

**Title:** *Strategies of Interruption: Slowing Down and Becoming Sensate in Site Responsive Dance*

## **1. Opening**

Exploring how embodied population of sites can be seen to invoke new encounters with familiar space and place for both mover and audience, this chapter offers a practitioner perspective charting the lineage and working processes of *Enter and Inhabit*<sup>i</sup>. In seeking to reveal the sensorial exploration intrinsic to the collaborative process of *Enter and Inhabit*, this chapter draws on a philosophical perspective to theorize the slow and sensate in embodied encounter within site response dance making. Positioning site responsive work as *emergent* through time and collaborative dialogues, the work of *Enter and Inhabit* is considered here as an example of a collaborative practice that moves between the rural and urban acknowledging the each can co-exist in the same site.

Conversing with the work of performance studies scholar Andre Lepecki (2006), (2007) and others an argument is made for the quietly political provocation of the slow and sensate in site responsive dance as a means to disrupt the coupling of subjectivity and motility found within a modernist economy of being. Drawing on Lepecki, a re-integration of the slow as an inherent aspect of the dance and creative process are proposed and imagined.

Offering case study examples characteristic of the work of *Enter and Inhabit*; this chapter details how an emphasis on the sensory perceptual cycle as understood by Body-Mind Centering (BMC)<sup>®ii iii</sup> and improvisational practices more widely enable an attentive dialogue between the materiality of site and an attuned bodymind, from which alternate and new perspectives can emerge – including an appreciation for the

slow.

The chapter closes by proposing that the slow, more than an act of interruption, can be re-inscribed as an inherent and ever present aspect of the dance and creative process, rather than just an interruption of late capitalist modernity. In doing so the political significance the slow in site responsive dance is asserted and a claim made for the acceptance of corporeal knowledge as a valuable and necessary epistemological position.

## **2. Introduction to an Instance of Outdoor Practice**

The Enter and Inhabit project explores process-orientated dance making in rural and city landscapes. The first site of the project in 2007/2008 was the underpass system of the Coventry Ring Road in the UK. An intrigue of post war architecture the underpass system comprises concrete structures with landscaped gardens, longstanding trees and historic monuments serving to remind of us of the possible blur between the rural and urban within the UK landscape where little is truly wild or untended. In other wooded sites we have worked on such as a wooded common in Kenilworth, Warwickshire, traces of human population in the form of objects discarded or lost; red plastic sunglasses, fragments of green wool loitering in the mud, a hue which one might guess comes from a manufactured dye, are noted and guest in the photographic image response to site. The presence of such objects offering a reminder of the human intervention that silently resides in much of the UK countryside. Projects created as part of conferences amongst University campuses have also enabled an exploration of the blur and meeting of edges between planted campus gardens and fields and the utility architecture of University buildings. Hayling Island, a beach site most recently

explored as part of the project similarly offers a landscape of edges where beach and fields meet and merge, and the visibility of human occupation through trodden pathways forms part of its identity. The notion of the rural is therefore awake in the work of Enter and Inhabit as a question contributing to the artistic play within sites, rather than something fully known.

INSERT IMAGE 1 [Enter and Inhabit, Multiples of Two, 2009, Coventry Ring Road, UK. Photographer: Christian Kipp]

The practices of the Enter and Inhabit project includes durational scored movement-improvisation, photography and writing to create scored live (and virtual<sup>iv</sup>) installations with an interest to reveal *versions* of the site and the body as always in a process of becoming<sup>v</sup>. When beginning a project the edges of the site are undefined and become so only through the acts of moving, scoring, writing and moving once more. Implicit within this is an understanding of site as a material entity, defined in part by its use and population yet in a state of continual transition, renewal and change however imperceptible or microscopic these shifts might be.

*Enter and Inhabit  
Hayling Island 2013  
Resourcing score*

*For a full moon and low tide on the East Winner, Hayling Island.*

*With awareness of ground and constellations of three,  
Traveling shoreward, noticing shifting edges and emerging  
boundaries.*

The interest in different modes of perception invoked by BMC<sup>®</sup> noted above in the introduction, leads to a foregrounding of inter-subjectivity<sup>vi</sup> to support this particular understanding of relationship between body and site adhered to in the Enter and

Inhabit project. From this viewpoint the work seeks to explore how embodied population of sites, real and virtual, can invoke new and the yet-to-be known encounters of familiar space and place, rendering the familiar unfamiliar for both artists and audience. Within this is to be found inquisitiveness around the possibility for kinesthetic empathy<sup>vii</sup> between the project members and audience and performer through a response to site located in the sensate and corporeal.

Broad in its spread of references and lineages, the Enter and Inhabit project can be located within contemporary dance practice and specifically the British New Dance tradition. Following the teachings of UK dance artist Helen Poynor<sup>viii</sup>, it draws on Anna Halprin's model of collaborative working via the RSVP Cycle. Formulated in partnership with Halprin's husband, architect Lawrence Halprin in the late 1970s, the RSVP Cycle offers a map or model for collaborative working across disciplines and in site responsive practice. As its title suggests, particular to this process is an inherent acceptance of the cyclical nature of art making, through and across four key stages termed as Resourcing (R), Scoring (S), Valu-action (V) and Performance (P), whereby the creative act is understood as ongoing and continuing past the moment of a 'first performance'.<sup>ix</sup> This formulation is depicted visually, an architectural plan if you will, and thus allows for the articulation of, arguably inherent, characteristics of the creative process, for example the mapping of the inner individual artistic journey in relationship to the collective journey as the project moves through and across the different stages. Implicit within this model is a celebration of collective response and thus too an undoing of hierarchies between art forms and artists. Similarly an investment in reflection as an integral aspect of the creative process is also highlighted in this modeling of collaborative making<sup>x</sup> underpinned by the RSVP

process. For instance, movement scores devised and moved in certain sites are collectively revised / re-imaged in the studio or virtual space and then folded back into the live realms of the project which are not bound by project / performance deadlines but rather feed into months or possibly years of movement and photographic practice on a particular site. Images created from inhabiting sites become the slide shows of the website and project installations of live events, but also fuel the resourcing cycle of movement-score writing and project reflection.

As indicated in the discussion so far, central to this practice has always been an interest to develop a collaborative process in which derives from an engagement with the anatomical structures and systems of the body as conceptualized by BMC<sup>®</sup>. The anatomical mappings offered by BMC<sup>®</sup> uphold the possibility of initiating movement from systems of the body other than the muscular-skeletal for example the organ system or awareness of the fluid body. Within the Enter and Inhabit project these offer us as movement practitioners a means to extend our improvisational starting points and bodily modes of meeting the environment. Within the practice of BMC<sup>®</sup> can also be found a valuing of the interrelationship between sensing and action, between rest and activity and between inner and outer awareness. Considered as something inherent to the human organism within the organization of the nervous system, this acceptance of the interrelationship between the sensate and being in the world enables the slow into conceptions of subjectivity. That is not to say that a slowing to notice sensation is posited as a replacement for action rather it is recognized as an integral aspect of the sensory perceptual cycle of human movement. More than this its value as equal to action is upheld and explored as a creative opening. Understood another way, as bodies enter into relationship with the site,

through the senses of sight, sound, smell and touch, a balance between activity and receptivity, pause and action leads the artistic inquiry.

The possibility of the slow is twofold within the enter inhabit project and is more than just a literal slow moving through space although this is possible too. Rather it combines a durational approach to making across seasons, one that embraces the slow of the creative process with a delight in the slow of the sensate when practicing and performing. The process of art making is understood to be one of unfolding across time and place through collective activity, where waves of culmination rather than end points are the characteristic and shape of public events find their form through the doing. An inclusion of the slow within the project is traceable in the words of the performance scores. References to dwelling and meandering that invite a stopping, a pausing...a slowing to notice are included as an integral part of the creative strategies. Photographic images wander across the many versions of the site offering figures of stillness alongside sites invigorated by motion. The seeing of the camera slows and pauses to notice detail, alongside movement vocabulary that echoes this mode of attention to detail in equal measure to full bodied frenetic action. And so within the work of Enter and Inhabit the slow reasserts itself as valuable collaborator.

*Enter and Inhabit*  
*2012, Dublin*  
*Virtual Plenary Resourcing Score*

*Returning to the Arts, Technology, Research Lab*  
*Building, Dublin, post symposium.*

*Amongst the corridors and designated spaces of*  
*the symposium.*

*Meander*  
*Dwell*  
*Shifting perspectives,*  
*exploring the haptic.*

### **3. Becoming Conversant with the Slow**

In the methodology of practice imbued by BMC<sup>®</sup> the political significance of a 'slowing' and the slow action in site responsive dance has operated as a quiet but consistent interest. The interruption of modernist culture and values enacted via the slow act is not of course unique to the Enter and Inhabit project nor site practices. The political significance of slowness within in dance more broadly for example is a theme discussed by Andre Lepecki, performance studies scholar (2006), (2007). Within this work he argues that central to the subject of modernity the humanist model of subjectivity, lies a drive towards mobility, a constant moving on and towards being. In making this claim, Lepecki draws a correlation between the body of production required in modernity by capitalism and that often locatable within contemporary dance. He also brings attention to the fact that the association of dance with 'uninterrupted flow of movement' (Lepecki, 2006, 3) is not inherent but a historical construct identifiable from the renaissance time forward. Culminating in the 1930s when the American Modern Dance 'pioneers' were read by influential dance critic and scholar John Martin, as Modernist due to their commitment to the autonomy and purity of movement, this historical conflation of motility and dance is, suggests Lepecki, still present today. He draws on critics' disdain at dance performance which problematises this assumption that dance is pure movement to illustrate his point. Having established this interrelation between modernity and dominant understandings of dance he looks to anthropologist Nadia Seremetakis's concept of the 'still-act' and choreographer's use of stillness within dance to argue for its political significance. To frame dance as stillness is, suggests Lepecki, to bring into question the modernist project by disavowing the motility of the modernist

subjectivity as a given and constant. As such Lepecki casts Seremetakis's 'still-act' as 'a corporeally based interruption of modes of imposing flow' which succeeds 'because it interrogates economies of time, because it reveals the possibility of one's agency within controlling regimes of capital, subjectivity, labour and mobility' (Lepecki, 2006, 15). Summing up his thesis he states

The undoing of the unquestioned alignment of dance with movement initiated by the still-act refigures the dancer's participation in mobility – it initiates a performative critique of his or her participation in the general economy of mobility that informs, supports, and reproduces the ideological formations of late capitalist modernity.

(Lepecki, 2006, 16)

The critical potential of 'slowness' within Western culture is similarly noted by dance anthropologist scholar Deidre Sklar (2007). Reflecting on her experience of Butoh master Kazuo Ohno, identified as an antithesis to American culture in its slowness, she notes, 'I could not 'see' his performance until I stopped looking at it as a visual spectacle and moved into a kinaesthetic mode, joining the rhythm of my attention to that of his movements' (ibid). In formulating this possibility of audience work relation through the kinesthetic Sklar echoes the work of performance studies scholars Holledge and Tompkins (2000) writing at an earlier time on Butoh from an intercultural perspective. Considering in more depth the significance of the slowness of the form they use the metaphor of transformation to characterise that which arises when performers, such as those engaged in Butoh, are attending to their corporeality or sensory awareness.

If we are to follow Lepecki, Sklar and Holledge and Tompkins we might begin to understand how sensate bodies moving across a continuum of stillness and activity, connecting through touch with the materiality of site illuminate linear logical notions



of space and time common to western frames of understanding as socio-culturally located rather than given and stable. The possibility of a re-patterned relationship to time and space arises. As dance scholar Erin Manning suggests, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, recognising the inter-subjective quality of touch in movement leads to a particular concept of space and time. This is one other to that which emanates from delineation of “self” and “other”, common to a humanist subject position and complicit within the modernist project. Importantly it is one whereby movement pre-exists space and time.

Whereas in the active-passive commonsense model, time and space are located as stable signifiers into which the body enters, within a relational model, space and time are qualitatively transformed by the movements of the body. The body does not move *into* space and time, it *creates* space and time: there is no space and time before movement

(Manning, 2007,27).

### **3.2 The Slow of the Sensate in Practice and Performance**

INSERT IMAGE 2 [Enter and Inhabit, 2012 & ongoing, Ashdon Village, UK.  
Photographer: Christian Kipp]

*Enter and Inhabit*  
*Project Website Introductory Text*  
*Ashdon 2012 & ongoing*

*Weather playing along with us, wind to rainbow mud.*  
*Landing in Christian's stories.*  
*Enjoying the illusion of permanency, amongst pathways which emerge and disappear, fields which thrive and lay fallow. A dialogue between human hand and nature.*

*A dance with lines on the luminous green strip begins; a dance of furrows, pathways and power-lines.*

Before further exalting the slow in the work of Enter and Inhabit it feels important to restate an interest to acknowledge this in companionship with the kinetic. In acknowledging the moments of attentive stillness integral to the process and practices

of Enter and Inhabit, the possibility for interaction and movement choices to register as animated, action orientated and therefore shift to a more purposeful play with dynamics rooted in a compositional understanding of time are also remembered.

However when developing resourcing and event scores from the sensate body, a notion of time derived from the corporeal body is enabled. This can be seen to manifest itself in a play with 'real' or 'lived' time. Rather than time being dictated by the structure of the music or metered "dancer counts" in which movement sequences follow rhythmic music structures, each moment is allowed to unfold, sometimes in real time as the dancer connects to the inner rhythms and pulsations of the body or with attention to a particular body system or movement pattern. The transition from sensing into moving is a process that can require duration to find form and thus this way of working can have a sense of extended or vortex time more akin to installation art than dance performance whereby the structure and form of the public event embodies alternate relationship to time. Consequently, there is no longer solely a focus on the place of arrival or destination in space within a metered time frame. Rather an interest develops the pause of interruption and moments of transition alongside the flow of movement thereby removing a focus on fixed images, positions, lines or forms in space. More than a compositional device this play with alternate time frames, if we follow Lepecki and others, holds the potential to disrupt the body of production associated with late modernist capitalism through its decoupling of dance with motility.

Within the work of Enter and Inhabit there can be seen a play along the continuum of pause, stillness, change and action of bodies in sites conceived of themselves as

consisting of stillness and movement. This is reflected in some of the scores for example, by the way they invite stillness as integral phase of the improvised duet process as can be seen in the score for Multiples of Two (2009).

*Enter and Inhabit  
Multiples of Two (2009)  
Event Score Extract*

*Phase 1: Landing  
With choice to witness and join another's dance and awareness of the spaces between, meeting the environment through the cellular ground, connective tissues, and skin, **settling in stillness until saturation spills into movement**, offering the site that which it invites.*

*Phase 2: Bridge  
Bringing that which has come before, becoming attentive to the architecture of the skeleton, meeting the environment with support of the bone layers, compact bone and bone marrow, **remaining available to shared moments of stillness**.*

Other scores such as that for River Walking (2010) share this invitation to stillness while also playing with expectation to move, claiming it is a possibility rather than a certainty as a compositional strategy.

*Enter and Inhabit  
River Walking (2010)  
Event Score Extract*

*Part 2 - micro-climate score draft 1 (somatic under-score hands on - separating muscle from bone, and yield and push BNP)*

*Establish your own micro-climate, **Remain attentive to the possibility of movement**, Play with the possibility of relating / relationship, a constellation of four and the freedom to witness, move, write, story tell or gift an exchange.*

**Repeat until sculptural stillness emerges**

This inclusion of stillness, pause, action and change in equal measure extends to the photographic dimensions of the project. Images of still, hovering and paused bodies

sitting on bridges, laying in tunnels, amongst trees, on benches and crouching on the sand, are to be found amongst those of running, activated and gesturing forms. Similarly images of still water, fixed objects, suspended droplets and solo leaves live amidst those of swirling water, dancing kites, and shifting shorelines. In offering the images as part of live or virtual events consideration is given to the mode and duration of their presentation, for example slow paced slide shows as part of the web space invite a slowing down of the nervous system in the looking, a play with multiple scales of image in live exhibitions invite visitors to pause and notice the varying perspectives being offered. Just as the sharing of images might invite visitors and audiences (invited and accidental alike) to momentarily notice the otherwise not seen or acknowledged aspects of a woodland or city underpass site, so too does the act of slow dancing in the environment. Moving and re-appearing repeatedly over time, those populations who are local to the site may indeed literally stop to converse with us about our visits and activities as they pass through on their own trajectories. Those invited to or stumbling across a live event similarly momentarily join a process of slowing and appreciation for the pause before action, and the detail in the landscape as modeled in the scored improvisation.

### **3.3 The Slow Unfolding of the Creative Process**

Lepecki's and others theorization of the slow within the performance moment, discussed above, offers some useful thinking as to the potential of the slow to interrupt the modernist body of production. However there are other dimensions of the slow within the Enter and Inhabit project<sup>xi</sup> that I would argue warrant discussion. Broadly this can be seen in the making process of Enter and Inhabit which, characterized by its collaborative, nature unfolds through an extended period of time.

Rooted in reflection and the RSVP cycle the making time-frame is other than one predicated on an understanding of the “dance work” as product, something which can be constructed to order and within a conventional six week period. Instead there is recognition that through time a dance event will emerge from a process of exploration, negotiation, and sharing of practice across disciplines.

As discussion so far has alluded to the Enter and Inhabit approach to working on site involves a slowing down to enable attunement to specific body systems or patterns as an axis point from which movement initiation and relationship with environment can begin. And while muscular-skeletal initiated action and movement through space is perhaps our most familiar territory as dancers we might choose to dwell in an alternative body system for example the organs or fluids as a means to illicit other ways of being and moving in relationship to site. Within BMC<sup>®</sup> the different tissues of the body are considered to align with variant movement qualities including relationship to time and space which can be accessed via practiced and guided experiential explorations and mined for their creative potential. In exploring this creative potential, we are interested to continually develop the skill to experience anew each time the sensations opened by the improvisational and score structures collaboratively developed during the making process. Within this approach improvisation is no longer a means to generate movement in ‘rehearsal’, but rather the extended making period is used as a time for us to explore and develop the skill of staying present with the selected anatomical focus allowing time for movement responses to accumulate beyond the expected. Thus inherent to this way of working is a commitment to the process. Value is given to the returning and repetition of sensate movement explorations fuelled by a belief that new experiences will unfold each time.

The skill of connecting with and moving from experientially known body systems and patterns becomes a skill to be honed and developed, a practice that also requires studio time alongside on-site investigations. As such value is ascribed to a process that extends through time enabling reflection and intuitive unfolding of creative ideas.

Public events are thus not conceived as the work, but rather the first manifestation of an ongoing exploration. And so our engagement with different sites may span months or years, sometimes working in several sites concurrently, as we dwell, meander and resource in the sites to discover what form the public event might take.

To enter into this way of working is to embrace the state of being in the unknown, embarking on a creative journey without a final destination. Such an understanding of the creative process is noted by Crickmay discussing the work of those artists of the British New Dance movement, in the early 1980s when he observes

...these dancers (through their work) are always confronting the unknown. They deliberately seek out situations they themselves do not recognise. The work differs from traditional dance forms in seeking continually to overturn habits of response and perception.

(Crickmay, 1982, 8)

As such the dance is not conceived as a completed entity but rather as a work in transition. Seemingly rooted in an experiential understanding of subjectivity as an emergent phenomena, the choreographic process becomes one characterised less by a need to construct form and content. Rather, it is replaced by one that delights in the generating of material, the structure of which, to a large degree, is self-defining and resistant to models of capitalist production and consumption.

#### **4. Closing - Integrating Acts of Interruption**

An argument has been made here not for a replacement of action with stillness or the kinetic with slowness but rather to propose an interest to acknowledge the interrelationship of these two habitually diametrically opposed aesthetics, to invite a more easeful move along the continuum and a valuing of the slow in this endeavor. As within BMC® the interest is to balance rest and activity, or to use an anatomical reference point, to balance the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous system not merely dwell in the solitude, sensing and contemplation phase of improvisation and making. In this we might also want to reclaim the slow as more than an act of resistance through interruption of motility and reassert its always-present presence in the dancing moment but also creative process.

In taking this view a recognition of the cultural and aesthetic situated nature of action and motion is made, or to return to Lepecki, a meditation on the slow in dance is ‘...to propose how movement is not only a question of kinetics, but also one of intensities, of generating an intensive field of microperceptions (2006). Informed by Deleuze and Guattari, the proposition here is thus becomes that slowing to come into relationship with the ‘microperceptions’ of site can perhaps paradoxically reminds us of its and our continual state of motion or process of *becoming*, and in doing so offer an experiential example of the philosophical notion of inter-subjectivity.

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<sup>i</sup> See [www.enterinhabit.com](http://www.enterinhabit.com)

<sup>ii</sup> For an introduction to BMC<sup>®</sup> see Cohen (1993) or Hartley (1989).

<sup>iii</sup> The words 'soma' and 'somatics' were first coined by philosopher and somatic practitioner Thomas Hanna (1928-1990) in the late 1970s to speak about the body as experienced from within, as a 'felt, sensed, lived entity.

<sup>iiii</sup> The words 'soma' and 'somatics' were first coined by philosopher and somatic practitioner Thomas Hanna (1928-1990) in the late 1970s to speak about the body as experienced from within, as a 'felt, sensed, lived entity. In using this term he advocated a balancing of first and third person perspective, rather than a replacing of the one with the other.

<sup>iv</sup> For further discussion of the virtual within the enter inhabit project see Garrett Brown, N., Kipp, C., & Voris, A. (Forthcoming)

<sup>v</sup> Begun by dance artists Natalie Garrett Brown and Amy Voris in 2008, principally as a site responsive movement project in the city landscape of Coventry, the project has subsequently evolved to work across a range of rural and urban sites and to include a photographer, Christian Kipp and, until her passing, dancer / writer Niki Pollard.

<sup>vi</sup> Here I am drawing on a theorization of the term inter-subjectivity as offered by dance scholars informed by corporeal feminism. However this term is used by others working in the fields of Psychoanalysis, Psychology, and Philosophy, specifically Phenomenology when formulating understandings of relationship. For further discussion of this point see Brown, N. G. (2007) & (2011).

<sup>vii</sup> In introducing term, kinesthetic empathy I acknowledge the research project and resulting collection of essays which speaks to themes of that which we and others have theorized as a corporeal response or bodily transmission. Of particular interest is the cross art and cross cultural perspective this brings. See Reynolds, D. & Reason, M. (2012).

<sup>viii</sup> For further information about Helen Poynor's practice and work see [www.walkoflife.co.uk/helen.htm](http://www.walkoflife.co.uk/helen.htm)

<sup>ix</sup> For further discussion the RSVP process and Halprin's work more generally see Poynor, H, & Worth, L, (2004) & Poynor (2009).

<sup>x</sup> As other writing has discussed N. G. Brown, C. Kipp, N. Pollard, A. Voris (2011) & Garrett Brown, N., Kipp, C., & Voris, A. (Forthcoming), the process of art making we are honing within *Enter and Inhabit* resonates, with the work of performance studies scholar Professor Susan Melrose (2003), who casts the collaborative process as one of 'chasing angels' and reliant on 'expert intuition'. In developing these metaphors she articulates the significance of artists in relationship when they are making, and also positions intuition as reliant in part on the embodied knowledge of the performer. In doing so she offers a philosophical perspective on the significance of Halprin's RSVP process as a model for collaborative practice operating from an inter-subjective position.

<sup>xi</sup> There are of course many other examples of collaborative and dance practice that might align with this observation. See Garrett Brown (2007) for further discussion of this point in relation to other 'somatically informed' dance artists.