

Performative Space and the Construction of Place

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# **Performative Space and the Construction of Place**

## **Abstract**

For the purpose of this research project, I have undertaken a series of practice-based approaches to examine how concepts of place may be created using film and performance. Through filmed excerpts of dance and movement work, and through the interaction with space, sites and landscapes, I have set out to determine differences, meaning and responses to place. As part of the process I have used the body as research tool, movement as interaction and film to record, document and analyze the process.

Artists and practitioners in the 1970s New York dance and performance scene, such as dancers Yvonne Rainer, Tricia Brown and artist Gordon Matta-Clark have particularly inspired me. Ideas by these practitioners, based on fundamental interests derived from simple everyday routines and movements, developed into collaborations influenced by the socio-economic situation in the city at the time, becoming an important phase in performance. I have examined and linked some of the initial research to other artists, dancers and choreographers, such as Pina Bausch and then to my own practice as a spatial dance artist, with emphasis on dance and the

use of space on a phenomenological level. Furthermore, I have explored place from the angle of a range of writers and philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, often connected to architecture and place. I have also researched Juhani Pallasmaa's interest in sensory space, as well as Jane Jacobs's explorations of the notion of place in the city. Thus, this thesis will investigate and analyse space and how, through interaction with space, through physical being or phenomenological approaches, space may transform into place. The thesis contends that it is interesting to see that phenomenology is a well-established discipline and has impacted on architecture. It is also interesting to discover that architects are aware of notions of sensory spatial engagement. My role is to rethink this from a dance and performance platform.

## **Introduction**

This thesis sets out to examine the notion of place, the transformation from space into place and how the interaction between bodies and spaces may create 'place'. Through the range of spaces and sensory connections I have researched, I show the way interaction or close sensory understanding of space and use of space may become more than just 'a space', creating 'a place'. Primarily, the thesis investigates concepts of space and place from a range of views and readings with particular emphasis on the role of performance in the concepts of space.

Central to this enquiry are the works of Juhani Pallasmaa, Gaston Bachelard and Peter Zumthor, each of whom have conducted a phenomenological inquiry into place. Michel Foucault and Martin Heidegger have helped shape this thesis to debate. Particular interest has been on the stance on place from these authors. Pallasmaa has written about the connection to nature and family heritage binding people and place; and Bachelard has added the spatial experience of the home environment through poetic narrative. Zumthor brings a holistic architectural experience, integrating inside with outside and emphasises well-being and receptive human spatial experience. Performance references add a broader agenda, linking to my practice of movement and dance work. The Judson Dance Theatre and choreographer

William Forsythe amongst others have been studied to explore the wider field of research into concepts of place.

Building on this research, the thesis sets out to explore how the two concepts of space and place may intersect and merge. Place is a key component in my practice. Through an activity of impromptu dance performances in unusual spaces, concepts of place may be discovered. Neglected or derelict spaces are used as sites for the investigation of place through the practice of dance. The kinds of places I have looked at cover architecture, philosophy, the city and performance. I am taking a range of texts on the notion of place to examine and describe the conceptual range on which this thesis is based. I am examining texts and performances to endeavour to clarify and bring together some of the existing ideas on place. The volume of critical sources used in this thesis is potentially broad. However it is important to realise that the key primary and secondary sources are bound together by this notion of place. The sources come from a cross section of fields, from architecture through to performance and the history of ideas. This broad selection has helped me investigate how place is used in architectural, philosophical and performative contexts from many different angles. I am examining place at both a textual level and through my own practice using my own work to make commentary and experiments on the texts and other precedence material and performative works I have

studied.

In my current practice, I am interested in anonymous, non-descriptive or neglected spaces, such as derelict urban landscapes; industrial estates, the hidden alleyway or transient spaces such as car parks. I am interested in the 'spirit of place' (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 5) and how movement can be created from these ideas of place. I am also interested in the human presence and scale in unusual locations.

The method used through my practice is to carry out interactions with space thereby creating place. I call this process Spatial Choreography. By staging or improvising dance in a range of spaces, such as derelict space (Saarinen, *Derelict Dance*, 2012), as I explain in Chapter 6, Spatial Choreographies: My Practice, I find a close connection to the site, or place. Thus whilst carrying out physical movement on a particular site, a phenomenological connection between site and performer may be derived. This may be because of historical, architectural or personal links to the site.

As an attempt to investigate the process, I perform, record on film, analyse and edit the process. With the performance and film as an outcome, my aim is to show that simple or ordinary actions, when placed in unusual or unexpected settings begin to create dialogue between the body and site.

The body may become a part that does not quite fit in perceptually in some locations, such as derelict space or the urban environment. The perceptual skewing may be caused by an unusual performance setting, adding resonance to the site, giving the viewer or passer-by the opportunity to react and reflect on the moving body, and its human scale, when placed in unorthodox locations. This process of analysis may underpin scale, proportion and the body as a key architectural component through my investigations. The interactions may be seen or translated as movements of the everyday, morphed and developed through the process. Performance may take the form of exploratory fieldwork and ideas may be based on a site with implications for local historians, where buildings may be at risk of demolition. Furthermore, the performances may also be based on local or personal experience of our environments, as Tim Cresswell explains "[But] place is also a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world. We see attachments and connections between people and place" (Cresswell, 2007,11). Through the intervention of performance, the site gains added significance, no longer a site stumbled upon, or ignored, but a relevant point in time in the local landscape. Where interaction takes place, however brief, the activity leaves a trace of event, adding site-specific historical content (Cresswell, 2007, 85).



This moment where space and place merge is being investigated through the sources I have considered in this thesis and analogous approaches in my dance practice to place. Through a debate, the importance of place through varied voices and disciplines is highlighted. The key research questions I set out to examine are these: What determines place? How may space become place? What can be discovered through the process? How is performance and dance germane to the understanding of these concepts?

The phenomenological dimension of place has been highlighted in this research study. Key authors have been particularly important for this task as they all address phenomenology and place from different viewpoints. They include Pallasmaa's *The Eyes of the Skin* (2005), with emphasis on phenomenology and the body. Similarly, Zumthor's *Atmospheres* (2006), dealing with architecture and the senses, has enabled me to identify a deeper, sensory understanding of architecture and place. By understanding the angles that, for example, Zumthor and Pallasmaa view space and phenomenology from, has widened my own understanding and made me experiment and relate to space and place in new ways in my own work. This has been helpful in exploring the intersection of space and place through a body interacting with space on a physical and psychological level. Whilst carrying out dance and movement work on particular sites I have developed a close relationship with the spaces used for my performances.

Correspondingly, in my practice I place myself in spaces, attempting to interact and sense place intimately and directly through the movement. Consequently, a close connection to an otherwise anonymous site may be derived. This can be further explored, as I go on to show, through the film of the intervention.

Without the dance element to this work, the sense of place would be very different. In my practice, dance is an ephemeral yet unpredictable and improvised motion. I challenge often difficult or awkward sites on which I perform and therefore also challenge the body. Between the action of dancing and the site, a connection takes place through the performance as the body familiarises itself with the constraints of narrow, dark or derelict space. This is evident in my pieces *Derelict Dance* (2010), *Shoreline* (2012) and *In-between Space* (2013). By placing the body on an inconsequential site, human scale is introduced.

I have used the body as a tool for spatial investigations in architectural space. The understanding of new characteristics of place through this research has become germane in my own practice. I have experimented with different sites, sometimes difficult and awkward spaces (Saarinen, *High Levels*, 2011, Saarinen, *site\_seeing\_1*, 2014).

I have read texts that refer to everyday space and various forms of in-between or other-space, physical as well as conceptual. Key examples are Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* (1994), Pallasmaa's *Eyes of the Skin* (2005) and Zumthor's *Atmospheres* (2006). In my work, this may refer to physical spaces such as derelict or transitional spaces that the performer may navigate through, such as beaches and loft spaces (Saarinen, *Ad Hoc Performance*, 2010, Saarinen, *High Levels*, 2011).

My own practice has translated new work through the influence of the phenomenological methods of the authors and performers studied such as Juhani Pallasmaa and The Judson Dance Theatre for example. Additionally, I have looked at the concept of place through the landscape and site, particularly how topography, time and mood may determine sense of place (Pallasmaa, Zumthor).

Finally, filming my performance work live, as it occurs, I have established a further layering of place in the post-production of the films. For example, through the process of editing, as is shown in my works *Ad Hoc Performance* (Saarinen, 2010) and *Derelict Dance* (Saarinen, 2012), I have overlaid layers of film footage from the performances and adjusted the speed to underpin movement, repetition and place. Short dance works have been

created. The result of the research is based on the many findings and culminates in a critical report on my practice and place.

The selected authors have been specifically relevant to my interest in place in this thesis (Heidegger, Zumthor, Bachelard). Heidegger's texts relating to architecture have been helpful from a historical angle on architecture, place and the everyday. Furthermore, Zumthor's and Pallasmaa's texts about nature, memory, architectural materials and details are all adding to the sensorial experience. Moreover, Pallasmaa's work is specifically significant to my own connection to Finland and Sweden, where I grew up. Topics such as the Finnish landscape, closeness to nature and traditional methods of making are all relevant. It underpins my own methodology of movement and particularly the ideas of using simple gestures in dance, staging performances in natural or urban/common spaces. It is also the link to my personal connection to the Nordic way of life, nature and poetic phenomenology that all my selected authors address from their own perspectives. This is covered in my chapter *2.1 Phenomenology in Architecture*. The bearing to sensory spaces and movement are also covered by Tricia Brown and Pina Bausch and therefore key to this stage of my investigation on performative space and the construction of place. Their attention to the body is interesting also in a mundane everyday way as this type of everyday or mundane movement is also part of much of my own

practice.

I am aware there is an interesting body of work that I have not included in this thesis. For example, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theories in *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) will be relevant for my continued studies in the future on phenomenology, place and the body. Merleau-Ponty argues that the body acts as a form of measuring device for observation, perception and knowledge and that everything we see around us is a series of perceived 'objects' based on our individual memories and experiences (1962, 67). Jennifer Bullington writes in *The Expression of the Psychosomatic Body from a Phenomenological Perspective* (2013) that Merleau-Ponty's view of the body 'is both material and self-conscious' (2013, 24). This will be interesting to add to my future research and practice methodologies in terms of perception, body and place.

Furthermore, there is important feminist writing on place, performance and the body that may well be interesting for future studies. This may concern women in the everyday, ageing and mobility and particularly issues of inequality. For this thesis, this was not a main concern, and this topic will emerge in future investigations. Particularly relevant for my future work, as a continuation on place with more emphasis on the body, will be the notion of feminist body space, performance, ageing and the everyday. For example,

authors such as Jane Rendell (2008), addressing the 'in-between' language and practice between architecture, body and art will be relevant for future research. Texts by Luce Irigaray (1994) on gender equality and identities and Donna Petrescu's (2007) politics and poetics of feminist space will also be relevant in later projects. Other texts I will consider for future research on gender issues and postmodern values in performance are for example, *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, edited by Amelia Jones (2003) and Helen Thomas's *The Body and Everyday Life* (2013).

Furthermore, as there are valuable crossovers between performance, interiors and architecture, I continue to create experimental spatial projects in my teaching practice, documented, for example, in a series of online blogs, whilst teaching Interior Architecture at the University of Hertfordshire. Students may observe, experiment and test space and spatial qualities through performance and movement (Saarinen, 2010; *Performance East, Performing the Space*).

My involvement in the community through activism and heritage campaigns in London has further supported my research. I have co-ordinated a campaign to save local architecture and high streets from the clustering of betting shops (London Live TV, 2014; North London Star, 2014; Rucki, 2014). I have also combined activism with short performances, to record

activities, site and time in local history. This will be important in my future practice, as I am interested in several sites currently threatened by regeneration and urban master plans. I aim to capture the spirit of place by my performance activities before the building or structure is demolished. I have already started working on one such site in my piece *site\_seeing\_1*, (2014).

I remain active in collaborations with Haringey Council and English Heritage and have contributed to survey consultations and visual artwork for the *Noel Park Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2015)*. This work aims to highlight neglect and propose improvements to conservation areas in north London (Haringey Council, 2015). Clearly my work in this research is primed by a significant personal investment as a practitioner. It is for this reason that phenomenology looms large in the research.

# 1. Literature Review

## 1.1 Introduction

It is worth beginning with the *locale*. The 'locale' can be likened to a particular place that in Martin Heidegger's theory had particular meaning to place, in which an event might have taken place altering the landscape and the use of space. It is at this point that the architect Peter Zumthor's example is relevant. Zumthor emphasized the holistic environment created by a mindful attention to landscape, the use of materials and the user experience. These concepts are expressed in his project Thermal Baths at Vals, Switzerland (1996).

Juhani Pallasmaa's work covering the home; memory and heritage (Pallasmaa, 1994, 2005), Gaston Bachelard's discussion about poetic space (Bachelard, 1994) and Heidegger's discussion on the *locale* have each been beneficial in exploring place from the angle of phenomenology and philosophy (Farrell Krell, 1993, 356; Sharr, 2007).

Readings on place mapping and human geography by Tim Cresswell and Steve Pile have provided further knowledge, particularly in terms of the concept of site as place. Furthermore, the notion of the in-between and other-space as place reflecting on the everyday has been of interest. I have



also looked at Foucault's ideas on Heterotopias (Foucault, 1986, 24).

Finally, the overlap between these sources and dance is considered. From a performance point of view, the Judson Dance Theatre, dancers and choreographers Tricia Brown and Yvonne Rainer and others such as Pina Bausch and William Forsythe have been considered. In this context, the work of Rainer has been particularly relevant, as I have found similar approaches and methodologies to my own work. Rainer uses routine like motion with simple composition, with her early work largely dealing with choreography such as for example monotonous and repeated steps and exaggerated arm movement (Rainer, *Trio A* 1966). These types of ideas have been developed and embedded also into my own work (*Shoreline*, 2012, *Snowdance*, 2013).

The selected texts studied have proven influential in the formulation of improvised dance works throughout the process, particularly in terms of the construction of the memory of space, of landscape and the notions of improvisation. I will here outline the main area of study for the literary and practice based contributors to my research. I discuss the content in fuller detail in the chapters that follow.

## 1.2 Formulating notions of space: The theoretical view

Juhani Pallasmaa focuses on the intimacy between architectural spaces and their inhabitants. Writing in *The Eyes of the Skin* (2005, 40), he states how “The city and my body supplement and define each other. I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me”. This is a provocative comment. Pallasmaa talks about the holistic connections that place may evoke. For example, childhood and other memories may create a personal link between body, mind and place (Pallasmaa, 2005, 40). In much of his work, Pallasmaa refers to landscape, the memories of childhood, at times with a melancholic mood. Here, ambience and landscape may evoke uncomfortable or hidden agendas directly connecting memory to place and “events occurred or imagined”, argues Pallasmaa (1994). This connection may involve a fear of leaving a warm and comfortable home, or indirectly, more broadly, childhood memories, or when moving to a new location. Pallasmaa elaborates this idea of place as a memory. He speaks for example of a mood that may set in when leaving a place, the sense of longing that is generated. Lastly, Pallasmaa speaks of the process of returning to a location that may be psychologically prescient to find what he describes as the “traces and scars of intimate lives” (Pallasmaa, 2005). This can be explained as the emotions one might have when returning to a familiar place, or place of childhood. It may be in form of memory, when unexpected reminders such as smell or touch evoke feelings of the past (Pallasmaa, 2005). Pallasmaa also writes

about linguistic bonds connecting people to memory and place. Even though we may be far away, “language is strongly tied up with our bodily existence, the unconscious geometry of our language articulates our being in the world” (Pallasmaa, 2005). This notion is set out in his essay *Mental and Existential Ecology* (Pallasmaa, 2009). Pallasmaa notes how the “unconscious notions” that “affect our understanding and utilisation of space in specific and pre-conditioned ways” affect our behavior (Pallasmaa, 2009). Pallasmaa goes on to argue that architecture does not merely protect the body in giving it shelter, but also provides a means where the mind, body and place react together to make a ‘place’. Here, Pallasmaa claims that “space is not inactive; it either empowers or weakens, charges or discharges” our capacity to appreciate space and, he maintains, is key to human existence, labeling space as holistic (Pallasmaa, 2009). For example, when referring to architecture and sensory space, Pallasmaa describes the intimate experience of moving through space, whilst listening, sensing and experiencing the environment by explaining that “The eye surveys, controls and investigates, whereas touch approaches and caresses” (Pallasmaa, 2005, 47-49). Furthermore, Pallasmaa describes the sensory matter of the everyday and also a connection to nature as “invigorating and healing, due to the constant interaction of all sense modalities” (Pallasmaa, 2005, 41). This unified approach to environment and design is further explored in texts relating to the work and processes of Finnish architect Alvar Aalto

(Pallasmaa 1997, 2005). Aalto's intimate connection to nature, as I go on to show, is equally evident in the architect's buildings and design processes. In Aalto's Säynätsalo Town Hall (1949), for example, there is a "mystical and mythological sense of community; darkness creates a sense of solidarity", meaning that building materials, brick and timber, and its construction contributes to the purpose of the building where "the power of the spoken word" is central (Pallasmaa, 2005, 49).

Along lines similar to the sensory concepts explored by Pallasmaa, Gaston Bachelard was concerned with the intimate in the domestic environment of the home. This is described by Bachelard in *Poetics of Space* (1994). Here Bachelard argued that when entering a particular space, the viewer's memory might trigger a sense of kinship and belonging to a place (Bachelard, 1994, 4). He described these moments and spaces as difficult to clarify physically; they are places where inhabitants explore the "edges of the imagination, recesses of the psyche, the hallways of the mind" (1994, vii). Bachelard considers these moments as very personal and dependent on individual circumstances and moments in time, "[But] a whiff of perfume, or even the slightest odor can create an entire environment in the world of the imagination" (Bachelard, 1994, 4). He goes on to point out that "This [triggered memory] is also true in life. But it is truer still in daydreams (Bachelard, 1994, 4). For the real houses of memory, the houses to which

we return in dreams, the houses that are rich in unalterable oneirism, do not readily lend themselves to description” (Bachelard, 1997, 91). Bachelard talked about spaces that may be represented through the “phenomenology of the soul” (Bachelard, 1994, xix). Bachelard argued that our personal experiences of childhood, life and the everyday would have an effect on our overall individual experiences, imagination and how we react to sensory space (Bachelard, 1994, 26, 174).

Furthermore, on the theme of the home, domesticity and community, Heidegger’s theories on place link being, belonging and living (Heidegger, 1971). This link is referred to by Heidegger as *Dasein* and is loosely translated as being [in the world], or being present. Heidegger believed that people exist together, conscious of the surrounding world and the everyday (Heidegger, 1971) This concept informs part of Heidegger’s idea on the *fourfold*; the defining character of earth and sky, divinities and mortals, including the spiritual and grounded, which formed part of the divinities, reflecting a search for phenomenological meaning. Furthermore, and germane to this project, Heidegger argued that spaces other than the home had a sense of *place* (Farrell Krell, 1993; Heidegger, 1971, Ch. II). These ‘other-places’ are inhabited or passed through albeit not lived in, such as railway stations or when travelling on the highway (Sharr, 2007, 39). Heidegger elaborates this point and highlights space as a connector of sites

and routes. By linking geographical points, through added construction, such as a bridge, for example, Heidegger rationalised that such interventions in space change the use of the immediate landscape (Farrell Krell; 1993, Sharr, 2007). Changes happen, Heidegger argues, also on a practical level, as people may walk across a bridge to reach the other side of a river, for example. Heidegger, writes Adam Sharr in *Heidegger for Architects*, was surprised to see the way people failed to appreciate the spaces in which they lived and felt that many were taking the everyday spaces for granted. In his view, responsibilities of the complex everyday were with everyone, and he believed that many people chose to “ignore the big questions” of community, society and the built environment and focused on trivial tasks and activities (Sharr, 2007, 7). Furthermore, being interested in the human experience, Heidegger argued that building and construction bypassed the human side of design and focused on the practical design process rather than the creation of experiential space, a space of community and interaction (Sharr, 2007, 42).

To develop his theories, Heidegger spent time close to nature, writing much of his work in a woodland hut in the Black Mountains in Germany, in what Heidegger describes as the “simple oneness” with the surrounding landscape. Here he lived with only basic facilities (Sharr, 2007, 67; Heathcote, 2013) [Fig 1]. Mountain walks and strolls along rural paths

inspired content to Heidegger's work, such as the essay collection *Pathmarks* (Sharr, 2007, 6; Heidegger, 1998). Heidegger argued that the thinking process was similarly complex as following a sign-posted woodland path that may lead to unexplored or new territory and ways of thinking and writing (Sharr, 2007, 43). This solitary working environment may be compared to the way that I work in my practice and the locations I select for my dance performances. Furthermore, this can be likened to my methodologies, where the thinking, preparation and performing are important on a phenomenological level and on each performance site.



[Fig 1: Heidegger's hut (n.d.), Photograph [Online], Black mountains, Germany. Available at: <http://www.critical-theory.com> [Accessed 13 June 2013].

Equally, Zumthor has shown concern with spaces of well-being, environmental calm and cleansing, where natural landscape is key, as in the Thermal Baths at Vals (1996). In his book, *Atmospheres*, Zumthor, like

Heidegger, connects place and mind, “We perceive atmosphere through our emotional sensibility”, he argued (2006, 13). Through individual and emotional triggers, we may define space, says Zumthor. When entering architectural spaces, Zumthor reflects that how in a fraction of a second, “[I] have this feeling about it [the space]”, arguing an immediate connection between body, space and the senses (Zumthor, 2012, 13). This notion is reflected in Zumthor’s choice of materials in the Thermal Baths project. Sources of natural materials allow an intimate experience of place not only in the spa environment, but also in a close, personal encounter with the built fabric of the architecture and topography, inside and out (Zumthor, 2012). Architectural design and spatial function underpin built space in Zumthor’s work. How space is used may be designed but the phenomenological effect space has on people will remain individual. Zumthor argues, that without the key components of people, sound and acoustics, materials, spatial proportions, light and other architectural features, the feelings about space may be very different. The notion of place may also be different at a different time or in a different season, due to lighting and other seasonal conditions (Zumthor, 1999, 2012, 15-17). It is interesting to see that for Zumthor architecture has a performative dimension that depends of the presence of others.

Zumthor questions the view about spatial ambience in his experience of



place, “What on earth is it that moves me?” he asks, and draws conclusions that the connections between feelings and space are “highly personal” (Zumthor, 2012, 13). Zumthor clarifies that the ‘body’ of materials is equally responsive to individual sensory spatiality as is the *feeling* about space. Therefore we can draw conclusions that the emotional space created forms part of the wider spectrum of architectural components (Zumthor, 1999, 2012, 21). The data gathered in Zumthor’s texts have been beneficial to this research as there are similarities to holistic aspects of Pallasmaa’s ideas, particularly as seen in *The Eyes of the Skin* and the *Identity, Intimacy and Domicile essays* (Pallasmaa 1994, 2005). These intimately written and detailed texts have helped position the sensory place of architecture for the purpose of this study.

Other work relevant to this project relate to anthropology and geography. Tim Cresswell’s texts have been helpful. Cresswell (2007) draws on some of the ideas in Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space* where home is referred to not as one place but “a series of places with their own memories” (Bachelard, 1994, 19). In Cresswell’s work, place is again analysed with emphasis on interaction between body, space and architecture through a phenomenological approach. Along similar lines to Zumthor and Pallasmaa, Cresswell argues that the environment, together with our experiences play a part in our receptiveness to space (Cresswell, 2007, 24). Noteworthy links in

Cresswell's work, such as referencing place through language, behaviour and culture have also been helpful, adding a practical angle. Furthermore, through information about inhabitation and geographic site analysis on particular place, we may imply "associated meanings" as culturally diverse, historical, or social events may shape our understanding and view of place. We may use our personal experiences to determine how we feel about specific geographic locations, for example (Cresswell, 2007, 2-7, 50).

Similarities and connectors between place and principles of psychology are drawn and can be explained in Steve Pile's book *The Body and the City* (Pile, 1996, 23). Here, Pile also argues that place is perceived through our experiences. In his analysis, Pile is critical of what in his view is a "cosy understanding of the world" by behavioural geographers and their connection to psychoanalysis of space (Pile, 1996, 20-24). Pile argues that these are two very different disciplines and is critical about some methods used by behavioural geographers such as too much emphasis on personal experience. However, although not always in agreement with the behavioural geographers' views, Pile does accept that the study of the 'inner', our personal experiences and views and the 'outer', public world has some common ground in the two disciplines (Pile, 1996, 20).

Continuing the theme of experience and place, Michel Foucault adopts a

broader perspective on the topic. Foucault's theories on Heterotopias address different types of spaces that may not be tangible, or actual spaces but notions of being in, for example a telephone conversation, meeting somewhere in the middle, in a non-place. Foucault addresses the notion of 'other-spaces', spaces of physical and psychological importance, as the concept of Heterotopia, the notion of in-between space or states of mind (Leach, 1997, 353). This concept of Heterotopia in Foucault's work has a range of implications, among them, connections between place and the performative aspect of space. In Foucault's essay *Of Other Spaces* he speaks about how place had been "displaced" and then "found its natural ground and stability", due to historical evolution, town planning, local activities and circumstances (Foucault, 1998, 244). Foucault argued that as places and cities started to come together, connections between inhabitants and spaces; naturally ordered the site. Foucault described this mapping as space "defined by relations of proximity between points or elements" or "trees, or grids" (Foucault and Miskowiec, 1986, 46-49).

### **1.3 The practice of theory: Place, performance and architecture**

American journalist Jane Jacobs described the city, particularly the American city, in flux in her writing, establishing a particular social and economic place (Jacobs, 2000). Jacobs described a time where American urban spaces were changing and communities were involved in resisting and actively supporting their community by defending local community shops and facilities and demonstrating against large-scale gentrification. Socio-economic interest could also be seen in the performance scene of the 1960s and 1970s. Many performers, for example, members of The Judson Dance Theatre participated in community issues and took a stand on local regeneration plans. Some artists chose to link their practice directly to activities in the community. One such example is the restaurant *FOOD* that was set up in New York by Gordon Matta-Clark and other artists (Yee et al, 2011, 55). Here, local residents and artists came together to create a social space where food, community activism and art came together (Yee et al, 2011).

Although there is no 'performance' in the work of Jacobs, it is an exemplar of place making and in-between activity where place is described in the present through a nostalgic tone of longing to protect heritage and the familiar, "I have made the daily ballet of Hudson Street sound more frenetic than it is, because writing it telescopes it [the place]. In real life, it is not that way. In

real life, to be sure, something is always going on, the ballet is never at a halt” (Jacobs, 2000, 64).

The Judson Dance Theatre started out from their rehearsal space at the Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village in the early 1960s [Fig 2]. I have focused on the work by Tricia Brown and Yvonne Rainer for the purpose of this thesis.

Furthermore, ideas of New York as “the city in flux” were explored in the choreographies of Brown and Rainer. Mundane and repetitive movements were created, echoing the politics of the city.



[Fig 2: Saarinen, H. (2012) self-portrait, digital photograph. Judson Memorial Church, Greenwich Village, New York].

Many artists and performers came from this environment, developing and transforming the discipline of dance. Collaborative activity took place between artists and dancers. Dancers and choreographers Brown, Rainer and artist Matta-Clark have all been central to this section of the research through their performative interactions with the city and its built fabric (Yee et al, 2011, 96-98).

I discuss the importance of performance practice and place. Simple movement and techniques echoing the everyday were used by Brown and Rainer and also artistically by Matta-Clark.

Similarities were seen between Rainer and Brown's performances in unorthodox locations, such as city rooftops and in the exposed construction materials and techniques of Matta-Clark's building installations, *Building Cuts* (Yee et al, 2011). Matta-Clark sliced through large buildings, that were due to be demolished, showing the construction and opening up the buildings fabric to the public. Glimpses of the interior could be seen from the street through the cuts. These improvised methodologies added a notion of the everyday to the performances in the city, as they moved away from formal practice, adding contemporary methods of movement and installation into city spaces (Brown, 2008, 28).

Rainer, for example, staged performances entitled *The Mind is a Muscle* (1968) and *Walk, She Said* (1972); these contained repetitive motion and adopted a multi-disciplinary approach using performance, audio and film (Rainer; 1968, 1972). Brown's New York city piece, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970) caught the pedestrians at street level by surprise as they looked up to discover a performer walking down the side of a building [Fig 3]. Through these unorthodox performances the everyday and particularly the human scale within the city could be seen from a very different angle. This is relevant also in my practice, where the body may be placed in unorthodox locations (Saarinen, *High Levels (of dust)*, 2011) or at unusual heights (Saarinen, 2015).



[Fig 3: Brown, T. (1970) *Man walking down the side of a building*. Photograph [Online]. 80 Wooster Street, New York. Available at: <http://www.trishabrowncompany.org> [Accessed 5 May 2014].

It was common for low-cost studios to be available at the time of Brown and Rainer's city performances (Yee et al, 2011). Many artists couldn't afford the available studio space in the most desirable and accessible areas, so they settled for unconventional spaces where interesting collaborative practice took place, leading to, for example, the formation of The Judson Theatre Group (Yee et al, 2011, 79).

Performances, including a mix of dance, music, film and experimental theatre were staged in the Judson Memorial Church. Through time and change, the regenerative process found its way to new areas in the city. This changed the way artists practiced and worked. In time, many artists and performers who had previously worked in the community, creating performances and work in the urban environment, began working within the gallery environment. One example is Brown's city interventions adapted for the Whitney Museum of Art (*Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, Brown, 1970, 2010). Rainer's *Trio A* (1966) also moved into gallery environments and was adapted and seen in at the Raven Row Gallery, London as late as in 2014 [Fig 4].





[Fig 4: Saarinen, H. (2014) Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A* performed by students from Trinity Laban conservatoire. 9 August. Photograph. Raven Row Gallery, London].

In the street performances and later in their adapted versions for the gallery environment we see influential work derived from experimental performance art forms such as Fluxus, where the concept of place was portrayed through the mundane everyday (Goldberg, 1988, 130). Reference was made to the cultural, political and economic climate where artists were moving further out from the city to cheaper studio spaces and setting up performances in the street. By staging simple movement the performance could be related to the ordinary person in the street. Rainer's dance performance *Trio A* (1966) was seen as controversial and full of ambiguity in its content and repetitive motions and sometimes performed by naked dancers avoiding looking at the

audience (Rainer, 2006, 349). The movements in *Trio A* fluidly changed from one to another without a real visible break, highlighting this difference from previous work where differentiation between movements had been more precise and important. The piece was staged as a solo to start with, later becoming a dance for three dancers and staged in a number of formats with male and female dancers (Rainer, 2006, 349-352).

Similarly, in Europe in the 1980s, important developments occurred in urban dance. Everyday movement took place in, for example parks and on traffic islands in the work of Pina Bausch and Tanztheater Wuppertal.

The dancers claimed space with recognisably uncanny movements, constructing place in unorthodox urban locations and industrial parks (Wenders, 2011) [Fig 5].

Performances portray the relationships between men and women, for example, young and old; obscure events, out of the ordinary take place in various locations, staged café settings, railway stations and roundabouts. The choreography describes relationships, particularly the ordinary, minute, yet complicated notions of everyday relationships, with humour and serious matter side by side. Dancers may also be dressed in ball gowns and suits, adding to the simple props and contrasting the everyday landscapes.



[Pina (2011) Directed by Wim Wenders [DVD] Film stills. London: Hanway Films].

Others continued to push the boundaries of performance practice and place. With emphasis on movement within site and context, particularly in the everyday, or 'in-between' space, contemporary practitioners such as American choreographer William Forsythe also fit into this category of place. Forsythe uses repeated formulae and spatial diagnostics through analysis and multimedia techniques where movement may be, for example, simplified into graphic actions as seen in Forsythe's *One Flat Thing reproduced* (2000), *Loss of Small Detail* (1991) and *Heterotopia* (2006). Pina Bausch, on the other hand applied the mundane, everyday and emotional uncanny to her work (Bausch, *Nelken*, 1982). The scenarios that are played out in the film *Pina* are imaginations of the mechanics of the everyday (Wenders, 2011). In one scene a female dancer dressed in a long gown, moves slowly through a leafy lawn, obviously blowing away leaves with a leaf blower machine. In another scene a male and female dancer move back and fourth, pushing and pulling away and towards each other, simulating a human relationship. In a third scene a joyous dance and run take place over simple

café chairs placed on a field. As the dancer jumps up on the chairs, each chair falls over and the dancer carries on to the next one, shouting and leaving the viewer to translate or recognize the action through personal experiences. Dance and the human figure are taken out of the ordinary context of the stage, and placed in the urban environment, intensifying the extraordinary amalgamation of body, relationships, experiences, dance and place. Bausch's Tanztheater "breaks everyday behaviour into its most elemental fragments" writes Lucy Weir in *Audience Manipulation? Subverting the Fourth Wall* (Weir, 2014, 26). Weir argues that Bausch challenges the unusual albeit familiar setting in the work of the expected format of performance and how it is carried out. Repetitious everyday movement engages the audience in questions and reflection on daily issues embedded within the choreography. Topics such as relationships are questioned and analysed through the performances, expressing strong emotions through movement (Weir, 2014).



[Fig 6: Pina Bausch (1982) *Nelken*. Photograph [Online]. Wuppertal, Germany. Available at: <http://www.pina-bausch.de/en/pieces/nelken.php#> [Accessed 23 Mar 2014].

Bausch's works also have social and political connotations. *Nelken* (1982) [Fig 6], and *Kontakthof* (1978) highlight German and European contemporary, social and historical concerns (Weir, 2014, 24-29). Weir goes on to cite Susan Manning on the subject of political undertones and the "relationship to the German post-war experience", adding another stance on place and performance (Manning, 2010). The work may appear improvised but every moment is carefully considered. Bausch closely observed the everyday as research for her choreography (Weir, 2014, 26). Bausch's

curiosity of observing the world around her started early on when she helped out at the hotel her parents ran in Solingen, Germany. Much of the observed everyday phenomena first explored here return in Bausch's narrative choreography. Chaotic movement, noise and the sound of people moving around have echoes of Bausch's childhood, particularly her experiences of war. Bausch was born in 1940.

Phenomenological place, a deeper sensory connection between body and space, may be seen in the work such as repetitious everyday vignettes. As noted in an interview with one of Bausch's dancers, Bausch questioned the deeper role of her choreography and dramaturgy, "*What are we longing for? Where does all the yearning come from?*" (Wenders, 2011). Much of this deep questioning is likely to be derived from Bausch growing up amongst many different people and listening to many stories by different narrators, argues Weir (2014, 26).

Forsythe's work at Ballett Frankfurt and for the William Forsythe Company, also addresses the notions of everyday. Here Forsythe uses the choreography of movement repetition and digital coding. For example, the online project *Synchronous Objects* (2009) and *One flat thing, reproduced* (2006), use alternative methodologies to choreographic and spatial representation in the form of an online database describing everything in the

performance, including relevance to costumes and movements [Fig 7]. However, Forsythe's choreography may also use objects as a substitute to conventional choreographic practice, such as a room full of tables, thus removing the body as the focus and allowing "the understanding of potential instigation and organization of action to reside" (Forsythe, 2011). The body becomes just a part of a larger performance with static and moving objects.



[Fig 7: Forsythe, W. (2000) *One flat thing, reproduced*. Photograph [Online]. Available at: <http://synchronousobjects.osu.edu> [Accessed 23 Mar 2014].

For example, when seen from above, in *One flat thing, reproduced*, the rectangular static shape of a collection of tables become a pattern around which dancers create movement. Awkward spaces between, on top of and underneath the tables are utilized in a repetitious yet busy coordinated manner. This creates dialogue between what appears to be static objects with dancers as moving particles, and later reorganising the tables around

the space. Erin Manning describes Forsythe's choreographic progress in *Choreography as Mobile Architecture* as "complex interlocking systems of action and organisation. This organisation is a series of themes, choreographed according to coding and data (Manning, 2013). Movement sequences, cues, sound, costume colours and data from a dancer's movement can be seen and traced on the interactive project website *Synchronous Objects*, "visualising choreographic data from dance to object" (Forsythe; Ohio State University, 2009). The mapping of space and movement are further explored with digital animation added to the recorded piece of the dance. This technique allows the web audience to interpret movement, space, pattern and composition alongside place. Several layers of information can be found on an interactive website, tracing the dancer's movements, the objects (tables, for example) and how the interactive system was developed. Forsythe argues that this method of overlaying digital information in post-production further describes and invites inter-disciplinary practice and the "freedom to think" about the process (Barrios, 2009). Forsythe's use of choreography through digital methodologies acts as a way of exploration of movement as well as clarification. He explains, "As poignant as the ephemerality of the [dance] act might be, its transient nature does not allow for sustained examination" and therefore, the application of digital media will examine movement, notation and site, alongside the physical movement of the dancers. Forsythe used similar digital techniques in the



series of short videos entitled *Lines-Complex-Operations* (Forsythe, 2008). Here movement is synchronised with graphically overlaid lines as instructions onto video of Forsythe demonstrating core movements.

In my work, postproduction of the filmed footage can help define movement by for example repeating or slowing down sequences (Saarinen, *Derelict Dance*, 2010, *Ad Hoc Performance*, 2010) although much of my work has not been manipulated by the post-production process and remains in its raw format.

## 2. What defines Place?

*“And in this intersection identities are moulded.*

*Your spatiality can ‘place’ you.*

*Places are part of what tells you who you are” (Massey, 2000)*

From the literature review, I aim to discuss space that may be found in buildings or urban sites and may become *place* through phenomenological and performative interventions. This section of the dissertation goes on to discuss space in buildings and other urban sites that may be thought of as ‘place’, locations with resonance and meaning for communities.

### 2.1 Phenomenology in architecture

Although phenomenology is widely discussed within architecture it is not broadly accessible as a sensory tool for analysing and establishing improved spatial environments. However, whilst it is not common practice for all architects and designers to fully embrace the sensory elements of phenomenological spaces, some architects consider this field a key aspect of good and holistic design practice. It is also a central concern for this thesis.

In architecture, the interpretation and influence of materials, lighting and shadows contribute to the spatial qualities and a tactile sensory experience closely connected to who we are and our heritage, Zumthor and Pallasmaa argue (Zumthor, 1999; Pallasmaa, 2005, 2009). Zumthor uses the term 'thinking space' when referring to spatial qualities in interiors and is primarily concerned with the experience a building creates (Zumthor, 1999). This might be through the innovative use of architectural components such as lighting. Zumthor also writes about the way that space should 'move' its inhabitants (Zumthor, 2012). Zumthor explores the ambience of space, the intimacy of physical space, design and materials that manages to touch, or indeed 'move' our senses. In his book *Atmospheres* (2012), he questions the way space may influence us and the ability to design sensory space successfully (Zumthor, 1999, 11). Architectural spaces with connections to sensory elements and nature may generate emotion within occupants and visitors through the ambience or episodes of personal memory that may become present when entering or passing through a space or building.

Pallasmaa, in turn refers to the buildings of Alvar Aalto, where creative process, materials application and a particular emphasis on site are all key sensory elements (Tuomi, Paatero, Rauske, 1998). Details in the architecture, for example, become an experience for the visitor. Door handles or handrails serve to create place through the touch of the natural

form and material (Schildt, 1994). “Aalto was able to site the [Paimio] Sanatorium, a tuberculosis sanatorium in Finland very freely on a beautiful pine heath” and worked to the smallest of detail, always considering the use and sense of place, as he outlined the project (1933) (Tuomi, Paatero, Rauske, 1998, 11). Aalto stated, “When I received the assignment I was myself ill and therefore had the opportunity to make a few experiments and find out what it really felt like to be sick. I became irritated at having to lie horizontally all the time, and my first observation was the rooms were designed for people who are upright and not for those who lie in bed day in and day out” (Schildt, 1994, 13, 69). Used as precedent in sensory and holistic design, Paimio Sanatorium was considered with care in each detail for every type of patient, as Aalto explained, “One of the prerequisites for healing is to provide complete peace [...]” (Schildt, 1994, 69) [Fig 8].



PAIMIO SANATORIUM - ALVAR AALTO



images via <http://www.alvaraalto.fi/net/paimio/paimio.html>

[Fig 8: Alvar Aalto Museum (n.d.) Paimio Sanatorium, Finland. Photograph [Online]. <http://www.alvaraalto.fi> [Accessed 1 Feb 2014].

Similarly, Zumthor has covered this ground and believes that great architecture “collects different things in the world, different materials and combines them” explaining, “It’s a kind of anatomy we are talking about”. “I mean the word ‘body’ quite literally. It’s like our own bodies with their anatomy and things we can’t see and skin covering us – that’s what architecture means to me and that’s how I try to think about it” (Zumthor, 2012, 23).

To elaborate these ideas, Lena Hammergren, of Stockholm University, refers to the writings of Swedish author Ivar Lo-Johansson in her essay *The Return of the Flaneuse* (Hammergren, 1996). Hammergren examines what is

described as a sense of bodily experience when entering a space, or to the importance of recognisable factors triggering memory within a building. “A doorknob, a perspective window [...]” is seen to have the capacity to produce, “open-minded and transparent thoughts and feelings“, describes Hammergren. She explains that objects such as a door or a window “are things which one repeatedly touches and which mould one’s body in the everyday practice of living in and using a house”. Hammergren calls this “memory progress” and explains it as “observing in the mind to observing and responding in the flesh” (Hammergren, 1996, 54-55). Hence, mind and body may connect as place, by sensing, observing and using familiar space.

## 2.2 Contemporary use of urban space

A very different place constructor, the contemporary urban skateboarder, in his/her own way, surveys the city, in a more temporal manner than the users of permanent, commercial or public spaces [Fig 9]. The fleeting motion through the city’s curbs, railings and ledges can be seen and heard albeit “the city is trying to eliminate [this] by adding stoppers and course ground to smooth city surfaces”. The skateboarder has no time to investigate or survey the city historically or in conscious phenomenological ways, but the social side, the “[skate] spot” and the happiness of the “session”, is nevertheless a spatial moment of interaction and construction of place (Borden, 2001, 153).



[Fig 9: Armitage, R. (2014) *Ivanov, urban skateboarder*. Digital photograph, Barcelona].  
Private collection of Author.

Åsa Bäckström, in her essay *Skateboarding: Radical and Romantic Physical Use of Urban Architecture* (Bäckström, 2007) writing on the subject of skateboarding and the city, refers to Iain Borden's description of spaces used by skateboarders, such as the plaza, as "leftover" spaces, or places with no real meaning, but where skateboarders may stay longer than other users of the space due to their activity directly relating to place. Bäckström claims that "with our socio-cultural perspective" these spaces cannot be "leftover" or unused spaces, and should be used by all, including skateboarders (Bäckström, 2007, Borden, 2001, 198). Protesting and defending place and heritage in the name of a group activity is seen in many sub-cultures including the skateboarding community, as in the successful

*Long Live Southbank* campaign in 2014 to save a historical skate spot threatened by retail developments on the Southbank in London (*Long Live Southbank*, 2014).

Additionally, I have found relevance in briefly stopping to think about the very different use of space by the urban skateboarder. Adroit in their movement, joyful and daring in the use of versatility beyond the ordinary, the skater has inspired me creatively, when considering the resourceful use of place and the human body. Furthermore, it is evident that certain sub cultures such as skateboarders are perceived suspiciously when there is fear or little knowledge of the 'different'; causing a heterogeneous level of understanding and appreciation of shared public space. It is common to see signs such as 'no skateboarding or similar activities' in urban areas. Skateboarders are also often told to 'move on' by authorities or security guards (Borden, 1998; Bäckström, 2007).

Similarly, artists and skateboarders Raphael Zarka and Shaun Gladwell have used the idea of place making in contemporary culture directly through skateboarding, sculpture and film respectively. Zarka's film, *Species of Spaces in Skateboarding*, uses extracts from several existing films dating from 1964 to 2006 and exhibit the interaction between materials and surfaces in the city or other urban environments, during the skateboarding



activity (Zarka, 2008) [Fig 10]. Zarka refers to the immediate influence in his art, “One [influence] is about the geometry of the spaces that skateboarding occurs in and around, which is obviously linked to modern architecture and its typological simplification of forms. Skateboarding does not give any answers but it definitely helps form some questions about the spaces we live in and the way we live in them” (Griffin, 2011).



[Fig 10: Zarka, R. (2008) *Species of spaces in skateboarding*. Video still [Online]. Available at: <http://www.frequency.com/video/species-of-spaces-in-skateboarding-by/91792911> [Accessed 3 Feb 2015].

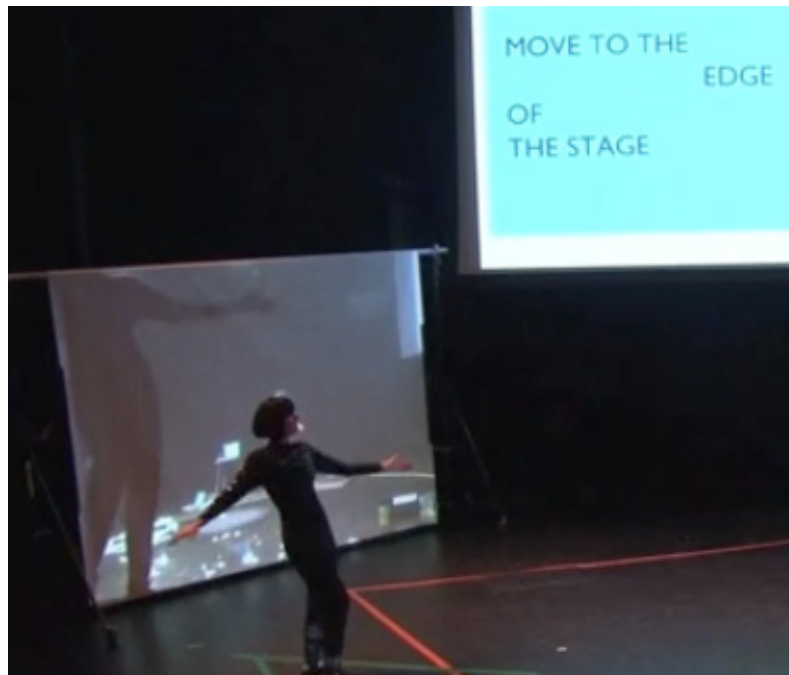
### 2.3 Place and performance

On a performative level, choreographers may use topological combinations for establishing spatial connecting points, simultaneously constructing place, for example. William Forsythe's performances *6 Collapsing Points* (2000), *One flat thing, reproduced* (2000) and *Synchronous Objects* (2009) are examples. The pieces allow movement and pace, through careful combinations of arrangement of body movement and in *Synchronous Objects*, multi media coding maps out physical and digital space.

The connecting of distant spaces was investigated in my performance *disDance 11054.80*, a project in collaboration with Ian Willcock of University of Hertfordshire who was on location in Singapore at LASSALLE school of Art (Saarinen/Willcock, 2013) at the *Remote Encounters* international conference (*Remote Encounters*, 2013). Two remote locations, Cardiff and Singapore, interacted through instructional-networked systems, triggered by cues. Simple instructions were randomly cued between the two distant locations, by pressing on keyboards or interactive floor pads. Interaction was managed by activating certain codes, instructing random movements via a shared projected interface.

I choreographed and performed *disDance 11054.80*, a dance piece for the *Remote Encounters* event in Cardiff using Willcock's LIMPT interactive

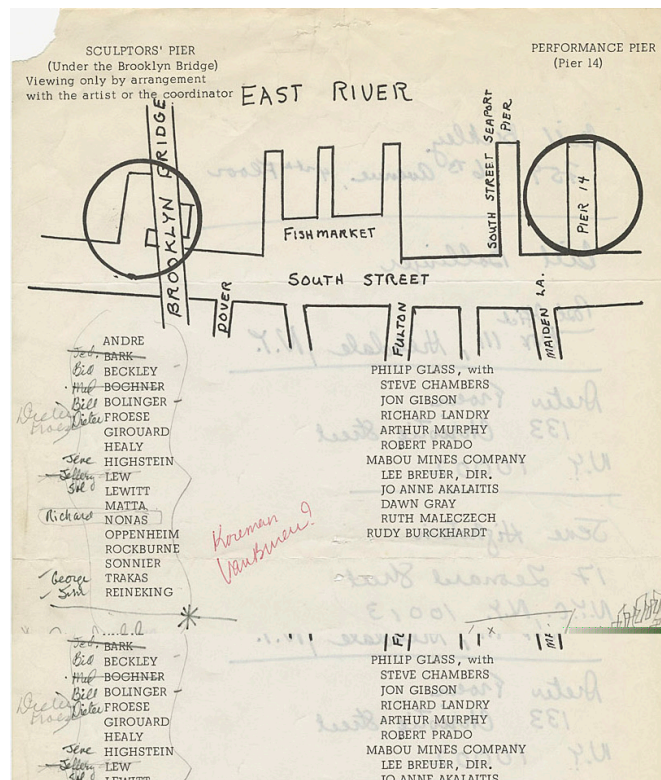
system Willcock, n.d.) to set out the order of choreography through randomly triggered cues displayed on a projected screen that could also be seen in Singapore. This performance enabled me to experiment within a contained stage setting, timeframe, new technology and remote collaboration via multimedia and the Internet [Fig 11].



[Fig 11: Saarinen, H., and Willcock, I. (2013) 'disDance 11054.80' in *Liminalities: a journal of performance studies* 10 (1). *Body, space and time in networked performance*. Film still [Online]. Available at: <http://liminalities.net/10-1/distance1105480.html> [Accessed 5 May 2014].

Collaborations, amongst artists contemporary to The Judson Dance Theatre, developed events around place and the recurring theme of repetitious movements representing the everyday and the home. Collaborative projects

commenced in the shared lofts and studios and extended out into the street and became regular events and space related performances, experimenting with the everyday. Artist Tina Girouard's *Swept House* was staged at the collective Brooklyn Bridge Event (1971) with Girouard sweeping debris from under the bridge, reflecting the activities of the 'home' and domesticity in her actions as well as turning a domestic act into a public performance [Fig 12].



[Fig 12: Moma (1971) *Brooklyn bridge event*, New York. Map [Online].

Available at: [http://www.moma.org/explore/inside\\_out/2011/06/27/from-the-records-of-moma-ps1-the-40th-anniversary-of-the-brooklyn-bridge-event](http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2011/06/27/from-the-records-of-moma-ps1-the-40th-anniversary-of-the-brooklyn-bridge-event) [Accessed: 11 Dec 2013].

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“Home is in the skin and mind. Wherever they are, you are home”, Girouard said about her performance (*Girouard*, 1971). This activity highlighted the

concept of domesticity and home as an intimate, private place but gave it a public performative position. Girouard was also interested in nomadic space and created work based on place and the home.

In *Swept House* (1971), the floor space transformed through the sweeping into the depiction of an architectural floor plan of a domestic interior (Yee et al, 2011, 78, Crimp et al, 2012, 81) [Fig 13].

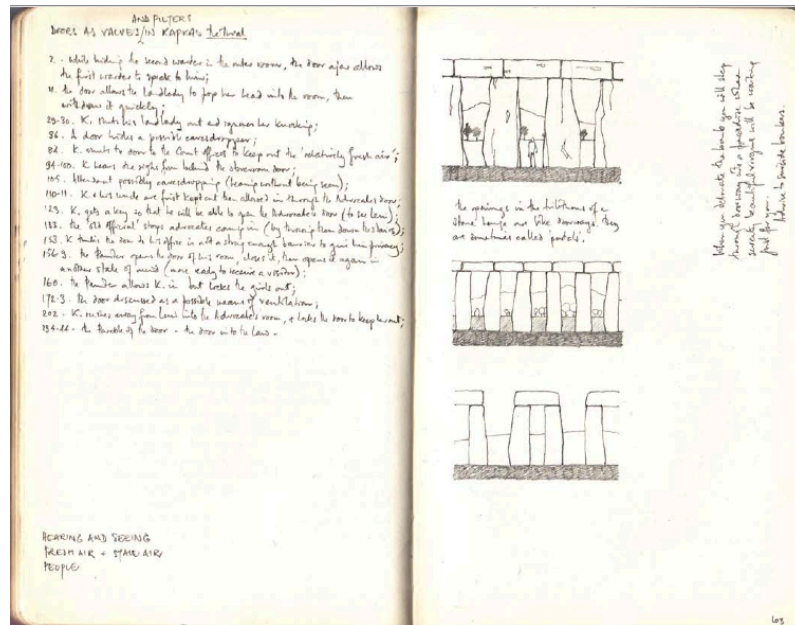


[Fig 13: *Moma ps1* (n.d.) Tina Girouard: swept house. Photograph [Online]. Available at: [http://www.moma.org/explore/inside\\_out/2011/06/27/from-the-records-of-moma-ps1-the-40th-anniversary-of-the-brooklyn-bridge-event](http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2011/06/27/from-the-records-of-moma-ps1-the-40th-anniversary-of-the-brooklyn-bridge-event) [Accessed: 11 Dec 2013].

The *Brooklyn Bridge* Event was part of what started the *Institute for Art and Urban Resources*. The project developed a strong focus on architecture, place and performance in derelict city spaces. This formed the foundations

for what is currently known as MOMA PS1 (Interactives n. d.). The *Brooklyn Bridge Event* was an immediate response to the economic, social and cultural situation of the time. Derelict buildings became spatially interesting as a transitional performance stage, whilst rapid regeneration of neighbourhoods took place around them. Neglected space and buildings were used by artists 'passing through' as rents were cheaper, until the buildings were refurbished with high rents and new, high-end customers replacing the artists and other less wealthy temporary occupants (Jacobs, 2000, 225).

Others have shown an interest in the narrative of architecture and the built environment. Simon Unwin has written about architecture and place. In *Analysing Architecture* and more recently in blogs and online notebooks, Unwin introduces a platform to record and analyze architecture and the built environment in a different way (Unwin, 1997). In these blog posts, notebooks and social media, new forms of *place* occur. *The Place Notebooks*, (Unwin, n.d.) is a set of written and illustrated notes and sketches, detailing observational studies of buildings and events act as a form of place-making performance [Fig 14].



[Fig 14: Unwin, S. (n.d.) *Simon Unwin: Notebooks*. Digital photograph [Online]. Available at: <http://www.simonunwin.com> [Accessed 23 Oct 2013].

The *Place Notebooks* are part of a series of online, downloadable notebooks on architectural themes, published online on Unwin’s website (Unwin, n. d.) alongside information on his published work, such as *Doorway* (Unwin, 2007) and *Analysing Architecture* (Unwin, 2014). *The Place Notebooks* nevertheless highlight an important position within the discussion on *place*. Here, the notation of ideas and fleeting topics are quickly recorded as transient information, such as observing the landscape as walking, becomes available. The process is more important than the finished product as I also show in my pieces *Unisphere Dance and Shoreline* (2012). *Unisphere Dance* was developed as I came across the site of the 1964 New York World Fair where I staged an ad hoc performance. With the large-scale Unisphere

sculpture as the immediate site and backdrop, I responded to the site and audience around me impulsively, considering human scale and the built sculptural structure. *Shoreline* was developed through exploring the New York Staten Island shoreline along the east side of the island. The uneven and slippery ground made the performance difficult and appears static, thus deliberately responding to the site (Saarinen, 2012).



### 3. Phenomenology and Place

#### 3.1 Sensory space: Territories and boundaries

Having looked at the conceptual foundations of phenomenology and some of its spatial and architectural applications, I now want to move on to another examination of the authors with particular reference to sensory space.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard does not merely refer to the descriptive interior or the physicality we can touch and be present in, he also connects to the sensory side of space, memory and dreams. “Through dreams, the various dwelling places in our lives co-penetrate and retain the treasures of former days” (Bachelard, 1994, 66). He argues, “The house’s welcome is so genuine that even what may be seen from the windows belongs to it” (Bachelard, 5, 66). Bachelard’s dreamlike memory spaces contribute the notion that is created by human presence in space, “[...] a primitiveness which belongs to all, rich and poor alike, if they are willing to dream” (Bachelard, 4). Bachelard is particularly concerned with dream spaces and argues that it is “a good thing” to have dreams about places where we might live in the future, as it is important to continue to dream, even if “we shall not have time to achieve it” (Bachelard, 1994, 61).

Links to sensory space can be found between Bachelard, Heidegger,

Zumthor and Pallasmaa. Pallasmaa states in his paper *Aesthetic and Existential Space* (2005), “[The house] is an instrument with which to confront the cosmos”, indicating that architecture embodies existential space, acknowledging the Heideggerian vision of *Dasein*, or *being-there*, being present in the everyday. Bachelard’s view can be seen to critique Heidegger’s vision of architectural space as being ‘pre-structured’ and without the emotional or sensory function. However, Heidegger states, through the theory of the *Fourfold*, which can be translated as a set of existential and sensory conditions, within which humans live and design buildings, is a world where sensory, spiritual and physical aspects exist (Sharr, 2007, 24). Heidegger explains the *Fourfold*, “The building gathered together earth, sky [all that exists between sky and earth, the practical side], divinities [the spiritual] and mortals [the people]”, allowing people to live a fulfilled life with equal practical and sensory elements (Sharr, 2007, 68).

Pallasmaa also writes about multi-sensory space and nature: “A walk through a forest is invigorating and healing due to the constant interaction of all sense modalities”, echoing Bachelard’s sensorial place, within the boundaries of the home. Pallasmaa is concerned with the “imbalance in our sensory system” contributed by the expansion of industrialization and negligence in the built environment (Sharr, 2005, 45). Pallasmaa further highlights sensory space, when he argues that touching a carved wooden

door handle at, for example, Aalto's *Viipuri Library* (Alvar Aalto Museum (2011), immediately connects the body to space and the senses (Pallasmaa, 2009, 74-75). Reaction to space is highly individual, yet can connect us as people through architecture. However, Pallasmaa argues that our sensory appreciation, "memory and imagination, and dreams" have been left "homeless" due to the "inhumanity of contemporary architecture" (Pallasmaa, 2005, 19). Furthermore, Pallasmaa writes about the importance of sensory awareness throughout the design process and refers to Aalto's careful choice of materials, design details and simple forms, that allow the "consciousness and vision" to become "internalised and embodied" (Pallasmaa, 2009, 74).

These notions can be likened to Heidegger's *Dasein*, as a form of consciousness with the space around us. We may experience a place that has just been constructed, touched or felt through an intimate sensory connection with entering a building, opening a door and moving through an interior (Pallasmaa, 2009, 74-75). Similarly, Zumthor treats buildings as if they are emotive connectors. When entering a building, there is, he argues, a lasting first sensory impression, "We can't change or influence this impression, as once it has happened it is there". Therefore, argues Zumthor, it is important to get the architectural design process right from the start (Zumthor, 2012, 15). Zumthor expands on this by outlining the process of

spending time on an architectural site to collect sensory materials to inform the design process. This can be seen and sensed at the Thermal Baths at Vals, where these sensory techniques are key (Zumthor, 2012, 10-11).

### 3.2 Notions on place: Heidegger

Heidegger has been instrumental in the recognition of the everyday in architecture, the built environment and domestic space. Heidegger's essay *Building Dwelling Thinking* (Heidegger, 1971) fostered debate and acted as a catalyst for developing a wider philosophical vision for architects and design historians and the everyday in the built environment (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 34). Heidegger notes that all buildings are not for dwelling, but may form an important place in the everyday world. Spaces such as bridges and hangars may be important as transient spaces. These may also include vehicles as workplaces or other non-domestic environments (Sharr, 2007, Heidegger, 1971). As Heidegger argues, "We travel and find shelter on the way, now here, now there.." (Farrell Krell, 1993, 349). These findings further support the idea that dwelling and place were central in Heidegger's thinking. Place had a deeper purpose than just acting as a shelter (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). Heidegger believed that "Building configures physically, over time, how people measure their space in the world", arguing that people need to be involved in their wider everyday world on practical and emotional levels

(Sharr, 2007, 45).

Sharr highlights simple examples used by Heidegger to explain the importance of dwelling and the everyday. Intimate domestic objects or rituals of daily life such as the dining table or a picnic in the park could be likened to architecture. They each contain components of construction, organisation and programming, albeit on a domestic level (Sharr 2007, 41). The *locale*; or place, in Heidegger's argument, is dependent on the occupation of space; the user, the passer by, the inhabitant and their activities (Farrell Krell, 1993, 356). Philosophically, this may be seen as the experience of a place with memory and history that may be created through an event. Participants may pass a spot where, for example, a picnic, took place in the past. An individual may remember an event; have feelings and memories of the event (Sharr, 2007, 2-9). This is also relevant in my own work and the sites and relationships formed whilst and after performing.

Heidegger argued the priorities for architecture and urban regeneration must be that structures generate a sense of belonging and the experience of life. The everyday routines should be important and taken into consideration when planning and organizing spaces. However he stressed that there should not be priority for the visual and decorative in design and building but, again, concentrates on the everyday (Heidegger 1971, Sharr, 2007, 41). Heidegger refers to different types of architecture and activities and

separated the domestic projects from large-scale buildings. He argued that non-domestic spaces, such as work places, were very much part of the everyday and familiar, “The working woman is at home in the spinning mill” (Sharr, 2007, 39). Heidegger stressed that place is not just home, but can be any place occupied regularly, created through inhabitation, through personal experience, work or connection between “people and the world around them” (Sharr, 2007, 49).

Moreover, Heidegger argued that a space might be transformed into *place*, or *locale*, through its association with a physical event or daily ritual (Sharr, 2007, 67). He means that there is more to a space once it has been occupied or important or personal events have occurred in the space. One such place, the bridge, is referred to not just as a place where people return to, to carry out ritualistic everyday activities, walk across; but as something more; a point of connection, the agency of *place* (Farrell Krell, 1993, 355). This link allows for the everyday to function and connect also on a larger, public scale through its construction, location and the communication between its users (Farrell Krell, 1993, 356). A bridge, for example, can be seen as a physical boundary but also, a space in-between, connecting people through the everyday and events that may take place. Links between these ideas and essentially, the notion of being, are the spaces in-between, although it is important to note that Heidegger did not refer entirely to

physical place but also to ontological place, describing the phenomenological journey from home to work, from place to place; as a form of space in-between (Farrell Krell, 1993, 350-351). In my practice, this connection can be likened to dance in spaces in-between and the interactive activity between body, mind and space. Through events and memory, an ordinary space becomes a place, as a link may be created to an event through interaction (Farrell Krell, 1993, 351). Heidegger connects back to the *fourfold*, the concept where the spiritual, sensory and practical elements in life are all considered (Farrell Krell, 1993). My work also highlights the sensory side and the connection between the performance, performer and the site.

### 3.3 Phenomenology and place: Pallasmaa

Phenomenologist and architect Juhani Pallasmaa writes about the concept of place in architecture. He describes multi-sensory space throughout his work, describing the connection to memory and how this may be triggered by the senses: "Touch is the sensory mode that integrates our experience of the world with that of ourselves" (2005, 11). Furthermore, Pallasmaa explores how by using all our senses we move through space and become integrated into the landscape as we hear, smell, see and experience our environments holistically (Pallasmaa, 2005, 41). Pallasmaa goes on to explain the

connection between the body and the city, “[...] my legs measure the length of the arcade and the width of the square; my gaze unconsciously projects my body onto the facade of the cathedral, where it roams over the mouldings and contours, sensing the size of recesses [...] and my hand grasps the door pull as I enter the dark void behind” (Pallasmaa, 2005, 40-41).

Pallasmaa’s view of space regularly refers to the Finnish landscape, folklore, crafts and architecture (Pallasmaa, 2005). The immediacy of nature, natural forms and craftsmanship in art and design and simple domestic rituals may be seen as influences for many Finnish designers and architects. As the Finnish landscape consists of large areas of forest and lakes, national crafts are closely linked to locally sourced materials and reflect the topography also in shape and form. Pallasmaa believes it is important to reflect the sensory aspects of nature, life’s rituals and routines in architecture. He elaborates on this in *The Geometry of Feeling*, (Pallasmaa, MacKeith 2005) where the introductory sentence reads, “Why do so very few modern buildings appeal to our feelings...”. He stresses the importance of a close connection to sensory and phenomenological space and spatial experiences. Carrying on with this theme, Pallasmaa continues, “One of our most important “raw materials” of phenomenological analysis of architecture is early childhood memory” (Pallasmaa, MacKeith 2005). In his native Finland, Pallasmaa would have had close access to nature, whilst growing up. A conclusion can



be drawn that this would have had an impression and connections to what became a way of thinking, feeling and 'seeing' space (Pallasmaa, 2011). This intimate connection to nature is also seen in the architecture, furniture design and detailing of Alvar Aalto. With this dialogue we may assume that the environment and background to spatial understanding, use and perception originate in early personal experiences. Connecting surroundings with architecture, Pallasmaa explains, "[...] various architectures can be distinguished on the basis of the sense of modality they tend to emphasise" then refers to the architecture of Aalto, where "full recognition of the embodied human condition and of the multitude of instinctual reaction hidden in the human unconscious" (Pallasmaa, 2005, 70). Here we see Pallasmaa drawing links to Aalto's concern with the object and body connecting through furniture design, interiors and mindful architectural details [Fig 15]. Aalto's use of landscape and topographic contours in buildings, furniture and objects further underpin Pallasmaa's view.



[Fig 15: Spens, M. (1994) *Viipuri library: Alvar Aalto*. Photograph. London: Academy Group Ltd. p.12.].

Pallasmaa continues to defend the importance of the landscape and surroundings. He highlights the importance of a building's façade, its courtyards, trees and the smallest details such as nationally protected forest flowers; add inspiration to the architectural design process and sensory space (Barbican, 2007). Pallasmaa argues, "Architecture exists in another reality from our everyday life and pursuits. The emotional force of ruins, of an abandoned house or rejected objects stems from the fact that they make us imagine and share the fate of their owners. They seduce our imagination to wonder away from the works of everyday realities" (Pallasmaa, 2005, 452).

Pallasmaa questions the phenomenological response to architecture by asking "Why do so very few modern buildings appeal to our feelings, when

almost any anonymous house in an old town or the most unpretentious farm outbuilding gives us a sense of familiarity and pleasure?” (Pallasmaa, MacKeith, 2005). Pallasmaa refers to Bloomer and Moore (Bloomer, Moore, 1977) who have both written about the importance and the lack of phenomenological methodology in today's domestic setting. The relationship between the past and the present and particularly memory is missing (Bloomer, Moore, 1977). Referring to the work of American architect Louis Kahn (Design Museum, 2014), Pallasmaa explores intimate architectural experiences that are assisted by elements such as light, shadow, landscape and vistas. He continues to say that even feelings of loneliness can be “part of a strong architectural experience”, and questions the difference between feelings of solitude when experienced in buildings and those experienced in nature (Pallasmaa, 2005, 452). Pallasmaa continues to assert that the way solitude may be felt as an architectural experience is dictated by the way structures are built and designed, and by the architectural process. Through a similar lens, we may determine here that these feelings of solitude, in a natural as well as a manmade architectural setting, might be rooted in a place in-between, a kind of intersection where melancholy acts as a facilitator for these feelings and architectural sensory observations. These are notions that form a strong part of my own dance work and practice, with examples such as *Chapel Dance*, 2012, *Barn Dance*, 2012.

### 3.4 Architecture and landscape: Zumthor

Here I return to Zumthor, as his work demonstrably focuses on landscape. A concern with location, site and place add a holistic link in the architectural design process, inviting a connection between inhabitation, use and phenomenological appreciation of place. Site and location are key factors, as are the interior details, architectural components and the use of space. In this chapter I focus on the specific ideas of architect Zumthor.

The texts and work of Zumthor have been relevant to this research, particularly in the connections and comparisons between body and architecture. In this sense his work has much in common with that of Pallasmaa. This may be referred to as an interior and exterior as the anatomy and the protective outer skin and the sense of well-being and order of arrangement in buildings (Zumthor, 2012, 23). Zumthor develops the comparison to the construction of buildings and how the meaning of materials used in architecture plays a pivotal part in determining the experiential qualities of buildings. The architect's decisions on materiality make up the perceptions of the visitor, audience and occupant have of the building, not just physically as a tactile object or material, but also as a sensory aspect to the overall experience. Zumthor writes, "Material is endless. Take a stone: you can saw it, grind it, drill into it, spilt it or polish it – it will become a different thing each time" (Zumthor, 2012, 25).



[Fig 16: Zumthor, P. (1996) *Thermal baths at Vals*. Switzerland. Photograph [Online]. Available at: <http://www.dezeen.com/2013/02/06/peter-zumthor-at-the-royal-gold-medal-lecture-2013/> [Accessed 7 April 2013].

The Thermal Baths in Vals, Switzerland is an example of the architect placing the body at the centre of the architectural concept *Zumthor*, 2012 [Fig 16]. “It was incredibly important for us to induce a sense of freedom of movement, a milieu for strolling, a mood that had less to do with directing people than seducing them”, Zumthor writes (2012, 41). The underpinning of sensory architecture – allowing the body to stay central to the spatial experience is key in Zumthor’s work. The building at Vals invites the visitor to be part of the architectural experience, with the landscape and building changing with the seasons, opening and closing for activities inside and out, allowing the body to interact at different levels throughout the year. In the

summer months, for example, the focus is on outdoor activity, in the outdoor pools, admiring the meadow landscape. In wintertime, the heated pools act as a refuge from the weather and the everyday, within the protective walls of the Thermal Baths (Zumthor, 2012).

Zumthor extends his concern with connections between the body and architecture, describing architecture in terms of the details, “Thresholds, crossings, the tiny loop-hole door, the almost imperceptible transition between the inside and the outside” (Zumthor, 2012, 47). It is clear that details, sensory materials and construction are key in the work. He continues by comparing and relating to the body through examples of sensory architecture, how this alerts the body of its surroundings and how each detail affects the inhabitation and presence. In the construction at Vals, a thoroughly executed holistic design approach took place, determining details and stillness in the creative process of looking, observing and seeing. Zumthor writes, “[I] spent five minutes or so looking at the actual appearance of things in my living room and what the light was like (Zumthor, 2012, 14). That same take on sensory order and arrangement in architecture (Zumthor, 2007/2012, 23) is discussed through the use of materials and how the selection and suitability of materials is crucial to the process of producing the kind of space that “moves’ the user. “One word for it is Atmosphere” [and] “how can I get it into my own work?” Zumthor questions (Zumthor, 2012, 10).

He talks of the importance of materials and notes for example how “[...] the cedar was so soft and had no trouble at all asserting itself in this milieu” (Zumthor, 2012, 27). All aspects of design from planning to the actual use of an architectural interior are all carefully considered.

Zumthor poetically analyses phenomenology and memory, perception and illusion, through observing the vision of the architect and inhabitant alike. The design of the Thermal Baths in Vals is an example of architects placing the body at the centre of the theme and concept. This is key in Zumthor’s work: allowing the body to stay central to the spatial experience (Zumthor, 2012, 41). Of The Thermal Baths in Vals, Zumthor explains that it was more than simply designing space, it was about designing so “you would enter and begin to feel you could stay there” or it is like “designing a stage set or directing a play”. It is here that this work’s relevance to my own agenda emerges with particular clarity.

Architects use intimate connections to buildings and Zumthor, a key figure in the area of sensory architecture, has written extensively about sensory and atmospheric architecture and place in his book *Atmospheres* (Zumthor, 2012), using examples from the built environment through to the way music may influence emotion and *place* (Zumthor, 2012, 4).

### 3.5 Heterotopias: Foucault

Michel Foucault's concept of *Heterotopia*, the idea of different sequestered spaces examined for distinct social practice, is described in his book *Other Spaces* (Foucault, 1986, 22-27). Foucault's text has informed my experiments with body and *place*. In my work I consider physical spaces and spaces in-between, such as experiential spaces (Saarinen, *In-between Space*, 2011, Saarinen, *Chapel Dance*, 2012). The spaces that Foucault refers to, as 'other' may be mental and physical spaces. He argues that Heterotopias are somewhere in-between designated spaces, they are 'cosmoses' that hold spatial and psychological importance (Foucault, 1986, 24). There are spaces that may exist when looking in the mirror or whilst speaking on the phone. They are "a kind of effectively enacted utopia", existing "in every society" with particular social and cultural associations to place (Foucault, 26, 1986). Heterotopias may also be spaces representing feelings and emotions, remembering or utilising spaces or people outside of the everyday or familiar terrain, such as hospitals or cemeteries (Foucault, 1986, 24-25; Leach 1997, 353). Foucault also spoke of spaces "unfamiliar" or "outside the norm" such as the place of the boat, a mobile home or non-permanent and transient place (Foucault, 1986, 24).

Foucault also discusses places, how history plays a part in the shaping of Heterotopias. Here, he is mainly concerned with hierarchic places, inside



and outside, celestial, rural places that we all occupy. They may be forced places, such as prisons, or ritualistic spaces such as Finnish Saunas, where rituals of cleansing and purification take place in the immediacy of nature (Leach, 1997). Not unlike Heidegger's place of the *Divinities* (Heidegger, 1971), there are references in Foucault's work to the urban cultural landscape and early Heterotopias, cities taking shape from being a mixture of 'other' spaces, when considered in urban planning. Foucault signifies place and how place is located, because of history, activities and circumstances and how cities started to develop through a series of layered places, Heterotopias. For example, the cemetery used to be centrally located in towns, and today we tend to see cemeteries located outside of communities (Foucault, 1986, 25). Connections between inhabitants and spaces are debated; the natural hierarchy that ordered place. Foucault argued the priority of the inhabited space and determined the site, its connecting factors, geographic location and industrial developments were more important than human relationships (Leach, 1997, 353). Foucault refers to Bachelard's phenomenological ideas of the interior, the inside spaces of the home, nurtured and psychological spaces (Foucault, 1986, 25). Foucault argues that these heterotopic spaces are "real places; places that exist and are formed in the very founding of society, which can be described as sub-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites; all the other real sites that can be found within culture" [...]. "Places of

this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality” (Leach 1997, 353). Foucault’s Heterotopias can be found in society too, they are categorised into different ‘principles’ of spaces in-between, “Heterotopias of deviation: those in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed” (Leach 1997, 353). These places may be care homes for old people, prisons or graveyards. Having looked back at the nineteenth century, how the past history had affected the time, crises, war and developments in industry, Foucault noted, “The present *epoch* will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side”, arguing that time now accepted change and new connections (Foucault, 1986, 25). Foucault spoke of learning from the past and using all available resources; “[...] the effort to establish elements that could have been connected on a temporal axis, an ensemble of relations” (Foucault, 1986, 23-24), describing a desire for unity of place. Foucault’s interest in space was also connected to the interior, the emotional space, the home; but the focus remained on the exterior spaces, the places that connect transportation and infrastructure. Utopias are the spaces that are ‘unreal’, with no real connection to the sites we occupy (Foucault, 1986). Therefore Foucault considered there was a need for Utopias, as a type of ideal or virtual space, for the ‘real’ or actual spaces to function or stay bearable (Leach, 1997). Summing up the concept

of Heterotopia, Foucault said “There are real places, places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society, which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture” [...]. “Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality” (Foucault, 1986, 24).

Foucault likens the concept of Heterotopia to the experience of looking in a mirror, where space becomes a non-place. Although a reflection can be seen in the mirror, argues Foucault, the space in the mirror becomes a true and untrue space at the same time. Heterotopia becomes the space between the unreachable and untouchable, utopia, virtual and real; the tangible; and the spaces in-between, explains Foucault (Foucault, 1986, 23-26).

To conclude, this chapter has discussed another strategic form of in-between space. It is fundamental to my research as my own work deals largely with in-between, unorthodox spaces, often in the city, spaces that are both physical and ontological, accidental collisions where stumbled-upon spaces and their thresholds are core to my practice (*Derelict Dance*, 2010, *Ad Hoc Performance*, 2010).

## 4. The Body, Place and the Urban Realm

As we have seen, this project draws upon methodologies that have been used to understand space through the example of movement, dance and performance. In this Chapter, I discuss the background to a selection of historically important practice relating to my work; these are case study based dance and performative spatial interventions in the urban environment. I aim to set the scene from the perspective of place created through dance and movement, particularly in 1970s New York.

### 4.1 Performance and the city

The Judson Dance Theatre was key to the formation of many collaborative ideas and performance, in the late 1960s and early 1970s New York. In *Pioneers of the Downtown Scene of the 1970s*, which accompanied a major exhibition with the same name in 2011 at the Barbican Art Gallery in London, give an insight to this pivotal time (Yee et al, 2011). The Judson Memorial Church in New York's Greenwich Village became the studio space for The Judson Dance Theatre, set up by Yvonne Rainer, Tricia Brown, Steve Paxton, and Simone Forti with dancers, choreographers and artists (Crimp et al, 2012, 65). The Judson Theatre Group was formed in 1962 and the group continued to be influential until the mid 1970s (Yee et al, 2011). This was a

time of unrest and rapid change in the city landscape and infrastructure and studio and living costs were rising fast (Yee et al, 2011). It was in this context that a range of multi disciplinary collaborations grew. Some of the early pieces of the time, such as Rainer's *Trio A* (1966) bore the key components to what was happening politically and economically in the city of New York [Fig 17]. Movement, 'repetition and variation' underpinned improvisation and the everyday through simple dance and movement (Yee et al, 2011, 69).



[Fig 17: Moore, P. (1967) *Yvonne Rainer: Trio A*. Photograph of performance [Online]. Hunter playhouse, New York. Available at: [http://www.frieze.com/issue/print\\_article/my-influences-alexandra-bachzetsis/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/print_article/my-influences-alexandra-bachzetsis/) [Accessed 13 May 2014].

The Judson Dance Theatre practiced and performed in low cost space and experimented with showing work in unusual locations with major pieces performed in the street, "addressing urban problems and creating open air

performances” as in Tricia Brown’s *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970) and *Roof Piece* (1973) (Yee et al, 2011, 27, 77). In 2011, *Roof Piece*, for example, was reproduced and performed by Tricia Brown Dance Company on the High Line in New York City and in April 2013 at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Center for the Art of Performance (Yee et al, 2011, 33) [Fig 18].



[Fig 18: Tricia Brown dance company (1971) *Roofpiece*. Photograph [Online]. New York. Available at: <http://www.trishabrowncompany.org> [Accessed 13 May 2014].

Everyday movement was elevated, placed in unexpected locations, at extraordinary angles, creating a direct dialogue with the public, moving bodies suspended and moving perpendicular high above the audience (Brown, 2008, 9).

Another important element of place making and the city was the work of Gordon Matta-Clark. Matta-Clark founded *Anarchitecture*, a collaborative in the early 1970s New York of likeminded artists and friends. This group was concerned with “dialogues about architectural and personal notions of space” where ambiguous space was central to the groups’ interest (Yee et al, 2011, 93).

Matta-Clark constructed his version of place by cutting and slicing through the built fabric of architecture, exposing construction details and materiality, allowing passers-by glimpses of the cut out spaces (Yee et al, 93; Moure: 2006). *Anarchitecture* members included Laurie Anderson, Richard Nonas and Tina Girouard (Yee et al, 2011, 93). Matta-Clark also used the urban space as his workspace and became the exhibition space for his building installations (Murg, 2013). Derelict space and structures threatened for demolition were used to create opportunities for dialogue about the city, space and the perception of architecture, creating “[...] metaphors for the human condition”. Having studied architecture, Matta-Clark pursued the artistic elements of the city through the method of slicing through buildings, questioning the fabric of the built environment (Yee et al, 2011, 72). Matta-Clark’s experimental work in the city was inspired by Brown’s and Rainer’s city dance interventions such as *Leaning Duets* (1970) and *Woman Walking*

*Down a Ladder* (1973, 2010) and started executing similar ideas of performance in his field of art and architecture (Eleey, 2008, 35).

Matta-Clark's *Bronx Floors* (1972-73) not only functioned as a performative take on the city; but also spoke deeply of the structure of the buildings, the physical elements of architecture, the layers seen and those imagined beyond. Matta-Clark cut through the physical building materials, creating holes and exposing the layers of construction materials from structural to wallpaper finishes [Fig 19]. The pieces spoke of the way in which materials are used, and how there are physical layers of past histories and narrative of use intertwined within the structure and materiality of neglected and soon to be demolished buildings. There was also a strong connection to social agendas and territories within the city, such as community, art practice and regeneration.





[Fig 19: Matta-Clark, G. (1972) *Threshold*. Photograph [Online]. Available at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/07/towards-anarchitecture-gordon-matta-clark-and-le-corbusier> [Accessed 15 May 2014].

With regenerative change taking place, areas of New York were changing fast. Social issues were key to Matta-Clark and became central to his physical work and installations in derelict buildings. He was concerned with the amount of unused land and buildings in New York. *Threshold* (1972) and *Threshold* (1973), part of a series of installations called the *Bronx Series*, document the social and economic intersections and in-between spaces just as it exposes the physical materials and architectural construction (Yee et al, 2011,107)



[Fig 20: Tricia Brown dance company (1973) *Woman walking down a ladder* Photograph [Online]. Available at: <http://www.trishabrowncompany.org> [Accessed 20 May 2014].

”By undoing of building there are many aspects of the social conditions against which I am gesturing”, Matta-Clark wrote in an undated typewritten statement, *Building Dissections*. This was edited for the 2012 Barbican Exhibition *Pioneers of the Downtown Scene New York* (Yee et al, 2011, 107) and is included in the exhibition publication with the same title (Yee et al, 2011, 107) [Fig 20]. Matta-Clark argued in the statement, “[...] the question is a reaction to an ever less viable state of privacy, private property and isolation”. “I seek typical structures which have certain kinds of historical and cultural identities. But the kind of identity for which I am looking for has to

have a recognisable social form". Matta-Clark's statement further explained that he was interested in taking the notions; place, social conditions and event further and "deal with them directly through municipal involvement" (Yee et al, 2011, 107). Matta-Clark and artists hosted community and art events in the restaurant *FOOD* in SoHo between 1971-74 (Yee et al, 2011, 80, 107). Matta-Clark's statement addresses the "complexity which comes from taking an otherwise completely normal, conventional, albeit anonymous situation and redefining it, translating it into overlapping and multiple readings of conditions past and present". Matta-Clark was interested in movement as a gesture in his work, "metaphoric, sculptural and social" (Yee et al, 2011, 80, 107). The importance of the incidental audience had resonance as he felt that it had similarities to that of the "[...] busy pedestrians in transit" glimpsing the event of space and buildings being transformed (Yee et al, 2011, 80, 107) [Fig 21].



[Fig 21: Matta-Clark, G. (1972) *Building cuts*. Photograph [Online]. Available at: <http://artsdocuments.blogspot.co.uk/2010/10/gordon-matta-clark.html> [Accessed 13 Mar 2014].

Through his creative processes, Matta-Clark was able to purchase properties and land or a “locked-in plot at the intersection of several backyards” of no commercial interest to the city of New York, in the areas of Queens and Staten Island for a small fee (Kimmelman, 2005). These projects became known as *Fake Estates* (1973-74), and highlighted the issues of unused, derelict property. Matta-Clark would visit the sites, document them and produce evidence of their existence in note and journal format. Matta-Clark was able to practice his architectural construction techniques on these buildings and land for future projects, further exposing the in-between and neglected space in the city. Through Matta-Clark’s interest in social agendas of the time, neglected space and architecture, as seen in the *Bronx Series*, his works also documented the socio-economic conditions through the installations and processes which are now archived as photographs and video footage (Z33, 2012). Due to high property and land taxes, Matta-Clark eventually had to sell the *Fake Estates* properties. Today none of these buildings exist (Ouroussoff, 2007).

#### 4.2 Disciplines and influences

There were many multi-disciplinary art forms at the time. Rainer used film in her early work *Homemade* (1966) and started filmmaking full time in the early 1970s after leaving The Judson Theatre Group ((Yee et al, 2011;

Rainer, 2006). Throughout her career, Rainer has been interested in the way the body moves through everyday repetitive and mundane movement (Wood, 2007, 33). Actions like walking, eating or talking is intricately written into her choreography and film work. Similarly, Brown used order as a graphic language of sequential mapping of movement, adding choreographic notation and drawings created through the process of dance from which kinetic pieces developed, such as *Skymap* in 1969 (Eleey, 2008, 44). These grew into complex mappings, drawings and coding, such as *Untitled (Locus)*, (1973), and *Untitled (Locus)*, (1975). In these works, order is a numerical aspect of choreography and a common way of working out sequences of movement, topologically.

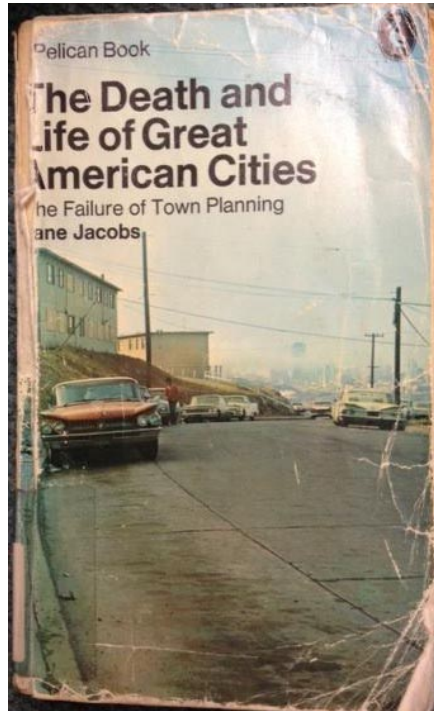
A decade earlier, Rainer, inspired by John Cage's graphic score *Fontana Mix* (Cage, 1958) had already started using mapping and recording of code in her work. Accidental movement sequences used by Rainer through improvised techniques based on Cage's scores, were built up to produce complex choreographic codes and then performed and repeated, again through sequenced codes as in *Three Satie Spoons* (1961) (Crimp et al, 2012). This everyday and repeated motion work continued and traces were seen in Rainer's later film work, such as *Journeys from Berlin* (1971).

The Judson Dance Theatre and contemporaries took inspiration from the

experimental and collaborative approach of Cage and Merce Cunningham (Goldberg, 1988, 136). Another artist in the Judson collaborative, Robert Rauschenberg, (Goldberg, 1988, 135) was influenced by his time as costume maker for Cunningham and created his own piece, *Pelican* (1963), where “the element of place, as well as objects [parachutes, ballet shoes and roller skates], determined the nature of the performance”, adding props as key to the delivery of ideas (Goldberg, 1988, 135-136).

#### 4.3 Place and the socio economic climate

Town planning and the city were popular topics around the time that The Judson Dance Theatre started in the early 1960s. The street was changing shape fast. Developers were moving in with big plans for the New York infrastructure, particularly around Manhattan and the area of Greenwich Village due to its geographical location as a thoroughfare with industrial development potential. In 1961 the New York based journalist and critic Jane Jacobs voiced community concerns in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (2000 [1961]).



[Fig 22: Jacobs, J, (2000 [1961]) *Death and life of great American cities*. Book cover. New York: Vintage Books Random House].

The book was published when the concern for the city's future plans was at its height and the book openly discussed and dismissed, planning activities and discourse, including examples such as Ebenezer Howard's Garden City Movement in England, one of few who had to this point written about town planning (Sudjic, 1992). Jacobs expressed that "The Garden Cities were really very nice towns if you were docile and had no plans of your own", as in her view the Garden Cities were pre-planned and agreed without the view of the real community (Sudjic, 1992, 14). Jacobs was keen to preserve the landscape and buildings of Greenwich Village where she lived, and the campaigns that followed the support for conservation helped avoid the Lower Manhattan Expressway being built across the neighbourhood (Yee et al,

2011, 96). Jacobs wrote in her book that the community fought for the “vitality of urban neighbourhoods” including the local shopkeepers, but “cities are never static, they are in a constant state of flux” (Sudjic, 1992, 16). Place was ever changing in New York with redevelopment plans threatening the local communities (Jacobs, 2000, 138). Campaigners, residents; including Matta-Clark and other artists, demonstrated against ‘slash-and-burn’ proposals by Robert Moses, an influential planning policy contributor of the time (Crimp et al, 2012). “When city designers and planners try to find a design device that will express in clear and easy fashion, the ‘skeleton’ of a city structure, expressways and promenades are current favourites for this purpose, they are on fundamentally the wrong track”, wrote Jacobs (Jacobs, 2000, 390).

Jacobs argued that the residents of the threatened neighbourhoods were the real voice of the time. Furthermore, she highlighted that particularly in Greenwich Village, local people successfully resisted the plans for a highway to cut through the neighbourhood (Jacobs, 2000, 176). This socio-economic urgency was also seen in the works of the performers and artists, as we have seen in the work of Matta-Clark.



## 5. Mapping the City

This chapter looks at theories of mapping place through ontological, geographical and sensory methodologies; searching for *place* from a geographical, socio-economic stance. This is important for the research, as often, it is important for my own work to be placed in the urban environment. The reading into this area improved my understanding of behaviour and expectations of performance and place in the city.

In his book *The Body and the City*, Steve Pile describes mind maps based on behavioural and mental geographies and how, since the early 1960s this type of discourse has been applied to place through mapping the city's geography and urban landscape (Pile, 1996). "Conceptually", writes Pile, "mental processes and cognitive representations became of central importance in the work of behavioural geographers because they represented the filter between the mind and behaviour" (Pile, 1996, 19). Mental mapping processes took spatial patterns to work out behavioural circulation and then used these processes to investigate environmental perceptions (Pile, 1996, 24). Pile states that the mental mapping helps understand and read spatial configurations through translating processes of behaviour. Part of the theory was to investigate through forms of mapping how people imagined the world and their locality. The method examined how

people made decisions based on their views on place, taking into consideration their backgrounds, family histories and individual viewpoints (Pile, 1996, 26).

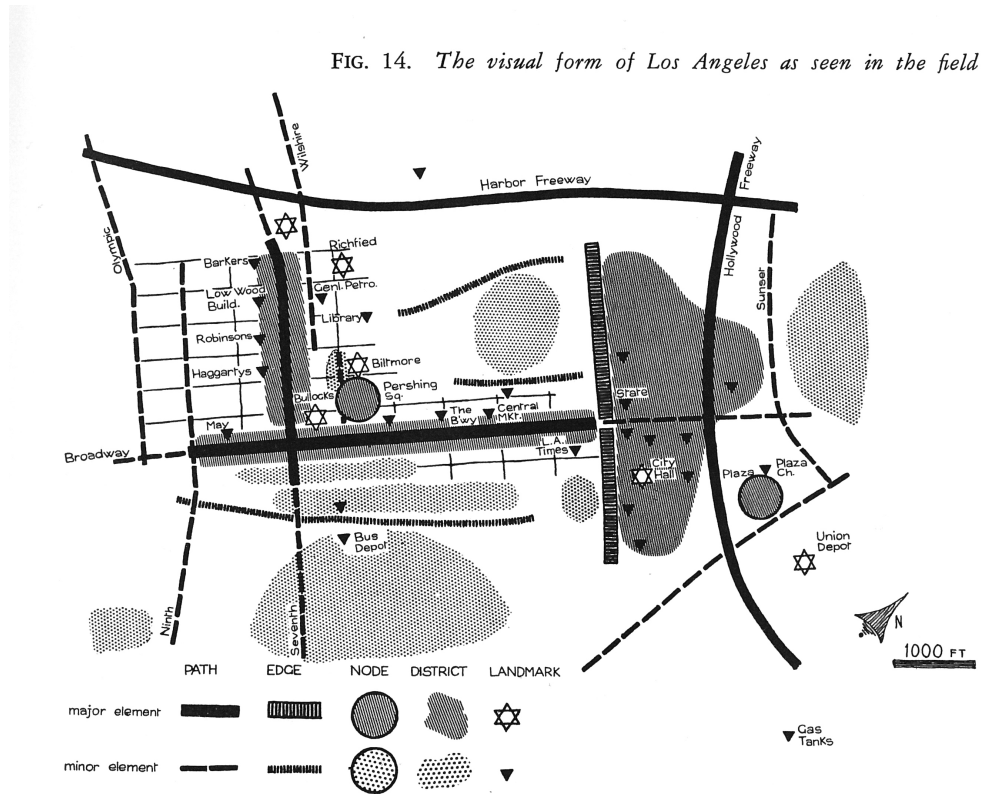
Pile argues that the theories of the behavioural geographers were not necessarily a true expression of popular perceptions, as it proved difficult to map something that may be sentimental, inherited or based on short-term experiences. Pile refers to the work of Kenneth Boulding who argued that people's experiences led to images representing people's perceptions of everyday lives, particularly if the imagery referred to was limited, if, for example, there had not been much experience away from one area (Boulding, 1956). Pile responds to Boulding's theory to say that images of perception need to become more sophisticated and detailed as people develop a wider understanding of their world. Pile concluded that the image [of the world around us that we may carry around through our perceptions] is "about learning as a cognitive process but within a particular context" (Pile, 1996, 24). Therefore one may conclude that a series of experiments must take place over time and differentiations in perception must be taken into account when carrying out the analysis of the mapping. To underpin this point, Pile states, "It is a complex formula creating maps and investigating social situations and user groups to establish a common ground for innovation, improvement and understanding something in common" (Pile,

1996, 26).

Other mental map and place developers, relevant to my work include Kevin Lynch who in *The Image of the City* (Lynch, 1960) describes the city as “a construction in space, but one of vast scale, a thing perceived only in the course of long spans of time” (Lynch, 1960, ch1). Lynch argues that the city’s development and shape can only be partially controlled and states that “no wonder then, that the art of shaping cities for sensuous enjoyment is an art quite separate from architecture or music or literature” (Lynch, 1960, 12). Lynch was particularly concerned with the legibility of the city from the people’s perspective, creating methodologies using nodes, pathways and other forms of assessment to describe a mental map (Lynch, 1960, 12-14). These methods can be likened to those of Heidegger’s theory of the bridge, connecting points and re-creating place between these new points (Sharr, 2007, 49).

Lynch used American cities as examples of how these theories could be applied to any city. Lynch suggests that the mental maps naturally form over time through the interaction with the city. People move through and live in the city; then start to understand place geographically and through its infrastructure and personal formulas of mental maps, particular knowledge and experiences (Lynch, 1960). Lynch argues that people who occupy space

not only understand their urban or city space through what they see and experience but also through memory and their own experiences (Lynch, 1960, 32, 94) [Fig 23].



[Fig 23: Lynch, K. (1960) *Image of the city*. Illustrated map of Los Angeles. Lynch, K. (1960) *The Image of the City*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. p32].

Furthermore, key elements of successful mental mapping included the ability to recognize and differentiate separate areas from one another, structure of the city, place or relationship to the person, whether public or private terrain. Lynch also valued inclusive methods, where people with restricted movement for example, were encouraged to see the map through their true viewpoint (Lynch, 1996, 110). Lynch assesses the importance of people as

moving objects within the urban environment, arguing that people are important parts of everyday city life and its development (Lynch, 1996, 6). He continues to write about the way we perceive the city through its various cues that are triggered when we see "colour shaped motion of polarisation of light" and all other related senses. The way we feel and sense environments is very individual and adds layers to the mental map of the city (Lynch, 1996, 2). Lynch discusses how literal maps and other ways of coding and graphic communication can lead us back to familiar paths (Lynch, 1996, 4). One contemporary version of this type of mapping in the UK is the *Hello Lamp Post* project in Bristol by PAN Studio (2013). It is described as a project that "encourages you to look at the city with fresh eyes and engage with systems we take for granted". Through smart phones and text messages, people can connect to other people and passers-by in the vicinity and interact through mapping devices attached to street furniture and urban landmarks. People are encouraged to create social connections and interact with their local community and issues (Pan Studio, 2013).

To illustrate mapping and recording ideas from a contemporary performance point of view, I identified work by Chinese dancer and author San San Kwan. In her book, *Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces*, she describes her journey mapping Shanghai through movement, "Walking up the steps, I feel small, my movements hardly displacing the

enormous space” (Kwan, 2013, xxii). Kwan travelled through Shanghai and other cities, analysing the way the body moves through busy traffic, pedestrian areas and ever-changing architectural landscapes. A very different stage to that of my work, but the same feeling of alienation or belonging can be provoked by these different environments. Kwan looks at the city from, for example, street level and from high-rise buildings. Details of this journey are observed as the unfamiliar city and the familiar “dusty courtyard” of home (Kwan, 2013, xvi). Kwan investigates the familiar and the unknown that is on ones own doorstep. So I ask, how different is this topography to that I perform in? Furthermore, does our experiences differ? In the Shanghai setting, Kwan has a history with this place, a form of anthropological mind map, just like I have in my surroundings and those that are familiar to me (Cresswell, 2007; Lynch, 1960).

Lynch’s mapping techniques isolate the main elements; identity, structure and meaning, and how this may eventually formulate maps, showing how we recognise particular materials, colours and patterns. Furthermore, Lynch’s techniques investigate how travel through the city becomes a journey. This may be a journey of habit either through the way we walk to work, travel by train, commute in other ways or use landmarks and monuments to guide us through new and unfamiliar territory. Lynch explains, “To heighten the imageability of the urban environment is to facilitate its visual identification

and structuring” (Lynch, 1960, 95). Lynch created maps from his findings, using arrows, patterns and hatching to differentiate movement in the city. Visual data was ordered in range of importance to users of the city, taking into account different experiences, including personal histories and different abilities to see, hear and move. It may be impossible to create a true map through this technique; it is however a useful tool when starting out plans for an architectural or urban design, for example, allowing an important dimension into early planning stages. It also sits well as a performative tool for navigating a city choreographically.

## 6. Spatial Choreographies: My Practice

*“All human movement traces complex spatial configurations. Its forms can be seen as a compounding of movement through the spatial axis – a process continually changing in time”* (Bloomer, Moore: 1977, 59)

My work sets out to seek and build upon connections, between space and place, the user and its surroundings largely through a phenomenological approach to performance. In my work, I build upon and apply some of the ideas and practices set out in this study. I call this methodology ‘spatial choreographies’. By interpreting space through events or by passing through a building or site, I use my body and senses to connect choreographic actions with place. This may be carried out, for example, through mimicking a structural element in a building, such as a staircase that I may dance up or down, or setting out to challenge a derelict site, a tall building or through performing in unexpected, awkward or neglected spaces. An improvised, ‘accidental’ intervention may take place, in locations such as an urban alleyway or confined and narrow spaces. In my work *Bike Shed* (2013), I pass a bike stand and start to dance, slowly connecting to the otherwise anonymous space, making an intimate connection through this interaction [Fig 24].





[Fig 24: Saarinen, H. (2013) *Bike shed*, video still, Hatfield].

Other works take place in, for example, derelict space, where the moving body interacts with the stillness of a neglected and forgotten interior (Saarinen; *Derelict Dance*, 2012, *Ad Hoc*, 2010, *In-between Space*, 2011, *High Levels*, 2011) [Fig 25].



[Fig 25: Saarinen, H. (2011) *In-between space*, video still, Hatfield].

With place as central platform for this research, I will here outline how my work, ideas and processes fit into this research. My practice has gained new knowledge from this research study, from the range of studies encouraging deep site-specific phenomenological investigation. Appreciation and clarity of the site and human scale has been gained. As I approach, select and use a site for performance, there is an anticipation of what the outcome will be. Full control or pre-planned outcomes are not intended, whilst improvisation guides the process towards an end result (which may be highly experimental and even appear unfinished). Work from this starting point is improvised, devised and edited through the performance and video. There is necessarily no order of narrative; occasionally short initial scenarios, closely determined by the site, are pre-planned, performed, recorded and edited into short films (*Ad Hoc Performance*, 2010, *site\_seeing\_1*, 2014). Similarly, accompanying audio is largely found or ambient sound or silent. Some collaborative projects carried out with sound artist Gerard Boeck (*Boeck, n.d.*) have resulted in composed ambient audio for *dance pieces, such as Snow Dance (2013) and disDance11054.80 (2013)*, where sound for my performances was collected by Boeck and composed in collaboration. Furthermore I have carried out the performances as well as the video recordings of most of my work. This became an important part of my early practice, which started as a self-managed operation.



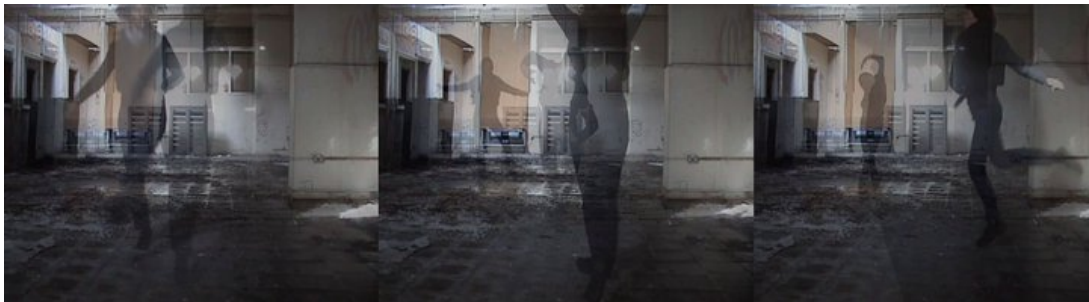
[Fig 26: Saarinen, H. (2010) *Derelict dance*, video still, London].

Movement and choreography within my work is deliberately monotonous as in *Barn Dance* (2012) and *Hidden Shoreline* (2012). Repetition and improvisation within each piece and also between dance works may link and refer to previous work. Some of the dance pieces examine movements, adjusted according to location. The dance may be improvised from a core set of movements, changing in speed or direction.

By spending time on a given site, through the medium of dance, I discover how space that may be taken for granted may become a tool for site analysis and allow phenomenological encounters with the present, past and future. The performance becomes a connector between me as a performer, and the location. A bond and connector may be formed by the performances. For example, by recording the event and setting up the camera to film, I am able to use the footage in its raw or edited format, depending on what is captured during the performance. I never know exactly what is captured until I look through the footage. What I find might be very interesting and useful for the final edit, or it may have not produced what I had planned. This is a risk and challenge at the same time. Sometimes I find myself at the stage of making creative decisions and 'happy accidents' may occur through the recorded footage. For example, there may be audio fragments of recording I was not aware of that can enhance the visual outcome. There may be unconnected activity taking place behind me as I perform, potentially adding to the end result. In *site\_seeing\_1* (Saarinen, 2014), my dance piece on a site of Victorian gasholders in London about to be demolished, a car beeps its horn as it drives past me as I perform. The footage is also evidence of the event that took place. The process applies digital overlays, cuts and changes of speed. This has enhanced the connection between body, movement and place, creating a phenomenological viewpoint through the film, as can be seen in *site\_seeing\_1* (Saarinen, 2014). The film captures

moments of time and maps out activities and performances. It may act as a reminder of what was there before by capturing the very moment of dance as an intervention in present space.

The moment of the performances has allowed me to connect with the various sites on a deeper, sensory level, than had I merely walked through the space, not noticing the immediate surroundings. The site topography, costume, weather and ground surface all affect my process. I will outline this in the descriptions that follow.



[Fig 26: Saarinen, H. (2011) *High levels (of dust)*, video still, London].

***Derelict Dance*** serves as a good working example [Fig 26]. Here, the performance takes place in a neglected former public baths building in London, about to be demolished. Inside the space there are pigeons, broken glass and walls covered in graffiti messages, telling stories of past inhabitation, glimpses of social history. I perform a sequence of simple dance movements, which are repeated and filmed from different angles,

creating a collage of ghostlike movements, adding spatial depth, and celebrating the past of this constricted space. The footage is edited into one piece, with added audio from the actual performance, entitled *Derelict Dance* (Saarinen, 2012). (Performance/video 1:30 min, colour, ambient found sound, London, 2012).

Interaction with the everyday takes place in ***Seat Taken***. Here, I interact with the tranquil goings-on of the everyday one morning in Waterlow Park, London. After a run through the park, I take a seat in a small wooden pavilion, with a view over the park. I sit, rest and take in the stillness of the moment. It is early morning and the park is quiet except for the distant sound of barking dogs and traffic. Slowly I start to move. I stay seated. My body moves freely, stretching, swaying, still seated; narrated by the moment and place. The setting of the simple timber clad pavilion becomes a place of shelter and rest, and a temporary stage, whilst my senses connect with the moment, the landscape and the activities around me. The wind and ambience of place create a phenomenological connection between the performance, my breathing, movement and the sensory elements of the site. Passers-by watch me move, quietly, slowly. I sense a connection with the passing audience and there seems to be a common understanding, as people quietly interact through eye contact as they pass. (Performance/video 1:20 min, colour, ambient found sound, London, 2013).

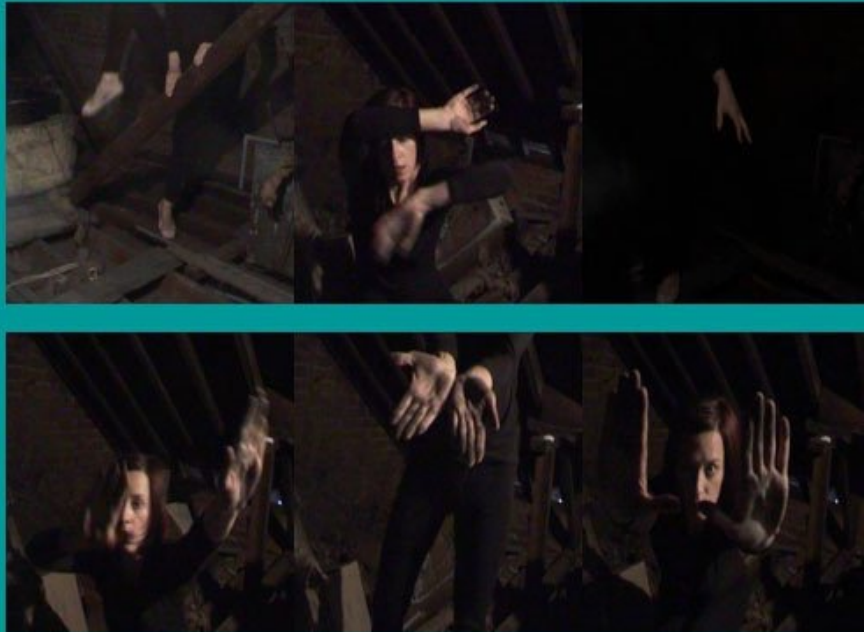
Topography is also explored in ***Snowdance***. This is an improvised performance, filmed in winter, in a London park, placing the body into the empty site of a churchyard and historic church tower (Open House London, 2014). The dance takes place around an ornamental fountain feature in the church gardens. I move around the feature, performing a joyful dance, interacting with the circular form of the feature, allowing the movements to take advantage of the snow covered ground. Traffic and sirens can be heard through the ambient sound, locating the piece in the city, with me as a lonely figure dressed in black dancing across the snow on this historical site (Performance/video 1:41 min, colour, ambient found sound, in collaboration with sound artist Gerard Boeck, London, 2013).

*awkward corners* > volume one

> *high levels (of dust)*

survival in unusual, awkward and uncomfortable spaces.

volume1 - the high end, lofts, atticks and other high levels



performance, DV colour, 0:33, 05/2011

[Fig 27: Saarinen, H. (2011) *High levels (of dust)*, video still, London].

Examples of other in-between, awkward or challenging spaces can be seen in ***High levels (of dust)*** [Fig 27]. Here I explore the concept of the attic space as an in-between and neglected space with forgotten, stored away items, narrating place. It is also considered, through the movements, as a structural space, supporting the roof. In the dust covered, floorless space, I move carefully through difficult and awkward space, adapting to the challenging terrain.



The uneven, dark and dusty surface, restrict my movements and this is reflected in the slow and contained movements (Performance/video 0:33 min colour, ambient found sound, London, 2011).



[Fig 28: Saarinen, H. (2011) *In-between space*, video still, Hatfield].

***In-between space*** is performed whilst waiting in an area between floors in a non-descript building [Fig 28]. I perform a quiet dance, starting off sitting down, warming up. Then slowly I let my body go with the flow of the moment, gradually with faster speed, then getting up to exit the frame in a quick pirouette. Here, this everyday non-descript space somewhere between waiting and anticipating, becomes a connection between site, event,

environment, landscape beyond and body (Performance/video 0:31min, colour, ambient found sound, Hertfordshire, 2011).



[Fig 29: Saarinen, H. (2014) *site-seeing\_1*, video still, London].

In *site-seeing\_1*, I stage an impromptu dance performance on a site of Victorian gasholders. There are plans by the local authority to demolish the structures and regenerate the site into housing. By carrying out and recording the performance, history may be preserved of the place, and the value and meaning that the site holds. The joyous, playful dance may simultaneously be seen to act as a serious statement about architectural

heritage. It may be one way of highlighting awareness of a particular issue or site, for example. It may act as a reminder to others passing by, that 'something is happening to our architectural heritage here', 'get involved' [Fig 29].

Several performances around different parts of this site were devised and filmed. The body is used to alter perceptions and highlight the urgency of the preservation of the site through the performance. In parts of the performance I am 'attached' to a railing, where I 'hang', still and 'folded' over the railing as part of the structure. By doing so, I may alert the spectator of the act taking place, not just as a performance but it may also be seen a message about human scale, place and attachment. Building on this, much of the performance occurs with me performing 'up side down', on the ground. It may highlight awareness that this site and its heritage is at risk and will soon be gone, it may also be seen as an act of protest (Performance/video 1:39 min, colour, ambient found sound/birdsong, London, 2014).



[Fig 30: Saarinen, H. (2010) *Ad hoc performance*, video still, Lee-on-Solent].

***Ad Hoc Performance*** takes place on a beach in Lee-on-the-Solent, where the beach promenade is neglected in places, including a run-down games arcade [Fig 30].

This performance is devised as a sensory experience between the body, the sea and the space between. The film footage is laid over other parts of the film, so it appears as a dream-like activity. I move as a ghostly figure in and out of the frame, crossing over at times, as a double act. The sea and wind can be heard in the background (Performance/video 0:30 min, colour, ambient, found sound, Lee-on-the-Solent, 2010).



[Fig 31: Saarinen, H. (2012) *Barn dance*, video still, London].

***Barn Dance.*** Amongst dog walkers and ramblers, on a sunny afternoon, a barn dance takes place. The flow of the red fabric of the costume helps alert the passing audience, encourage movement and act as a catalyst for improvisation. A fast and furious dance and improvised gallop takes place across the derelict structure which is filled with graffiti and broken glass. The dance ends with the dancer slumping onto the floor exhausted (Performance/video 0:44 min, colour, silent, London, 2012) [Fig 31].

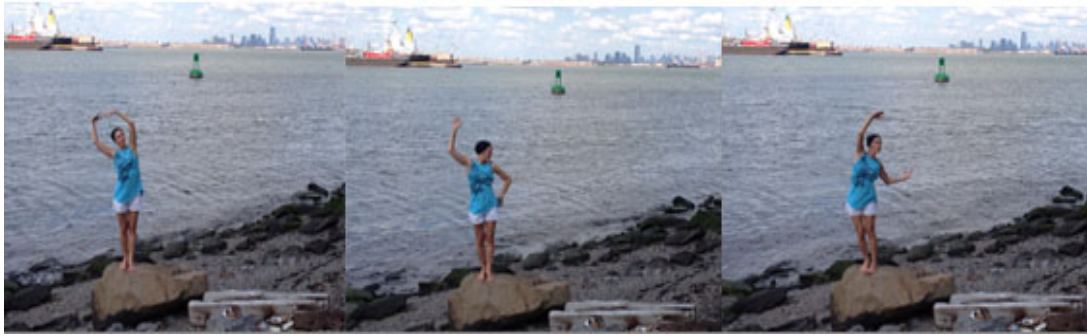


[Fig 32: Saarinen, H. (2012) *Hudson river dance*, video still, New York].

***The New York Sketches*** (Saarinen, 2012) is a series of short dance pieces filmed in the city of New York in the summer of 2012. This project enabled me to connect to the urban realm of New York. It is also the city where the Judson Dance Theatre was active. Impromptu dance interventions were staged in selected or accidentally found sites around the city. These spaces ranged from a Hudson Riverside car park to a derelict shoreline on Staten Island and other urban locations in New York. Some of the performances are outlined here.

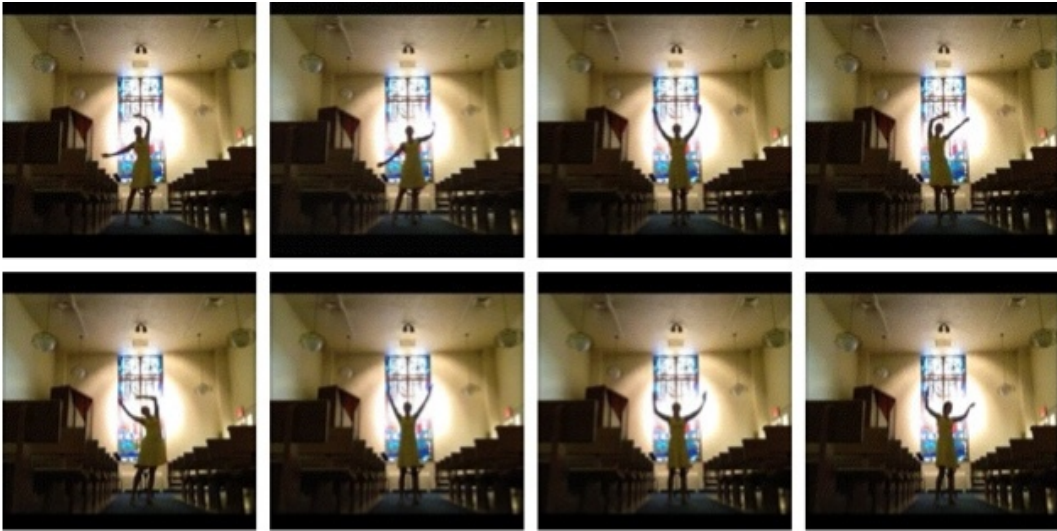
***Hudson River Dance*** was performed in a large community sports centre car park with New York's night skyline as backdrop [Fig 32]. Here I explored the anonymous car park, and the human scale. I danced late at night

overlooking the Hudson River, creating a fleeting and grainy image of the brief moment in the space. (Performance/video 1:06 min, colour, ambient found sound, New York, 2012).



[Fig 33: Saarinen, H. (2012) *Hidden shoreline*, video still, New York].

Staten Island was the site of *Hidden Shoreline*, performed on the beach amongst driftwood and rubble from demolished buildings [Fig 33]. Apart from a couple of lonely sunbathers, the site was empty and topographically challenging with broken glass and discarded rubbish. Simple movements were performed, enhancing the monotonous aspect of the in-between, everyday place in nature (Performance/video 1:42 min, colour, silent, Staten Island, New York, 2012).



[Fig 34: Saarinen, H. (2012) *Chapel dance*, video still, New York].

***Chapel Dance*** is performed and filmed in a small private chapel on East 15<sup>th</sup> Street in New York [Fig 34]. Connecting the body to the space, using the layout of the chapel interior, I moved in front of the ornate stained glass window, with the sun creating a glow through the glass into the chapel. The movement echoes the spiritual ambience of the calm and silent space. A quiet prayer accompanied the movement (Performance/video 0:52 min, colour, silent, New York, 2012).





[Fig 35: Saarinen, H. (2012) *Unisphere dance*, video still, New York].

***Unisphere Dance*** was a dance performance by the Unisphere globe, on the site of the 1964 New York World Fair and Queens Museum of Modern Art [Fig 35]. I act as a lonely dancer on the huge site surrounding the Unisphere globe structure interacting and improvising with the landscape and ambience of the place. Slowly groups of youths on bikes and skateboards gather to watch. Their observations can be heard in the background. A child runs across the background and accidentally collaborates with the movement (Performance/video 2:56 min, colour, ambient found sound, Queens, New York, colour, ambient/found sound).

Furthermore, to investigate particular movement techniques, specific to this research and the early work of the Judson Dance Theatre, I attended a New York workshop by Tricia Brown Dance Company (Peridance Capezio Center, 2012). The workshop gave me hands-on experience of Brown's

choreographic routines, creative process and core principles, composition and aesthetics, such as repeated movement and directional movement narratives. It was beneficial to have the opportunity to try some creative movements and use this knowledge in my own dance work. I also had the opportunity to try the techniques with other dancers and in a group setting during the workshop. This knowledge and technique was used in the *New York Sketches*, by simplifying my movements, repeating movements and slowing down the pace.

My practice has moved on to integrate creative processes with other practitioners. For example, the collaborative project *disDance 11054.80* at the *Remote Encounters* International Conference 2013, involved two geographically separated, distinct locations, Cardiff and Singapore, between which live performances were projected (*Remote Encounters*, 2013). I performed in Cardiff. The project explored remote collaborative performance techniques and place. My performance included improvised movements determined by the projected signposts through a networked multimedia connection system between UK and Singapore. The choreographic structure was a non-linear narrative, referring to immediate place yet simultaneously bearing witness to a connection, to distance and remoteness. Digitally projected random cues determined the direction and duration of each movement, 'Move to the centre of the stage', 'Repeat, repeat', for example.

This project was in collaboration with Ian Willcock of University of Hertfordshire and the LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore (Performance/video 20min, colour, ambient composed sound/G. Boeck, Cardiff, 2013). This project was published in the peer reviewed *Liminalities Journal of Performance Studies* vol10/issue1 2014 (Lynch, 2014).

Furthermore, I collaborate with environmental artist and sculptor Diane Maclean (Maclean, n. d.) and filmmaker Su Grierson (*Grierson*, n. d.). Dance performances take place around Maclean's large-scale public sculptures, in Milton Keynes town centre (*Xscape*), private collections and sculpture parks, performed by me, filmed by Grierson. The project highlights the body navigating through a sculptural landscape, constructing *place*. Each sculpture has an immediate relationship to the landscape where they are located, the sculpture park, rural setting or town centre. By placing the moving body in the sculptural, material landscape, a new sense of scale and meaning to the site is discovered (Grierson, Maclean, Saarinen, *Xscape*, 2014).

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, I have carried out studies on the topic of phenomenology and its applications on place. I have applied and considered theories based on the new knowledge into my own performance work.

First I studied place from phenomenological scholar Pallasmaa and sensory architect Zumthor. Alongside these authors, I undertook further research into the area of phenomenology and place by relevant authors such as Bachelard, Heidegger and Foucault. Artists and performers Matta-Clark, Bausch, Rainer and Forsythe were also studied from their individual connections to place. I looked at the use of urban space, through dance and performance. I also considered the skateboarder as an example of a perceived urban sub-culture. Here, I addressed the in-between space that may occur between the public and private and the threshold between the norm and what may be unexpected activity and behavior in the city.

Furthermore, socio-economic issues were analyzed through the lens of the evolving city and dance practice, particularly in the 1970s New York. Moving on, I studied the city as place, through behavioural geography, mapping and performance. Dance and performance practitioners were discussed to locate a historical timeline in the thesis from members of the Judson Dance Theatre through to more recent practice, finally connecting to my own work.

The analysis in this thesis demonstrates that through the many dimensions studied on place; dance can have a genuine role in constructing place. The activity of dance brings movement and co-ordination between body, mind and site. Dance connects aspects of sensory and experiential movement and activity to a space or site, and can be seen as a form of place making. Through phenomenology, site and interaction, the research has enabled me to create work that has explored, exploited and analysed the theoretical and practical in phenomenology and place. The study has opened up new possibilities and through the methodologies used in dance, movement and spatial analysis, I can now develop these techniques in future research and continued multidisciplinary practice.

Connecting to the research studied by authors and practitioners, such as Pallasmaa and Zumthor, the site is key in my performances. The site becomes a locator for place; visually and through placing the body in a phenomenological context, as guided by the texts and work studied. Each location is different, adding a different dimension to the body in space. Natural environments, as seen in my work *Shoreline* (Saarinen, 2012) and *Ad Hoc Performance* (Saarinen, 2010) represent the findings on nature, memory and phenomenology in my research.

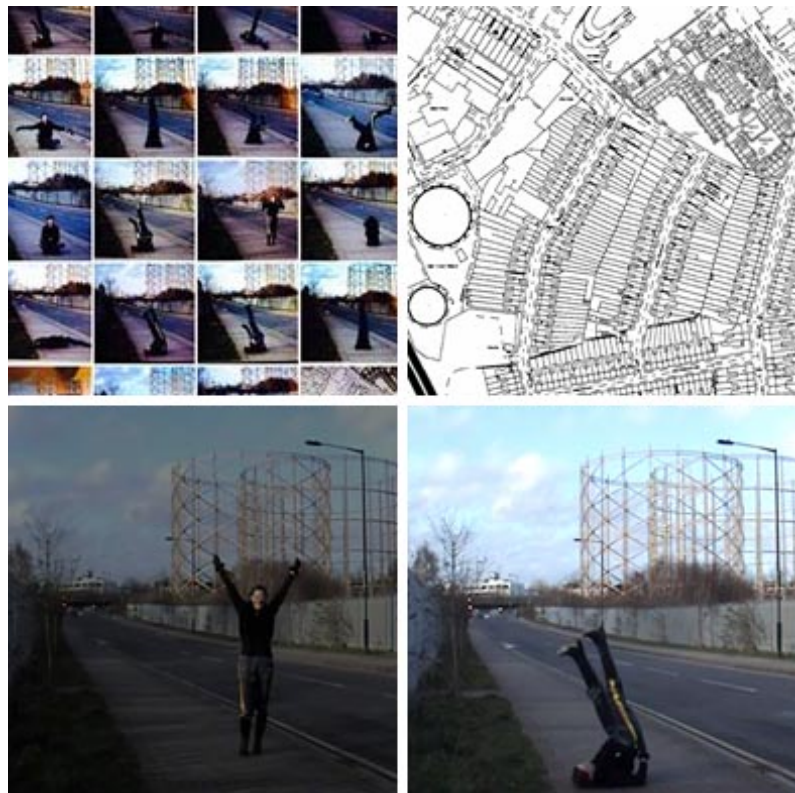
Furthermore, Pallasmaa's texts interpret the link between body and place in

the *Eyes of the Skin*; “My body is truly the [...] very locus of reference, memory, imagination and integration” (Pallasmaa, 2005, 11). These ideas on place, closeness to nature and memory of past places and events have also been central and encouraged the process of my own work. Furthermore, Heidegger’s idea of place and how a connecting bridge acts as more than a mere connector has further clarified my practice (Sharr, 2007, 52). My performances may also be seen as a ‘bridge’ or connector between site, body and place.

The observer may be surprised by the performances staged in unorthodox places. I encourage dialogue through the performance about the way we move in space, and how public space is perceived and used (Brown, 1970, Yee et al, 2011). This was considered in, for example, *Unisphere Dance* (Saarinen, 2012) and *Snow Dance* (Saarinen, 2013), both staged in public parks where user behaviour is generally conforming to picnics, playtime, family events and dog walking. In my works *Derelict Dance* (2010) and *site\_seeing\_1* (2014), I perform on threatened sites of architectural heritage, considering Cresswell’s discussions on behavioural geography (Cresswell, 2007).

Throughout this work I have been interested in how interference with expected behaviour may trigger communication, wit or an unnerving edge.

Through my performances, I aim to create narrative and *place* to a site that otherwise may remain anonymous, unnoticed, derelict and eventually demolished (*Derelict Dance*, 2010, *Snow Dance*, 2013, *site\_seeing\_1*, 2014), as seen in the performance descriptors about my work in the previous chapter.



[Fig 36: Saarinen, H. (2014) *site\_seeing\_1*, video still, London].

Matta-Clark's *Building Cuts* and other installations were also messages about the everyday and seeing beyond the surface in the city. Matta-Clark's work was about the regeneration, meaning and cost of building. This was also apparent in the street performances of Brown (1970) and Girouard

(1971), both influential to ideas in my urban performances, underpinning the everyday and unnoticed (Brown 2009). In my performances I have selected sites, where, for example, there are plans for regeneration (*site\_seeing\_1*), underpinning values of heritage and conservation, as well as performance and placing the body in an unusual setting. Brown introduced the human scale to unorthodox locations and created performances on large-scale structures and rooftops. Girouard brought issues of the inside to the outside with her work dealing with home and domesticity (*Swept House*, 1971). My own work *Unisphere* (2012), *Shoreline* (2012) and *Barn Dance* (2012) are also examples of narrative in specific place.

Furthermore, the work by Jacobs (2000) about the city in flux is also fundamental to my performances. As seen in *site\_seeing\_1*, described above, and in *Derelict Dance*, performed in a disused public baths building, I perform in many locations of heritage and architectural importance.

I have used the ideas set out above in this study to challenge the perception of place through my dance work and how we interact with space and its elements, as explained in the previous chapter (Saarinen, *Chapel Dance*, 2012, *site\_seeing\_1*, 2014, *bike shed*, 2013). By 'occupying' a site and interacting directly through dance and movement, I apply methodologies of phenomenology and place, as seen in *Seat Taken* (2013). In this piece, as



described in the Chapter above, I start off as any other visitor in a park. I sit down on a bench and gradually develop movements from stillness to movement and back again. The environment and all that takes place in that moment, the wind and the temperature, the noise in the distance, the time of day and my personal space and thoughts. Everything plays a part in that moment of capturing place.

My place construction, through spatial interventions may be a form of site survey that can be likened to the architectural survey, taking notes and measurements, suitability, investigating and making sure. For the purpose of this research the choreographic survey is largely about impressions, senses and improvisation – it is about the entering a site and allowing the body to take agency of place. Through the systematic movement and close connection to the site, a form of sensory communication occurs; this may be called constructing place. The standing still and breathing, listening to the sound that movement makes, feeling the ground in a different way than one would, had one walked across the site in a hurry, all takes a phenomenological approach to place. It's about stopping to connect, collide and interact with a building, a site, and a *place*.

New ideas have developed through the reading and observations I have carried out in this research project. The phenomenological aspects of the

main authors I have studied have particularly helped analyse and deepen the understanding of my own work. I have considered the construction of place more carefully, in works such as *Seat Taken* (2014); *Snow Dance* (2013) and the *New York Sketches* (2012).

Moreover, this study has explored potential new techniques. I have applied methodologies, particularly phenomenology, memory and in-between space to my work (Pallasmaa, 1995, Foucault, 1986). I have used sites that may relate to an agenda or urban planning, placing the site on the 'map'. This process can be likened to Pile's theory on mental processes and cognitive representations of space (Pile, 1996). I have also taken more risks in my practice through this research with more experimental movement, for example (*site\_seeing\_1*). I have become interested in new types of spaces for dance and I continue to explore new opportunities.

The theory of mind mapping through experience and memory has encouraged new aspects of choreography in my own practice (Pile, 1996, Cresswell, 2007), as in *Unisphere Dance* (Saarinen, 2012), where I performed on the site of the 1964 New York World Fair, where the location became geographically and historically important along with the personal experience of mapping steps and movements. Although I don't yet use physical maps, early crossovers and ideas of mapping techniques, formulae

and coding to my portfolio are germinating. Some of this started in the collaborative project *disDance 11054.80* where my performance was driven by remote network systems and random instructions, created by my collaborator Ian Willcock (Saarinen/Willcock, 2013). Mapping devices and digital applications will be tested in my future practice, as a direct result of the geographic and anthropologic references (Pile 1996, Lynch, 1960). This will move my practice to cover a larger area of concern and may become a developing sequence of movements rather than quick improvised performances as thus far.

I have experimented with movement and evaluated the phenomenological findings of the work carried out. I have looked at thematically linked place construction through dance and performance and other interventions by practitioners, choreographers and artists within historical and contemporary discourses. With this in mind, I have addressed intricacies of intimate, everyday, dream and memory space, inside and outside of the home, exploring phenomenological theories through dance. This can be seen in my work, for example, *Ad Hoc Performance* (2010), *Chapel Dance* (2012) and *Bike Shed* (2013). In these pieces, I have translated some of the theoretical studies into physical actions through my work. I have connected phenomenological data with physical presence and place. In *Ad Hoc Performance* (2010) I explore landscape and closeness to nature; In *Chapel*

*Dance (2012)* I form spiritual links with a small New York chapel with connections to spiritual and spatial environments. *Bike Shed (2013)* is a dance about the mundane and sometimes difficult everyday.

There is a deliberate risk and a sense of allowing events in the moment to take charge of the outcome in my work. There is a vision however, that the experimental side is important at this stage of my practice so that I can continue to use this accidental interaction as development for analysis and future projects. My experimental approach, together with the knowledge of the work of Rainer has been important in view of the repetitive movements and connection to the apparent everydayness of the dance (Rainer, 2006, 2014). Brown's walking city performances as described in Chapter 4, have added further insight to my own work.

All the above is considered in the work at the stage of development and process, through to the editing of the films, where further layers of the theories studied on phenomenology and place have been added in post production, through digital manipulation. I do strive however to keep the edited outcome as close to the original performance as possible.

These events have encouraged ideas and broadened my professional and artistic network. I have received funding for a collaborative project entitled

*Project Threshold* (2014). Working in a multi-disciplinary setting of performance, design, architecture and urbanism, we are “Examining the inside from the outside [...] and that place that lies between; the threshold” (Saarinen, et al, 2014). My role is to investigate the performative in-between space of urban locations, building directly on the knowledge and experience from this research project.

In my performance work, film is used as an analytic and dialogic tool, by placing the body in unusual locations; scale, proportions and the performance event connects to the site. I have discovered that this may highlight dialogue between human presence and landscape, allowing architecture and body to meet. This process is understood and carried out as a foundation for the next stage to take place after this research project, which explores and investigates the possibilities for more choreographed and multidisciplinary methodologies. These may include continued development of phenomenology, through digital and interactive technologies, connecting the body and movement to spatial environments.



[Fig 37: Grierson, S., Maclean, D., Saarinen, H. (2014) *Xscape*, video still, Milton Keynes].

Working in collaboration with filmmaker Su Grierson (2014) has been positive for my professional development, as usually I manage the filmmaking without assistance. [Fig 37] The collaboration was also a positive multi-disciplinary experience working with Sculptor Diane Maclean. Collaborating has enabled me to focus on the performance, phenomenology and place. It has also added an interesting dialogue between disciplines and further strengthened my creative process and experience.

Thus, to reiterate, this thesis explores the representation of place through a range of views, from other, related disciplines and voices. Examinations into these views have aided the development of my practice. This knowledge has helped me add new relevance and content to my work. New sites, as I have

shown have been introduced for my performances. I have widened my appreciation of place as a phenomenological entity. Through investigation into place from across disciplines in this research, I have found equivalent pockets within my field. The firm closeness of the ground on which a dancer moves, the vision, speed and air that touches the body in motion are all ingredients in the place-making of my practice.

## List of illustrations

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