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Tactical Moves in Strategic Places: Performing *Val, The Invisible* in the MCA, Australia



Fig. 1. Julie-Anne Long, *Val, The Invisible* (2012). Photo Heidrun Löhr.

In November 2011, a cleaning woman at a museum in Dortmund destroyed a work of art valued at \$1.1 million. She mistook the painted puddle underneath Martin Kippenberger's multimedia sculpture *Wenn's anfaengt durch die Decke zu tropfen* (*When the Roof Begins to Leak*) for a stain and scrubbed at it until it disappeared (Day 2011). Six months later, in April 2012, I conceived and performed *Val, The Invisible*, in which—as the publicity explained—a cleaning lady performed her daily duties at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia, in Sydney, under careful instruction to keep clear of all artistic puddles. The publicity continued:

Who makes those windows sparkle? Who takes pride in the dust free gallery floor? *Val, The Invisible*, makes it all possible. With considerable skill and dexterity *Val, The Invisible*, undertakes the challenge of constant cleaning. See her throughout the gallery, in customer service areas and other high traffic areas. Keep your eyes peeled for her quietly taking a break on a bench. She may appear to be doing nothing, but don't be fooled look closer, a lot is going on for under-appreciated *Val, The Invisible*. If you are lucky you may even catch a moment where her interior life bubbles out.

Throughout the day this quietly subversive middle-aged woman will work with the ambiguity of where the performance starts and finishes, moving in and out of the things we do in life that nobody notices, the things that are taken for granted. This durational performance intervention reflects on the small secret pleasures that are yours and yours alone, the illicit invisibilities that you 'get-away-with', while engaged in the business of everyday life. (Long 2012)

This essay examines the performance-making decisions and spatial choices I made as an artist to shape *Val, The Invisible*, a durational solo performance. This work is analysed utilising Michel de Certeau's theory of strategies and tactics to frame the choreographed moves, activities and behaviours of the performer as *Val* employed practices of "making do", working in a tactical way, not necessarily aligned with the impressive institutional setting and organisational structures of the MCA. Through a combination of textual fragments, this essay shows attention to the materiality of the place of the gallery and reflects on the process through which the performance's meaning activated, and was activated by, the space. This represents a personal understanding of the tactical moves through, and in, the strategic place of the gallery.

Dance in the Museum

Since the early 20th century "dance in the museum" has been presented in both European and American contexts. See Cramer (2014), Bishop (2014) and Brannigan (2015), among others, for a survey of dance exhibitions from 2008 to 2013 including mid-century pioneers in the field. Recently, choreographers have become increasingly eager to present and perform dance in museum and gallery spaces. Locating dance and performance in the domain of the visual arts has increased the profile of, and exposure for, dance by associating with the institutional identities of internationally prestigious museums. The site of the gallery, however, can be inherently problematic for dance and performance, given the differing needs and expectations of dance performance and visual art practices and products.

It is not within the scope of this essay to provide a comprehensive survey of the artists who have contributed to this recent movement in dance performance and dance work presented in a visual arts and gallery context. Suffice to note that over the past four years

in Sydney alone, we have seen several local and international choreographers presenting work in a white cube, or surrounded by post-industrial steel and wood, rather than in a black box. For example, in 2013, as part of the *13 Rooms* exhibition—funded by Kaldor Public Art Projects and curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Klaus Biesenbach—we saw Tino Sehgal's *This Is New* (2003), Xavier Le Roy's *Untitled* (2012), and Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla's *Revolving Door* (2011) (see Kaldor 2013). In 2015, Xavier Le Roy returned to Sydney, to premiere *Temporary Title* (2015) and remount *Self-Unfinished* (1998) (see Kaldor 2015). Then, in 2016, the 20th Biennale of Sydney included Boris Charmatz's *manger* (2014), William Forsythe's *Nowhere and Everywhere at the Same Time no. 2* (2013), Nina Beier's *The Complete Works* (2009), Nicola Conibere's *Assembly* (2013), and Agatha Gothe-Snape and Brook Stamp's *Here, an Echo* (2015–16) (see Biennale of Sydney 2016). Each of these choreographic works challenge traditional spectatorship in the museum, as well as accommodate the visual arts market in order to be curated, purchased, collected and exhibited in ongoing ways within the gallery system.

Claire Bishop discusses three museums that have a commitment to and experience of programming dance and performance in their gallery spaces: the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York as well as the Tate Modern in London (2014). Bishop talks of the challenges of dance in the space of the Atrium at MOMA leaving her:

with the conclusion that the traffic between dance and the museum is one-way, and always on the museum's terms: dance animates the galleries of the museum, but ultimately the museum flattens and homogenizes our experience of dance. (2014, 66)

Bishop's concern for dance operating within the strategic institution of the museum points to an imbalance of power to be addressed. She suggests:

Museums can offer incredible opportunities for rethinking the context of choreography—formally and historically, but also socially and politically. When a work is made specifically for a site, this relocation can be immensely stimulating, especially if the choreographer understands, and is responsive to, the atmosphere of the building. The downside of this approach is that pieces originally conceived for the autonomy of a black-box theater might need serious consideration before being moved into white-cube institutions where context inevitably bleeds into the work—be this architecture, daylight, weather, acoustics, other works of art, viewers, or a larger curatorial framework. ... the more that dance takes place in museums, the more the construction of distinct atmospheres seems necessary. (2014, 72–73)

Bishop's consideration of the need by the choreographer to be responsive to the space of the gallery when presenting dance performance in the site of the museum provides a

useful point of departure for this essay. At its most essential, “[s]ite-specific dance can be defined as dance performance created and performed in response to a specific site or location” (Hunter 2015, 1). Given that *Val, The Invisible* was made explicitly for the site of the museum, responsiveness to the space is perhaps an obvious consideration. However, the aim of *Val*’s choreographic tactical approach was to affect the experience of the spectators and in turn encourage them to experience the spaces of the gallery in unexpected ways.

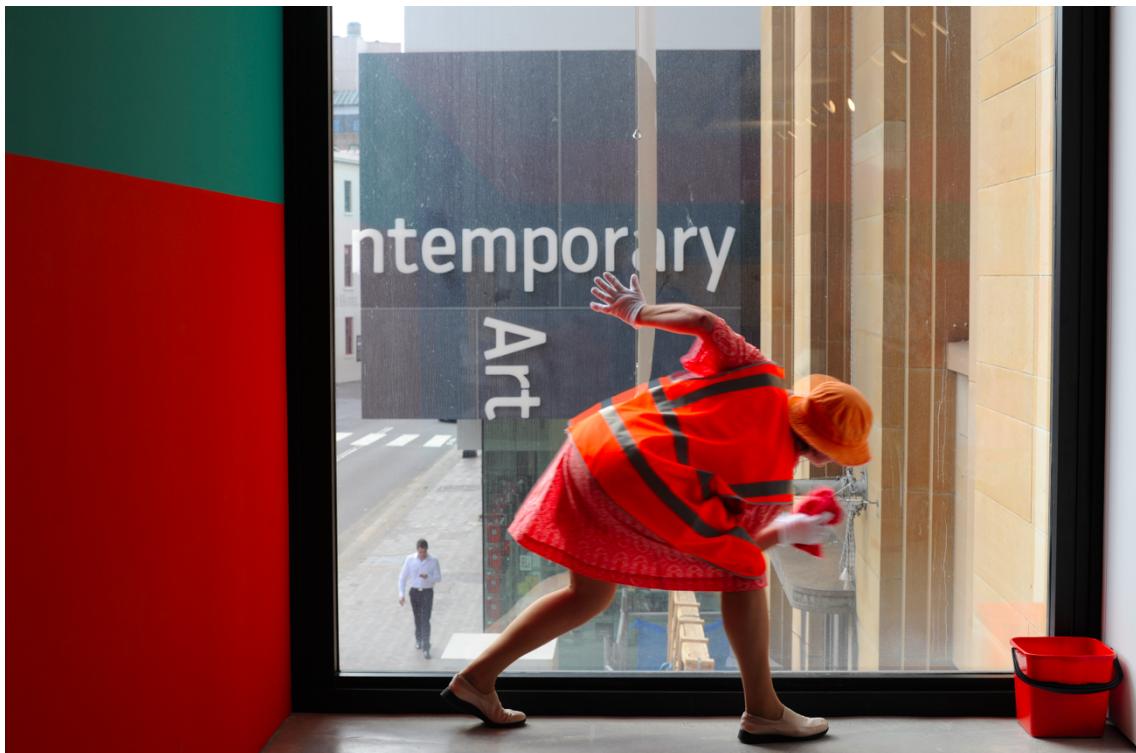


Fig. 2. Julie-Anne Long, *Val, The Invisible* (2012). Photo Heidrun Löhr

Dance in this Museum: MCA, Australia

The Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) opened in November 1991, located on the harbour’s edge, across Circular Quay from the iconic Sydney Opera House and flanked by the historic Rocks Precinct under the arch of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. In the psyche of the city, Sydney Harbour is the location to aspire to, and a position harbour-side suggests status, power and prestige. Not surprisingly the most recognised city landmarks in Sydney, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and the Sydney Opera House, are located on the harbour. The MCA is positioned in this prestigious harbour-side location encouraging assumptions that high quality cultural products are presented here.

The original art deco sandstone building on the site at Circular Quay, designed in the 1930s but only completed in 1952, previously housed the Maritime Services Board. It is a large stand-alone block-like edifice, once considered, when the gallery was originally

established, too monumental a building to attract a passing crowd. For some its facade may have suggested that only the initiated might enter to experience the exclusive art world inside. To counteract its rather intimidating exterior and the severity of the material nature of the edifice, large banners announcing current exhibitions covered and softened the facade.

In March 2012, the MCA launched the redevelopment of its landmark building at Circular Quay, Sydney. Though the Sam Marshall design was not without controversy, the new wing complements the existing art deco building and increased the available exhibition space by almost 50 percent. It also includes additional education facilities and commercial spaces. The launch of the new MCA was highly successful, attracting more than 250,000 people in its opening season, setting a new attendance record (Stone 2012).

The program for the launch of the new building involved an international exhibition *Marking Time*, including the hugely popular and highly acclaimed 24-hour video installation *The Clock* (2010) by Christian Marclay; an exhibition of the MCA Collection, featuring works by more than 170 Australian artists; and for the first time the Museum commissioned a performance program, curated by Performance Space. *Local Positioning Systems* invited six performance artists from Australia and a UK collaborative, to work in and around the building.¹ I was one of the artists commissioned to create a site-specific performance work for the public spaces of the MCA for its launch season—this work was *Val, The Invisible*.

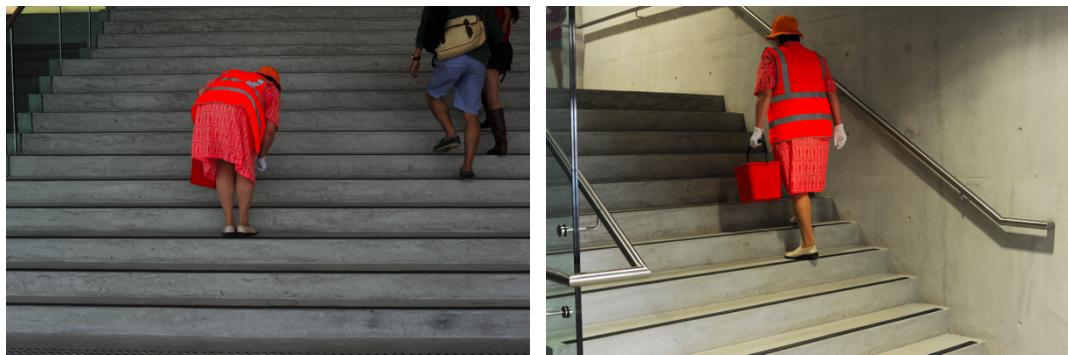


Fig. 3 and 4. Julie-Anne Long, *Val, The Invisible* (2012). Photo Heidrun Löhr

Devising *Val, The Invisible*

Val: A middle-aged woman weaves her way up a steep stretch of stairs. Wearing a fluorescent orange visibility vest, bucket in hand, she looks down stopping intermittently to reach down to pick up minuscule fragments of debris off the concrete ground. She calmly continues this spasmodic stop-start task, oblivious of her surroundings. All around her gallery-goers steadily climb the stairs, in straight lines towards the summit—the front desk of the MCA —mostly not noticing her.



Fig. 5. Julie-Anne Long, *Val, The Invisible* (2012). Photo Heidrun Löhr

JA: As I make my way up the stairs I am pleased that the colour of my vest is mirrored in the geometric mural on the wall.² Somewhat disconcerted I ask myself if my presence here is merely decorative? As I ascend I am aware of the imposing volume of space above me, which in turn brings awareness to my own body. Hauling my weight up step by step, the space of my body fills up as I breathe in. As I breathe out emptying my lungs of air, the space of my body reduces its bulk. My body expands and contracts meeting and breathing with the space above and around me. I stop to look very closely at the ground. The task is routine and manual, something that improves the cleanliness and maintenance of the gallery, albeit in a small, imperceptible way.

Since the 1960s the intersection between movement and visual art has often been explored through a discourse on the subject, the everyday and the private body made public. With *Val* the aim was to extend these lines of enquiry to explore the labour and mobility of the body as part of the production of work. This work explored essentially intangible and unproductive labour as part of an aesthetic product, specifically considering low paid female workers. With *Val* quietly crossing the floors and subversively infiltrating the building in a mode of walking/cleaning, the performance engaged with the multiple layers of activity in operation throughout the MCA and challenged existing use of the place within its public spaces.

Place and Space, Strategies and Tactics

Notions of place and space were central to thinking about *Val*. Here I am drawing on Michel de Certeau's distinction, as articulated in his influential work *The Practice of Everyday Life*. He describes a place as "an instantaneous configuration of positions" that "implies an indication of stability" (1984, 117). He adds: "[t]he law of the 'proper' rules in the place: the elements taken into consideration are *beside* one another, each situated in its own 'proper' and distinct location, a location it defines" (117). By contrast, de Certeau regards space "[as] a practiced place," adding that "[i]n relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken" (1984, 117). While the MCA is clearly a place, in the sense that it has a defined location and proper function, it is the live audiences—and occasionally live artists—who make it a space. What *Val, The Invisible* does, then, is to push this one step further to investigate whether the practice of performance—even a minimally visible one—might shift this space yet again. To put it another way, *Val, The Invisible* stages a blindspot within the place of the MCA by producing her own small, mobile space of simultaneous invisibility and hypervisibility. Even though visitors have come specifically to see art, they often cannot see *Val* in any meaningful way.

In the same volume, de Certeau also elaborated his theory of strategies and tactics with his analysis of power relations, giving new meaning to the military terms (1984, 34–39). Strategy, according to de Certeau, comes into being through "force-relationships ... when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment'" (1984, xix). He adds that a strategy "assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* ... and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it" (xix). Conversely, "a tactic ... is a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of the tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance" (xix). Once again, the MCA is clearly an institution, which imposes a certain force field and set of relationships around it. Yet, it is also the site of tactics: a place that is occasionally overwhelmed by tourists, overtaken by protests, and overrun by skateboarders. *Val, The Invisible* sought to bring these tactics, which are typically deployed outside, inside the institution. In doing so, the project became an extended investigation into how performance—so often overwhelmed, "flattened," and "homogenized" by institutional strategies—might become more tactical (Bishop 2014, 66). To put it in Bishop's terms, the hypervisible yet invisible *Val* both embraces and resists the spectacularising and objectifying tendencies of the gallery. In doing so, she subtly redirects the "one-way traffic" between dance and the museum.

Val's Space as a Practiced Place

Val: A middle-aged woman hovers at the opening of the gallery. Transferring her bucket from left to right hand she slides in closer to the walls and proceeds to walk the perimeter of the long room. The left side of her body skims the space parallel to hundreds of black and white faces looking out from the floor to ceiling

rows of photographs hanging on the white walls.³ Three white columns divide the space and act as navigational markers for the woman walking. An older Chinese man stands in her path looking fixedly at a collection of blurring faces overlaid with digital numbers counting down. As the woman closes in the man stands his ground and glances at her. She leans toward him bends to reach down and deftly stroking the floor with her white-gloved fingers collects something from the floor placing it into her bucket.

JA: My head twists toward the wall and the brim of my hat shades my eyes. I look at the art and the faces look back at me. I am inclined to keep moving at this pace, a pace that has chosen me. I concentrate on the smooth transfer from my heel to the ball of my foot pushing forward through my toes for one ... two ... three more steps ... then I stop. A man is in my way. My weight shifts in towards the man as I swivel to face the wall. We are both aware of each other. Aware that we are both looking at the art and aware that the art is looking at us, aware that through from the walls behind us the art is looking at us, aware, albeit in a small, imperceptible way.

In his book *The Fate of Place*, Edward Casey builds on de Certeau's concept of "space as practiced place" to suggest that the body must be moving for space to exist. He writes: "For space to arise, our body as geared into it cannot remain static: it must be in motion" (Casey 1997, 229). This posits space as a place that *sits waiting* for the dancer to enter and animate it. In other words, space comes into being when the body moves. Val, however, does not consider place as simply sitting and waiting but as *ready and waiting*, willing to enter a dialogue. Through this dialogue, the place, the space it becomes, and the subject all change each other. This suggests that the "discursive" approach, typically associated with verbal dialogues, might be expanded to include embodied conversation as well. In this way, as Kate Lawrence—via Miwon Kwon—remarks of discursivity more generally, Val "further loosens the bonds between the art object and site, so that the site itself might stand for subject matter or content" (2007, 165; quoting Kwon 2004, 26). When the gallery becomes content, it also becomes concrete and Val knows this: the number of steps from the gallery entrance to the information desk, the height of the ceiling when lifting her hands above her head, the condition of the floor and more. Unlike the other artworks, which are fixed in place and easy for spectators to locate, Val is mobile, unsettled and unsettling; her precise status as object or subject unclear. This, in turn, cast the gallery's status into doubt. In other words, Val's tactics, which emerge from not having a proper place, eventually cause visitors to doubt the very essence and existence of a proper place. That's if they see her, of course.

Val's Tactics

1. *Val, The Invisible* interrogated the multiple strata of visibility in operation within the public spaces of the MCA building including the galleries and stairwells and the inconsequential, overlooked, often abandoned service alcoves, nooks and crannies. As *Val* traveled through the gallery, traversing the floor and circulating throughout the

labrythine building in a mode of walking/cleaning her tasks were characterised by devalorised embodied skills and an unremarkable routine:

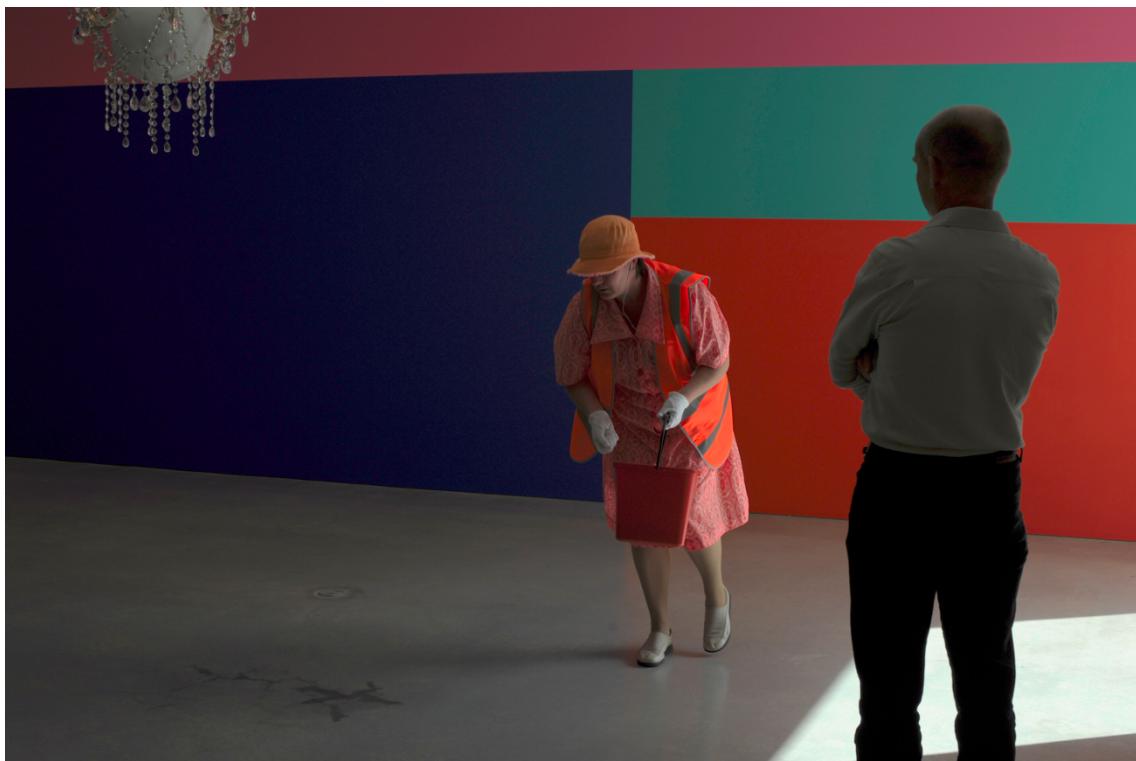


Fig.6. Julie-Anne Long, *Val, The Invisible* (2012). Photo Heidrun Löhr

Val: Look walk scan walk spot locate lean reach open close collect continue; Look ...
 JA: *Let your eyes lead your chin*
 Val: Walk ...
 JA: *Expand behind the knee and lift leg from the sole of your foot*
 Val: Scan ...
 JA: *Soften your eyeballs in your eye sockets, open your temples to the air*
 Val: Spot ...
 JA: *Defocus, every detail is equally important, don't get caught up in the detail*
 Val: Locate ...
 JA: *Breathe in*
 Val: Lean ...
 JA: *Breathe out*
 Val: Reach ...
 JA: *Unleash your armpit, lengthen arm and opposite side of body*
 Val: Open Close ...
 JA: *Move the bones of your fingers, think of a soft pinch*
 Val: Collect ...
 JA: *Feel the matter in your fingerprints*
 Val: Continue ...

JA: *Release ... It's just a drop in the bucket*

Val: Look walk scan walk spot locate lean reach open close collect continue; Look ...

2. It was *Val's* job to keep moving in order to complete her tasks and actions from a rehearsed movement score within the specified time frame of one hour for each appearance. *Val* performed a 60-minute circuit of the MCA, three times each day for three days over three weeks in April 2012. However, there was little to announce *Val's* performance to an audience, no wall labels, no audio guide, no map locating where she would be at what time. The predetermined, mapped journey through the building gave structure to the performance, although *Val's* whereabouts were never publicly announced.

3. When opportunities arose *Val* blurred the line between the performance and the everyday, adhering to the score that *Val* must not multitask. She was able to stop what she was doing in order to respond to unanticipated interactions:

Val: During my time at the MCA I did have a few people give me rubbish and ask where the toilets were. A child asked their mother what I was doing and the answer given was: "The gallery isn't finished yet. She's just cleaning up."

JA Disclaimer: I was fully aware that my job here was 'a performance' and in no way anything like the actual duties and responsibilities of a cleaner. There were a couple of Indian guys who were on cleaning duty around the gallery. When our paths intersected they humored me with a certain ironic 'cleaners camaraderie'. I'm pretty sure they thought I was a 'nutter'. They wheeled a rather large service trolley with all sorts of cleaning agents, mops, mystery gadgets and large receptacles for waste. They wore embroidered polo shirts with company logo on the breast. I had a bucket and a cloth and I wore ... well I wore *Val* in all her heightened orange visibility.

4. In order to accomplish her mission *Val* employed tactics for invisibility in a place where gallery-goers had come to look. An important characteristic of the performance was this tension between visibility and invisibility:

JA: In addition to the action: the looking/the doing, I was also thinking about the bigger issue of invisible work and invisible workers, specifically considering those jobs occupied by female workers. Work often defined as routine, manual, executed by unseen, unnamed workers such as cleaners and domestics. Often, lowly paid work. Work, none-the-less, that is crucial for the functioning of our everyday lives, public places and workplaces—work that is often taken for granted.

The visibility vest came first ... my thinking was to put *Val* in a high visibility vest anticipating the probability that gallery-goers would not give her a second glance. My aim was to not be seen, so in that respect the intervention at the MCA were

highly successful, many spectators didn't notice me. This was a challenge for me, because although I wasn't intending to illicit any feedback from "the audience," as a performer accustomed to getting a response from an audience that was disconcerting. When people approached me to talk I talked to them as myself. I was not "acting" as *Val*; I was just "doing" a task. This became a little difficult when people I knew were there and the conversational mode was very familiar but ultimately it seemed fine for me to move in and out of 'doing' *Val*.

5. This switching in and out of focus between what was "real" and what was performed, between fact and fiction, became a tactical opportunity for *Val*. Her commitment to being in the moment and giving undivided attention to the simple task at hand—an internalised, meditative approach—ensured that *Val* exercised personal agency over the situation. Deliberately subverting her focus away from the spectators when involved in the performative actions and then breaking that focus with a direct response to a request or conversation subverted gallery goers' expectations.

6. Standing still for a little too long on one spot was another destabilising tactic employed by *Val*. Gay McCauley suggests that stillness draws attention from the performer to the spectator: "The stillness thus draws the move to the attention of the spectator, it brings it into existence as a completed entity within the flux of being, and calls for some effort either of aesthetic appreciation or interpretation on the part of the spectator" (2001, 106–07).

JA: The effect of *Val*'s choice to stop and stand still created a tension for me as an artist. A woman came up to *Val* as she stood still with her hand over her eyes and asked, "Are you alright?" When *Val* looked at her the woman appeared genuinely concerned. I felt pretty uncomfortable about that so she didn't let *Val* stand still with her eyes covered again.

7. Another tactic involved an awareness of the effect of speed. *Val*'s trajectory often traced a parallel line with the gallery walls, just behind the gallery-goers standing looking at the framed art on the walls. The speed of *Val*'s movement was constant and a little slower than was usual. With lowered eye focus and intent repetition of minimal task-based actions, this created an uncomfortable tension once you became aware of it.

8. An integral part of the performance was the behaviour of the gallery-goers who were both spectators and participants in the artwork. At other times *Val* quietly challenged the audience by joining them in looking at the surrounding artwork. This created a disconcerting ambience having the artwork looking at the artwork. In turn the viewers became part of the *Val, The Invisible* artwork. The lines were blurred further when *Val* appeared in direct relation to other artworks: either framed by or immersed in video works; or consciously spatially situating her "live" body in relation to an artwork that appeared related to *Val*.⁴ An additional gentle form of audience intervention involved *Val* standing or moving a little closer to gallery goers than is considered acceptable in public.



Fig.7. Julie-Anne Long, *Val, The Invisible* (2012). Photo Heidrun Löhr

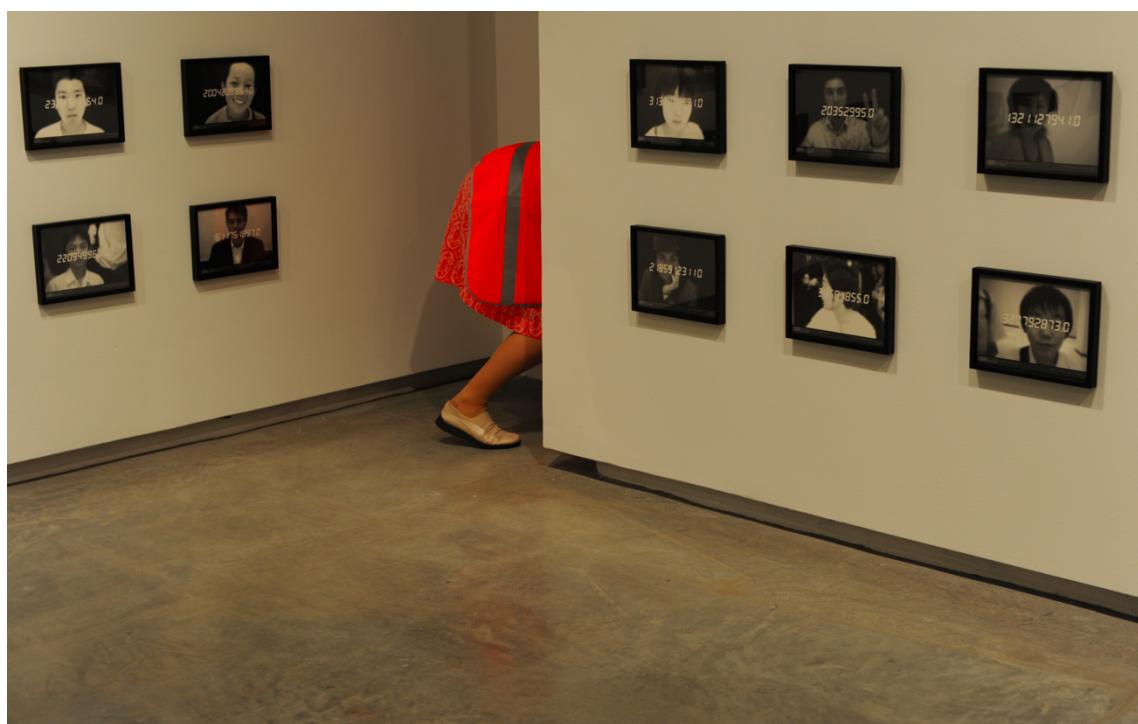


Fig. 8 Julie-Anne Long, *Val, The Invisible* (2012). Photo Heidrun Löhr

Val's Manifesto

Much has been written in response to Boris Charmatz's "Manifesto for the Dancing Museum" (2009) where he questions existing modes of engagement with museums and offers playful, yet serious propositions for a multimodal reimagining of the bodies of dance artists and choreography in the place of the museum (see Charmatz 2008, 2014; Cramer 2014; Nicifero 2014). *Val's Manifesto* was in part a tongue-in-cheek response written for an artist's talk; nonetheless it does serve as a guide to the often pragmatic experience of my performing in this particular gallery context. *Val's* primary choreographic interest was in navigating a pathway through the museum using the physical tasks of an everyday mundane routine. *Val's* interest was choreographic (as in Charmatz's manifesto) but more literally aligned with Mierle Laderman Ukeles *Manifesto For Maintenance Arts 1969!* (see Phillips 2016). Although not as explicit as Ukeles's *Manifesto*, a strong feminist politics is present in *Val's Manifesto* reflected in the experience of the body as it moves in, against and through the space:

1. ART IS WORK
2. JUST DO IT
3. IT'S NOT BRAIN SURGERY IT'S ART KEEP THAT IN MIND
4. STICK WITH THE PLAN HEAD DOWN BUM UP
5. STAY COMPOSED YOU ARE BEING PAID NOT MUCH BUT BETTER THAN SOME
6. REMEMBER WHAT MARTHA SAID (GRAHAM THAT IS NOT STEWART)
7. 'ONCE A DANCER ALWAYS A DANCER'
8. DON'T WORRY IF NO ONE KNOWS YOU ARE DANCING
9. FIND OUT WHERE THE TOILETS ARE PEOPLE WILL ASK
10. GO TO THE TOILET BEFORE YOU START
11. KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN buy one pair of gloves for each performance
buy enough pairs for each day wash gloves overnight with dress and stockings
12. CONCRETE FLOORS ARE HARD MOVE ACCORDINGLY
13. GROW UP EMBRACE YOUR ACHES AND PAINS

14. ACT YOUR AGE BUT DON'T ACT
15. TAKE PRIDE IN BEING A CONSCIENTIOUS ENDEAVOURER IT'S NOT GLAMOROUS BUT IT IS NOBLE
16. BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN COBBLE TOGETHER A CAREER OUT OF INVISIBLE VIRTUOSITY
17. IF NO ONE NOTICES YOU, YOU HAVE BEEN HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL

Val: An audience gathers, some with their phones to video or photograph the performance of the middle-aged woman washing the window. They recognise that this is “something.” For some spectators this is a *divertissement* and they watch for the duration of the “routine.” For others it is just a woman washing a window and after a short time they drift away, joining the passing gallery-goers who think it is nothing at all.

JA: I look out from inside and notice someone I know passing by on the street down below. He laughs and points up at me. I laugh and continue my task. The cloth in my hand leads the sweep of my arm in an arc across the window. I lunge out and extend my reach even further. I am gaining momentum as I transfer my weight, forward and back, step ball change, to face the opposite side. I enjoy the rhythm and flow and the ease that I have when I pivot to change direction. When the window is finished it appears clearer and I flash an appreciative smile to the audience, albeit in a small, imperceptible way.

Conclusion

Val, The Invisible was a performance work made to dialogue with the strategic site of the MCA gallery. Considerations of site-specificity informed how this performance work utilised the design and purpose of the gallery and responded to the museum atmosphere, including spectatorship patterns of the gallery-goers. *Val*’s political intention to illustrate the invisibility of low paid workers and challenge expectations of what constitutes ‘performance’ challenged the strategic institution through a combination of tactical tasks and actions that would be irrelevant outside the gallery context.

Tactics such as: performing an unremarkable routine of devalorised embodied skills and mundane tasks; employing an internalised focus; using stillness; heightening attention to speed; disconcerting spatial proximity; blurring the lines between the everyday and the performance; challenging who was looking at what; and *Val*’s relationship to other artworks, all became part of *Val, The Invisible*’s repertoire—actions and behaviours that she could play around with, things she could “get away with”—when people were looking right through her.

Val: An unremarkable routine: Look walk scan walk spot locate lean reach open close collect continue; Look walk scan walk spot locate lean reach open close collect continue; Look ...

JA: When I asked my then teenage son if he was going to come and see what I was doing he responded with a wry smile: "Would you want to go and see your mother picking up fluff off the MCA floor?"

Enabling the new MCA to function for the enjoyment of large numbers of people of widely varied backgrounds through free admission was a priority consideration when the new MCA was launched. The building continues to be animated through diverse curatorial choices and accessible artistic activities. These include highly regarded retrospectives, popular exhibitions and public workshops, as well as more challenging exhibitions that incorporate innovative, sometimes controversial contemporary art, demonstrating that this strategic institution can be refunctioned and open to diversity. Whilst there has been inclusion of visual artists appropriating dance in their artwork, including performance, the MCA has yet to show curatorial interest in including the work of dance artists in the gallery. With the advent of more performance being programmed I suggest further consideration for what dance and dance artists bring to the museum and for those artists, how performance might animate the spaces of the galleries with specific consideration of the site.

Notes

1. The *Local Positioning Systems* performance program curated by Performance Space featured six Australian artists: my own durational performance intervention *Val, The Invisible*; Stuart Ringholt's naked viewing tour of the exhibition; *The Expert's Project* by Lara Thoms, who worked with local participants to uncover and celebrate their unofficial expertise; artist Jason Maling's one-on-one consultations with gallery visitors exploring their 'anxieties' around visiting the gallery; a large-scale architectural installation and performance work by Bennett Miller *Dachshund U.N.* involving 47 dachshund dogs as national delegates of the United Nations; Latai Taumoepeau's large scale performance intervention drawing attention to the impact of climate change *I-LAND X-ISLE*; and UK-based collaborative duo Walker & Bromwich who collaborated with local residents to create a soundscape for their pirate radio station as they sailed around Sydney harbour on a yacht covered with reflective mirror tiles for *Celestial Radio*.
2. Helen Eager's *Tango* (2012) synthetic polymer paint on wall, has large triangles in 3 shades of oranges cascading down the staircase to the quay. This imposing work (15 metres long x 7 metres high) was commissioned for the stair well specifically for the opening of the new MCA.
3. Tatsuo Miyajima *Death Clock* 2011-2012 digital prints and video archive, part of *Marking Time* curated by Rachel Kent, for the MCA Launch season.
4. The MCA launch exhibition included several artworks from the MCA Collection that especially caught *Val's* eye because of vibrant colours and ways in which they evoked movement. These artworks included: Rebecca Baumann, *Automated Colour Field* (2011) a multi-coloured paper flip-clock kinetic sculpture; Justene Williams, *Crutch Dance* (2011) multichannel digital video displaying Williams own performance of 'delirious choreography' installed across 13 stacked old-

school, bulky black TVs; Robert Owen, *Sunrise #3* (2005) synthetic polymer paint on wall, designed for 2 walls in the MCA with blues, red, yellow, pink, black and orange, creating a 'shifting kinetic perceptual field' of pure colour.

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