

## Shelley Lasica

### Do You Do This Often?



Fig. 1. Shelley Lasica, *The Shape of Things to Come* (2017) in, *Superposition of Three Types*, Artspace, Sydney February 10–April 17, 2017. Photo Jessica Maurer

This was a throwaway question someone asked me recently following my solo performance as part of the exhibition *Superposition of Three Types* at Artspace, Sydney. The follow up question was a query about whether I had done 'something' at a similar institution in the recent past.

But I keep returning to it because it reveals so many aspects of the performance/live work/choreography discussion in this current time when it is existing within the museum, gallery as well as many other spaces concurrently and exposes so many contested areas for both the artist and the receiver or audience or viewer, depending on the shape you are making.

What is the practice of the artist in this situation, or indeed the work of the artist as an ongoing practice. Is the doing, the performing—is that the only aspect that is identified with work?

The practice of making choreography, performing dance work in particular conditions, and, then, what is the virtuosity in this process in relation to concert dance.

In the DO YOU DO THIS OFTEN question is embedded the question of sustaining a practice, of what this practice might actually be, and what the opportunities are for airing the outcomes of this practice.

Because although the doing is not always witnessed, it is always happening. This situation is of course not exclusive to dance choreography.

So, in order not to be totally elliptical, how might choreography, the performance of dance in a particular situation exist outside the conditions of its viewing. It can't.



Fig. 2. Shelley Lasica, *The Shape of Things to Come* (2017) in, *Superposition of Three Types*, Artspace, Sydney February 10–April 17, 2017. Photo Jessica Maurer

### Choreography and the Museum

By now, at this particular point, there has been so much written about and consumed, in this, choreography in the gallery museum thing. The current thing. The historical context perspective location time-line—told as very many different stories.

The philosophical discussion

The institutional discussion

The practical discussion

The discussion about the body—experience, knowledge, articulacy, anatomy, representation, commerce, value, presence, making

Interchangeability of performers, especially when the work has initially been performed by the artists; and authorship, especially in recreating historical work—authorship and authenticity if acknowledged as a state of play can then become part of the trajectory of a work, rather than an awkward impasse.

How does choreography function or respond to both the economies of the visual art world in its complex system of museum curatorship and commercial transaction?

Also often without the specific expertise in this field in a practical, theoretical or historical sense, somehow being inserted into public programmes. perhaps there is a way of making this work intrinsically part of an exhibition, without the instruction to respond to the objects of the exhibition, but able to exist and function through its own materiality.

In this time of adaptation, co-opting of languages, there is also the reverse: engagement with the specificity of the particular practice of dancing and the structure of choreography whilst allowing this modality to expand into many areas.



Fig. 3. *Solos For Other People* (2013), Shelley Lasica, Carlton Baths, Melbourne, Dance Massive. Photo Gregory Lorenzutti for Dancehouse



### How Might Something Appear

What am I “doing”?

What is the audience “doing”?

In the doing, is it the replication of the frisson of the moment shared or experienced? The something that is a moment of manufacture—the realness of the experience, the discussion of authenticity ...

How do the hierarchies and differences between forms and disciplines play out in a world in which equivalence is sometimes becoming homogeneity? If all forms are interchangeable how does this work operate through the contexts of museum, concert house, art fair, dance house etc. and maintain the itch of difference?

Space; theatrical distance in collapsed space



Fig. 4. *Solos For Other People* (2013), Shelley Lasica, Carlton Baths, Melbourne, Dance Massive. Photo Gregory Lorenzutti for Dancehouse

### How Something Might Appear

How something seems to appear in the space of cultural practice, almost, as if, out of nothing. As an imaging of a particular moment in history.

But that's it really, the sense of history, or in this case the lack of the sense of history, of a practice that keeps seeping through the interstices of formal production/solutions/practice definitions.



Fig. 5. *Solos For Other People* (2013), Shelley Lasica, Carlton Baths, Melbourne, Dance Massive. Photo Gregory Lorenzutti for Dancehouse

But also exists as central to these concerns.

At this moment dance finds itself (was it put there?) in the situation of being 'centre stage', but not. In the situation of the museum, the gallery, the Biennale (Venice Biennale 2017 Anne Imhoff, German Pavilion, Golden Lion 2017) as the thing, the central thing. Not part of public programming, but the thing that everyone wants to be part of, to understand, to feel, to be moved by.

The thing: it is the thing that everyone wants. is it the instability, the clear relationship (although misunderstood) to labour, to effort both in the sense of Laban effort analysis but also about politics, to feeling something. Fashion, fad, fetish, body ...

The relationship between feeling and analysis, ways of thinking. The processes of experiencing, proprioception, the complex politics of empathy ...

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How nakedness, nudity and the body interweave histories of 'embodiment', the theatricalisation of the nude, being naked in many contexts.



To tell the truth, to take one's clothes off. These are very different scenarios and not to be confused with each other.

I don't tell the truth  
I have taken my clothes off

How something might appear to be—important potent have potential.

How I might appear to be telling the truth by performing choreography very close to you, or very far away from you, but for the sake of discussion, in the same space as you.

But that would leave me with little agency, and how I might appear to you, is only half the story. because I am doing this also, when I don't appear to you. This work might appear without you.

And then what is the audience's role as viewer or participant. In whatever role the transaction, the contract, is a complex one of compliance, care, responsibility.

But what happens if that balance changes somewhat. In two recent works of mine, *the Shape of Things To Come* and *The Design Plot*, something is still happening and changing between how I might engage people and how they choose to participate; where their attention is.



Fig. 6. *untitled* (2016), Shelley Lasica, Spring 1883, The Windsor Hotel Photo Mark Feary

### **How Something Might Appear (Again But Differently)**

appear to come into being

how something might come to notice or to be noticed

or

how something might look, what it might mean

A list of things - in beginning HOW CHOREOGRAPHY WORKS in 2015 with Jo Lloyd and Deanne Butterworth:

re enactment  
retrospective  
time doubling the present  
duration  
not object not residue  
re configuration  
to change the texture of the room  
what happens when I am not there  
rhythm

a list of things:

altering the space  
the conditions  
the possibilities of understanding seeing reading feeling experiencing

and the what go further  
reduce reduce, analyse and the body

collaboration inclusion participation  
maybe these mean something else

agency authenticity transmission

a list of things.

The thing, it is the now the thing the thingness of choreography now it is the thing that is not a thing. That's the whole point.

Words to think about: instability, neutrality, identification slippage (of language) anxiety.

Are you in or out, of it.

Am I in or out, of it.

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SHELLEY LASICA is an independent choreographer and dancer whose practice is characterised by cross-disciplinary collaborations and an interest in presenting dance in various spatial contexts. Lasica’s choreographic works illustrate an enduring interest in thinking about dance, movement and the many contexts in which they occur. Her works have been presented by Melbourne Festival; National Gallery of Victoria; Artspace, Sydney; Centre Nationale de la Danse. Paris; Siobhan Davies Studios, London; Dance Massive 2015; 20th Biennale of Sydney; Murray White Room and Anna Schwartz Gallery. In 2018, solo and ensemble work will be presented in a number of situations including Union House, University of Melbourne, Sutton Projects, The Substation.

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