

Performance Paradigm 7 (July 2011)

Landings: Moth Stories

Petra Kuppers

On the occasion of watching "In the Public Domain," September 2010, by the QL2 Center for Youth Dance, 'performed live on locations throughout the NewActon precinct, these performances are the result of a four-week process entitled "Soft Landing 2", which aimed at enhancing the skills and experience of recent graduates from Australia's finest tertiary dance training institutions.' Acton is a district of Canberra, a city planned by the Chicago architect Walter Burley Griffin. Names suggested for this created capital city of Australia included Olympus, Shakespeare, Kangaremu, Sydmeladperho and Captain Cook. The Bogong moth was a staple food at the heart of cave festivities by local Aboriginal peoples, festivities now part of the Mungabareena Ngan-Girra Festival. The moths can be seen encrusting crevices of Canberra's public buildings in the spring time.

stone

drop

(somewhere in the middle/shadow cut/sun crisp performance, black clad young women move in the side courtyard, step, sidle over the white decorative stones, pick them up, one by one, assemble, cradle. Bury her amongst the white stones, dusted, slain sister)

stone

dripping

stone



all photos by Petra Kuppers

cold site

sighting a leg

hand

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stone

gather the rock

in the concrete forest

storks at urban foods

(black hip women sharp and vocal assert their chorus line, magpies look on)



space ship moves

move on, move on, round the corner, it's more private here

the warmth of Tasmanian wood: log split theatrically for my spine

spinal iron tension cantilevers

taunt flesh: you throw yourself against the wall, again, and again, and someone

is watching you

throwing yourself into the city light to the light to the warmth of the fire rock

is watching you

she is watching you

and wants to dance with you

she watches you and wants

to play

and watch (she is five, I am forty-two)

to eat

in the dancing nooks of the glass and the pouring (rain) concrete edge

she wants to dance

on the mount

your back arcs, and her mother carries her away

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fifteen years ago, who carried you from the grass, to the glass?

the wall remains silent

wallflower

open up the crevice

(she is a warm-blooded stalagmite, pours geometrical surface, car jack up)



elegy of no jobs

(holding up the wall)

elegy of you training yourselves you hang out together and move, downbeat, move

Cinderella at the ball

elegy of labor as

you hold her on the white pebbles

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the middle distance, you drop your stone

What do you see in your future? Where do you fly, Perth girl, Sydney woman?

Where will your name echo?

Can you come nearer to me will you look at me will you warm me, and my feet can I dance
with you

“watching the Royal Ballet is like meeting the angels” says the Cuban barber on TV,

cultural development: what will warm this stone

your stories travel

and the ghosts and the ghosts what

ghost step

what inhabits here, what lives, when your stone drops

into space, what lives

the moth is called by its name you try to scrape into steel

Afterwards, my fingers

trail the snail on the shell of the city these birds have picked me not clean not clear

shiny walls

urge me to go upside down, my legs up the wall, feet sprawled between

teenaged tense relaxation and (streetwalk the crow) urban women



eat in the courtyard

dislocate the new

Acton urban fat

glossy hair swings in the cool wind

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*Petra Kupperts is a disability culture activist and a community artist, and teaches in performance studies and disability studies at the University of Michigan. Her books include *Community Performance: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2007), *The Scar of Visibility: Medical Performances and Contemporary Art* (Minnesota, 2007) and *Disability Culture and Community Performance: Find a Strange and Twisted Shape* (Palgrave, 2011). She is artistic director of *The Olimpias Performance Research Series*, www.olimpias.org.*