

*Lessons from Dancing*  
Zoe Theodore

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*Lessons from Dancing*  
 01.08.18–25.08.18

Eugene Choi  
 Angela Goh  
 Amrita Hepi  
 Shelley Lasica  
 Alice Heyward +  
 Megan Payne

*Lessons from Dancing* hosts a conversation between six performance practitioners who each use movement as their artistic medium. Filled with embodied expressions of subjectivity, the exhibition presents video, installation and performative works that each explore the materiality of dance, as well as the immateriality of visual art objects. Considering the possibilities and limitations of space, duration, labour and spectatorship *Lessons from Dancing* is an open research space for choreography as artistic expression.

In December 2014, the Congress on Research in Dance published a special issue of *Dance Research Journal* entitled ‘Dance in the Museum’ as a response to the apparent recent influx of choreographed performances being presented within major international art museums. The issue included dialogues between art historians, performance theorists and dance scholars who considered the reasons for, and the resulting effects of, the shifting relationship between dance and the art museum from their alternating scholarly perspectives. The issue also acknowledged that despite the increased amount of

dancing occurring in museum and gallery settings, dance and the visual arts have had a long and complex interrelationship. This history was elaborated upon in Claire Bishop's article within the journal, entitled 'The Perils and Possibilities of Dance in the Museum', where she accounted for the historical events that delineate the visual arts fascination with dance, beginning in the 1930s and its important role in the emergence of post-disciplinary practices that developed in New York in the 1960s.

*Lessons from Dancing* is not a curatorial attempt to recount this relationship, nor to provide concrete answers to how best to programme dance in gallery settings, but more about providing the space for practitioners who already respond and provide answers to these conditions. Not relegating performance to public programs and allowing immaterial artworks a generative and durational space to transpire, *Lessons from Dancing* exists to give each practitioner a situation to occupy, a place to carry out action, a moment to engage in movement or a space to fulfil a live response.

Both convening and demarcating the exhibition space, Eugene Choi's *A Brace for Support* uses scale and tension as a means to direct movement through the gallery. Including both installation and performance, the work uses monumental structures and embodied movement to toy with notions of support and stability. A "self-made system of geometry", each of the configurations are constructed out of steel poles and cast steel clamps and are positioned in a way to direct bodies

through the exhibition space. Activated through a one-off performance, Eugene and fellow dancer Ellen Davies performance will be negotiated in relation to these structures as their bodies seek comfort in the objects' solidarity. Not only prescribing their own movements, the structures will undoubtedly involve themselves into the other "dancing" occurring within the exhibition, as well as influencing how the audience orientate themselves within the space.

Shelley Lasica has been creating works that occupy the conflation between dance and the visual arts for more than 30 years—first performing in a gallery space more than 30 years ago. Her recent ongoing performance project, *The Design Plot* (2016- ), has afforded her the opportunity to delve deeper into her choreographic research into intermedial practices. Performed at nine different locations across three years, this suite of work considers the various ways that spaces are inhabited. More than a singular performance restaged again and again, *The Design Plot* has been created in collaboration with dancers Ellen Davies, Timothy Harvey, Louella Hogan, Daniel Newell, Lilian Steiner, and Jo White, and each time it is staged the work generates new knowledge. Performed during lunch service at a busy café, within a gallery space and amongst an outdoor pavilion, each iterations responds to its situation and explores the agency of performer, as well as the possibilities for the audience, which are specific to each circumstance. Included in the exhibition, *The Design Plot* (2017) is a part of this suite of works and involves a further collaboration with cinematographer James Wright.

Performed at the Royal Melbourne Tennis Club and solely for camera, this iteration of the performance incorporates the design and politics of the space into the work.

Amrita Hepi's *Dance Rites* considers how the body is the "ultimate archive" for embodied expression, the work considers how black and brown female bodies communicate and confirm their cultural authenticity. Blending traditional forms of dance with pedestrian representations of cultural, *Dance Rites* probes the viewer to consider what is learnt, what is imposed and what is permitted on these bodies. As a Bundjulong and Ngapuhi woman, Amrita uses movement as a means to express her own voice as a contemporary sovereign woman. Invoking the aura of the exoticised other of the traditional dancer performing dance rites, Amrita's dance reimages history through her contemporary body. Her hypnotic movements are further represented and rooted in the present through the echoing of her steps in a mountain of pink sand on the gallery floor.

*Predictable Dances* is an ongoing performance project by Angela Goh that has been performed thirteen times in various situations and contexts, including as part of public programs, for parties and was included in an immaterial exhibition project by Galerie International. Its premise and elasticity mean the performance remains open to being situated in various contexts, including the gallery. What is *Predictable Dances*? Just exactly as it sounds—a dance that has been prophesied and then comes into fruition. Each time it is performed, Angela visits a psychic and

then the work fulfils its own prophecy. “For the pure joy and love of dancing”, Angela continues to return to this specifications as a means to generate new and unknown movements. Occurring once, the inclusion of Predictable Dances in an exhibition context almost feels like an exercise of precognition. Trusting in the possibility of what may happen—a feeling for the future and a simultaneous exploration into the potentiality of the space—at this moment Predictable Dances #13 is still in the state of unknowing, or an undeniable future.

*Tongue rolls between smile*, a performance by Alice Heyward and Megan Payne, occupies the exhibition twice weekly through an hour-long performance. Similar to *The Design Plot* the work is malleable in form and explores new possibilities in situ. Confined and constrained by the physical gallery space, the work is performed by two women who move through phases of being “active, passive, supportive, connected and/or discrete.” Moving simultaneously, each body repositions itself in relation to the other. At once surrendering to and resisting each other, the work unfolds as an unconscious flow of positions and explores how two bodies can share space and occupy the work together. Resisting a narrative structure, the performance summons an intersubjective response for its audience, straddling multiple possible dichotomies including as spectacle vs routine, tender vs unyielding and graceful vs unrefined.

Zoe Theodore  
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**Eugene Choi** is a performance-based artist whose practice has evolved around the physicality of constructing internal and external structures working across sculpture, performance, installation, video and text. Often influenced by the body in movement, Choi's practice travels between controlled and uncontrolled states by engaging herself in unfamiliar, yet composed situations, relying on the live response of her physical and emotional body. A self-made system of geometry becomes integral between objects, bodies and space, attempting to achieve equilibrium. Her work has been performed and exhibited at Carriageworks, Underbelly Arts Festival, the Museum of Contemporary Art and Firstdraft Gallery. She regularly performs with other artists including Ivan Cheng, Angela Goh, Agatha Goethe-Snape, Xavier Le Roy and Scarlet Yu and Marina Abramovic. Choi is a current recipient of the Artspace Studio One Year Residency Program.

**Angela Goh** is an Australian dancer and choreographer. She is working with dance in theatres, galleries, and telepathetic spaces. Angela's works have been presented in a multitude of formats across Australia, Europe, the UK, USA and SouthEast Asia. Her work *Desert Body Creep* has been presented in Next Wave Festival (Melbourne), PACT Sydney, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, the Asia Pacific Triennial of Performing Art, and most recently at Performance Space New York (PS122) COIL Festival in NYC. Her work *Predictable Dances* has been presented at The Judson Church (NYC), Indigo Dance Festival (paf, FR), Firstdraft (Sydney), and by Galerie International at La Biennale de la Danse (Lyon), Jan Mot Gallery (Brussels), Dansehallerne (Copenhagen), Menagerie de Verre (Paris) and Saal Biennial (Tallin). Angela's work has also been presented by safARI, Lucy Guerin Inc, ArtBank, and Performance Space Sydney, among others. In 2017 Angela was commissioned by Campbelltown Arts Centre to make the new work *Scum Ballet*, and Auto Italia (UK) to make the new work *Body Loss*. Angela received the danceWEB Europe Scholarship, Next Wave Kickstart commission, Australia Council ArtStart, and residencies including Critical Path, ReadyMade Works, Bundanon Trust, Rimbun Dahan (MY), Vitalstatistix, Arts House Culture Lab, among others. She regularly performs in the work of other artists, recently including Mette Edvardsen (NOR/BE); Germaine Kruip (NL/BE); Atlanta Eke (AU); Jane McKernan (AU); Marina Abramovic (USA/SRB); Joan Jonas (USA); Tino Sehgal (UK/DE); Marten Spangberg (SWE) and Branch Nebula (AU) among others. Upcoming projects include the premiere of new work *Uncanny Valley*, *Girl* at The Festival of Live Art (Melbourne) as well as the Australia Council International three-month residency at the Cite Internationale des Arts in Paris.

**Amrita Hepi** is a dancer and choreographer. A Bundjulong and Ngapuhi woman, her practice probes at the idea of authenticity, the perpetuation of culture and tradition. An artist who has toured nationally and internationally with a broad following and reach, her work has taken various forms (film, performance, sculpture, text, lecture, participatory installation) but always begins from working with the body as a point of archive, memory and resistance. Amrita trained at the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA) dance college, New South Wales and Alvin Ailey American Dance School, New York. She has exhibited and performed at Sydney Opera House, Next Wave Festival, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Australian Centre for Contemporary art, Carriageworks, ACE Open, Banff Centre Canada, Art Central Hong Kong, Art Basel Hong Kong, DARK MOFO Tasmania, Underbelly Arts Festival, and Sydney Contemporary among many others. Upcoming projects include the premiere of a new work for the 2018 Choreographic Award.

For more than 30 years, **Shelley Lasica** has pushed the confines of dance, choreography and performance. Her practice is defined by cross-disciplinary collaborations and an enduring interest in staging performance in non-conventional settings. The prolific and vast repertoire of Lasica's choreographic works have been presented by Melbourne Festival, National Gallery of Victoria, Artspace (Sydney), Centre Nationale de la Danse (Paris); Siobhan Davies Studios (London), Dance Massive, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Murray White Room and Anna Schwartz Gallery.

**Alice Heyward** is a dancer and choreographer. She makes solo and group work, co-authored work and collaborative projects. Alice's work is presented in Australia and Europe at Uferstudios, Sophiensaele (in the frame of Tanztage 2017) and within many group contexts. She is an ongoing resident at art/house project, Kunsthaus KuLe in Berlin. Here, she presented Imaginary Dances in frame of the Performing Arts Festival Berlin 2017. In 2016, her work Before the Fact was commissioned for the Keir Choreographic Award at Dancehouse, and Now Is Not The Place at gallery Murray White Room. In 2018, Future City Inflatable, her collaboration with Ellen Davies, premieres in Next Wave festival. She is a danceWEB scholarship recipient at Impulstanz International Dance Festival in Vienna mentored by Louise Höjer and Tino Sehgal. In 2018 she will develop her new work, Mutter, Matter at Lucy Guerin Inc. She works regularly as a collaborator-performer in the works of artists including Xavier Le Roy, Scarlet Yu, Alexandra Pirici, Alicia Frankovich, Hana Erdman, Geoffrey Watson, Mia Lawrence, Simone Forti, Maria Hassabi, Shelley Lasica, Female Trouble, Becky Hilton and Laurel Jenkins (for Trisha Brown), among others.

**Megan Payne** is a dancer and choreographer. After graduating from the Victorian College of the Arts (2013) she worked with Russell Dumas' Dance Exchange in 'Room E100' Larret Cultural-Centre (France); The Body Festival (Christchurch); 'a day like any other' 'Reorienting the Post Colonial Symposium', Institute of PostColonial Studies 'Dance Remains,' Monash University Museum of Art'. Megan has presented her own work at Testing Grounds in the Melbourne Fringe Festival with Ellen Davies, TCB Art Inc, Pitch Festival in collaboration with Alice Heyward and PSP, Memphis Gardens with Leah Landau and TBP-HQ. Megan has worked with artists including Shelley Lasica, Ivey Wawn, Chloe Chignell, Amanda Betlehem and Shian Law. Her practice has been supported by the Australia Council for the Arts, the Ian Potter Foundation, Ausdance through a DAIR residency at Frankston Arts Centre, Lucy Guerin Inc. Megan is studying Professional Writing and Editing at RMIT University. She writes creative critique, nonfiction and poetry.

**Zoe Theodore** is a freelance producer, writer, editor and curator based in Narm, Melbourne. She has worked with artists Shelley Lasica, Amrita Hepi, was the Co-Editor of Dissect Journal's third issue and has held professional roles at Anna Schwartz Gallery, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art and MoMA PS1. Her research and curatorial practice focuses on the relationship between performance, choreography and the gallery.

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