the river] present again, get people to notice its movement and turbulence" (Eliasson, 2004, para. 4) – to make a 'hyperreal' environment. He believes "a lot of people see urban space as an external image they have no connection with, not even physically" (Eliasson, 2004, para. 4). Although not explicit, there is an influential ecological subtext to Eliasson's The Green River. Robert Lawrence France describes the work as a "shocking reminder that a river exists, flows and has sensitivities and is not a constant unfolding diorama, concocted for "your viewing pleasure" by engineers in some distant lab. What resonates is one individual could have such powerful impact by showing nature's fragility" (France, 2005, p. 118). Similar to Eliasson I wanted to draw attention to the movement of tides however my conceptual reading differed from his sustainable notions focusing on a monstrous feminine.
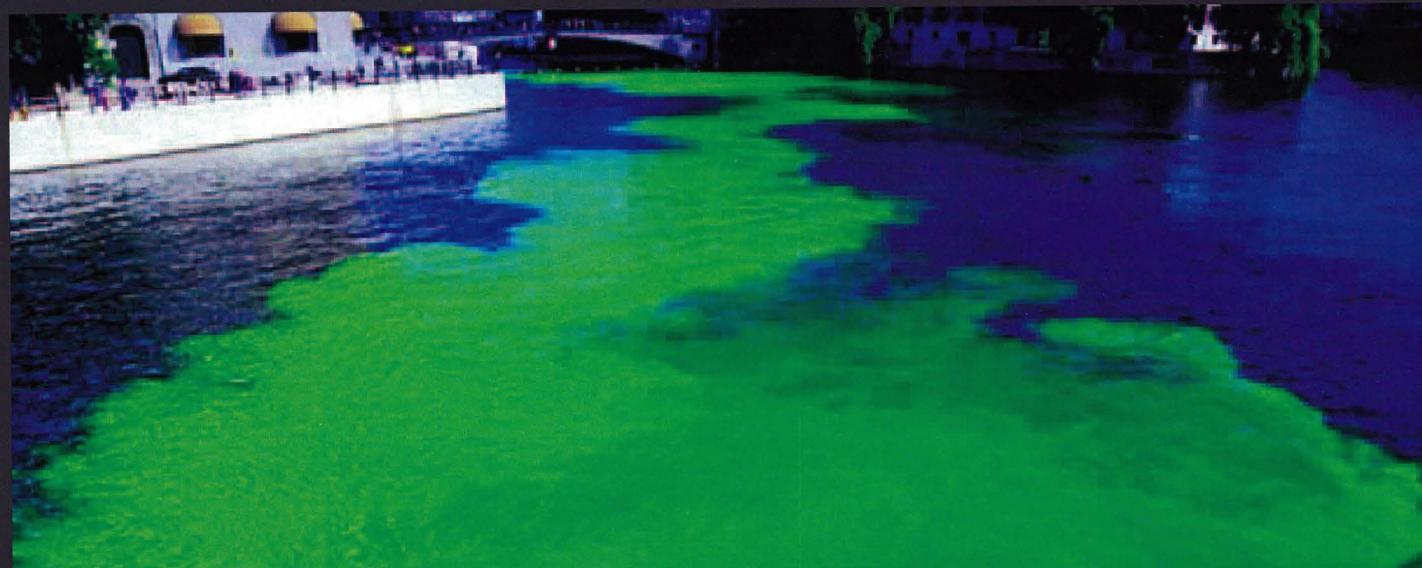

figure 51. The Green River, Stockholm, Sweden (2000): Olafur Eliasson

figure 52. Becoming

figure 33, Becoming

Through the slow duration of *Becoming* the female in the red dress endures a metamorphosis to become a mythical woman rendering the concept of the monstrous feminine. As the blood dye disperses from beneath her gown, she shifts from one being to another linking her body to moon tides and menstruation. She is rendered both sensuous and monstrous, a fusion of the theatrical and the banal.

Creed asserts that "when a woman is represented as monstrous it is almost always in relation to her mothering and reproductive functions" (Creed, 1993, p. 7). The performance exposes this through the durational performance of blood referencing the cyclical and sometimes-erratic rhythms of the woman's menstrual cycle revealing what Creed would consider the monstrosity of females. The notion of staining and bleeding can be found in an earlier design sketch of the dress in the railway station in Wellington where I render the dress a bloody stain seeping into the space and disrupting the flow of inhabitants (see figure 54).

The slow becoming of the dye dispersed into the harbour appeared as if it was a smudge or blur on the landscape. In a paper titled Strategies of Disruption Working in Seams presented at the SEAM conference in Sydney (2009) Samantha Spurr maintains that the blur as a conceptual mode collapses the stability and solidity of architecture in favour of new and 'ambiguous' opportunities,

To blur is to smudge the distinct. Rather than simply imprecision, it implies an initial clarity followed by action. Indeterminacy, vagueness, unpredictability and chance are all words situated in a state of in-between, where definitions become blurred (Spurr, 2009, p. 9).

Becoming blurred the definition of the city as static and singular revealing how space is always becoming through multiple rhythmic actions and movement as event-space. The city as a polyrhythmic landscape is produced through a multiplicity of rhythms produced continuously through space and time. As stated by Elizabeth Grosz,

Becoming is what enables a trait, line, an orientation, an event to be released from the system, series, organism, or object that many have effect of transforming the whole, making it no longer function singularly: it is an encounter between bodies that releases something from can and, in the process, releases or makes real a virtuality, a series of enabling and transforming possibilities. (Grosz, 2001, p. 70).

Becoming exposed the 'evental' nature of Wellington's waterfront produced by events and characterised by multiple rhythms. The performance engaged with the menstrual rhythm of the female body, which, like the tides, is influenced by lunar cycles. This connection is extended through the garment to dye the ocean a bloody red, thereby rendering the waterfront a transitional space.

RAILWAY STATION - 5.00PM

body in red dress

camera
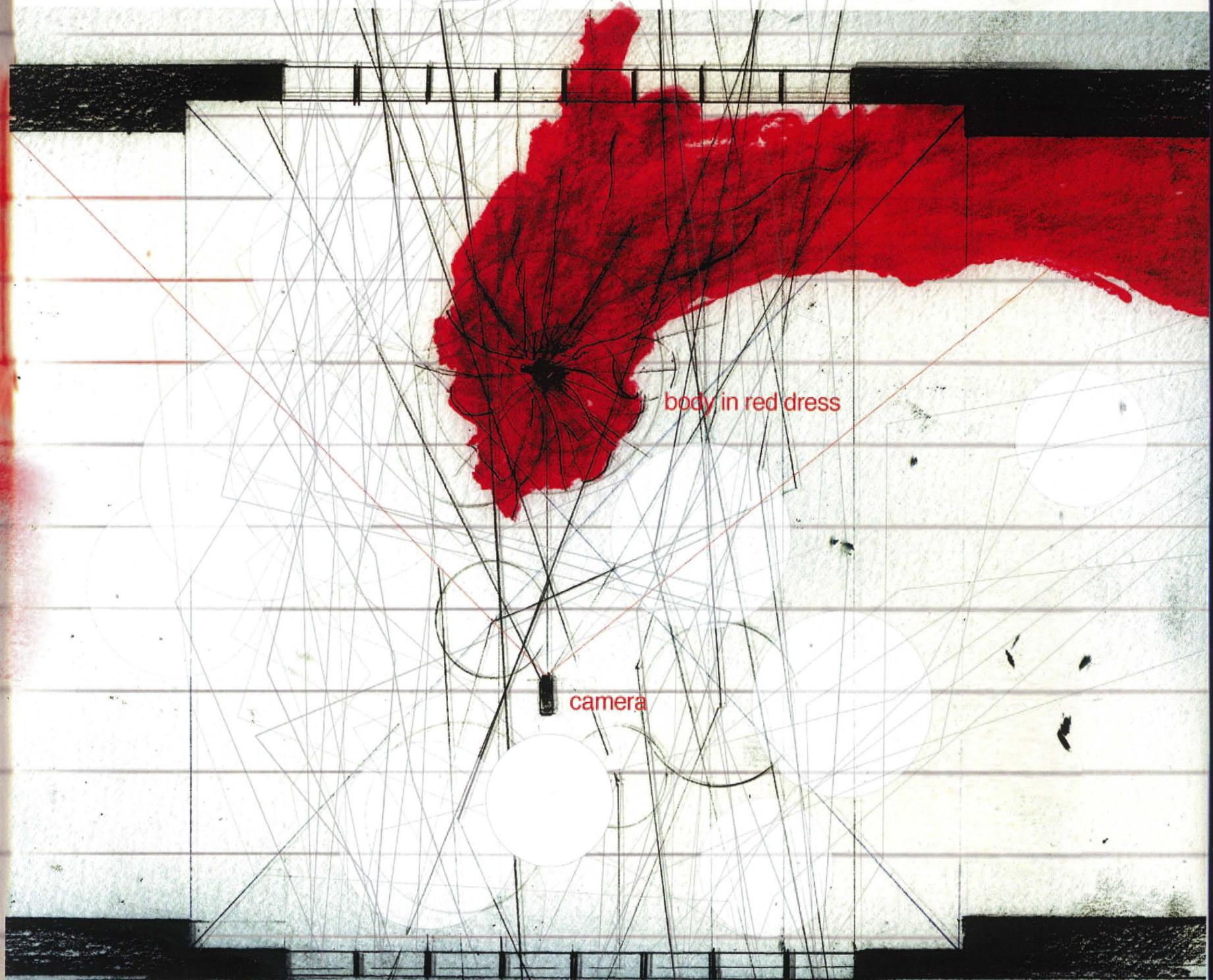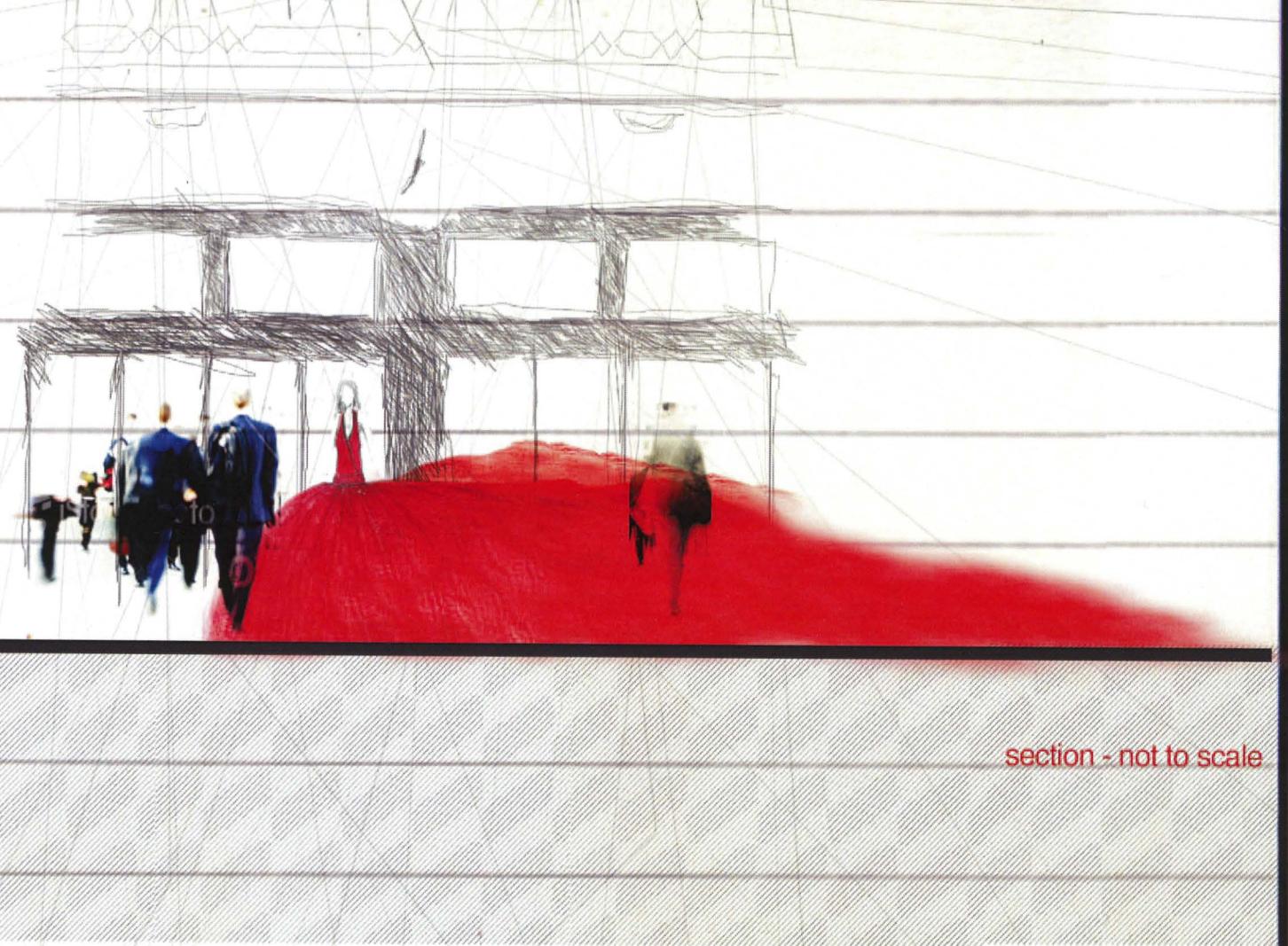
plan - not to scale

section - not to scale

figure 54. Railway Station Sketch

big weather

The next performance *Big Weather* explores a more institutional public space in Wellington, the Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa (see film *BigWeather. mov*). Operating in and out of the architecture, this performance engages with the building, the harbour and the *Big Weather* of Wellington to reveal their fundamental monstrosity.

Architect Tommy Honey describes Te Papa as 'stuck' in the 1980's reflecting the "countries indecision and apprehension about national identity. Ten years to build, another ten to reflect – the country has moved on but the building is stuck" (Honey, 2008, p. 90). Not only is the building fixed in time, its placement in the city is uneasy: "Te Papa is orphaned on the waterfront with a merkin of ridiculous trees perched in its crotch" (Honey, 2008, p. 90). Honey refers to Bush City as a pubic toupee 'jammed' between the building and the sea disconnecting Te Papa from the harbour and its surrounding town belt, where the real bush lies. This dislocation however is the result of a large thoroughfare designed for a V8 raceway, which no longer exists. Gerald Blunt states, "the external relationship to the waterfront is poor", reminding us, "the waterfront is the 'jewel' of Wellington, which should be enjoyed as a promenade along the waters edge. Te Papa doesn't prohibit this experience" (Blunt, 2008, p. 88). As a site-specific performance *Big Weather* attempts to negotiate the dislocated space between the harbour and Te Papa to reveal both the problematic nature of the space and how the audience can perceive it differently. The performance negotiates in between building, garment, body and environment interfacing with the multiple rhythms that occur.

55. Big Weather: Ascending Te Ara A Hine

56. *Big Weather: Ascending Te Ara A Hine*

On the 18th of December at 5pm, dressed in a monumental red gown, a woman emerges into the foyer space of Te Papa. She walks up the long narrow space of Te Ara A Hine – the pathway of woman – to the marae. An audience gather behind her, captivated, as she weaves her way through the building. The woman proceeds to a balcony outside where the wind is horrific, almost blowing her off her feet. Against the strong eighty-kilometre wind she throws her skirt over the podium. An audience gather on the waterfront watching the dress violently blow against the building, flying in multiple directions.

Occurring simultaneously, a woman in an enormous grey gown fights against the aggressive wind as she descends down Te Ara a Tane – the pathway of men – an outside stair of Te Papa to the waterfront. A chorus grasp hold of the massive gown and begin to march along the waterfront. The force of the wind causes fingernails to rip holes in the garment. The chorus battle to ensure the woman in the grey dress is not blown away. She pauses to acknowledge the woman in red – the chorus act as anchors restraining the garment from taking the woman into a dangerous flight. Dark clouds loom over with contrasting breaks of bright sunlight and blue sky.

figure 57. Big Weather: Outside Te Papa

figure 58. Big Weather: Outside Te Papa

Big Weather was conducted with executive director of Dance New Zealand, Tania Kopytko and a dance group Crows Feet. The performance consisted of Kopytko in the grey dress and a second performer Elizabeth Isaacs wearing the red garment with a chorus of four women. Te Papa became a stage for performance with an accidental and invited audience gathering outside on the waterfront looking up towards the woman in red (see figure 58). In amongst bystanders the performance then claimed the space of the waterfront as the woman in grey acknowledged the lady in red. The dislocation between the performance outside and the performance inside revealed Te Papa's weak relationship to the harbour as expressed by Honey and Blunt.

Beginning inside, *Big Weather* challenged the bicultural spaces of the museum. Walking up *Te Ara a Hine* the woman in red passed through Lisa Reihana's video

installation *Mai i te aroha, ko te aroh*a (2008), meaning From Love, Comes Love. The piece was commissioned specifically for Te Ara a Hine, the internal and female entrance to Te Papa's Marae, *Te Hono ki Hawaiki*. Te Ara A Tane is the external, male entrance. Curator of Contemporary Maori and Indigenous Art, Megan Tamati-Quennell, states the work highlights the "core function of Te Papa as a 'treasure house of collections'" (Tamati-Quennell, 2008, para 3). The powerful and dominating figure of the woman in the monumental red gown respects and claims *Te Ara a Hine*, making visible its purpose as the "changing contemporary art space for women" (Tamati-Quennell, 2008, para 4). The fleeting performative moment aims to enhance and emphasize its surroundings becoming a site to reflect upon the space and Reihana's compelling *Mai i te aroha, ko te aroha*.

A safety team employed by Te Papa, attempted to minimize any chance of accident. The main concern was for the safety of the two women on Te Papa's high exterior platforms that caught the brutal force of the northerly winds of Wellington. Days before the main event in a full dress rehearsal there was barely a breath of wind in the air, the dress floated softly over the side of the building, a high contrast to the wind that blew with vicious force on the day of the performance.

The performers struggled and battled against the wind to complete the performance. In a report after the event Kopytko felt that "the wind had become the main protagonist and we had to react to that. The dresses were the victims of the monstrous wind" (Kopytko, 2009, para. 21). Where the dresses were rendered monstrous in *Becoming,* the dramatic winds become the monstrous epic force that dominated the performance. Not only were the dresses victims to the wind, but also the two performers, thereby causing a tension between wearer and garment. The women were victims of the garment, the wind and the building. Te Papa became a grotesque platform, completely exposed to the winds off the harbour. Sharp grey towering facades loomed over the waterfront. The building, initially designed with a covered veranda to the sea, refused the easy entrance of performers or audience with its absurd forest and duck pond. It was as if Te Papa shuddered in disgust at the people outside it. Te Papa was indeed 'stuck', a static and immobile monstrosity on the waterfront.

This thesis has described the multiple rhythmic behaviours of the city forming an understanding of Wellington as a polyrhythmic landscape through a theatrical relationship between body, building and the urban landscape. Many people, attracted to the harbour's connection between city and sea, perform their rhythmic daily activities on the waterfront: running, walking and wandering, taking a break or consuming lunch or visiting the seaside 'attractions' such as the Museum. The site is completely exposed to frequent southerly and northerly winds, creating an almost vacant space. By acknowledging these rhythmic movements Te Papa could have been a space of polyrhythmic 'flows'. Even if the Jasmax Architects had to incorporate a raceway, the building's façade could have opened out onto this, forming a flow between interior and exterior thresholds. Sam Spurr comprehends spatial flows as 'flux' – "where space and bodies are read in terms of flow. [...] "Flux space sites itself in the contemporary questioning of all things stable and fixed ... concerned with new spatiotemporal world of flows" (Spurr, 2009, p. 6).

Outdoor performance is traditionally designed for fine weather. This performance struggled to operate in the big weather with dancers who resisted performing with the wind. Although the unpredictable nature of weather is impossible to negotiate, what if performance was designed *for* big weather, revealed through performers in costumes that are activated, dramatised and enhanced through the force of the wind, revealing their human fragility and activating the city: enacting a mutual performance of architecture, body, garment and wind. This concept leads me to my conclusion, a proposal for a *Big Weather* performance on Te Papa that draws attention to the architecture and the environment.

figure 59. Big Weather: Outside Te Papa

CONCLUSION

Lefebvre believes the city consists of a multitude of simultaneous overlapping rhythms. Everything operating through space and time, contains its own 'space-time' and therfore has a unique and complex rhythm. 'Rhythmanalysis', coupled with the concept of the Metapolis, enabled an awareness of Wellington city as not only an accretion of places but also a plethora of dynamic temporalities. The city became place of becoming: an event-space of multiple movements and actions. As Gausa asserts, the city "is no longer a single place or a particular shape, nor a unique evolutionary stage, but rather the accumulation of multiple stages and simultaneous experiences" (Gausa, 2003, p. 430).

In my project these 'multiple stages' were utilized through performativity and theatricality, leaving Lefebvre's distanced window or balcony, in order to immerse oneself in the city and experience its manifold rhythms. The site-specific actions and performances interfaced with spatial rhythms to expose a city enriched with temporalities that weave through and extend beyond the overt performance. This was made evident during *Becoming* when the blood red dye continued to disperse through the harbour long after the event had seemingly concluded. Through performance the city is revealed as a fluid space inhabited by numerous synchronized interactions, movements, relationships and actions. This allows us to observe "architecture and movement in terms of process of rhythms and flows" (Spurr, 2009, p. 7). Spurr extends this to the fluid experience of space, "continuity is essential, because when people move, they perceive and understand space fluidly, and as a combination of continuous images and experiences" (Spurr, 2009, p. 7).

Big Weather struggled against the architecture and the monstrous wind of Wellington, yet out of the difficult day came a powerful idea. Instead of imagining performance for good weather, consider the power of performance to harness a violent wind fusing with

figure 60. Proposal image for performance at Te Papa

the dramatic atmosphere of Wellington. I therefore conclude with the final proposal, in which the woman in the monumental red gown walks up *Te Ara a Hine* to the highest platform at Te Papa, an architectural precipice overlooking the harbour (see figure 60). Atop *Puwhara* she subjects herself to the force of the brutal northerly wind. This epic performance, in which the performer subjects herself to the brutal forces of the northerly wind, would draw attention not only to the fragile body, but also to the dramatic skies, brutal architecture and surrounding environment, revealing and celebrating the unpredictable nature of the weather.

As the huge dress flaps in the wind violently diving in all directions the woman endures the very real threat of the climatic performance. Acting as a giant sail her garment would constantly attempt to lift her off the precarious stage. The sense of catastrophe would quicken the hearts of those watching and undeniably the woman whose body responds to the evident risk of

danger. In the moment of shock the rhythms of the city would be arrested. That same moment of catastrophe – described by Nin in A Spy in the House of Love where the woman in red runs through the streets – causes the rhythms of the city to pause with a collective intake of breath. It is in this pause that the public would be violently propelled out of their contentment creating a 'place of shock' (Tschumi, 1996, p. 258). It is this shock that Ruiz refers to; the warning embedded in the theories of Artaud, Tschumi and Eisenstein (Ruiz, 2004, p. 203).

The city as Metapolis is a polyrhythmic landscape: a spatiotemporal 'place of places'; of constant events, flows and transformations that destabilize perceptions of the city as singular, static or 'stuck' by challenging its rational patriarchal order. But most importantly, this landscape is inhabited by necessary and discursive moments of shock.

Battered by violent sea winds she stands atop her risky stage. Her fiery gown forms a disruptive beat that shocks the city out of its complacency. The vibrant red fabric contrasts against the dark green town belt and the immense grey wall of Te Papa. Her body is bound to a dynamic fluttering seam that responds to and activates the Metapolis as something alive: a pulsing polyrhythmic landscape.

figure 61. Proposal image for performance at Te Papa

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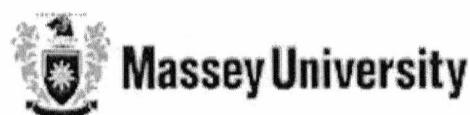
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