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TESTING WATERS
Ecological becomings and liquid perceptions.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master in Creative and Performing Arts
Dance Studies Department, Auckland University, 2013.
Preface

Saturday September 15\textsuperscript{th} 2012 Point Chevalier Sailing Club.

The wind is whipping my body as I walk across the car park towards the rising tide. The waves crash on the concrete boat ramp. The audience is watching and waiting for a plunge. I didn’t go in last night as the tide wasn’t high enough and I had been warned that the ramp was slippery. However, today they had routinely sandblasted the ramp and tonight the tide is perfect. The waves seem to be beckoning me. As I plunge into the dark inky depths of the water my heart skips a beat at the coldness and I rise up and gasp for breath, I feel invigorated. The crowd cheers. I have made the ultimate connection between felt experience and my research inquiry. I feel connected to that Indian scientist who despite all his knowledge of the dangers of swimming in the Ganges, still bathes daily in the water to meet his spiritual needs.

No words need to be spoken. Actions are louder than words.
Abstract

Testing Waters explores where water ecology, dance performance and the everyday converge. Practice-led interdisciplinary research focused on the connections between identity, place and environment that aimed to explore cultural, social and scientific aspects of the environmental issues of water. I situated this project in the place where art and science meet. Through the lens of ecology I described this project as an ‘ecotone’ (the place where two habitats converge) creating the possibility for new choreographic life-forms. Using the dancing body as site of research, I engaged in ecological place-sensitive performance practice through a kinesthetic sensing of nature that encouraged a slowing down and taking notice of the world around me. Through ongoing and changing relations to urban and natural environments my investigations became the focus for Whau (faux) science, a series of pseudo scientific experiments. This work was critically informed by current research on choreographic empathy (Susan Leigh Foster, 2011); ecological performance (Sandra Reeve, 2011; Nigel, Stewart, 2010 and Baz Kershaw, 2012a, 2012b, 2007); ‘liquid perception’ (Jacquie Clarke, 2010; Gilles Deleuze, 2005); and eco-feminism (Elizabeth Grosz, 2011, 2008; Donna Haraway, 2010a, 2010b, 1991a, 1991b).

I developed choreographic actions that evoked transformative perceptions of everyday activities developed through an appropriation of De Certeau’s The Practice of Everyday Life (1984) and artists collective Wrights & Sites. I applied these theories to performative experiments at selected locations in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland City). The significance of this research was to be found in its attention to ‘meta-morphorhical interruptions’ of daily life that created connections between soma, city, home and urban waterways within the context of impending global ecological catastrophe (Bottoms and Goulish, 2007; Kershaw, 2007). The methodology of Whau science avoided sequential logic through actions aiming instead to evolve prismatic angles of interpretation, lines of flights and rhizomatic proliferation (Carter, 2004; Deleuze and Guattari, 2008; Grosz, 2011, 2008; Kershaw, 2012a). Through testing and disruption these performative actions were aimed at inspiring imaginings towards untold futures.

This research was guided by the following research questions: How might a series of choreographic iterations be considered part of an ecological practice? How might solo performance explore ‘liquid perception’ and inspire a collective imagination for sustainable futures? I tested choreographic practices that were deemed ecological and sustainable drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Baz Kershaw’s thought experiments (2012) and Paul Carter’s concept of material thinking (2004). Research was activated through the performance character of Millicent the domestic scientist/mermaid. By focusing on the everyday ‘small’ acts of domestic life through the multiple personae of Millicent, the performance element of this study attempted to evoke for audiences a sense of ‘liquid perception’ and slow choreography highlighting performance in the everyday. I explored ‘ecological becomings’ and modes of ironic self-parody whilst drawing on the work and practices of performance artist Bobby Baker and Wrights & Sites. Millicent existed in the hybrid space between domestic life and water ecology and provided a voice for my personal experience of this research. As a multi-modal research project Testing Waters morphed between various registers of performance and writing in a fluid play between the abstract, the literal, the fictional and the scientific. Testing Waters explored how choreography can actively contribute to developing new varieties of critical thinking in an era when environmental concerns are becoming integral in the daily theatre of our lives.
Acknowledgments

Thank you to the many individuals who have contributed to this research project over the last two years. Firstly Millicent and her status as muse for most of my poetic becomings who emerged through Somatic Choreography (2011) along side the somatic meanderings of Alys Longley, Val Smith, Rachel Atkinson and Katherine Tate. It was in the space of productive proliferation that I saw the beginnings of this research.

Thank you to The Fluid City research team from which my research emerged: Charlotte Sunde, Alys Longley, Carol Brown, Clarke Ehlers, Kathy Waghorn, Rose Martin and Becca Wood. Thank you to Alys Longley and Carol Brown for being my ‘super’ visors throughout the in and outs of my watery investigations, providing valuable directional troughs for my meandering thoughts.

Thanks to everyone involved in the production of Water Slides and to the audience who participated: Val Smith, Zahra Killeen-Chance as the fabulous enigmatic attendants and Sean Curham for climbing the tree to shine a light in through the window to create nostalgia. Carol, Alys, Anna, Zahra and Sean for challenging yet vital choreographic feedback that further encouraged the relational aspect of this performance. Evania Vallyon and Kate Bartlett for sharing the Performance Trail evening that made the experience one of journeying. Thanks to Johannes Blomqvist and The Old Folks Ass. for our great collaboration and Friends of The Whau for their enthusiasm for integrating ‘the choreographer’ into their ecological activities.

I have also really valued the people I engaged with in workshops along the way that including Alexa Wilson’s Performance Art as Practice and Simon Ellis and Efrosini Protopapa’s Choreography as Research, thanks everyone you know who you are.

Thanks to Austin and Isabella for accompanying me on many research trips and starring in many voice-overs, film-clips and photographs, including the scientific sampling field trip with Stella, Becca and Clarke.

Thanks to Rob for supporting me and providing me his creative talents in map-making.

Also thank you Nana and Poppa for much needed baby-sitting and support and to Mum who passed to me the beauty of dancing and most of all Dad who always encouraged scientific enquiry and questioning of the world around us. He always saw me as the dancing scientist that I was.
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I think of the water, a never-ending ocean full of drops, and each drop is a shoe, a bag, a piece of chair, a body... (*La Ribot Dublin, October 2001* in Heathfield, 2004).
1.1 In the Beginning

As a choreographer and a writer with a Master of Science in Zoology (MSc Otago University, Dunedin; Houghton, 2000) and a career trajectory that includes marine ecology and conservation, I follow an ecological imperative in my everyday life. Similarly there has always been a folding between my experience of the world as a scientist, a dancer and a fashion designer and the physical response I have to the landscapes I traverse. These affect me in a poetic way. I am interested in these connections between identity, place and ecology and how one affects the other as an intertwined complex matrix, much like those of a bio-physical system. This particular research project provided the opportunity to explore performance identity in relation to place while investigating how performance research could be used to explore cultural, social and scientific aspects of environmental issues. In particular I was inspired to explore how dance and performance, in the context of local sites, could become a way to evoke a collective ‘ecological imagination’ in approaching the environmental issues we are currently facing in today’s world.

When embarking on a choreographic project concerned with the environmental issues of water, I felt it was in that slowing down and noticing the world around me that I could heighten awareness of the my constant affective relationship with the surrounding environment. Water as a substance provided a metaphor for connectivity. Our fluid bodies are connected through air, water and land as part of the water cycle of nature. In addition, waterscapes, as sites for performance of everyday life, can be used to inspire meandering and lingering through “a social convergence of culture and ecology promoting a non-materialistic aspect of wellbeing through its very experiential qualities” (Clarke, 2010, p. 116). Testing Waters engaged with somatic practices to highlight the importance of beginning with the health and well being of the corporeal body, while simultaneously investing concern in the health of the planet. In attending to the small details of everyday life this research turned its focus to the local sites of an everyday world. I asked the question: Through body/site investigations how might I reveal my inter-dependence with the environment and others?

Testing Waters as an art/science water project further contributed to critical research by asking whether the social/personal or collective experience of performance could make shifts in perception or behavior.
that contribute to long term ways of being or becoming. Might these experiences positively affect future environmental awareness and action? By investigating the use and presence of water in daily life through kinesthetic sensing and somatic dance practice my concept of a slow choreography emerged in response to this provocation. These investigations inspired performative actions in my immediate surroundings that revealed how personal experience can inform perceptions of urban and natural environments.

In the research presented in the following chapters of this thesis I brought my experience as a dancer (somatics), scientist (ecology), fashion designer (identity) and mother (everyday actions) to the ‘watertable’. When applying the concept of ecology to theatre Kershaw (2007) suggests that projects with active open systems that are more like ‘ecotones’ are more likely sustainable into the future. An ‘ecotone’ as described by ecologists, is a place where two or more ecologies meet. Such as river banks and seashores and deep sea volcanic vents”, often producing “new hybrid forms of life due to ‘edge effects’ characteristic of the meeting of ecosystems” (p. 18). I used this analogy of the ‘ecotone’ for the emergent interdisciplinary practice through which I developed the choreography for Water Slides. By undertaking somatic and kinaesthetic research at specific locations I activated this ‘ecotone’ as the connective space between water ecology and performance. Drawing on Paul Carter (2004) and his concept of ‘material thinking’ as a place making practice and Baz Kershaw’s ‘thought experiments’ (2007) this research was interested in testing “new kinds of accessible and participatory scientific and artistic experiments that everyday humans can use to deal with the invisible drivers of climate change” (Kershaw, 2012a, p. 7). The idea being if we look at the place where water ecology and choreography meet we may reveal new conditions for choreographic life-forms. It was in the place where water ecology and somatic dance practice met as an ‘ecotone’ of ‘performance in the everyday’, that my research critically discussed processes for using choreographic practice as environmental activism.
1.2 Water Water Everywhere.

Water has always been essential to the lives of those who live in Tāmaki Makaurau (wider Auckland Area; Fig. 64: Tāmaki Makaurau Site Map). New Zealanders came to this land over the sea. Firstly the ancestors of Te Kawerau a Maki, of Ngati Whatua and subsequently the European settlers depended on the surrounding waterways for basic survival, fishing and transport well into the twentieth century (MacDonald and Kerr, 2009). Despite ongoing change through urban and suburban development, the importance of water to the emotional and environmental wellbeing of the city has remained inestimable. In West Auckland the waterways originally mapped the development of industries such as timber gum, clay, fish and produce as they used water for their production and transportation. However, these waterways have since become unnoticed due to urban development with roads becoming the primary transport system. These changes have contributed to both increased pollution from road surface contaminants and the covering of streams into underground pipes. In the Auckland CBD (Figs 2 & 4) there was once the Wai o Horotiu stream that flowed through Myers Park and down Queen Street to the sea. Asphalt roads now replace this stream (culverted out of sight) and dry storm water gutters that flow surface runoff in heavy rain and floods are the only evidence of the movement of water. Asphalt roads now replace these streams (culverted out of sight) and dry storm water gutters that flow as surface runoff in heavy rain and floods are the only evidence of the movement of water.

In the global domain, water is an increasingly important environmental issue. There are concerns with supply, control, quality and access to waterscapes. The United Nations (UN) recently recognised the crucial importance of water to many aspects of human health, development and wellbeing. The General Assembly of the ‘human right to water and sanitation’ established the right of every human to ‘sufficient’ water for personal and domestic uses that is safe, affordable and physically accessible (between 50 and 100 litres of water per person per day, within 1000 meters of the home; United Nations, 2013). In Auckland concerns are that water that flows from the hills to the sea pass through the environment of the city with around 70 percent of the toxicity in our storm-water, such as lead, zinc and copper, coming from the roads and cars that propel us through life at a great speeds (Barclay, 2012). Furthermore, Auckland’s 100-year-old storm
and waste-water system combines outflow from kitchens, laundries, bathrooms and industry outflows that are treated before being discharged into the Manukau Harbour (south of the Auckland Isthmus; Figs. 3 & 64). However the storm-water system overflows in heavy rain causing sewerage to spill directly into the Waitemata harbor (and the wider Hauraki Gulf). Inner city Auckland beaches such as Cox’s Bay, Meola Reef and Kawakawa Bay (and more) have permanent health warnings because of high levels of e coli that are regularly detected indicating the presence of sewerage (Barclay, 2012).

Dr Kepa Morgan, a senior lecturer in the environmental planning department at the University of Auckland, suggests urban development concepts such as ‘Low Impact Design’ and ‘Water Sensitive Urban Design’ have the intention of reminding people of the connection between humans and nature. He suggests the recognition of indigenous perspectives of nature such as the mauri (life force) model where we are either enhancing the mauri or we’re not (the point where the water can no longer support life), as being highly important to its protection. Tangata whenua (Māori - People of the Land) refer to Tikapa Moana (Hauraki Gulf) as pataka kai, a storehouse for food (Kai Moana) and knowledge (Hauraki Gulf Forum, 2011). In 2004, Auckland Regional Council reported that zinc concentrations were high enough in some urban streams to kill and/or at least effect estuary dwelling creatures, ultimately making their way into the food chain and the seafood we eat (Barclay, 2012). The vision for Tikapa Moana in the State of the Environment Report 2011 (Hauraki Gulf Forum, 2011) is to sustain the mauri of the gulf and it’s taonga (treasured resources) through communities caring for the land and sea, thus protecting our natural and cultural heritage.

Many projects in Auckland aimed at improving waterways and estuarine areas aim to build links between communities and their natural surroundings such as the Volcano to Sea Project whose aim is for restoration of the Tāmaki estuary (Dawson, 2012) and the Friends of the Whau an ecological restoration community group in New Lynn, West Auckland. These approaches reveal that awareness and connectivity between places and people can foster stewardship of the environment within local communities.

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1 Friends of the Whau, www.whauriver.org.nz
1.3 My Backyard

The Whau estuary, a degraded arm of Auckland City’s Waitemata Harbour, has particularly suffered under increased urbanisation and industry. It was this part of the harbour that drew my attention as I made my daily journey by car from my home in the Waitakere Ranges. Following the highway that criss-crossed streams and then passed by the estuary. The Avondale stream that flowed into the Whau estuary, originally part of the Terenga Portage connecting the Waitemata and the Manukau Harbour (Fig. 3), was once a trading highway for early settlers and Māori waka (traditional Māori water vessel). This waterway showed visible degradation due to location, backed on to by suburban quarter acre sections and the Rosebank Road industrial area. This type of low quality, highly sedimented mangroved riverbed was unfortunately a typical aesthetic of city estuaries. To me this location represented the impacts of domestic activities on natural waterways and created nostalgia for a time when one could swim and fish in their own backyard. I recognised the Whau estuary as part of my own backyard thus it became a primary focus for my research on local sites. It became my place of local action a pivotal point in this research project.

*Testing Waters* acknowledged community projects that actively restore the local environment. I was also drawn to Donna Haraway’s (2010b) suggestion that we should refer to the recuperation, rather than restoration or reconciliation of the planet as the means to reconfigure our relationship to the environment. That statement led me towards developing a project that sought to recuperate and regenerate as well as identifying problems and constructing solutions.

1.4 Social and Ecological

This project was interested in exploring movement pathways though landscape as a starting point for ecological choreography. In response to the ‘earth’s crisis’ Susan Leigh Foster (2011) suggests choreographing the motionality of people and events is a way towards connectivity. She believes choreography can be a way of analysing patterns of human mobility through sensation and that the ability for the performing body to sense what another is feeling through choreographing empathy is imperative to
Figure 2. Auckland City Surfaces. (2013; Aerial Photograph. Google Earth, 2013).

Figure 3. Following Terenga Portage. Manukau Harbour (2011; Photograph, Green Bay, Manukau Harbour).
Figure 4. Staring into the Unknown. Christina Houghton (2011; Photograph by Carol Brown, Wynyard Quarter, Auckland CBD).

Figure 5. Subterranean Water Flows. Whau estuary (2012; Photograph, Tony Sedgedin Reserve, New Lynn).
todays world. Furthermore the subjective investigation of the environment as environmental dance (somatic studio based practice or kinesthetic response to site) can explore the relationship between humans and nature through the kinesthetic experience of landscape and the other-than-human world “as a means for not just deepening appreciation of the natural world but of generating new ecological knowledge and of exploring environmental values” (Stewart, 2010, p. 32). These sensory experiences investigate “becomings that undo the stabilities of identity, knowledge, location, and being, and how they elaborate new directions and new forces that emerge from these processes of destabilization” (p. 3). I borrowed Sandra Reeve’s (2011) concept of the ecological body as a research body who is in a constantly changing relationship to the surrounding environment. In this research the ecological body captured the “imperceptible movements, modes of becoming, forms of change and evolutionary transformations that make up, natural, cultural and political life” (Grosz, 2011, p. 1).

1.5 Liquid Perceptions

Somatic modes of attention encourage receptivity through an awareness of internal and external sensations in the body in relation to the surrounding environment. A somatic approach to choreography explores the human body’s relationship to the wider landscapes and environment through internal awareness and receptivity to external stimuli (Stark Smith and Olsen, 2006). Water has been linked to the senses as water inspires what has been described as a ‘liquid perception’. This termed coined by Deleuze (2005) in relation to the moving images of cinema is described by Jacquie Clarke (2010) in relation to the city’s flows and circuits as we experience ‘living waterscapes’ and imagery in everyday life. In addition, creative practices such as walking meandering and drifting (Wrights & Sites, 2006a&b) that follow the pathways of nature created useful disruptions to constructed urban flows and domestic environs. Through the process of sensing the natural flows of movement within and through space this research aimed to evoke ‘liquid perceptions’ of the places we pass through on a daily basis.
Drawing on these theories Testing Waters sought to inspire ‘liquid perceptions’ (Deleuze, 2005) through a slow choreography that drew on somatic movement practices and a kinesthetic sensing of the environment in the context of everyday life. Choreography was inspired by water imagery and poetic mappings of my pathways through these landscapes that inspiring transformations of perception from solid to liquid and back again. It is envisioned that this process could open the potential to challenge static ways of seeing as well as creating an abundance of dance material that feeds the developmental process “and equally important is pleasurable to those who engage with it” (Karen Christopher in Bottoms and Goulish, 2007, p. 120).

1.6 Performance in the Everyday

Provoked by performance in the everyday I sought to embody the sensory aspect of water while choreographically mapping the criss-crossing and moving nature of waterways in our immediate environment. In the books Small Acts of Repair (Goulish and Bottoms, 2007) and The Practice of Everyday Life (De Certeau, 1984) the writers share the idea that the wandering lines of everyday life express creativity and contain activities that can influence change at an everyday scale. In particular De Certeau describes the ‘art of using’ at the microscopic level as a way of creating tactics for ‘making do’ within the larger wheels of society. These theories suggest that in noticing the actions of everyday life there is potential for encouraging change at an everyday level. By situating my research within my own daily actions that included drifting in my domestic environment and meandering further a field I planned to create disruptions through performative interruptions aimed at evoking unusual ways of seeing.

1.7 Mapping Water Slides

This project created a choreographic map from the sources of streams, and the meanderings of these through urban and suburban sediments. Connection points between identity, place and environment were
explored through a non-linear creative process that drew on ‘material thinking’ where “boundaries between inside and outside are ill defined” (Carter, 2004, p.4).

Crossing and crossed, the eloquence of the line is suddenly interrupted, and the new figure’s right angles, expanding in all directions from the center, suggesting a yawning chaos, a stellar explosion (Carter, 2004, p. 3).

Paul Carter (2004) states that the practice and theory of making art are interconnected. He uses the term ‘material thinking’ to describe how through the creative practice of making art “creative research is, in itself, an act of reflection and invention” (p. 191). Carter describes ‘material thinking’ as a ‘place making’ practice where the process of creative practice is ultimately embodied in the final artwork “where as a method of materialising ideas, research is unavoidably creative” (p. 7). Thus artworks that embody material thinking produce new understandings about ourselves, our histories and the cultures we inhabit producing knowledge that establishes fertile ground for future invention (Carter, 2004, p. 8; Lee Brian, 2005).

Choreography was inspired by fluid narratives that coalesced as the spaces in-between ecological concepts, memories of place and experiential archives, whilst paying attention to sensation through the ecological body. I focused on points of connection as ‘ecological becomings’ that foregrounded the un-seen and the in-between spaces as a constant source of regeneration. Drawing on feminist theorists Elizabeth Grosz (2011, 2008) and Donna Haraway (2012a, 2010b) Testing Waters offered ‘ecological becomings’ and ‘liquid perceptions’ (Clarke, 2012; Delueze, 2005) as a way towards a concept of life “that does not privilege the human as the end aim or end evolution, but sees the human as one of many species (Haraway, 2010b). I somatically explored the emergent, the un-seen, and the remembered as starting points for choreography. These moving concepts provided the connective points in the structure of the performance Water Slides where the performance foregrounds the un-seen and in-between through multi-specied story-telling.

1.8 Testing & Experimentation

This research explored choreographic tactics that inspired ‘ecological becomings’ and ‘liquid perceptions’ of water through testing and experiments via indirect routes described by Baz Kershaw (2012a, p. 5). I also
drew on Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of rhizomatic mapping based on cartography, not reproduction of a tracing that is orientated toward experimentation in contact with the real (Delueze and Guattari, 2000, p. 12). Through disruptive everyday actions, a series of pseudo scientific experiments (I describe as Whau science, See Chapter 2) were developed as ‘meta-morphorical interruptions’ that aimed to reveal the unseen qualities of water through the cartography of material thinking and imagination.

If research implies finding something that was not there before, it ought to be obvious that it involves imagination. If it is claimed that what is found was always there (and merely lost), still an act of creative remembering occurs (Carter, 2004).

In the performance Water Slides (2012) the performance character Millicent (the domestic scientist) who moves between mother and other as ecological body performs Whau science as a disruptive action. Millicent emerged early in the initial stage of the research project as a poetic voice translating my personal experience. Millicent’s narratives offered multiple perspectives of water in daily life. This performance character was disruptive in nature and aimed to evoke a milieu of ‘liquid perceptions’ and ‘ecological becomings’ through imagination. In addition Millicent’s personae initiates ambiguities of narrative and modes of character that evoke physical and psychological relations between audience and environment that can inspire perceptions and encourage ecological engagement with the world around us (Claid, 2006; Briginshaw 2005; Reeve, 2011). This research was guided by the following research questions:

- How might a series of choreographic iterations be considered part of an ecological practice?
- How might solo performance explore ‘liquid perception’ and inspire a collective imagination for sustainable futures?

The following chapters of this thesis describe the research process involved in developing the choreographic work Water Slides that was performed at the Point Chevalier Sailing Club (see Fig. 64 Site Map) in Point Chevalier, an Auckland Suburb that sprawls across a peninsula that is bordered by the Waitemata Harbour. Firstly Chapter 2: Methodology - Fluctuating Turbidities discusses the development of the methodology through practice-led research. This section describes the emergence of Whau science and

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2 a term I developed by combining terms metamorphosis with metaphorical to describe transformation in relation to water ecology and science fiction. This term inspired the synthesis of science, cultural values and practices that are related to water.
slow choreography through kinesthetic sensing of everyday actions. Chapter 3: Literature Review - Hanging Out the Washing provides a review of literature that supports the critical discourse of this project. In particular this section focuses on how ‘ecological becomings’ and ‘liquid perception’ are applied to the ecological thinking of Testing Waters as a research project and a choreographic work. Chapter 4: Discussion - Reflections in Water reflects on eight performative experiments that investigated specific choreographic tactics in a range of domestic and urban sites, and contributed to the choreography of Water Slides. Lastly Chapter 5: Conclusion - Down to the Waters Edge outlines the main findings of this project and discusses them in context of performance ecology and Baz Kershaw’s thought experiments and imagining a future.
Chapter Two: METHODOLOGY

Fluctuating Turbidities

Figure 6: Meandering Board Walk. The Whau estuary (2012; Photograph, Tony Sedgedin Reserve, New Lynn).

Following meandering streams of knowledge that collect as sediments. Research cuts through pathways through solid clay, pooling in stillness and flux through the geography of everyday life. Wandering lines of research know no outcome, they connect art, science, theory and nature in choreographic thinking where knowledge emerges through doing. Following the flowing currents of ideas, thoughts are meandering like streams, metamorphosing through the elements of ice, liquid and gas. Narratives of the natural histories of place and identity float to the surface (Houghton, Field Notes 2012).
Chapter Two – Methodology

2.1 Choreographing Process

*Testing Waters* investigated choreographic practice through the critical lens of performance ecology. The research methodology emerged throughout the research process. This focused on small local actions of everyday life through slowing down and taking notice of the surrounding environment. Fundamental to this methodology was the development of 1. *slow choreography* that drew on somatic and kinesthetic awareness of everyday life 2. *Whau science*: a series of pseudo-scientific experiments enacted out by

3. the performance character Millicent the domestic scientist/mermaid. *Whau science* draws on;

(a) somatic research in relation to the qualities of water focusing on the fluids of the body.
(b) slow movement through place, taking notice of the surrounding environment.
(c) exploring notions of sustainability through everyday actions.
(d) collecting a range of experiences from different locations around the city.
(e) written narratives of place as experiential observations of natural history.
(f) dialogue between art and science practices.
(g) choreographic actions as disruption.
(h) choreographic actions as ‘tactics’ and ‘fix it’ techniques.

This methodology evolved through critical discourse that involved practice and theoretical reflection. This informed my choreographic process and consequently shaped the aesthetic of the solo performance work *Water Slides*. The process was concerned with connections between self, others and the environment in the social and political context of environmental performance and action.

2.2 Knowing through Doing

Practice-led research is a form of research where performance writing and creative work can be recognised as methods of research articulation alongside or independent of traditional forms of academic writing (Longley, 2011). Such methods are emergent as part of a creative practice. The creative practice of *embodied research* is reflexive in nature. In the intersection between the personal, social and the political, new forms of knowledge can be revealed. Duxbury, et al, (2007) describes these sustainable forms of scholarship and enquiry in the academy as “ways of legitimating affective understandings and perceptions, ways of exposing not only the aesthetic but also the epistemological and ontological” (p. 8). In addition Annette Arlander (2008) suggests as a normal part of artistic work, research should ideally be developed from within the working methods, as opposed to an emerging field from the outside. “Research ‘from the inside’ of performing arts practices needs time to develop its own models” (p. 30). Furthermore, discussions by artists involved in practice-led research describe “Questioning, reviewing, reflecting, analysing, performing, speculating, relating, remembering, critiquing, constructing and further questioning” as what is involved in sustained forms of creative practice (Duxbury, et al, 2007, p. 8).

Anna Pakes (2009) describes choreography as a form of praxis that is a ‘highly productive activity’ involving the constant negotiation of relations in multiple contexts. “It is crucial, in this inter-subjective context, to have a creative sensitivity to others involved, the evolving situation and the experiences it generates” (Pakes, 2009, p. 19). Thus a choreographer’s action is a form of intelligence that is ‘embedded in the doing’, however at the time the artist may be unaware of this (p. 12). This approach values the responses that emerge from situations beyond that of pre-planned static reasoning and expected outcomes.

The now disbanded performance group *Goat Island* reveal their practice methods through the process of ‘not thinking but doing’. They would identify a sustainable process that ‘encourages proliferation’ finding a beginning and following its growth pattern.
The thought surprises us from within the action rather than coming first to inform or create the action. The result it seems for want of a better word. Organic (Bottoms and Goulish, 2007, p. 119-120).

Practice led research is a way for creating methodology that emerges from within the process of discovery and enquiry. One where knowledge and ideas are established through processes that are prolific and organic. I borrowed this approach in developing this methodology towards an ecological practice.

### 2.3 Interdisciplinary Practice

This practice-led research is focused on how interdisciplinary choreographic practice, in response to the environment, can be understood as a form of material thinking across physical, psychological, temporal and geographical dimensions. Drawing on Carter’s (2004) understanding of the emergence of material thinking in the fields of collaboration, I sought to encourage a dialogue between science and art practices in order to reveal multiple meanings and unforeseeable connections. Miriam Van Rijsingen suggests that through interdisciplinary practices art works ‘re-frame’ discourses by re-viewing other practices with different ‘eyes’, as it were. In this way the viewer or audience becomes “an edgy reader/viewer, forced to switch between frames” (Miriam Van Rijsingen in Anker and Talasek, 2007, p. 102). The distinctive character of this creative research aims to reveal how the process of ‘material thinking’ enables us to think differently about our human situation as Carter states “to demonstrate the great role works of art can play in the ethical project of ‘becoming’ (collectively and individually) ‘oneself in a particular place’….To understand how identities form, how relationships with others are actively invented (and therefore susceptible to reinvention) is essential knowledge if societies are to sustain themselves” (2004, p. xii).

Due to the subjective nature of this research, that situates the researcher, as insider this choreographic methodology diverged from qualitative research, including social sciences and scientific research, where the researcher observes the environment from the outside recording and testing facts and data. Sandra Harding a scientific critic defined the word ‘method’ as a predetermined technique for the gathering of evidence or a set of materials used in order to carry out research, but the term ‘methodology’ describes a theory and
evaluation of choices about how research does and should proceed (cited by Jill Scott in Anker and Talasek, 2007, p. 94). The differences between arts and science methodologies and the potential for their complimentary co-presence have however been explored by recent developments in interdisciplinary practice and research. For example in the book Experiment: Conversations in Art and Science (Arends and Thackara, 2003) showcases a collection of projects (funded by the Sci-Art awards, Wellcome trust, United Kingdom) where artists work with scientists exploring different working methods to enhance each other’s practice. One project in this collection was the investigation of cognitive behavioural techniques by psychologist Richard Hallem and performance artist Bobby Baker resulting in the creation of a self-help video ‘How to Live’ (Arends and Thackara, 2003). This project drew on Hallem’s expertise on psychology and Baker’s experience of the mental health system. These projects involved practitioners such as biologists, architects, neuroscientists, fashion designers, filmmakers, marine biologists and performers working together³ which created a multitude of creative projects inspirational for those working with interdisciplinary practice. The methodology for Testing Waters provided a meeting point between dance and water ecology as a form of interdisciplinary practice. I used the analogy ‘ecotone’ (Kershaw, 2007; see section 1.1 & 3.3) to describe the place where disciplines meet and new models of choreography could emerge.

### 2.4 Whau science.

I borrowed concepts from scientific method in the development of a faux science. Inspired by primary research at the Whau estuary (pronounced as Whau (fau), Whau (wow) or Whau (fow) Fig. 7). I named this fake science Whau (fau) Science. Some accounts suggest the Whau estuary was named after a native tree, the Whau (Entelea arborescens). Others suggest the name Te Whau was a derivative of Te Wao nui o Tiriwa the ancient Maori name for the wider area and Te Whau was know as Te Wao before being re-named as Wahu during European settlement (Time Spanner, 2010). This confusion as to the actual origin of the name has lead to multiple pronunciations of Whau. I embraced these multiple explanations as indicators that

research into place created diverse and ambiguous narratives in relation to subjective and cultural values of the researcher. *Whau science* presented results of an unusual nature through local and everyday actions and became the central methodology in creating *Water Slides*.

### 2.4.1 Local and Everyday Actions.

As part of the development of *Whau science* I engaged in a studio method that created choreography that drew on the concept of creating everyday ‘tactics’ (De Certeau, 1984) and ‘fix it techniques’ (Bottoms and Goulish, 2007) as activist actions of the amateur. This way of researching recognised Critical Art Ensemble’s (U.S. based activist collective) argument for the necessity of amateur engagement in contemporary debates. For example their re-titling of the artist as a *Cultural Worker* or a *Tactical Media Practitioner* where he/she finds resistance in places of agency outside the realms of the traditional work-place of artists who sell their labour to the highest bidder (Schneider, 2000, p. 137). Following this movement I looked for resistance against the economic structures that control public spaces and place profit ahead of enjoyment of natural environments. Through my actions as a mother, scientist and artist and through my research methodology I considered this strategy as aspiring towards a more ecological life style.

Through transformations of the everyday, *Whau science* masqueraded as real science without upholding those rigorous requirements of scientific investigation. For example each time a site was visited I used a different method of subjective observation without the use of a ‘control’ or specific data collection technique. I used the term faux not in the derogatory sense that I am portraying my subject inaccurately or deceptively but rather I explored the contradictory, the exaggerated and the un-provable through the rigorous process of artistic testing. *Whau science* was informed by walking, meandering and drifting practices of Wrights & Sites (2006b) that aimed to create disruptions of private and public spaces through playful walking and unusual action. Taking pathways that follow constructed tasks while maintaining “openness to the mytho-geographic, flexible boundaries, and a creative awareness of the connections between here and elsewhere/anywhere” (Simon Persighetti in Wrights & Sites, 2006a) is one of the primary aims of Wrights & Sites. In walking they also remember the non-human “Walking is sustainable and walking
is slow. At a snails pace we see a snail trail” (Hodge et al, 2006). I was particularly influenced by the practice of Wrights & Sites artist Cathy Turner who situates her practice of drifting in a domestic environment evoking concepts of a shared experience between women from a multiplicity of backgrounds as well as exploring her own personal experiences (Heddon and Turner, 2010). Following Turner I drew on my own experience of motherhood to explore notions of visibility and potential for change. Through my everyday actions (Figs 9 & 10) and out walking with my children (Figs 18 & 19), I explored everyday actions and collective experiences that can be shared with each other. Choreography emerged as a rhizomatic mapping of experience and accumulated as narratives on domestic water use and nature walks.

2.4.2 Body Sites/Water Sites

Drawing on the practices of Turner (Wrights & Sites, 2006) De Certeau, (1984) and Bottoms and Goulish, (2007) I undertook a series of Whau experiments in a range of environments that ranged from the domestic to the public realm. These followed the paths of nature and activated change through local actions situating my body as a site of research. Although I borrowed the term ‘site’ from scientific method my intention was to subvert this body ‘site’ into a place of action. Given that the concept of site has associations with abstraction of territory (Gotman, 2012), I transformed these study sites into locations for ‘place making’. Following the theories of Carter (2004), such thinking acknowledges that we create place through stories and material thinking. Using this approach I collected a range of different experiences of nature from multiple perspectives.

- Domestic Experiments,
- Nature Walks,
- Scientific explorations,
- Transformations of past, present and future.

(see DVD1 Field Samples).
Figure 7. Whau estuary (2012; Photograph, Tony Sedgedin Reserve, New Lynn).

Figure 8. I See a Man. Unknown Subject (2012; Photograph, Ken Maunder Park, New Lynn Auckland).
Figure 9. Everyday Actions with Washing. Christina Houghton (2012, Photograph, Raroa Tce).

Figure 10. Domestic Interruptions. Christina Houghton (2012, Photograph, Raroa Tce).
These body/site experiments at specific locations explored the notion of performative/thought experiments (Kershaw, 2007) as practical encounters of action that are various configurations of everyday activities. I followed Kershaw’s (2011) call for local sites of creativity that facilitate small, on site performance research activities that encourage human ‘econnectivity’ (Kershaw, 2011). Each body/site created an ‘ecotone’ between urban/suburban environs and natural landscapes through the ‘edge effects’ of where art and science meet. Through these performative experiments I sought to explore how a dialogue between art and science could open spaces for creative imagination (Carter, 2004), ecology (Kershaw, 2012) and contribute to ‘small acts of repair’ as a recuperation of environment and body consciousness and awareness (Bottoms and Goulish, 2007).

2.4.3 Experiential Archives

I captured the experience of my research through photographing, filming, sound recording, writing and recorded dialogue (see DVD1 Field Samples). These digital archives provided further impetus for choreographic responses in the studio and provided projections for performances Mapping Tamaki Waters and Water Slides. In addition I collected materials to be used to construct costumes and props for performance. The action of working with these material items and developing the costumes for Water Slides entwined itself into the choreographic process through the construction of my performance identity and performance environment. I constructed this plastic archival aesthetic through similar everyday homemade and D.I.Y (do it yourself) tactics that related to the body as site. I drew on Whitaker’s (2013) understanding of ‘the somatic sensuality of cloth’ to be like a skin as an interface between inner and outer worlds (Bristow in Whitaker, 2013) that can be infused with a sense of journey by wandering and collecting found objects from nature, within streets, or public places. These items can create links to domestic life and touch on ritual practices or heirlooms that transform into worn garments that act as charged symbols of becoming (Collier in Whitaker, 2013). The development of costumes from these found items engaged in the process of my body becoming part of the degraded environment. As I embodied the chaotic forces of

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4 In ecology edge effects refer to the change in population or community structures at the boundary of two habitats. As edge effects increase biodiversity increases (Wikipedia, 2013).
nature and everyday life, methodology for formulating the aesthetic design reflected the materiality and aesthetics of the environments moved through. In particular, I became interested in bringing attention to the artificial materials in our immediate environment. My intention was to contemplate how the artificial material of plastic affects our experience of the natural world and the place of material archives of performance. The topic of water and evidence of the impact of human habitation became the focusing lens of this investigation.

2.4.4 Slowing Down

My concept of slow choreography developed from the ‘ecotone’ between water ecology and everyday actions. The nature of water became my inspiration encouraging a slowing down through alternative gravity and ‘liquid perception’ (see section 3.6). Through my body as site and sited I drew on somatic knowledge and a kinesthetic sensing of the environment that allowed myself as performer-researcher to slow down and take notice, to pay attention through the body-site relation. I discovered that by slowing movements through space to a pace that is neither slow-motion or stillness, one that moves in small increments, that the whole body becomes kinesthetically sensitised to the surrounding environment and the greater temporal quality of nature cycles. This state enhances a self-reflexivity that cultivates environmental awareness. A somatic sensing of stillness in motion creates an embodied experience of place encouraging a noticing of the environment moved through both internally, spatially and organically.

The principles of slow choreography are:

1. Attention to stillness and a slow performance of everyday activities.
2. Research is occurring in the doing the creating and the experiences I have while moving, wandering meandering, looking, observing.
3. Choreography emerges in the spaces between, the body, writing, sound, video, spoken word.

Slow Choreography was strongly influenced by experiential practices that link to both the physiology of the body and the experience of embodiment. These practices included Yoga (Iyengar), Feldenkrais (Moshe Feldenkrais), Skinner Releasing (Joan Skinner) and Body Mind Centering (BMC, Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen).
Furthermore workshops leading into this research project included ‘Somatic Choreography’ with Alys Longley (2011) and ‘Super Nature’ with Otto Ramstad (2012). Such experiences provided tasks relevant to my research. Additionally texts as Sensing Feeling and Action (Bainbridge Cohen, 2008) and Body, Space, Image (Tuffnel and Crickmay, 1993) provided sources for developing methodology towards a slow choreography. Somatic practices develop awareness of the body through visualisation (mapping), somatisation (sensing) and embodiment (cellular consciousness) as “a being process and not doing process” (Stark Smith and Olsen, 2006, p.28). Somatic imagery of the fluids of the body provided me with visualisation of the connections between the internal fluids of the body and the external waterways of our environment. The somatic exploration of fluids, is a way of opening spaces of fluid receptivity to explore the internal qualities of the body in stillness and movement and are primarily concerned with transformations, flow, energy states and receptivity (Bainbridge Cohen, 2008, p. 83). I explored somatic dance practices in both the studio and in the environment (Bainbridge-Cohen, 2008, Stewart, 2010, Foster, 2011) as a means for generating ecological knowledge as well exploring environmental values (Stewart 2010, p. 32). Through these workshops I undertook somatic investigations of the ecological body and the science of water and responded to experiential archives from field trips/nature walks from Auckland city and domestic sites. Slowing Down, Noticing, Listening, Experiencing (Fig. 11 & 12).

2.4.5 Transformational Narratives

The character Millicent was an important part of this emergent methodology. Millicent was an enthusiastic amateur who through the masquerade of a domestic scientist/mermaid developed a voice throughout the research process (see DVD1/1.1). Through the practice of drifting through place and material thinking (Carter, 2004), I drew together slow choreography and mytho-poetic narratives of Whau science through this character. Millicent engaged in the discovery of the natural history of place as an ecological body. By enacting investigations through a kinesthetic sensing of the environment and the act of place-making Millicent developed narratives through a mytho-poetic creation of self. This development drew on Lepecki following Sloterdijk’s concept of “slower ontology” where stillness is considered an “interrogation of
Figure 11. *Overhanging Fig Tree*. Kinesthetic Research (2012; Photograph, Whau estuary, Ken Maunder Park, New Lynn).

Figure 12. *Dangling the Toes*. Christina Houghton (2012, Photograph, Kinesthetic research, Ken Maunder Park, New Lynn).
choreography’s political ontology” (2006, p. 45). Framing subjectivity and representing it through, the still, the slow, interchanging identities and repetitive actions, Millicent’s slow choreography created a choreographic disruption of representation. Therefore Millicent the domestic scientist and her repetitive actions of everyday chores encompassed the political interchange between scientist, mother and activist. The domestic scientist became a way to present the multiple perspectives of this research in the final performance of Water Slides and provided a divergence from my own phenomenological experience of this research.

2.4.6 Meta-morphorical Interruptions

This research aimed to discuss both the choreographic process and performative experiments through the critical lens of performance ecology, critically discussing how we might contribute to Kershaw’s notion of thought experiments and imagination (2007). I also drew on Carter’s (2004) material thinking in that one might look to the past in order to imagine a future. This research was interested in performative experiments as a set of conditions within choreographic processes in an ongoing process of relations between site, audience and performer. The methodology of Whau science that drew on a slowing down and noticing the surrounding environment aimed to disrupt the everyday through ‘meta-morphorical interruptions’ (see section 1.8) as performance experiments. In these experiments I searched for “new kinds of accessible and participatory scientific and artistic experiments that everyday human can use to deal with the invisible drivers of climate change” (Kershaw, 2012a, p. 7) at the same time I was interested in expanding these concepts to a multi-specied perspective. As a methodology for ‘ecology of the imaginary’, Kershaw (2007) suggests that there is potential in the imaginative couplings of art and science in interspecies and intergenerational performance experiments (Kershaw, 2012a, p. 11; see section 3.2 & 3.3). My actions were influenced by these concepts as my methodology unfolded, opening spaces between choreographic practice and water ecology. As the research progressed I continually questioned how these local actions might connect to issues at a global level. Results from each experiment ultimately informed the structure of the following tests in a continuous reflexive nature.
Chapter Three: LITERATURE REVIEW

Hanging out the Washing

Figure 13. Unusual Actions at the Clothesline. Austin Linkhorn (2012; Photograph, Raroa Tce).

What are the challenges to theatre and performance in an ecologically threatened world? Is there a future for theatre as an ethically and politically alert art through environmental action? How might ecological understandings refigure the natural virtues of theatre and performance? (Kershaw, 2007, p. i).
3.1 Art and Ecology

In the ‘ecotone’ between art and science in the light of increasing environmental issues, this project brings dance into new contexts. Choreography continually renews itself by moving into new alternative realms of exploration creating new spaces in a constantly and evolving way reflecting current modes of artistic thinking. Adrian Heathfield (2008) discusses some of these shifts in the context of the space and location of live performance, “this emigration has become a means through which to test the foundations and borders of identity, to being and the self into new relations with its outsides and others” (2008, para. 2). These new contexts are significant in developing approaches to social issues that encourage different ways of perceiving the world around us. The valuing of productive material thinking enables us to think differently about our human situation (Carter, 2004).

Interdisciplinary practice can play a role in creating awareness in times of ecological crisis. These practices incorporate ‘shifts of scale’ that move between the somatic, the microbial, to the digital and the gestural (Longley et al. 2013). In the case of Auckland Water issues art-science collaborations can highlight the unseen issues, through embodied research. For example the process of making art can bring attention to social, cultural and scientific perceptions of water that can contribute to the complex nature of these issues. Thus kinesthetic sensing of the surrounding environment, scientific knowledge and city planning can reveal how we relate to water as part of the urban landscape. It can also provoke research of a different kind that reveals the temporal nature of specific locations and community connections to place and the environment reminding us of the cultural and spiritual values we have in relation to water. These types of research inspire us to want to know more about how these complex systems work, so that we can develop our own personal strategies to protect the environment into the future.

In this literature review I focused on theories that informed the development of my interdisciplinary practice as one that had an ecological ethic. I also reflected on the theories that informed the development of terms ‘ecological becomings’ and ‘liquid perceptions’ within the context of this particular research project. These concepts evolved through the activation of slow choreography and Whau science (described in Chapter 2) through-out the process of creating the choreography for Water Slides.
Testing Waters drew on a range of artists and philosophers who are engaged in the world through ecological thinking. It saw performance as a way to bring concepts of ecology into everyday life through focusing on in between spaces of connection. Following creative practice as material thinking this research employed an eco-feminist perspective, seeing humans as indistinct from the non-human world around us. This review firstly described performance ecology as the paradigm from within this research lay. I then drew focus to the investigation of human relationships with environment. Connections between the body and the forces of nature through the constant changing nature of becomings, that encourage investigations of the non-human (Grosz, 2011) and are most relevant to this research project. In addition I described the inspirations of ‘liquid perception’ and water imagery as imperative to the underlying concepts of fluidity and flow that underpin this research approach. This discussion revealed how choreography of the everyday can address the relations between water ecology and dance inspiring imagination of the future.

I am inspired by those whose who work in writing, film, photography, dance, visual and performance who specifically research ecological and/or water-related subjects such as Baz Kershaw, Goat Island, Nigel Stewart, Julia Monson (U.K.) Vincent Ward (N.Z.) and Annette Arlander (Finland). I am further interested in those artists whom I perceive manifest ‘liquid perception’ through performance and actions that are social, environmental and political such as Body Cartography (USA/NZ), Bobby Baker and Wrights & Sites (U.K).

These thoughts and practices flowed within my streams of research and created a pooling of ‘liquid perceptions’ that informed my choreographic practice. Thus I developed this review of literature ‘which no longer has the solid as object, condition or milieu’ (Clarke, 2010) and where one may see such discourse through moving images of connectivity and imagination. I drew on influences from these artists in the critical thinking around my choreographic process for creating the work Water Slides.

3.2 Performance Ecology: Performance of the Everyday

Baz Kershaw’s (2007) definitions of ecology and performance discuss the inter-relationships between organic and non-organic factors of ecosystems ranging from the smallest and/or most simplistic to the greatest or/and most complex. He refers to the inter-relations or inter-dependence between organisms and
their environments. “Ecology fundamentally emphasises the inseparable and reflexive inter-relational and inter-dependent qualities of systems as systems, however their components are defined” (p. 16). In the case of ‘performance ecology’ this may also refer to performance being an integral process of ecosystems. Performance ecology can be fundamentally described as “the ways in which performance and performances function eco-systematically” and thus connected to theatre as part of the imaginary (Kershaw, 2012b, p. 267). Kershaw points out that a blurring of the language used to describe theatre ecology and ecologies of theatre are necessary to remain true to the ecological dimensions of words adapting to their environments and changing their behavior (2007, p. 17). Kershaw draws on the philosophies of Felix Guattari and Gregory Bateson to support his arguments of the inter-dependence of “the ecology of ‘nature’ and ‘nature’ of the mind” (Bateson, 2000) in relation to the environment going insane (an ecology of bad ideas) and warnings of ecological disequilibrium and ‘tipping points’ that threaten the continuation of life on the planet. By entwining biological analogies, metaphors and poetics of calamities and catastrophes he evokes the concept of thought experiments and imagination as a way of approaching issues of an environmental nature (Kershaw, 2012b, p.267-268).

Guattari is mostly known in environmental discussions for his ‘three ecological registers’ that determine the ecological as the inter-relations between ‘the environment, social relations and human subjectivity (2000, p. 28). The inter-relational aspect of ecology is highly relevant in understanding performance ecology. For example video artist Annette Arlander draws on Guatarri’s three ecologies in her doctoral research ‘performing landscape’ aiming to produce knowledge relating to these ecologies in her practice of creating experiential video work. Briginshaw (2005) draws on notions of home, recognising Guatarri’s reminder of the etymology of ‘eco’ as the greek word for Oikos meaning home as the traditional place for story-telling. Her notions of ‘home’ and story-telling that make connections between self and others as interconnected subjectivities, suggest an inter-dependency of self, others and the environment, fundamental to the ethic of ecological consciousness. De Certeau (1984) states that narration is also important in ways of operating in everyday life where the narrativising of practices is a textural ‘way of operating’ having its own procedures and tactics” (p. 78). Within the realm of producers and consumers, the user focuses on ways of using not
necessarily in the way intended. “The place of tactic belongs to ‘other’. It depends on time, manipulating events and turning them into opportunities and everyday practices being tactical in character” (p, xix). He also points out that these tactics are seen in nature also as tricks and imitations in animal behavior.

Following these theories Testing Waters asked the question: How might an exploration of the ‘ecology of daily life’ through ‘performance of the everyday’ shed light on ecological motivations in society? In the context of everyday the actions and activities that take place in the home can seem unimportant. I was interested whether performance encouraging different perceptions of these daily actions could motivate individuals to change their behavior in order to protect the environment. ‘Performing the everyday’ gives attention to what is usually unseen or considered mundane and focuses on the processes behind the actions. Haraway (2010a) suggests the exploration of the unseen, that incorporates risk and curiosity, is what inspires learning and optimism for the future. In addition the focus of choreographing process can lead to shifting configurations of performers and spectators taking on specific significance. “Attention is drawn to the in-between bodies, which is also shifting and at times becomes just as important in one way or another as the bodies themselves” (Briginshaw, 2012, p. 243). Furthermore to foreground the not seen and background the seen is the primary aim of ‘Goat Island’ when making performance (Bottoms and Goulish, 2007, p. 30). Performance that focuses on the connections between actions at a local level and their significance to the global gives a sense of ‘making a difference’ thus inspiring further action as a form of production. In the terms of Deleuze and Guatarri this ‘performance of the everyday’ may be understood as a “series of flows, energies, movements, capabilities, a series of fragments or segments capable of being linked together in ways other than those which congeal it into an identity … Production consists of those linkages between fragments, fragments of bodies and fragments of objects” (Grosz, 1993, p. 173). If we recognise the connection between our fragmented actions of local nature we may find ways of affecting the world at the global level.
3.3 Ecology of Imagination

Baz Kershaw (2007) offers the concept of thought experiments as a methodology for an ‘ecology’ of the imaginary. These experiments research solutions to climate change via indirect routes, making unlikely comparisons through parallels, analogies, and homologies. Investigations of this kind search for interconnections between apparently unrelated human performances and natural phenomena through contradictory logics that cross ontologies and disciplines (2012a, p.5). He suggests these lines of thought address “the rather ridiculous notion that, some types of momentary human perception in performance might help avert global warming” (2012a, p.5).

In searching for everyday activities as systematic encounters between humans and ecology Kershaw suggests that small actions can be recognised as collective activities. These encounters are small on site research activities that are potentially artistically transformative whilst being read as ‘scientific’ (Kershaw, 2012a). The collaborative nature of this way of working has the capacity to intervene in pressing social, environmental and political debates, not directly at the expense of the material resistance the work embodies, but indirectly through material thinking (Carter, 2004, p. 12). Material thinking as a creative act of remembering is a vital component in these acts of local invention that contribute to re-imagining past histories and cultures and provide fertile ground for re-invention (see section 1.7). In following these thought experiments the artist/researcher can address larger problems through small temporary solutions and temporary improvements that lead to “permanent cultural resistance. There is no end game” (Schneider, 2000, p. 139).

When applying the concept of ecology to the future of theatre Kershaw (2007) suggests that those projects that are more like ‘ecotones’ as active open systems are more likely sustainable into the future. I borrowed the term ‘ecotone’ to describe the space between art and science as an analogy for a new ecology that emerged as a form of ‘material thinking’ (Carter, 2004). I suggest that this ecology is one of imagination. Imagination and thinking may be the requirement for an alternative perspective of how we see ourselves in relation to nature and how we may practice performance as an ecological system.
3.4 Worlding Narratives

It sometimes seems that [heroic] story is approaching its end. Lest there be no more telling of stories at all, some of us out here in the wild oats, amid the alien corn, think we’d better start telling another one, which maybe people can go on with when the old one’s finished...Hence it is with a certain feeling of urgency that I seek the nature, subject, words of the other story, the untold one, the life story” (Haraway, 2010b, p. 3).

Haraway opened possibilities for revealing the limits and impossibilities of objectivity in science with her theory of ‘Situated Knowledge’ (1991a). As well as developing a discourse on scientific narrative that challenges ways of seeing ourselves in relation to science and the animal world, Haraway’s theories have provided a way of situating one’s self within the context of a multi-specied future (2010a). She suggested that scientist’s observations come from a biologically and culturally situated position and that one must embody the gaze and the movements one makes within research to extend the situatedness to the subject. Her theories extend to the everyday as she suggests we (not just as scientists/researchers or activists, but simply as people) integrate different organisations, individuals, objects, and even ideas into our daily lives (Haraway, 1991a). Paul Carter suggests such collaborative practices create an ‘imaginative break through’ which different forms of sociability; environmental interactivity and collective story-telling can emerge (2004, p. 13). Haraway suggests the dissolve of the animal human divide as a ‘worlding of multi-species story-telling’ that reaches the thresholds of the microbial, plants, animal and human, as a way towards the recuperation of the planet (2010b, p. 2). This discourse is relevant to addressing the environmental issues we face as we head into the future. This suggests that in adopting Haraway’s “zoo-ethno-graphic-mode that gives a terraforming mode of attention to among species relationships” (2010a, para. 6) one could create a mytho-poetic narrative in response to the environment that crosses the human animal divide. Furthermore, Baz Kershaw (2012a) suggests explorations of inter-species performance that embody animal characteristics have the potential to inspire new modes of action5. Kershaw imagines a multi-species future from the perspective of non-human suggesting biotic rights (for thousands of species we depend upon).

Whilst standing in an environment of global warming produced by ‘Homo sapiens’ we

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Figure 14. Millicent Speaking Worlding Tales. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Waters Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).

Figure 15. The Future Lab. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).
may realise “a profound paradoxical kind of insanity” (Kershaw, 2012b). Kershaw draws on Haraway’s term to formulate what he calls ‘situated progress’

That defines progress not as a global master narrative, but as materially contingent evolutions occurring in particular times and place. This perspective on change aims to reveal the wider environmental implications of specific past events for humanity’s current predicament (Kershaw, 2012b, p. 269).

Haraway’s poetic discourse entwines biological terminology with imaginings of a utopian multi-cultural and multi-specied future through the actions of the present. “Multi-species contact zones in these stories are where the tools for inheriting the trouble so as to leave more quiet country might be forged” (Haraway, 2010a, para. 7). Recognising stories from the past “as in those who have come before as a way forward” Haraway references the power of Australian Aboriginal teachings (Haraway, 2010a). In Aotearoa Māori have similar connection to ancestors and ways of seeing the land. The Māori connection to water has been previously mentioned (see section 1.2) as a source for Kai Moana (sea food) but also the spiritual ways of being with the land as Kaitiakitanga (the duty of care, for people and the environment). From a post-colonial perspective in Aotearoa New Zealand, looking towards the past recognises the actions that have contributed to the environmental degradation and draws on the belief that there once was a slower more simple way of being in the world.

Following Haraway, Carter and Kershaw Testing Waters adopts these notions of becoming animal/nature/other as ‘ecological becomings’ to develop perceptions of life that do not value humans as the end point of evolution, but humans as one of many species. This project also valued the concept of looking towards the past to address contemporary ecological issues. This review highlights the importance of revealing unseen stories of the environment and those who interact with, it the untold story that is of interest. One wonders in reference to Haraway’s theories, how can we know this story until we venture forth on experiential adventures with both the real and fictitious characters creating narratives of watery investigations?
3.5 Becoming Other

The ability of the body to sense the surrounding environment is what makes the body a responsive site for artistic process. In dance, somatic practices can create an intersection with the non-human world and connect internal and external waterscapes as sensation. Stewart (2010) explains how environmental dance explores the human kinesthetic consciousness of ‘non-human’ nature where the dancing body, moving in the surrounding elements of the environment becomes entwined within surface qualities and the textures of these surfaces as a ‘body scape’ or ‘body topography’ (Stewart, 2010, p. 35). These investigations inspire notions of ‘becoming’ nature itself, moving with the forces of the ‘other than human’ world, rather than fast paced commutes within the man-made constructs of urban city environs.

Feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz (2008) suggests that the processes of nature that manifest within the body as sensation is what creates the human ability to make and appreciate art. The separation of certain qualities from the chaos of the world, and their manifestation in material form, is like that of the forces of natural selection, thus the creation of art is similar to the evolution of life itself (Grosz, 2008). Critically engaging with Deleuze and Guattari (2008) Grosz explains this phenomena as a constantly changing process of becoming where “Body and universe, entwined in mutual concavity/convexity, floating/falling, folding/unfolding are directly touched by that out-side now en-framed, creating sensation from coming together” (Grosz, 2008, p. 16). It is in the movement between these becomings that we discover the importance of life itself and in the evolutionary sense, the process of self overcoming is the process of becoming inhuman. "We are animals of a particular sort, which like all of life, are in the process of becoming something else" (Grosz, 2011 p. 170). Deleuze and Guattari (2008) suggest that the relationship between animals and humans are not only the object of science but also dreams, symbolism, art, poetry, practice and practical use. This statement is perhaps further enlightened by Grosz’s (2011) suggestion that it is in the animal that we see the limits of ourselves as humans as the origins of human life.

I want to discuss what is before and beyond, and after the human: the origin of and trajectory immanent within the human. In asking about the inhuman - the animal, plant, and material forces that surround and over take the human - I am not asking a new question (Grosz, 2011, p. 11).
Although naturalists are concerned with the conceptual relationships between animals, the notion of becoming animal is neither concerned with progressions and regression, continuities and major breaks nor is it considered to be aligned with evolution. But akin more to the concept of ‘Neo-evolution’ that sees animals in terms of populations and movements between them (Deleuze and Guatarri, 2008).

I was drawn to these theories that suggest art is created through sensation in response to the forces of nature. These ideas offered interesting perspectives on the human relationship with the other than human world opening potential for evolutionary dialogues. I reflected on my research Masters in science from the University of Otago (Houghton, 2000) that investigated the ‘Meta-population Dynamics’ of two endangered lizard species, in which I focused on how lizard movements between isolated rocky out-crops impacted on the dynamics of the population as a whole. My most vivid memory of that project was crawling ‘like a lizard’ through tussock grasses and over rocks in search of my subject of investigation. I consider how in order to study the lizard I had to become like a lizard. This experience has influenced the artistic investigations that I now undertake as part of this project. In becoming ‘other’ I saw myself in relation to the environment, animal or human (others). This process increased awareness of the complex social relationships that determine how I saw myself in relation to the world I live in.

The project Being, in Between (2005) at Bristol Zoological gardens saw performers embody a range of characters from zoo keepers to apes as an inter-species performance (Kershaw 2010a; previously mentioned in Section 3.3). Reeve (2011) concluded that moving between multiple ‘character modes’ created performative disruptions in relation to other systems operating within the same realm, such as the visitors at the zoo. Constant negotiation was activated between the action of the responsive ‘ecological body’ and the mode of character embodied. In Reeve’s (2011) exploration of the ecological body she suggests that the movement of the responsive body through changing environments can evoke multiple ways of being in each environment “The body in movement, as a relational body, sets up different practices through habit according to its intentions, perceptual life, experiences and cultural preferences” (Reeve, 2011, p. 48). The ecological body could therefore be considered to be in constant flux between the narrative of the performer and the character modes that arise in response to the environment. This was the
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case where some characters emerged in relation to the environment at the same time as creating those in opposition to environment to cause disruption to expected situations (Reeve, 2011).

This ecological body can embody ambiguities of character and narratives creating complex interconnected subjectivities. Such subjectivities “signify a caring for the world and others mindful of the future of humanity in the context of our interdependent existence with the planet and the life forms it sustains” (Briginshaw, 2005, p. 240). In Briginshaw’s research on the performance piece No Bodies Baby (2002) as part of Embodying Ambiguities Project (2001-2004) through writing and performance, choreographer Emilyn Claid played with embodied narratives from individual performers and created a complex web of narratives that suggested both the individuality and the interconnectivity as a multilayered piece (Briginshaw, 2005). Drawing on the concept of the narratable self described by feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero, that influences how we see our selves in relations to others, Briginshaw suggested that the interconnected subjectivities in this performance created ecologically conscious narratable selves that ‘perform nature’ in a revolutionary way (Briginshaw, 2005, p. 249).

Giannachi (2012) describes presence in performance “a continuous unfolding of the subject into what is other to it” a process where the environment may be activated by your actions. Presence in performance suggests a co-existence between the realisation of subject and environment as an “ecological process that marks the awareness of the exchanges between the subject and the living environment of which they are part of”. The environment therefore defines the surroundings as ‘what is other to the subject’ and is necessary for presence to occur. Giannachi describes performance as like the biological operation of cells, a continuous ongoing giving and receiving of information between performer, environment and audience that operates on multiple levels. Cells do not perform in isolation but they act on the information from neighbouring cells as “a network of storing, transmitting, receiving and elaborating information”. Each cell is not individually responsible for their own behavior with their function depending on the in-between-cells (2012). Presence in performance can be considered an inter-relational tool through which a subject networks (and is networked) by the external world, that cannot be anything other than process thus is 

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6 See No Bodies Baby web page http://www.embamb.com/
recognised as ecological in ethic. Furthermore, Emilyn Claid (2006) states that performance presence involves sensing states and relations between performers that may create ambiguities that engage the viewer. “Performing presence is not fixed to either body but is sparked by both” (p. 4). At the point where performed choreography becomes an encounter that reveals the multiple levels of reality through the past and the present, unveiling meanings and concepts un-for-seen, “it is always becoming something else, somewhere else” (p. 4). These theories suggest that the ecological body in relation to the environment, through human/animal subjectivity in performance, has the ability to create ‘ecological becomings’ that both recognise our differences and connections with the non-human world.

3.6 Becoming Water

Testing Waters drew on the Deleuzian notion of ‘liquid perception’ as a “perception which no longer has the solid as object, as condition as mileu” (Deluze, 2005, p. 82). Its application to the everyday world of city networks and daily life is of specific interest to this research. In addition water as somatic imagery can encourage a slowing down through the visualisation of the internal fluids of the body and the embodiment of alternative gravities as a slow choreography.

In describing the liquid narrative of films that drew on the presence of water, whether the sea river or rain, Deleuze (2005) saw this perceptive system as separate from earthly perceptions, a language different from earthly language. Narratives that arise from imaginary water worlds have the ability to represent a world very different to the terrestrial world. Deleuze used the example of the film The Woman Who Dared (in Cinema 1- The Movement-Image, 2005) that exists in the conditions of a floating population, of a sea people, capable of revealing and transforming the nature of economic and commercial interests at play in society (p. 78). He suggests that those that are connected to the sea move differently and feel differently than those of the land and live under very different laws. This narrative provided poetic inspiration for transforming the terrestrial environment into one that is fluid slow and moving.
Figure 16. *Mangroves Witnessing.* The Whau estuary (2012; Photograph, Ken Mauder Park, New Lynn, Auckland).

Figure 17. *Becoming Tree.* Christina Houghton (2012; Photograph, Ken Mauder Park, New Lynn, Auckland).
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The term ‘Liquid Perception’ has been used by architect urban designer Brian McGrath in his consideration of the amphibious city of Bangkok. He describes the fluid properties of the city through the blood flow of urban streaming (Clarke, 2010). Jacquie Clarke (2010) further extrapolates on ‘liquid perception’ to describe a specific way of seeing place as a fluid space of imagination. Where “the ‘living waterscapes’ provide “a kind of poetic disorientation that is aligned with non-materialistic well-being rather than consumer desire” (Clarke, 2011, p.116). Moving through living waterscapes may inspire imagination as people, converge and move through cities inspiring a ‘liquid perception’. This encourages them to “dream, reflect, open up to the world around them, experience flow, move between the conscious and the unconscious, tune into the living aesthetics of water, which influences not just our biology but our psychology” (Clarke, 2010, p.122). These provocations suggest that wayfaring, involving methods that are more than geographical through a mobile methodology, can evoke ‘liquid perceptions’ that exceed the real to the imaginary (Myers, 2011).

Everyday activities that relate to water and walking through places that lie beside waterways can set a process that could be described as “associating and disassociating, of story-telling and translating, through direct communication and interactivity” (p. 191). These meanderings through environments become moments of discovery where the body intersects site as local invention. Carter (2004) suggests that one enacts poiesis (making) through the writing of self into place as a layer that folds into already established histories of a specific place. As one creates a mytho-poetic narrative in response to the environment one “could add his own thread to the still active loom of local invention...he might even remember what those who had lived there longer appeared to forgotten” (p. 2).

When adapting the term ‘liquid perception’ to choreographic thinking the focus is drawn to the fluid connective space experienced in between bodies in performance. This is primarily explored through the sensing body as performance presence and choreographic empathy. These concepts are the basis of somatic dance practices that explore the internal fluids of the body (see section 2.4.4) as well as receptive states of performance that explore relations between audience and performer. Exploring the place of the un-seen through visualising metamorphic qualities of water can create transformative becomings. These becomings move through ‘liquid perception’ towards a ‘gaseous perception’ where each molecule has free
movement as a particle of matter (Deleuze, 2005). These free particles are like bodies moving in and out of
the connective space of the live encounter in performance. Furthermore the dancing body in becoming
water opens the potential for the disruption and destabilisation of the constructs of identity and social
orders that reach beyond solid and liquid states associated with human. This embodiment of ‘liquid
perception’ through story-telling can also evoke multiple shifting transformations of identity, gender and
human/animal of a fluid nature.

3.7 Social, Geographical and Ecological.

Choreography that evokes empathy can create connectivity between humans and the environment in
performance. Susan Leigh Foster (2011) asserts that new forms of dance that choreograph empathy are
redefining relations between performer and audience revealing an ethic that can be considered ecological.
Choreography that maps the internal body and the external landscapes we traverse “involve percipients in
kinesthetic, dialogic, mobile and multi-sensory modes of knowing, communicating and engaging with lived
experience” (Myers, 2011, p. 191). This approach encourages kinesthetic experiences that map connections
of “body to land, to the digital, to popular media, and to culture and history, and through those connections
transforming physicality in diverse ways” (p. 217). Kinesthesia is described by Foster as “how the brain
senses bodily movement” (2011, p. 8). Neuroscientists claim that empathy is “foundational to the very way
that knowledge is acquired” (p. 178).

To Choreograph empathy thus entails the construction and cultivation of a specific physicality
whose kinesthetic experience guides our perception of and connection to what another
is feeling (p. 5).

Choreographic research that focuses on the relations between places and spaces has an ability to foster
community through kinesthetic empathy. Walking and kinesthetic experiences of the environment explore
the value of slowing the pace of the contemporary fast past world of today, not only in the sense that if one
slows down they will become more aware of the natural world around them but also in the production of
knowledge created through multiple rhythms of walking and talking. In Walking Women (Heddon and
Figure 18. *Walking the Whau.* Austin & Isabella Linkhorn (2012; Photograph, Ken M aunder Park, New Lynn).

Figure 19. *Experimentation.* Austin Linkhorn and Christina Houghton (2012; Photograph, Ken M aunder Park, New Lynn).
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Figure 20. Listening through Archive. Found Speaker Box (2012; Photograph, Tony Sededin Reserve, New Lynn).

Figure 21. Performing interspecies Futures. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).
Turner, 2011) dancers Ashley and Kenyon inform their walking with the kinesthetic analysis of walking “bringing attention to their center of gravity and centering them in the process” (Heddon and Turner, 2011, p. 21). They also improvise off the land and each other remaining sensitive to moods and atmospheres (of the landscape and their relationship). In addition Racheal Gomme drifts with Dee across her locale with no destination when they meet (Heddon and Turner, 2011, p. 21). Gomme’s practice “tends to focus on details”, on “things that aren’t noticed or things that are very small but accumulate” (p. 16). Alternatively Cathy Turner of Wrights & Sites points out differences in practice such as “a leisure walk chosen for aesthetic pleasure or convenience, is easily regarded as the antithesis of a psycho-geographic ramble-too easy, too naive, too, managed, too mapped” (p. 16). She therefore adapted this methodology into domestic environment that belies the ‘easiness’ of this environment. In attempting to ‘drift’ in a domestic space (with a new born baby in a pram at home) filmed as a parallel activity to other Wrights & Sites artists drifting through cities she highlighted the difficulty of such activities. In attempting to do so she discovered new perspectives on her immediate environment. As what she initially planned as a celebratory activity revealed an ambiguous narrative that suggested entrapment (Heddon & Turner, 2010, p. 16), highlighting negative perceptions of the domestic realm. These types of investigations provided a plethora of choreographic inspiration for Water Slides that ranged from the emotional to the physical and psychological. In addition the ability of the dancing body to connect and transform through sensing and empathy can create a milieu of fluid concepts and meanings that are social, geographical and ecological. These practices provide ways of researching outside the usual realms of performance that generate multiplicities of representation and perception.

7 As part of Wrights & Sites Simultaneous Drift: 4 walks, 4 routes, 4 screens (2006a).
3.8 Specific and Responsive

In this section I discuss the work of artists that have provided a broad background to my research. I am interested in work that explores connections to nature through the experiential and reveals the process as part of the final artwork. These works are ecological in theme and have the aim of inspiring new perceptions and connections to the surrounding environment. Towards the end of this section I focus on the work that specifically informed the tactics that I drew on specifically for the choreographic work Water Slides.

Rosemary Butcher’s The Site (1983) Touch the Earth (1987), Body as Site (1993) and Fractured Landscapes, Fragmented Narratives (1997), are all excellent examples of site-specific choreography that capture experience of site through embodiment and construction of performance site. The Site in particular was inspired by a trip to the remains of a hill fort near Castle Drogo in Devon (UK), where dancers embodied the archaeological site through the use of technical aspects of archaeology as choreographic starting points (Pakes, 2004). The performers danced an improvised score that stripped away superfluities to an abstraction of initial movement structure formed from the site provocations. This provided an abstraction of movement in response to the constructed environment that intensified the emotive and sensuous force of the choreography. The final work captured the sense of layering and mapping through an architectural framing of set, camera and soundscape where “the idea of an environment is abstracted from the surface detail and reconstructed as a performance location” (p. 8). Butcher’s work provides an example of choreographing the experiential through dance film and sound installation.

‘Performing Nature’ provided the primary theme for Nigel Stewart’s performance work that responded directly to environment through place specific improvisations (Stewart, 2010). Water Log: Dancing In-between Wet and Dry (2007) was a workshop with Jennifer Monson (USA) in the marshlands along the vast sands of Morecambe Bay (Northwest England) that involved improvisational investigations of dynamic ecosystems of zones between land and sea. The aim of these investigations was the re-enchantment of human relationship with nature (Rose, 2007). In addition Nigel Stewart’s Jack Scout (2010; in collaboration with Louise Ann Wilson and Sap Dance) was specific to the element of water and human relationship to it along
the shores revealing a hidden part of Morecambe Bay (Jack Scout, 2010). Furthermore, Jennifer Monson’s *Bird Brain: Multi-year Navigational Dance Project* (2000-2006) followed the mapping of bird migrations and other animals to investigate their bio-physical and metaphorical relationship to humans and fellow travellers (BIRDBRAIN, 2013, para. 1). All of these works have an ongoing presence through workshops and symposia that involve interdisciplinary researchers as well as dancers. Work of this kind manifests ‘liquid perceptions’ through the relations between the body, nature and place constructing multiple narratives from interdisciplinary origins. *Jack Scout* in particular showed an interdisciplinary narrative, which involved ornithologists, fishermen, cross-bay guides, plant ecologists, butterfly surveyors, conservationists, historians and local school children (Jack Scout, 2010).

In her book *Choreographing Empathy* (2011) Susan Leigh Foster describes the work *Women and Water* (2006) choreographed by Alutiiq (Native American) artist Tanya Lukin Linklater performed at the Centre of Performance Studies at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles). Originally created for *Canada’s Seventh Annual Festival of Performance Art* (2006) under the theme of ‘Domesticity’ (Foster, 2010). In this work situated on the grass by a fountain underneath a large sycamore tree Lukin Linklater endeavors to re-root dance, to ground it by establishing it’s location on and it’s connection to land (p. 179). She uses ritualistic slow moving actions to create a nest from quilts, leaves, branches and water bowls. She then hugs individual audience members while singing each a lullaby, all while both standing knee deep in the water of the fountain. Systematically handing out items to the audience, she disassembles the nest and draws the audience into something that celebrates the otherness of ritual and suggesting the redistribution of wealth (Foster, 2011). As a Native American she creates an archival map that lends more to remembering as a process opposing Western cartographic practices. She re-maps those of the colonialists into maps of the cosmology that she inscribes onto the actions of the performers and the performance space (p. 183). Lukin Linklater’s practice of choreography is one that devotes attentiveness to the surrounding landscape where the body becomes in tune with nature ‘in which all elements of physicality are enmeshed within and continually attracted to various forces of the environment” (p. 185). The performance is modestly announced as the audience is invited to attend to their situation of the moment, “to look listen and register
the environment around them” (p. 186). Lukin Linklater is an artist described by Foster as part of a current group of artists who are working against dominant conceptions of self, land, gender and cultural differences. This type of work holds true to the aspects of environmental performance in that awareness and attention of the immediate environment is the first step towards encouraging stewardship towards the planet.

*Kahurangi* (2003) is an environmental video dance directed/produced by *The Body Cartography Project* (USA/NZ) on Mount Wharepapa, Kahurangi National Park, New Zealand. This film created moody wind swept images that created a poetic sense of the wild. Co-directors Olive Bieringa and Otto Ramstad drew on the study of empathy and the physicality of space in urban and wild and social landscapes through dance and film (*Body Cartography Project*, 2009). Their choreographic process employed Min Tanaka’s body weather workshops. Site-based explorations range from solos to community projects. This work provided a geographical reference for my research in the New Zealand landscape. *Body Cartography’s* work *Super Nature* (2012) draws on Body Mind Centering and improvisation sources for creating empathetic choreography and exploring animal human sociality through art science collaborations. They also undertake workshops that develop their concepts in a social setting while they tour their work. I participated in Ramstad’s *Super Nature Workshop* (2012) which informed elements of this study.

In the visual arts works such as Annette Arlander’s durational video work *The Shore* (2004) and Lesley Duxbury’s *Another Day* (*Dyptic*), (2003: Duxbury et al, 2007) both value the cultivation of perceptions from relations between body and site through temporalities of nature and imagery of watery subjects. Arlander’s use of breath and repetitive actions in *performing landscape* attends to maintaining stillness while videoing herself in environments (Arlander, 2009a). Alternately Duxbury produced a series of atmospheric photographic images of clouds and text drawn from experiential walking through place (Duxbury et al, 2007). Although their works use very different media, they both capture the ‘ephemeral’ response to landscape that reveals an ongoing practice rather than a singular artwork (Arlander, 2009b). In cultivating perceptions they give attention to previously unseen aspects of the environment such as those that move more to the temporal scales of tidal fluxes and moving weather patterns.
*Shield* (2007), by performance artist Julie Laffin, provided an example of everyday performance that brought a direct connection to the issues in our environment. (Bottoms & Laffin, 2012). Laffin has an environmental illness where she is hyper-sensitive to many chemicals in the environment which requires she must remain quarantined from the everyday world. Her predicament has led her to create solo work based directly on her circumstance. In her work *Shield* (2007) as described by Stephen Bottoms (2012) she performs solo in her home while another performer stands in for the live action in a public setting, the audience is only told of this aspect of the performance through the text on a postcard. This work raises questions about the visibility of performance and the value of the unseen. The value in work of this kind is that, what is presented is not all that is part of the ecology of the performance. Bottoms & Laffin (2012) point out that the live performance might be best appreciated in hindsight as documentation where the invisible becomes visible through investigation. They further suggest that there is a political dimension to this type of work in that it encourages us to question the conduct of our every day lives. This work shows the relationship between our everyday wellbeing and ecological issues revealing the generative space where art and life meet.

*The Fluid City Project* (2012)\(^8\) recognised that a truly interdisciplinary approach to water issues though collaboration can increase knowledge and awareness through fluid shifts between architecture, science, and dance resulting in multiple perspectives of water from different disciplines. The dance architecture science laboratory performance (performed at the Waterfront of Auckland CBD as part of UNESCO World Water Day 2012) drew upon Māori and post-colonial perspectives bringing awareness to our relationship with the environment and the issues that surround this. The dance performance that moved along the waterfront told stories of the un-seen subterranean waterways and suggested a re-mapping of the city through the daylighting of forgotten waterways\(^9\). This work provided an initial starting point for *Testing Waters* encouraging my interest in specific choreographic tactics that could be deemed ecological.

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\(^8\) Part of ‘Transforming Cities: Innovations for sustainable futures University of Auckland - Thematic Research Initiative inspired by the Auckland City Council’s aim to make Auckland a more Livable City.

\(^9\) The event aimed to inspire the imagining of unseen values of water through story telling, video installation (Kathy Waghorn Architect), science (Clarke Ehlers Microbiologist) and dance (Carol Brown Choreographer). This project has since morphed into a number of separate research projects that are still underway through out Auckland in 2013 (http://www.creative.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/FluidCity).
3.9 Disrupting Domestic Spaces

In relation to water, women who have lost control of the water they once fetched on a daily basis which is now under the control of a masculine domain of pipes and taps, are still in touch with daily water usage through the man handling of multiple automatic appliances and taps amongst other domestic activities to a highly skilled level (Houghton, Field Notes, 2012).

The work of UK performance artist, Bobby Baker, *Daily Life 1. Kitchen Show: One dozen Kitchen Actions Made Public* (1991) as well as Wrights and Sites published hand book *A mis-guide to Anywhere* (Wrights & Sites, 2006b) have both influenced my research methodology for *Testing Waters*. Baker creates performances that invite reveal unseen everyday domestic activities. Her performances construct an outlook on ‘how to live’ providing a point of reference for domestic spaces and performance tactics in lecture demonstration contexts. Through masquerading as an exaggerated version of herself, as a mother, artist and homemaker, Baker highlights her inadequacies at the same time valuing the intellect and expertise of the everyday person. At the same time she acknowledges that she is playing a ‘role’ through self-parody and ironic self-reflexivity (Harris and Aston, 2007). Starting in the home, she encourages a sensing and enjoyment of simple actions. By situating *Kitchen Show* in her own home she makes connections between the domestic, action, and identity in everyday life through focus on the objects and rituals of everyday life.

Baker was dubbed the house-wife’s philosopher in 1993 (Barrett and Aston, p. 161). She demonstrates a number of what she considers private actions in public. In particular I am drawn to her ‘numbered’ investigations in the kitchen when she describes the sensations of turning and washing a carrot in descriptive terms that over-exaggerate her experience,

so quickly, neatly and lovingly under running water. I watch the splashes and drops of water flying out as they catch the light. It’s best when the sun is shining. I turn my hands so that the water pours over my wrists and palms - cleansing and cooling (Kitchen Show Booklet 1991, in Barrett and Aston, 2007, p. 167).

Baker focuses on the domain of the domestic realm. Using food and other actions from daily life her work comments on daily life, health and social etiquette. These concepts are explored through local actions and domestic material. Using the medium of food, Baker takes a domestic action and finds her own language in
Figure 22. Introducing Millicent. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Waters Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).

Figure 23. Bobby Baker in Mad Gyms and Kitchens (2012; Screen Grab, Bobby Baker the Journey. The Space, 2012).
material form (Barrett, 2007, p. 5). Through starting with the personal she makes work that she considers not to be of particular interest to any one else, but that communicates her passionate concerns. In revealing personal activities she brings awareness of the private domestic sphere to the public domain.

No. 4 One of the most soothing things that I do in my kitchen is to rinse and prepare vegetables under fresh cool running water from the tap. I know you shouldn’t waste water but this is one of my luxuries. In fact, nowadays, I put the plug in the sink, so that I can use the water for something else whenever possible. I don’t feel guilty that way (Kitchen Show Booklet 1991, in Barrett and Aston, 2007, p. 166).

The example of Baker ‘washing the carrot’ becomes a moment when she becomes aware of how her actions may be perceived by others. Through self-parody and self-deprecation Baker encourages laughter at “her claims of knowledge and expertise” which is deployed ironically to encourage the questioning of “social and political assumptions about social roles and identity categories” (Harris and Aston, 2007, p. 101). Throughout these actions Baker engages in the act of self-critique as evidenced through the over exaggeration of her final activity “Mark No. 4 To splash water from the running tap all over my face and chest – so that I’m drenched” (Kitchen Show Booklet 1991, in Barrett and Aston, 2007, p. 166). This action portrays a slight madness and a sense of chaos that lurks below the surface adding to her feminist portrayal of an artist who works with the material of experience (Pollock, 1991, p. 180).

UK based Artist collective Wrights & Sites’ published hand-book A Mis-guide to Anywhere (Wrights & Sites, 2006b), seeks to encourage new ways of exploring cities, making strange and seeking out ‘mytho-geography’. It “invites the reader to use it ‘anywhere’, thereby encouraging comparisons and imaginative links between diverse places” (Wrights & Sites, 2010). Wrights & Sites look for directions from both urban and natural environments that will lead them on strange and unexpected directions in their research.

Look for the non-human and follow trails of foxes cutting through backyards or the trails of slugs, or over lay a map of a leaf onto a map of a known location and follow that instead (Wrights & Sites, 2006b, p. 42).

This is a hand-book that provides an array of disruptive playful walks that push our perceptions of the known location into foreign realms. A mis-guide to Anywhere opens space for an audience to become situated within research sharing tactics and tasks. Their writing invites moving through places and affecting
perceptions drawing on the playful artful utopian ethos of the ‘situationists’. Creating knowledge, creating change, making connections that are ecological they state, “when the walkers reclaim the street, it becomes a different place” (Wrights & Sites, 2006b, p. 61). *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* intends to show walking as more than just a movement from one point to another but as a wandering quest for knowledge, and stimulation through sight and sound. The guide encourages a use of the senses and a slowing down. There is also investigation through the playful nature of children, through tasks and game playing that draws the reader into the methodology. Cathy Turner’s interest in the kind of knowledge that children are looking for formulates a commitment in the way that one commits to a game. She goes on to suggest that such playful, constructive pleasure seeking, and hopeful activities may temporarily change our relationship to the world if not only partially or temporarily.

Go exploring with Children – let them choose a special way of travelling: 
As if the city was underwater. As if the city were a mountain, As if the city were...
(Wrights & Sites, 2006b, p. 83).

Stephen Hodge describes Wrights & Sites’ walks as proceeding at a slower pace than normal, retracing routes to undiscovered dead ends and stopping for conversations with passers by (Wrights & Sites, 2006a). However, these meanderings still capture the resistance to ‘the flâneur’s stroll’ and reflect the ‘situationist derive’ through playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psycho-geographical effects (Wrights & Sites, 2006a). This work encourages individuals to move ideas into public spaces and real communications, where in a sense they take ownership of the outdoor sphere that may have been lost in the constructed networks of inter-web. Phil Smith suggests that these are places where ideas may be expressed in “wandering meetings and rain-washed discussions. We should put all our ideas at the mercy of weather, to the test of navigation. Smuggling them into public places” (Wright & Sites, 2006a). Thus Wrights & Sites actively extend these practices as forms of knowledge that transcend the social, the geographical and the political.

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10 Based in France, their strand of libertarian Marxism became popular after the mass strikes of 1968. Situationist tactics included attempting to create “situations” where humans would interact together as people, not mediated by commodities. They saw in moments of true community the possibility of a future, joyful and un-alienated society (libcom, 2006).
Simon Persighetti states that suggestive invitations in *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* allow the walking pedestrian to create layers of experience folding fact and fiction and meaning that draws lines, shapes and trajectories through the built environment “as if the walkers are writing and re-writing the city with their bodies” (Wrights & Sites, 2006a). As a hand-book participants are able to engage in Wrights & Sites research through tasks that actively place you in the position of the researcher. Understanding that serious play and a sense that urban spaces and places can present passages to “utopian, creative and optimistic relationships with the everyday” can be helpful in changing our perceptions of the city as a free-flowing environment rather than a constructed one drawn by cartographers as lines on a map (para. 1, 2006a).

These artists fore-ground many of the tactics and ethics that are considered important in ecological performance. They provide essential discourse in the critical thinking towards my research on water ecology. I therefore bring these individual’s to the ‘watertable’ as critical allies in performance of the unseen, the embodied, the liquid and the disruptive. I draw on these concepts in my reflections on the series of *Whau experiments* in the following chapter (*Chapter 4: Discussion*) that contributed to the main body of research for this project.
Chapter Four: DISCUSSION

Reflections in Water

*Figure 27. Looking for Eels. The Whau estuary (2012; Photograph, Ken Maunder Park, New Lynn, Auckland).*

Wearing striped jumpers. Sailing the seas of distant summer dreams. Family holidays that hold my origins. Staring into dark water holes. Diving into where the eels live. Diving into deep blue waters fathoms of pressure on eardrums and the silence of breath being held. Why do we love this blue watery world of fish stories and sailor myths? We are surrounded by it, and it defines our island of isolation. The overflow of our existence seeps into our watery nurturer. We are drowning in our own waste. (Houghton, Field notes 2012).
4.1 Activating Whau science

This chapter will discuss the outcomes of eight performative experiments in chronological order at locations throughout Auckland City (see Fig. 64 Site Map) these included City Walk (Central C.B.D), Domestic Washing (Raroa Tce, Waitakere Ranges), Walking the Whau (Ken Maunder Park, New Lynn), Water Walk (Karangahape Road, Newton) Put litter in its Place (Tony Sededin Reserve, Rosebank Peninsula), Roaming INHALE (Gus Fisher Gallery, Central CBD) and Water Slides (Point Chevalier Sailing Club, Point Chevalier).

The results of each experiment informed the structure of the next, therefore this chapter represents the progression of ideas and concepts throughout the research process.

Through folding my performance identity and my experience as a conservation scientist I explored new kinds of subjectivity. I looked towards the fields of somatic dance practices and performance ecology and critically evaluated choreographic tasks that emphasised connectivity, the relational and the recyclable. My body became the situated focus point of research. I used Baz Kershaw’s use of the biological term ‘ecotone’ (2007; see section 1.1) to thicken the description of where water ecology and somatic dance practice meet in the everyday. It was from this new ecology that modes of character evolved to tell the stories of my choreographic water research. Through this dance practice I begin to see those aspects of my history as a scientist, a dancer, and a mother emerge as new ecologies of knowledge. These are connected through lived experience and significance of everyday life in the context of the social political world. I played out Whau experiments and performative activities within the context of everyday life. I employed a process of mimicry this saw me play the role of the domestic scientist whose methodology emerged in a continually changing process. From these activations I developed choreographic scores that I present here as formulaic experiments that vaguely follow the scientific protocols of presentation. I explored the following choreographic tactics. Firstly, somatic dance practices and slow choreography; secondly, a kinesthetic sensing of place, walking and disruption of everyday actions; thirdly, masquerade/modes of performance (character and personae). These tactics progressed through each performative phase of development of the multiple personae of Millicent (from the domestic scientist to the Mermaid and back again). Each revealed
an array of insights that in-turn influenced the direction of my research toward the final work Water Slides shown at the Point Chevalier Sailing Club in September 2012.

4.2 City Walk

Oh hello this reminds me of the last time I emerged from the Water Body back in 1938. You see I used to be a mermaid but I left that all behind me to be the artist in residence at the Point Chevalier Sailing Club (Houghton, Performance Script, 2012).

The first part of this project was informed by research for The Fluid City (see section 3.9) that consisted of a series of science lectures and site-specific workshops and resulted in a performance evening and architectural planning exhibition under the title Mapping Tamaki Waters (2011; see DVD 2/2.1 & 2.2). The premise of this project was to explore unseen waters and encourage imaginings of a fluid city (Longley et al, 2011).

4.2.1 The Meta-morphorical

Notes: Drowning, swimming, ground waters, submerged water subject.
Christina will attempt a new record for terrestrial swimming she will follow an urban waterway and swim on dry land navigating these waterways to their source (Houghton, Field Notes 2012).

Experiment 1- City Walk (Fig. 25 Watertable One) aimed to investigate the relationship between the urban environment and original waterways that flowed in the central Auckland City by means of a walk through the city starting from the University of Auckland that lies on the ridge above the central city (Site 5; Fig. 64 Site Map). I collected sound samples of city traffic and took photos of my journey. Results from my observations suggested that the urban city environment was built without consideration for the natural flows of water. Hard concrete surfaces are designed to direct water towards gutters and drains and pipe it away under the roads towards the harbour. Instead the only water flow apparent was from mechanical fountains that flowed to nowhere. There was also an absence of water fountains in the central city (there was once a number of natural springs through out the city for public use).
Experiment 1 City Walk (Site 5: Fig. 64 Site Map)

Aims:
- To follow the unseen subterranean waters of the Auckland CBD.
- To explore emerging narratives of the science of water.

Modes: Situated Scientist and Mermaid.

Method:
Walk through the city from the University down to Queen Street behind the Auckland Art Gallery, behind the St James Theatre, through Myers Park (originally Ngā Wai o Horotiu Stream now covered over) and back up through Albert Park past the fountain and over to the car park in Grafton Gully (originally Waiparuru Stream).

Action:
- Take Notes/Notice
  - Notice the places where nature is pushing against the concrete surfaces and the pipes and drains that replace waterways.
  - Notice constructed fountains and urban waterfalls that provide places for city dwellers to relax and contemplate life.
  - Notice the manholes that mark the piped subterranean waters that once flowed as a river down through the centre of the city.
  - Notice the desert feeling of the city due to the lack of drinking fountains and the promotion of bottled water. Recall that there used to be many more fountains in the city.
  - Notice clouds forming above the city as the heat rises off concrete surfaces.
  - Sense the walk through listening to the sounds of the city morph between the fabricated mechanistic and natural or environmental, such as the sound of water gushing down a waterfall, the city makes its own waterfall soundscape.
  - Film what you see and record the city soundscape. Bring these archives back to the studio to determine. What it is to sense the environment?
  - Sense the heat and sounds of the city. You are an active part of the experiment/experience.

Results:
- The design of the city is focused on the draining and diverting of natural water flows. There is an absence of water in the city itself.

Performance Outcome:
- Perform the mermaid as a transformational character that enacts slow motion swimming while responding to imagery of the water cycle.
The city is constructed with hard surfaces, plastic pipes, designed fountains, manholes, and the only sign of water is in the clouds that accumulate over the city. In the studio in response to these experiences I explored the somatic sensation of evaporation and transpiration. I then responded to sound recordings of traffic sounds and drains as well as the slide show of photographs of the city walk. This moment of movement, reflection and response evoked narratives of dystopian landscapes and performative actions that I described as ‘meta-morphorical interruptions’ (see section 1.8). The slow moving nature of walking and my response to the real time film footage and photographic slide show developed into a slow choreography that developed through a kinesthetic and somatic response in the studio. There were two performance character modes that emerged in the initial stages of improvisation and movement development. The characters that emerged were the Mermaid and the Situated Scientist that were performed in the final performance lecture (Figs 27,28,29). In the final performance of Mapping Tāmaki Waters my improvised movement was created in response to a performance score that moved through the imagery of evaporation, transpiration, accumulation and precipitation.

4.2.2 The Situated Scientist

Observations: I go between the subjective and the observed in a reflexive manner. How does it feel? What does it look like? WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR A SCIENTIST TO BECOME A SUBJECT? To be observed classified, grouped, experimented upon. I explore the notion of the situated scientist demonstrating the evaporation of water. I want to know what it feels like to become the water body (Houghton, Field Notes 2012).

Performing as a situated scientist I subverted the usual objective position of the scientist and presented my subject-hood. This was a state that emerged from within the fluids of my body as they connect with the external nature of water science. I challenged scientific objectivity following Donna Haraway’s theory of ‘situated knowledges’ that moves away from the objective/subjective binaries of science and embodies all aspects of vision from the objective to the subjective (Haraway, 1991a). I responded to the strangeness of nature and human curiosity, where hypotheses are made, new forms of knowledge emerge and hybrid
forms evolve. It was from this place that transformations occurred into ‘the water body’ from which the experimental mermaid emerged as a masquerade.

4.2.3 Neo-evolution

Observations: The body of the city is a body whose wastes are piped away before they are seen. A body that has an impermeable man-made surface made of straight lines and flat spaces without curvature. The city is a constructed body in submission to the mechanistic paradigm of engineering and science (Houghton, Field Notes 2012).

I imagined the city as a body whose fluids had been piped beneath the surface to hide the messy, dripping overflowing fluids of nature. It was this image fused with narratives of the ‘meta-morphorical’ (see section 1.8) and ‘neo-evolution’ from which the character of the mermaid evolved. The mermaid as a human/animal hybrid provided a metaphor for art-science practices. However, following the theories of Deleuze and Guattari (2008) and Haraway (2010a & 2010b) that see animals within the concept of ‘neo-evolution’ in terms of populations and movements between, the mermaid is neither, woman nor animal yet exists in the evolutionary movement in which the human is in the process of self-overcoming, in the process of becoming in-human (Grosz 2011, p. 170). As a mythological character, the mermaid represents the past, present and the future of the in-human, while inheriting the past thickly in the present (Haraway, 2010a).

4.2.4 Masquerading as Mermaid

Notes: I imagine a leaky mermaid walking through the city, bringing attention to the dry impermeable urban man-made surfaces of the city and runoff of bodily fluids. A slow-moving translucent persona that appears and disappears in different locations throughout the city. The water-carrier. The water-finder. Where is the water? Dramatic noticing of the water-carrier body. She appears when the world is in crisis, a being from our future, returning to the past to warn us. A durational performance throughout the city. Like the buddhist Japanese monk who slows time by ringing the bell through busy streets (Houghton, Field Notes 2012).
Chapter Four - Discussion

Figure 26. Following Subterranean Waters. City Walk (2012; Photograph, Auckland CBD).

Figure 27. Situated Scientist Becoming. Christina Houghton (2011; Photograph, Mapping Tāmaki Makaurau Exhibition)
Figure 28. Demonstrating Sensation of Water. Christina Houghton (2011; Photograph, Mapping Tāmaki Makaurau Exhibition).

Figure 29. Mermaid. Christina Houghton (2011; Photograph, Mapping Tāmaki Makaurau Exhibition).
Situating my body within this research as the mermaid I explored multiple characters, subverted fixed identities and binaristic assumptions and engaged in eco-feminist social and cultural realms of multi-species existence. The mermaid character is a creature of both fiction and lived social reality, she is a feminist cyborg that is masquerading as a scientist (Haraway, 1991b). The nature of the mermaid also draws on feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva’s theory of the ‘abject’ body, that is neither subject or object, is uncontained and leaky (Quinlivan, 2011). It is not clear whether the mermaid is completely organic or not, however in parallel with Haraway’s theories her hybrid nature challenged binaries of object and subject and, nature and culture. It is through these notions of becoming other or nature through culture that I was interested in who or what my performative character might become in this research.

4.3 Domestic Experiments

Millicent, the subjective scientist performs experiments that investigate how our domestic actions impact on aquatic environs. But are her methods out dated? I undertake site investigations such as a bike ride along the portage (Terenga portage, New Lynn) and visits to stream sites throughout the Auckland region to collect freshwater samples for example: the pristine waters of the cascades in the Waitakeres (Houghton, Field Notes 2012).

It was in this next phase of research that I developed the performative character Millicent to conduct my daily research on water in locations in and around my own domestic environment. The multiplicities of Millicent were developed further as I engaged in a series of domestic experiments. As my research moved between domestic spaces and natural environments the development of slow choreography and the formation of Millicent became a way for developing ambiguities of differently configured spatialities, temporalities and identities (Briginshaw, 2005).

4.3.1 Mapping

I focused my research on three locations, which represented the flow from domestic water use at the source 1. domestic water use (Waitakere ranges, beside pristine waters in native bush habitat) towards the
Experiment 2 Mapping Tāmaki Makaurau. (Fig. 64 Site Map)

Aims: Create a map of research sites.

Mode: Domestic Scientist.

Method: Map locations that follow the flow from domestic water use in your home through suburbia to the harbour.

Action:

Film the view from your house note locations of interest from what you can see.

Take notice of the suburban locations near water that you pass in your car on the way to work.

Play the film in real time as a backdrop to your presentation on water.

Figure 30. Watertable Two: Experiment 2 - Mapping Tāmaki Makaurau.

Figure 31. View from Our Place (2012; Photograph, Raroa Tce).
wider catchment area of the Whau 2. degraded suburban waters (The Whau estuary in New Lynn, and the Waitemata Harbour 3. Converging waterways (Auckland CBD; Fig. 64 Site Map). This research catchment I could see from my house (Fig. 31). I selected a number of research ‘sites’, beginning with my home in the Waitakere ranges. Further sites of investigation marked points on a map that followed my journey by car alongside the Oratia Stream where I diverted towards Rata St, the main highway that crosses un-seen suburban water ways. I travelled through New Lynn past Ken Maunders Park (Site 2) across the Rata St. Bridge past Tony Sedgedin Reserve (Site 3) and Kurt Brehmer Reserve (Site 4) that border the Whau estuary. I continued on towards the University of Auckland that lies within the CBD of Auckland City (Site 5). Additional locations were revealed as further performance opportunities arose. These were The Old Folks Association near Karangahape Rd. (Site 6) and The Gus Fisher Gallery (Site 7). This map (which included a straight line as the crow flies from my home to the Point Chevalier Sailing Club, Site 8, that I can see across the city from my place) represented my choreographic connections to the wider geography of Auckland City.

4.3.2 Domestic Washing

Notes:
Waste not want not,
Use only what you need,
Use re-use and use again and honestly these tips are timeless.

Experiment 3 - Domestic Washing (Fig. 32 Watertable Three) aimed to explore household water use through the investigation of performance of the everyday in my domestic environment. I became interested in the details of these actions that resulted in my taking notes and small measurements of my daily water use (see Field Notes, Appendix 2). My investigations revealed that I used water in my daily life without much awareness about conserving water or being wasteful. This lead me to believe that water use may in fact be an un-noticed action in most people’s daily lives. I decided that the washing bucket was an ideal prop for a performative investigation of this discovery. As I engaged in the kinesthetic investigation of the daily activity of washing, I found myself exploring the strange and unusual. Though engaging in slowing down and
Figure 32. Watertable Three – Experiment 3 Domestic Washing.

Experiment 3 Domestic Washing (Site 1: Fig. 64 Site Map)

Aims: Explore the unseen actions of water in everyday life in the home.

Mode: Domestic Scientist

Method: Undertake research on water use around the home and in the backyard. Explore everyday activities through a kinesthetic sensing.

Actions: Explore everyday actions as performance and interactions with the children that provide insight into audience participation.

Create action and chaos out by the clothesline and reveal performative interactions with the black 60 litre washing bucket.

Take a sound sample of the kitchen with a narration describing observations.

Record your daily consumption of water in a notebook.

Results: The average household uses 180 litres of water per person a day three times the volume of my 60 litre washing bucket.

Recommendations: Waste not want not,
Use only what you need,
Use re-use and use again and honestly these tips are timeless.

Performance Outcome: Millicent, the subjective scientist performs experiments with the washing bucket that relate the volume of body mass to water usage and emphasises the strange and unusual in her performative imagery.

Figure 33. Domestic Investigations. Christina Houghton (2012; Photograph, Raroa Tce).
noticing the world around me I felt as though I became more attentive to the subtle small changes in the immediate environment, such as a shift in breeze and the heat of the sun. This state of receptivity lead me to discover alternate ways of undertaking this activity, such as diving into the washing bucket, pushing it along and wearing it on my head. These modes of action created sightless investigations of the backyard that encouraged slow moving investigatory perception. When reflecting on the visual images that emerged (on video and photographic documentation. Fig. 33) I saw the potential for shifting this everyday activity into the realm of the strange or unusual as well as the comic. These actions were a way of presenting the notion of a kinesthetic way of knowing. Millicent’s character was developed drawing on the theories of the ecological body (Reeve, 2011) performance presence (Giannachi, 2012) and ambiguities of narrative (Briginshaw, 2012 and Claid, 2006) as she challenged fixed and deterministic notions of self, expressing multiple selves in multiple environs. Situated between domestic life and water ecology Millicent created a choreographic disruption of representation through the repetitive actions.

The choreography of Water Slides situated the domestic within the realm of the experiential as the bucket choreography was performed to the sound sample Domestic Washing (DVD 1/1.2) revealing my investigation of water use in the home. The sound sample became the environmental scape in my choreographic narrative from which the domestic scientist emerged. Choreographically the task of moving with the bucket became a task that I aimed to master with a certain amount of theatrical flair. This tactic provided a way to bring attention to water use in domestic settings while using my body as a measure of volume by trying to fit entirely in the bucket. I was also situating my personal viewpoint within the research as a ‘domestic scientist’ exploring water use in an ‘unusual fashion’. The bucket as a performative object also became a vessel for ideas of containment that may represent the leaky over flowing body. Moving with the bucket created an image of ‘other’ as the body is partially obscured, cutting and fragmenting the body in a disembodied way. These images reiterated the domestic scientist becoming ‘other’ when fully immersed in subjective investigations, while bringing attention to the objective fragmentation of scientific experimentation. Theatrical moments are noted such as the slow cascade of the plastic bag dress from under the bucket on head (Fig. 34 & DVD 2/2.6 & 2.7). This experiment reflects the influence of U.K.
Figure 34. Cascading Theatricality. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).

Figure 35. Un-seen Kitchen Activities. Christina Houghton (2012; Photograph, Live in the Old Folks Ass. Newton).
performance artist Bobby Baker on my work. *Domestic Washing* posed a similar action to Bobby Baker’s action of ‘washing a carrot’ in *Kitchen Show* (Pollack, 1991). The revealing of the private domestic environment by Millicent became important in *day-lighting* (a term that describes the restoration of piped streams to open waterways) water use in the home as well as developing ‘timeless water saving tips’. This experiment also highlighted the connection between feminist and ecological views and the importance of research that starts in the home, a widely supported tactic of ecological and feminist studies (Heddon and Turner, 2010; Barrett and Baker, 2007).

Here the artist is both subject and object of the artwork, claiming previously denied autonomy and agency, pressing disclosures of private experience into the public arena in order to speak of an identity overshadowed by patriarchal culture of the mother-as-artist, and its implicit valorisation of women’s domestic work (Harris and Aston, p. 83).

Millicent performed a masquerade of a woman in the domestic setting. In her self-deprecating style of speech she shared her knowledge in a way that makes us think that she may or may not be entirely thorough in her scientific explorations. There is also a connection to the mad scientist. How can one take the mad scientist seriously? She also made recommendations for the future from her findings. Just as Bobby Baker acts out her own life story in the context of her own home, Millicent’s humour created discrepancies between the idea of an objective experiment. This further subverted ideologies surrounding the recognised expert, suggesting that everyday people can in fact be expert in their own field.

### 4.4 Walking the Whau

*I see a wooden step nailed into the branch of the overhanging fig tree, a remnant of a lost swimming hole. I do however doubt that one would swim in this estuary today* (Houghton, *Field Notes 2012*).

The aim of *Experiment 4 - Walking the Whau* (Fig. 36 *Watertable Four*) was to undertake choreographic and scientific investigations at a specific location next to water in a suburban area. I collected multiple narratives of the Whau estuary from Ken Maunder Park (New Lynn) through the observations of my children and my own over numerous visits. I also obtained water samples from a sampling trip as part of *The Fluid City* project that occurred over the same time period as this research.
Experiment 4 Walking the Whau (Site 2: Fig.64 Site Map)

Aims: Explore locations next to water to discover the impacts of suburban activities on waterways.

Mode: Domestic Scientist

Method: Go on walks with the family and notice the places you move through.

Action: Take Notes/Notice

Take photos of the impact of humans on the waterways

Undertake kinesthetic observations under the overhanging fig tree, record write and film the experience. Record a child’s observations of the film.

Take a water sample.

Perform the search for a lost swimming hole through a slow kinesthetic walk to a slide show of photos of the park.

Results: The Whau estuary appears to be a place that was once used for water activities by the local community. The surrounding habitat and water appear to be degraded due to being close to suburban back yards and industry.

Performance outcome: I perform slow pedestrian walking to bring attention to the experience of walking and imagining the water hole which has since become too degraded for swimming.

(www.fluidcity.auckland.ac.nz). Through the action of repetitive visits, multiple temporal layers emerged as a ‘toponarrative’ a collaborative partial story of place (Turner and Heddon, p. 15) in this case constructed over a temporal range from multiple perspectives. These field trips were infused with “evanescent atmospheres, the atmospheres, the rhythms, and immanent sensations and physical effects of walking” (Tim Edensor in Turner and Heddon, 2010, p. 15) that constantly shift the experience through a kaleidoscope of intermingling thoughts. As the domestic scientist I take notes and specific measurements of time and observations (see Field Notes, Appendix 2). I also collected archives from these walks both digital (sound and image) and material and constructed a performance environment that became a virtual
presentation of my experience (Fig. 50). I engaged in kinesthetic sensing by the over hanging fig tree that had broken wooden steps nailed to it’s trunk from another time. These experiences were developed into a recorded monologue describing the imaginary search for the lost water hole. The results of this experiment suggested that this suburban waterway was once used as a place for swimming, fishing and boating activities. While the quality of the water and surrounding habitat appeared to be quite degraded, people were still fishing and boating. The quality of the site suggested that swimming was no longer an activity that took place.

4.4.1 The Self Guided Nature Walk

In the studio I explored the somatic response of listening though the cells and skin surfaces (Bainbridge Cohen, 2008). In response to the sound score and the photographic slide show I reflected upon what it is to see and be seen. This was a task I undertook in the field and intended on developing in this section. Upon reflection of video documentation I discovered that I was interested in small and simple movements that reflected the pedestrian. In particular walking at a slow incremental pace appeared to open spaces of kinesthetic empathy that connected directly to my experience of Walking the Whau. I reflected once again on what it is to re-present these experiences as a performance and decided that walking provided reference to performance of the everyday. Through accumulation of my own written narrative on nature walks and my interest in Downloadable Self Guided Nature Walks (borrowed from a guided nature walk at Kurt Brehmer reserve as part of Eco Fest 2012; Fig. 38, Site 4: Fig. 64). I created the choreographic structure of a nature walk to the sound scape of my sample in the field, overlaid with my three-year old son’s dialogue in response to video documentation of this. I also layered my monologue of the imaginary search for lost swimming hole and the joys of nature walking.
Figure 37. Slow Walking. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).

Figure 38. Kurt Brehmer Reserve (2012; Photograph, Rose bank Peninsula, New Lynn, Auckland).
4.4 Turbulence (Live performance)

These next series of experiments investigated live performance within the presence of an audience. I performed a number of activities that allowed for the investigation of performance tactics through collaboration, audience participation, ambiguities of narratives and character, sensing performance states and constructed environments. The aim was to explore performance tactics as part of ecological practice as well as explore how performance might inspire ‘liquid perceptions’ and imaginings of an ecological future.

4.4.1 Water Walk

Notes: The mermaid becoming a drag queen seemed to encapsulate the concept of one appearing as other yet to have a distinct recognisable image in relation to the immediate environment of K-Road (Houghton, Field Notes, 2012).

Experiment 5. (Fig. 40, Watertable Five) provided an opportunity to explore collaboration with a visiting performance artist Johannes Blomqvist (Sweden) as part of his residency Time Travelling and Sensory Encounters at The Old Folks Association in Newton Auckland CBD (Site 6; Fig. 64 Site Map). Together we created a tactile experience of water through steam and sound, and enacted a collective walking performance Water Walk as part of a 12-hour performance event Live in the Old Folks Ass. Love Scones and Slippery Memories (DVD 2/2.3 Water Walk). The aim was to bring awareness and attention to the unseen nature of water in the city and the domestic environment of a community hall. The participatory nature of the performance was a form of collaboration not only with Blomqvist but with the audience who participated in the performative actions of the day. Enhanced by the dated social setting of The Old Folks Association we engaged in the social etiquette of Swedish slide presentations and afternoon teas in between investigations of domestic kitchen scenes involving water (Figs 35 & 41). The creative action of the Sensory Water Walk in the hall (including the sharing of water stories; Figs 40, 41, 42) and the Walk to the Laundromat (Figs 43 & 44) blurred distinctions between performance and audience. Collaboration as a creative practice has been described by Carter (2004) as “a technique for making sense of gaps, interruptions and unpredictable crossovers”. This collaboration with Blomqvist provided such a space for
Figure 39. Water Table Five. Experiment 5 - Water Walk, Performance event.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim:</th>
<th>To explore collaboration and participation as tactics that inspires connectivity as an ecological practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mode:</td>
<td>Domestic Scientist/Mermaid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method:</td>
<td>Participate in a 12-hour performance Live in the Old Folks Ass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action:</td>
<td>Create a sensory walk with blindfolds using steam and sounds of water and whispered water memories as part of a participatory performance. Go for a walk dressed as mermaids to the local Laundromat on a Sunday and perform the bucket dance for the punters.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 40. Water Bottle Installation. Water Walk (2012; Photograph, Live in the Old Folks Ass. Newton).
Chapter Four - Discussion

Figure 41. Steam Room. Water Walk (2012; Photograph, Live in the Old Folks Ass. Newton).

Figure 42. Water Stories for Kids. Austin & Sarah (2012; Photograph, Water Walk, Live in the Old Folks Ass. Newton).
Chapter Four - Discussion

Figure 43. Water Dressing. Johannes Blomqvist & Christina Houghton (2012; Photograph, Water Walk, Live in the Old Folks Ass. Newton).

Figure 44. Water Walk to the Laundromat. Christina Houghton (2012; Photograph, Karangahape Rd. Auckland CBD).
the generation of new creative pathways and imaginings that can emerge from sensory practices. Thus connections were made that manifested imagination over temporal, geographical, differential forms of sociability that encouraged environmental interactivity and collective story-telling” (Carter, 2004, p. 13). Bobby Baker suggests that performance in spaces that have community contexts opens space for people to be included in art that may ordinarily be exclusive (The Space, 2012). Like Baker in *Mad Gyms and Kitchens* (2013) *Water Walk* had the potential to meet people in a community environment from which they were able to develop their own opinion and contribute to creative imaginings of ‘liquid perceptions’ evoked by the activities. A creative exchange took place where “passing the shuttle of creative vision back and forth, in a way that advances or changes the pattern, is to imagine community in terms of affiliation, rather than filtration (Carter 2004). The becoming of the mermaid into a twin drag mermaid (played by Johannes Blomqvist) was a direct response to both Blomqvist’s research of a local inner city hall and it’s vicinity to the red light district of Karangahape Road (K-Rd). The costumes we wore were recycled directly from the immediate environment. We also enacted a *slow dressing* as part of the performance where we dressed each other in $2 shop items (from K-Rd) to create our mermaid characters. The final garment being glamorous plastic fishnet capes, one recycled from *Mapping Tamaki Waters* upon which participants had added their own plastic recyclables. This concept of recycling items from the environment and previous performances brought traces of the past to this present moment. As we re-enacted the mermaid in this new context we brought awareness to the domestic excess of our urban existence. These characters also brought attention to the unseen underground nature of water in the city performing the bucket choreography to the sound sample *The Search for the Lost Swimming Hole* (Fig 43; DVD 1/1.3 Self Guided Walk). In addition walking as a group in public evoked liquid activism as we intersected the cities usual flows and ebbs as an ‘organic moving story telling cluster’ that materialised from the collaboration with which we engaged.
4.4.2 Put Litter in it’s Place

Notes: Flooding that has increased due to urbanisation of the earth’s surface as well as natural disasters such as storms and tsunamis have washed these surface items that we identify with into a soup of litter. Items that are not biodegradable are turning our wetlands into archeological sites from which the stories of the people who live around the ocean beaches and water banks can be told.

For Experiment 6 (Fig. 45 Watertable Six) I participated in a local community eco-event The Tony Sedgedin Reserve Litter Pick Day (Site 3 Fig. 64) and then performed Put litter in it’s Place at the sausage sizzle at the end of the day (see DVD 2/2.4). This experiment revealed interesting facts about performance space and audience. I transformed found litter items into performance artifacts as part of my performance (props and costumes; Fig. 49). The recycling of costumes during this process was an act of material becoming as items of adornment were gathered and transformed and metamorphosised in performance. I became the activator of the items in the bucket in front of the clothesline (strung between two trees) as I engaged in the performance that required interaction with objects found earlier in the day at the litter pick. I performed my ‘island of domestic excess’ as I created a ‘recycle station’ of transformation. The mermaid that appeared today was a direct reflection of the environment in which I performed. With plastic bottles and twigs entwined into the mermaid costume from the previous performance Water Walk there was still a trace of the ‘trashy drag mermaid’ who is now out of her natural environment (Fig. 48). This new masquerade represents the changing nature of fluid identities and ecological bodies as a result of moving through multiple environs.

Mathew Goulish describes Goat Island’s work as ecological performance through the analogy of an Island as a closed system: the island, the ocean and the edge (Bottoms and Goulish, 2007). An island in conservation terms enabled Darwin to trace the evolution of the species of Galapagos without too much disruption from migrating creatures. In performance the island is the performance, the audience is the ocean and the shoreline (the edge) is the performance space (p. 177). I wanted to create work that mirrored nature’s natural tendency for messy beauty. Messy beauty is a term that I borrow from Sondra Horton Fraleigh. Her essay on transformation Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy (2010) addresses ideas of
Figure 45. Watertable Six. Experiment 6- Put Litter in it’s Place, Performance.

Experiment 6 - Put Litter in it’s Place (Site 3: Fig 64 Site Map)

Aim: To experiment with notions of live action and participation. To daylight the domestic excess of suburban communities through wearable trash to fashion.

Mode: Domestic Scientist

Method: participate and perform in an ecological event such as a litter-pick day

Action: Walk the mangroves as a mermaid in a costume that collects litter from the mangroves

  Wear costumes made from items found in the mangroves in final presentation on domestic excess.

  Perform the fashion show dance from the litter pick to eagles of death metal with two assistants as backing dancers.

Figure 46. Whau Washed Jeans (2012; Photograph, Tony Sedgedin Reserve, New Lynn).
perfection, inspired by Japanese Butoh as one “descends into the human condition—down into the turbulence, awkwardness and uncertainty of life” (Lani Weissbach in Fraleigh, 2010). Human perception of the aesthetics of nature have been explored in geographical terms in relation to how individuals rate the aesthetic beauty of landscape in relation to biodiversity by McCormick, (2009). Landscapes explored in this study ranged from the natural messy landscapes (indicating high biodiversity) to the clean lines of man-made water ways and troughs that one sees in the city (indicating low biodiversity; McCormick, 2009) and showed “public prefer landscapes of high ecological integrity with good morphological condition” (McCormick, 2009, p. 1).

In The Friends of the Whau Fashion Show as part of Water Slides (Fig 50) I represent this part of my research through a ‘fashion show choreography’ and encourage the audience to sign my petition (most of them do). This scene created a parody of Eco-events such as sculptures made from recyclable materials at Wynyard Quarter for the 2012 Volvo Round the World Yacht Race and Trash to Fashion fundraisers. By questioning common ecological activities I created an ambiguity of narrative where the audience couldn’t quite tell whether I was critiquing these actions or imposing my opinions on them. These narratives aimed to reveal meaning yet not define it, leaving the audience wanting to know more about the performer and her subject. This tactic is a way of opening space for the audience to develop their own opinions of water issues without preaching or forcing ones opinion on them. As the individual and collective narrative self developed through interconnected activities “the question of who one is finds its response in the unfolding of the story” (Cavarero, 2000, p. 135). This performance is also a fictitious re-enactment of Put Litter in it’s Place creating a slippery misconception of reality further adding to the ambiguities of the work.
Figure 47. Shopping Trolley. Performance Archive (2012; Photograph, Raroa Tce).

Figure 48. Mermaid Walks the Board Walk. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Put Litter in it’s Place, Tony Sedgedin Reserve, New Lynn).
Figure 49. Stringing the Line for Friends of The Whau (2012; Video Still, Put Litter in it’s Place, Tony Sedgedin Reserve, New Lynn).

Figure 50. The Friends of the Whau Fashion Show. Christina Houghton, Zarah Killeen-Chance, Val Smith (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).
4.4.3 Roaming INHALE - Performance (Situated within Vincent Ward’s Video Installation).

Observations: Once again Millicent tests her underwater imagery in the foreign terrestrial world. Enacting theatre as a place of fictitious realities. Stranded in a dry space, will she be able to get her message across. Sunglasses at night way too cool for this lady, her expertise in theatrical environments brings a highly skilled technique to her work (Houghton, Field Notes 2012).

Experiment 6 (Fig. 51 Watertable Seven) investigated the connection between durational performance installation and the unseen aspects of nature and water ecology. In this experiment I was invited as part of the TEMPO Dance Festival 2012 Launch to create a roaming performance in response to Vincent Ward’s video exhibit INHALE (2012) at the Gus Fisher Gallery Auckland CBD (Site 7: Fig 64; DVD 2/2.5). This exhibition was a metamorphosis and immersive experience described as “evoking otherworldly landscapes, transcendence, and acute moments of loss and discovery” (INHALE, 2013). Nude bodies swirl and morph within plastic sheaths floating/struggling amongst the roaming fish species who are familiar to this environment. These translucent watery images were surrounded by sounds of mystical strange under-waterness and melodic piano provided a performance environment in which I was able to explore what it is to be seen or unseen. The temporal nature of this durational performance in and out of the video projection screens became a metaphor for the way that nature is often backgrounded.

Millicent became a floating translucent roaming installation hovering near the light with plastic bags and blond wig and a newly constructed shiny jumpsuit made from a dolphin printed shower curtain. As she morphed her head into a bucket and slid along the floor with behind and legs protruding, she enacted the theatrics of an underwater scene in response to the video images. Legs up in a vertical stand for a moment. Crawling morphing into her plastic poncho raincoat the heat within steaming her face behind. She floated and walked in front of the front screen close to the door of the gallery space, where beyond there was a collected crowd helping them selves to the free drinks. Although they were unaware that there was a live aspect to the exhibition next door a few, catching a glimpse through the door, entered. In this performance Millicent became the environment, existing in the world of senses and contemplation in a room next-door.
Aims: To experiment with notions seen and un-seen as a performance installation.

Mode: Domestic Scientist/performance artist

Method:

Perform an installation situated within Vincent Ward’s video exhibit INHALE 2012 at The Gus Fisher Gallery.

Perform metamorphosis and immersion using the black 60 litre washing bucket and plastic raincoats.

Experiment with plastic crinkling, awkward juggling and shaking, whilst domestic foolery turns into high art.

and non-integrated into the social scene of the art world critics. However following an urge to break through, she made her way out the door through the crowds, she morphed under feet, rising plastic clad behind conversations. She performed as the silent activist “hey I have something to say”, but unannounced she was an intruder an alien in this environment. “I am actually a mermaid you know hence I can be forgiven for my awkward quality of movement”, she thought, now they will definitely follow this time. However, the draw of conversation and free food and wine was too strong. This performance was a silent un-seen performance of an unseen environment. I felt as if Millicent had personified nature and is content, yet she still ventured into the crowd another time (Fig. 52).

In this performance Millicent became her own Umwelt (environment) a distinct perceptual world with herself at the center yet ultimately connected to the constructed virtual world of Ward’s video images. Umwelt is described by Jacob von Uexkull a well known biologist as an infinite variety of equally perfect perceptual worlds, that, although uncommunicating and reciprocally exclusive, link together as if in a gigantic musical score (Bottoms and Goulish, 2007, P. 6). “The environment-world (that is part of this

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11 Vincent Ward is a well known Film maker artist whose video exhibit INHALE 2012 portrayed the nude underwater within plastic sheaths and pollutants, inspired by a near death drowning experience when he was thirteen.
umwelt) is constituted by a series of elements that are called ‘Carriers of significance’, or the only things of interest to the animal, in a closed unity with the receptive organs of the body (Agamben 2004 cited in Bottoms and Goulish, p. 8). The carriers of significance in this moment for Millicent’s performance was Water, Bucket and the plastic she continually interacted with these items she was affected by the ‘other worldly’ nature of the sound scape. However in the moments where she disrupted the scene by ridiculously throwing plastic bags into the air caused an uncomfortable representation of the melodic nature of the videos. The performance sought to both become yet disrupt and critique the atmosphere. This particular masquerade of Millicent critiques the ephemeral nature of water and brings it back to the everyday world through tomfoolery humour as a form of self-deprecation. In conclusion this installation performance revealed a sensory engagement with the audience through the slow performative journey of my performance character while simultaneously engaging with the imagery of Ward’s video installation. Thus performer and audience experienced the sensation of being underwater through sound video and live imagery while the image of Millicent provoked an image of parody that encouraged one to question the message of the artist.

Figure 52. Roaming Unseen. Christina Houghton (2012; Photograph by Megan Welch, Roaming INHALE Performance, The Gus Fisher Gallery).
4.5 Water Slides - The Final Plunge

Experiment 8 – Water Slides (Fig. 53 Watertable Eight) was a solo performance developed through the accumulation of research and choreographic methods that emerged from earlier domestic and performative experiments described previously. Millicent who believed that in order to “imagine a future first we must look to the past” took the audience on an experimental journey that travelled through the past, present and future realms of water, revealing transformations between animal, human, ice, liquid and steam. The presentation/performance took place at the ‘Point Chevalier Sailing Club’ (Site 8, Fig. 64, DVD2/2.6 & 2.7) where the local community was invited as an audience over two evenings to witness/participate in “the final experiment in my water ecology research”. Millicent moved slowly through each scene as a slow-moving fast-talking creature. Drawing on De Certeau’s (1984) ‘art of saying as a tactic’ she speaks of one thing she eludes to another. The development of the multiple personae of Millicent became a way to create multiple percepts, where she has a fluid identity that shifts between multiple paradigms. Through this performance I revealed Millicent as the active agent in these experiments and as the catalyst to alternative modes of perception. In addition the performance character morphed between animal and human. Briginshaw, (2005) claims that playing with ambiguities and narrative can open spaces for interconnected subjectivities implying ethical engagement with the world as an ecological consciousness. “As we glimpse fragments of one story through the performance of another. The narratives are being continually multiplied” (Briginshaw, p. 246).

4.5.1 Past

The first section of Water Slides focused on everyday and small acts of domestic life through the character of the housewife/mermaid Millicent. She described her investigations into tactics that encouraged sustainability and wellbeing as well as her intention to encourage an imagination of the future. She suggests that in order to this first we must remember. There is an ironic gesture in the fact that she is looking to the past to find a more simple way of life that is sustainable. Considering the fact that the way the developed world is accustomed to living has contributed to most of the environmental issues that are manifested
Figure 53. Watertable Eight. Experiment 8.

Experiment 8 Water Slides Performance (Site 8: Fig. 64 Site Map)

Aim: To present a choreographic work that reveals the processes and tactics explored throughout the research process. To evoke a sense of liquid perception within a community context that encourages imaginings for futures untold.

Mode: Domestic Scientist and The Mermaid

Method: The final performance Water Slides was presented as a series of domestic experiments presented by Millicent the Domestic scientist.

Action:

Have assistants greet the audience with a microscope and samples of Point chevalier tap water

Invite the audience to participate in the final experiment in water ecology research

Hand out paper cups with samples of ice, liquid and hot water to represent past present and future and the tactile nature of sensing water

Present the domestic experiment as if it was a re-enactment from 1938

Demonstrate liquid presence through a kinesthetic nature walk

Create a future lab with household items

Invite the audience to imagine the future of water

Walk down to the waters edge

Results: Slow choreography and ambiguities of narrative encouraged ‘liquid perceptions’ that inspired noticing of temporalities of nature and the importance of the past in influencing present actions in order to affect the future.

Actions that engaged with audience and with water itself opened spaces for community imagination and interaction with the materiality of water.

today. Her intentions were sincere yet questionable, which intended to lead the audience to question her methods and themselves. In this section there is reference to the fact that she used to be a mermaid. This implied that when looking to the past she is an actual fact looking to a world of ‘liquid perception’ to inspire her slow choreography on land.
In the performance I disappeared below the edge of the bench and emerged as ‘the water body’ to the sounds of bubbling water and Bobby Vinton’s *Blue Velvet*. The audience were exposed to my methods of investigation that suggested transformations of many kind were to occur in this performance. The sickness of the water body, as a result of a polluted environment, was inspired by the work of Julie Laffin, the performance artist who, at the mercy of an environmental illness created an interesting performance work (Bottoms and Laffin, 2011). Laffin’s work represented the cross between reality and fiction. Similarly, ‘the water body’ is an indicator of the sensitivity of our selves to the contaminants of the environment and becoming ‘other’.

Through the presentation of ‘Water ecology experiments’ Millicent created a world of interconnected stories through time as a relational character whose individual story was a result of her interactions with the environment and others. In the performance script she often refers to her family and research assistants through we, us or one, suggesting that she moves within the ‘ecology’ of community. As an ecological tactic this enabled her research to become part of her narratable self (Briginshaw, 2012) opening the possibility for full expression as a mother and a scientist and mermaid in a holistic way.

4.5.2 Liquid Presence

*At the point where water is liquid there is blue light and room temperature and we are in the present.*

I moved in slow motion drawing on the alternate gravity of being underwater. This created an attentive awareness of the digital sound and projected environment (Fig. 56). I engaged in a temporal quality that captured the durational process of the kinesthetic sensing of nature, within the time limit of this structured section of my choreography. This action of slowing down and sensing the constructed environment around me translated my experience of the nature walk to the performance in front of the slide show. Using walking as choreography, the awkward interpretation of the amateur brings attention to the disconnection between humans and nature. As I responded I sensed the ‘states of performance’ through the embodiment

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12Life becomes art when Laffin makes a film describing the event where she goes to inhabit a specially designed house that should be free of all chemicals that provoke her illness, only to find that they have used the incorrect paint resulting in her sleeping in her van for the rest of the residency (www.performancefootprint.co.uk)
of performance processes “where the subject relocates, or represents, in space and time in order to re-
encounter themselves in the other or as other” (Giannachi, 2012). The layering of recorded narratives in the
sound scape Self Guided Walk (DVD 1/1.3), shifted between the observations of the photographer, the
observer (the mother and the son) and the witness (audience). This experience of being immersed in the
imaginary world of water connected to the experience of ‘living Waterscapes’ as described by Jacquie
Clarke. She refers to ‘liquid perception’ (Delueze, 2005) in public spaces’ in which people converge, dream,
reflect, open to the world around them, experience flow, move between the conscious and unconscious,
tune into the living aesthetics of water, which influence not just our biology but our psychology’ (Clarke,
2010). Millicent’s presence evoked the space “where the subject relocates, or represents, in space and time
in order to re-encounter themselves in the other or as other” (Giannachi, 2012). In this slow moving
performance Millicent interrogates choreography’s political ontology that frames her subjectivity through,
the still, the slow, interchanging identities and repetitive actions (Lepecki, 2006, p. 45).

4.5.3 The Mermaid rises from the Experimental Gas

Deep water reserviors dying mermaid and impermeable surfaces. What are the natural geomorphic
processes? In the city the water is piped away as it comes toward the sea. Where is the braided river where I
trickle to oceans mind (Houghton, Field Notes 2012).

I steamed up a plastic sheet (hanging from a clothes line) using a steam mop and an iron (Figs 60 & 61).
Projected video footage showed water microbes dancing across the screen. This became a translucent
boundary for appearing and disappearing. The aim of this final section was to create the illusion of the
science lab and evoke the temporal quality of the work relating to both time and temperature. Increasing
temperatures represent global warming while the steam veils the scientist’s figure behind the plastic as I
undergo the final transformation into the mermaid. In this part of the performance perception is stretched
and enfolded within the spatial temporal range of the micro to the macro, the past and future through
visual imagery of ice, liquid and steam.
Chapter Four - Discussion

Figure 54. Millicent Presents. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).

Figure 55. Setting the Watertable. Attendants Val Smith & Zahra Killeen-Chance (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).
Figure 56. Walking in Presence. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).

Figure 57. Searching for the Lost Swimming Hole Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).
Figure 58. ‘liquid perceptions’. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).

Figure 59. Overhanging Fig Tree. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).
Figure 60. Imagining Pressed Clothes. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).

Figure 61. Imagining Clean Floors. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).
As Millicent’s experiment created a metamorphosis of woman to mermaid, she undertook multiple transformations. Metamorphosis in biological terms is the development of an animal into another form after birth. The mermaid as a hybrid between woman and fish can be read in the context of both a mythical character and a congenital disorder.

Sirenomelia, also called “mermaid syndrome”, is a rare congenital disorder in which a child is born with his or her legs fused together and reduced genitalia. This condition is about as rare as conjoined twins, affecting one out of every 100,000 live births and is usually fatal within a day or two of birth because of kidney and bladder complications. Four survivors were known to be alive as of July 2003 (Wikipedia, 2013).

The Sirenomelia has a modification and the solutions of science. Yet the mermaid also has the quality of an environmental indicator implying that it may not be too late to reverse the degradation of the planet. As she dances ‘the ode to all those lost to environmental disasters’ in the virtual memorial swimming pool.

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13 Inspired by the many ‘memorial swimming pools’ opened in remembrance to those lost at war, in particular Onehunga Memorial swimming pool that I came across when researching water in the Manukau Harbour catchment.
(that has the dimensions of a tiny paper cup; see Fig. 62. & 63) the audience’s perception is stretched and enfolded within the spatial temporal range of the micro to the macro, the past and future through this watery narrative. The mermaid reveals herself as a fluid time traveller and an accumulation of the mermaids that have been (Figs 44,48,62).

This part of the performance was intended to represent the accumulation of the performative devices that appeared through out the performance in the evocation of ‘liquid perception’. The paper cups that were handed out to the audience through each of the sections firstly containing frozen photos within ice cubes (see Appendix 4). Then receiving blue liquid (carefully poured by two attendants in blue rain coats; Figs 54 & 55). Finally they receive black hot liquid. The design of the set and the costuming add a fantastical textural to the shimmering nature of the theatrics of the future and represent the increased artificial nature of our future world. The use of recyclable plastics gives an attention to the recyclable nature of ideas and performance as ecology. The Future Lab is a place where the past, present and future combine, it intends to be a place of materialisation, where dance performance and water ecology meet as ‘liquid perception’ in the local setting of the sailing club.

*Figure 62. Inside a Tiny Paper Cup. Christina Houghton (2012; Video Still, Water Slides Point Chevalier Sailing Club).*
Chapter Five: CONCLUSION

Down at the Waters Edge

Figure 65. Where all the Water Catchments Converge. (2012; Surf Web Cam. View from Point Chevalier Sailing Club).

Welcome to the future Lab. This is a place where the past, present and future combine as liquid presence and together we imagine a future (Houghton, Performance Script 2012).
5.1 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate and test performance tactics that could be deemed sustainable, ecological and social in the context of global environmental issues involving water. This research ultimately asked how we can make shifts in perceptions or behavior that have a longer term impact on ways of becoming and ultimately positively affect environmental awareness and action.

This study was guided by two research questions:

How might a series of choreographic iterations be considered part of an ecological practice?

How might community-based solo choreographic performance explore ‘liquid perception’ and inspire a collective imagination for sustainable futures?

Performance experiments that explored the ‘ecotone’ where performance identity and water ecology meet sought ways of evoking ‘liquid perceptions’ through the sensing body. The various choreographic iterations of this research were considered ecological in these ways:

- Somatic and kinesthetic sensing of nature fosters an increased awareness of the surrounding environment and fosters empathetic connection with the non-human world.
- Performing everyday actions as slow choreography encouraged the noticing of the small details of everyday life and awareness of the impact of daily actions on our waterways.
- Drawing on practices that activated meandering and drifting through environments created local, social, and cultural mappings of waterscapes through material thinking.
- Character based performance research in relation to the ecological body revealed multiple personas in a constant state of becoming in response to changing environments.
- Ambiguities of narratives abstracted disrupted and destabilised social constructs of identity and ways of seeing.
Choreography drawing on the everyday practices of walking and place-making through domestic and natural environments showed evidence of:

- ‘Meta-morphorical’ connections between identity, place and water ecology.
- A critique of scientific views of the environment and the body through the ‘worlding of multi-species story-telling’.
- Changing scales of temporality in performance that inspired ‘liquid perceptions’ and imaginings of an untold future.

This research was local and experiential in nature. I explored the topic of water ecology through the materiality and experience of every day life. I situated my own body within the research and explored my relationship to local environments through kinesthetic sensing. As a result I was able to establish real experiences and entwine them into narratives that emerged throughout the research. The focus of the research was on the in-between spaces and fluid movements between concepts. Water ecology and dance practice converged as ‘ecotone’, a place of poetic and productive becoming. The character Millicent entwined the personal with the scientific giving equal importance within the research to the narratives of science and memories of water.

I followed practices that fostered creative connections through action. *Whau science* and the development of Millicent the domestic scientist created self-parody and ironic humour as a way to open connections to the audience and critique current ideologies of identity and daily practices. I discovered the voice of Millicent in the abstract place of the non-human. She provided me with a semi-detached voice through which to perform a ‘lecture’ on the subject of water and she opened a space for a mode of ethics that underlies the critical practice of this research.

The character of Millicent explored the multiplicity of hybrid forms of methodology and modes of performance that became stories of dystopian and utopian views of the future of our planet. *Water Slides* hybridised science and mythology through the iconographic character of the mermaid. The Mermaid became the imaginary environmental indicator for water contamination through her liquid narrative and her transformations between differing environs and the domestic scientist portrayed practical
recommendations for real actions through a slow choreography. Through the multiplicities of Millicent’s character narratives from my water research were told offering multiple perspectives in a milieu of ‘liquid perceptions’ as ‘ecological becomings’.

*Water Slides* aimed to expose the constructedness of scientific ‘truths’ as well as create the potential for a critical mythologising of these, as a way to generate a ‘feeling for what happens’. This follows recent concerns in the field of environmental activism that unless we ‘feel’ the crisis of environmental degradation at a gut and emotional level, no amount of scientific explanation will change people’s behaviours. At the core of my research is this dilemma and the challenge for environmentally engaged artists to communicate the crisis of our compromised waterways in a way that is engaging, humorous and ultimately affecting.

*Testing Waters* developed a research methodology that was an accumulation of a number of interdisciplinary practices that are ecological in nature through being: slow, responsive, productive, divergent, chaotic and prolific. The combination of these resulted in choreographic tactics that evoked the fluid, the mytho-poetic, the real and imaginary through flow, disruption and action.

The significance of this research is in the systematic investigation of various performative practices that inspire both a critical discourse on ecological and sustainable tactics in both performance and everyday life. Embracing the concepts of ‘liquid perception’ and slowing down implies a move from the global to the local, from the mass produced to the small production, towards the relational and the social (including the non-human species). The ethos behind a slow choreography also implies a move towards the non-representational. This methodology therefore can be applied to multiple areas of research such as performance, art science collaborations, mobility and wellbeing, social and cultural studies, philosophy and education.

The ‘ecotone’ of *Water Slides* emerged from the alchemy of dance and water ecology. As a place of encounter where senses prevail, potentiality, imagination and the mystical meet as a performance of everyday life. This space of creativity may also be described as a place where nature assembles order from
chaos, where random events in everyday life become moments of spontaneity or where ambiguities of narrative evoke unusual becomings.

*Water Slides* is an example of an ecological work that holds itself along side those of well-established researchers and practitioners that are focused on creating work or events that can be shown in community and ecological contexts. As both participatory and performative it also involves scientific inquiry that makes it meaningful and clear to non-specialist audiences from both the arts and the sciences. Performative interventions are experimental in nature and aimed to open potentialities for further questions to be raised in the critical discourse of performance ecology and environmental studies.

Through somatic and kinesthetic processes *Water Slides* employed a multi-layered choreography that evoked Deluezian liquid and gaseous perceptions. It captured temporalities from the micro to the macro, addressing both ecological issues and performance methodology. Following Paul Carters concept of material thinking (2004) such acts of creative remembering uncover lost knowledge. *Water Slides* morphed various registers of performance in a fluid play between the abstract, the literal, the fictional and the scientific.
Appendix 1 Testing Waters DVD (Contents).

DVD 1/Field Samples

Sound Recordings (Performance projections and recorded dialogue).

1.1 Millicent & The Water Body (Mov.)
1.2 Domestic Washing (Mov.)
1.3 Self Guided Nature Walk (Mov.)
1.4 The Future Lab (Mov.)
1.5 Tony Sedgedin Reserve (Mov.)

Field Research (Film Doc)

1.6 City Walk - Performance projection and dialogue for Mapping Tamaki Waters (Nov 2011). (Mov.)
1.7 Whau Sampling Trip (Dec 2011; Mov.)

DVD 2/Performance Documentation (Film Documentation)

2.1 Mapping Tamaki Waters (Nov 2011) Performance Rehearsal (Mov.)
2.2 Mapping Tamaki Waters (Nov 2011) Slide Show of Performance (Mov.)
2.3 Water Walk Feb (2012) Live in The Old Folks Ass. (Mov.)
2.4 Put Litter in its Place (March 2012) Tony Sedgedin Reserve, New Lynn (Mov.)
2.5 Roaming INHALE (August 2013) The Gus Fisher Gallery (Mov.)
2.6 Water Slides (September 14th 2012) Point Chevalier Sailing Club (Mov.)
2.7 Water Slides (September 15th 2012) Point Chevalier Sailing Club (MPG.)
Appendix 2  Field Notes

Walking the Whau

Walking the Whau 20.11.11 3:40
A sports park, or lost leisure water activities

A quick washing bucket and soak in the stream
back at the shopping centre in the stream (also the venue) at Olympic park.

Brings attention to:
- How do our annual activities affect our waterways?
- Activities observed: Man washing dog wearing yellow short sleeves

Location: Under the pylons trail that travels South to North along the waterway.
Beside the Park at playground that comes from the city to West Auckland.

A walking nature trail follows the path, along the path beside path, then path bridge, then the pathbridge then over hanging big tree and before that a picnic spot.

Water Sites:
Natural & Artificial
Sites/Sites/Parks/Strata
Ideal for lying next to, viewing the design or other leisure activities such as swimming, picnicking or fishing.

Observing each location over time period.
Rating qualities such as aesthetic attributes and other qualities and rating them for accessibility as a suitable location for the above activities.

The Whau Estuary: Kerewa Marina. 20.11.11
A sports park, ski or lost leisure water activities.

Site observation: Hanging bridge, hanging bridge over the water and pool on the stream or the bottom.

Time: 2:45 pm - 4:00 pm.
First impression: Hanging above the Fossil Whau.

Stone, standing in seductive bendy area ready for water fun but disappointment at not wanting to get in.

The search for a good swimming spot going to the water's edge but something else... Recording voice and reflection.

Feet dangling over warm fresh water edge.

Necahingston train friends to special place, meaningful cabin, private picnic spots.

Good for leisure activities, fishing, swimming, exploring.

and being in nature.
Walking the Whau, cont.

Recorded 13 min v. - Later 1.30 pm. Austin and second run said...

Observations:
- Emerging
- Water level
- Canyon forming

Activities observed:
- Floating
- Butterfly
- Fish jumping
- Water lilies

Water quality:
- Slight
- Colour:
- Turbid
- pH:
- Nitrates:

- 3
- 0
- 0
- 11

Recorded items noted:
- A leaf (or water)
- A fish (or water)
- A group (or water)
- A group (or water)

Sounds observed:
- Leaves rustling
- Leaves rustling
- Leaves rustling

I thought my head about the water and wondered about water quality.

Potential sites:
- Site: Four square

Date: 20.11.11
Description of site:
- Four square trees with a perfect viewing spot for the Whau behind.
- Performing location has been used.
- Recorded items noted: water level, water level, water level, water level, water level.

Activities observed:
- Fish jumping
- Butterfly
- Nitrates
- pH

Site: Mean-grade
Description of site:
- A few tall trees with water near the base.
Walking the Whau. Cont.

Walking the Whau
November 29, 11:13

Conditions: Rain, tides, sunset
Time: 10:13 High Tide
Participants: Audrey, Isabella

Activities observed:
- Cyclist passes twice
- Woman walking dog
- Woman with a baby and a little girl

Adistinct site: Walking back
- Rhizomes between trees
- Stand in basket
- Audience need to be invited one by one
to stand in performance spot and look
at the whau.

Site: Footbridge
- Parking
- Slow walking
- Good view of park from other side.

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Mangrove Tea Party
29.11.11

Site: Mangrove grove

Description:
- Table set for a tea party, with
  a huge table cloth that billows in
  the wind
- Table a bay with being that have
  been fished from the Whau.
- Table and chairs

Observations:
The site became the location for
- Show fishing into the water in the
  picturesque grove
- Trees beyond the trees
- Birds could be seen flitting about
- Eventually, after joining Audrey and
  Isabella, there was a family with
  chickens and hens, until we got hungry.

"Let's have a picnic, where a good spot? I know
- a picnic spot further around the path, but the
  bananas are in the car."

Video Recorded:
Raroa Tce – Daily Water Usage

Site: Raroa Tce 5.2-L14-3

Daily Water Usage (per number of hours)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time (hrs)</th>
<th>Water (L)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shower</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Water used in washing: 3 cups + 1 towel = 3.5

Note: Water supply at 13.3 L per hour

Site: Raroa Tce

Description: Open groy area with view North over the open water.

Notes: 
- Stabila helps me with her basking sheet, taking out the wet sheet and singing.
- Standard adds items to the basket of dye.
- Using the sheets, we can see the comparison between colour shades.
- Stabila helps to bring the sheets on the line.

Items needed:
- Green washing basket
- Sheets
- Water

Stabila adds:
- Sheets become more and more blue.

Notes:
- Stabila references fishing shades from the shore.

Recorded as Video: Dye experiment.
Appendix 3 Performance Scripts

Mapping Tāmaki Waters (2011)

I’ve got issues water issues.

The ethereal nature of water means that its qualities have values at many levels.
What we see is not what it appears.
The in-depth investigation into the scientific, the cultural and the subjective may reveal the un-seen qualities of water. Revealing our relationship to water and to nature.

So here we are at the water table standing in a dry space doing imaginary things with water in an absent way. I hope you’re not thirsty.

So I have been thinking about what it is to demonstrate a concept.
Walking and demonstrating. How can I dance the hydrological cycle?
Water molecules are absorbed by the sun and accumulate as cloud matter in the earth’s atmosphere.
Attempting to demonstrate evaporation as a visual image.
Now am I presenting a somatic notion of what it feels like to evaporate.
The water body is heavy, cellular fluid activity stimulates my senses my arms are being pulled by gravity pulling the visceral blood bags of flesh and bone down to earth.
Yet they feel light and they are floating.
Or now I could be attempting audience participation: are you wondering what it actually feels like to evaporate?
Surface skin evaporates energy pulling my arm in all directions. This feels amazing you should try it.
What say I really evaporate this would mean I could or would dissolve into thin air slowly my visual image would start to fade.

I went in search of the original water ways around Auckland that lay beneath the city. I wanted to contemplate how we connect with water and nature in an urban environment. I followed the manholes as markers of subterranean waters. The idea was to experience and capture images that would inspire a kinaesthetic response regarding the subject matter. Therefore what you are seeing (the city walk slide show) is a non-scientific aesthetically biased representation of my own personal lived experience of contemplating water and nature in my environment that may inspire a kinesthetic response from you. Here is my kinesthetic response.

Conclusion:
Walking waters edges to the coast of our memories. Blue pen on brown paper early watery memories are imprinted on the blue print of who I am
Water seeps from my terrestrial edges through the sands of time into the ocean of expanding space
Sunsets of water
Sailing into the sunset of family memories
The sun on my face the sound of water on the boat hull, singing into crashing waves drowning
notes on nature
I see the sea
Fish and chips eaten in sandy concrete places with smells of salt and warm winds
Soft youthful cheeks with sand smeared by tiny hands with grease
Can we pass this on to them?

Water Slides (2012)

Thank you for coming to Water Slides this evening. Tonight is very exciting you see, as you have been invited here to help me embark on my final experiment in my water ecology research.
The Point Chevalier Sailing Club what a perfect location for such finale. Here we are perched on the edge of the land where it meets the sea and where many of the rivers and streams from the local catchments converge out the front of the club in the Waitemata harbour.
Anyway tonight is very exciting and I am going to need your help. We are going to attempt to bend space and time in order to imagine a future. But before we can do this, first we have to remember...
**Water Slides (2012) cont.**

Walk down stairs- I remember why I first became interested in water it was something to do with how I was feeling in every day life. I was feeling fragmented and disconnected from myself and from others and particularly from my environment around me. So water became my methodology encouraging a slowing down and a noticing of the small details of every day life. Now from this emerged of a new kind of ecology, one that refrains from referring to I, but alternately draws upon other perspectives such as the royale we, the third person and ones ecology. This leads me to ask myself the question, What is ones ecology? And this is a question I would like you all to ask yourself throughout this evenings proceedings.

So I will be demonstrating a few of these concepts that have lead to the development of some handy tactics that can be used for increasing wellbeing and sustainability. These can be used in order to keep our home in ship-shape condition but first let me introduce myself...

Recording: Millicent & The Water Body (DVD 1/1.1 Field Samples)

Emerging from the Water Body costume- This reminds me of the last time I emerged from the water body back in 1938. That was when I left my watery world behind me and decided to live in a terrestrial environment. You see I used to be a mermaid but I left all that behind me to become the artist and residence here at the Point Chevalier Sailing club. Now the primary focus of this residency, being art-science research on the differing perceptions of water.

That first year I undertook a number of domestic water experiments in my home in the Waitakere ranges, which you can actually see from here. It was however Uncle George’s house back then. I was looking after it while he was away at the war, he was in the Navy. It was around this time when I discovered that the metamorphical nature of water allowed for the representation of time (past, present and future) through the elements of water (ice, liquid and steam). So first we will begin with ice and my assistants will now help us begin the first experiment.

In order to look to past I will now re-enact the experiment ‘Domestic Washing’ from 1938. This experiment tonight will have the exact conditions as the original experiment however I have updated it to give it a contemporary context. My assistants are also passing around frozen samples from the 1938 experiment.

Recording: Domestic washing (DVD 1/1.2 Field Samples)

Emerge from bucket - It was actually rob who pointed out that this bucket holds the same volume as the volume of my body mass and that on average one creates two buckets of waste water on a daily basis.
**Water Slides (2012) cont.**

This led me to wonder whether or not I was an average daily water waster or if my recommendations would render me a water conservatoire.

Pegging up sheet- My recommendations from this particular experiment have pretty much stayed the same as they were in 1938 such as:

‘Waste not want not’,
‘use only what you need’ and
‘use re-use and use again’.

Honestly these are tips are ‘timeless’ you should try them next time you undertake domestic experiments in your own home.

Now it is time for my next demonstration. The meta-morphorical nature of water allows for the present to be represented as liquid. And so this is the element for our next experiment. In order to explore how water can be used to inspire a kinesthetic connection to a particular site in the present moment, I have created a downloadable self-guided nature walk inspired by the ecological group the Friends of Whau. I will now demonstrate how one uses such a device and perhaps we can evoke the concept of ‘liquid perception’ in the process.

Recording: Self Guided Walk (DVD 1/1.3 Field Samples)

Sitting in bucket under plastic dress- You would be surprised how many lost and found items one finds in the mangroves. As I collected various items from the mangroves and hung them to dry I realised that there was a lot to be said for the Fashion of the Whau! Such as this water-carrier bag dress, and the 60 litre bottle dress that Val’s wearing and the bubble wrap number on Zahra. Also I found these Whau Washed jeans, I know! So I came up with a great idea, I thought why not have a Fashion Show at the Friends of the Whau Litter pick Day!

Walk from behind the screen- and now we have finally reached the exciting part of the evening where we will begin our final experiment, this is where you get to take part in the collective imagination of the future. We will now pass out the final samples for this experiment. You may begin to notice a change is happening.

What kind of future are you going to imagine tonight!

Recording: The Future lab (DVD 1/1.4 Field Samples)
Appendix 4 Performance Samples
Save Our Water Ways - Petition
Appendix 5 Water Slides Poster

PERFORMANCE TRAIL EVENT
Three individual performances for the completion of a Masters in Creative and Performing Arts – Dance.

Friday 14 & Saturday 15 September 2012

WATER SLIDES
Christina Houghton
Point Chevalier Sailing Club, Raymond Reserve Point Chevalier.
6.15pm for 6.30pm performance.

ROOM SPINE
Kate Bartlett
119 Mt Eden Rd, Eden Terrace
8pm and 8.45pm spaces limited, booking required.

SURFACE FRAME
Evania Vallyon
Storage King, 30 The Strand, Parnell
9.15pm | 9.35pm | 10pm spaces limited, booking required

For bookings contact: b.snook@auckland.ac.nz
Appendix 6 Water Slides Programme

WATER SLIDES

“Waste not want not, use only what you need and use re-use and use again!”

September 14th and 15th 2012
Pt. Chevalier Sailing Club, Raymond Reserve, Pt. Chevalier
A conversation with Millicent

C-Isn’t it funny that most practical recommendations for our own wellbeing, can also be the same for increasing the health of our waterways and our surrounding environment.

M-mmmmm such as walking, sharing a shower, building a rain garden? Or joining friends for a day of tree planting.

C-Also do you find it is most important in order to connect with others and our external environment we must first connect to ourselves?

M-Yes this is why I have been exploring the awareness of the internal fluids of the body, in the hope that it will bring greater awareness to my external issues... I have also found that it provides hours of entertainment mastering the difficulty of such concentration required to do what seems like a mindless task.

C-Plus do you find that there is an even greater satisfaction knowing that you are getting the housework done at the same time as completing the required amount of research on your water topic?

M-Yes I do. Killing two birds with one stone? or at least washing two items with one bucket!

Choreography and performance by Christina Houghton
Assisted by Val Smith and Zahra Killeen-Chance
Lighting Design Sean Curham
Research Assistants:
Clarke Ehlers, Becca Woods, Austin Linkhorn, Isabella Linkhorn

This performance is partial requirement for a Masters in Creative and Performing Arts. NICAI, Auckland University.

Thank you everyone for your organic contribution to the ecological system of WATER SLIDES...

Val Smith and Zahra Killeen-Chance, Sean Curham, Alys Longley, Carol Brown, Clarke Ehlers, Becca Woods, Austin Linkhorn, Isabella Linkhorn, Rob Linkhorn, Charlotte Sunde (and the Fluid City Team), Monique Jansen, Mark Harvey, Anna Bate, Kate Bartlett, Evania Vallyon, Nik Vigar, Jeffery Holdaway. Lesley Houghton and Margaret Linkhorn and Ken Linkhorn.

“It has definitely something to do with the weather.
Looking at the clouds or listening to the rain”.
Appendix 7 Water Slides Framing Statement

Dance Studies
National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries
Examination of Christina Houghton (Masters in Creative and Performing Arts)
Programme Notes: ‘WATERSLIDES’

WATERSLIDES investigates how environmental issues can be explored through performance making and performance ecology. As a choreographer and a writer with a Masters in Zoology and a past in marine ecology and conservation I have always followed an ecological imperative in my everyday life. Similarly there has always been an enfolding between my experience of the world as a scientist, a dancer, a fashion designer and the physical response I have to the landscapes I traverse. I am interested in the connections between identity, place and ecology and how one effects the other as an intertwined complex system, much like those of a biophysical nature. Dance and performance can evoke a sense of identity and place provoking critical thinking around how attitudes and behaviors impact on the environment.

The questions and provocations that have guided the research:

Water is currently a highly visible environmental issue, globally we are becoming more concerned with supply, control, quality and access to waterscapes that are part of our daily lives. We are realizing that the way we relate to water has an impact on how we manage these issues into an uncertain future.

My research explores the place where water ecology, dance and performance of the everyday meet. Connections between identity, place and environment are investigated through choreographic processes and in the fluid narratives that emerge where ecologies meet. By focusing on the everyday and the small acts of domestic life through the character of the housewife/mermaid Millicent, tactics and strategies are developed that critically examine sustainability through performance. Millicent is a character who emerged out of performance-led ecological research. She embodies the hybrid space between water ecology and domestic life. This research project responds to the following questions:

How might I explore choreographic tactics that can be considered part of an ecological practice?

How might performance in a community context explore the notion of fluid perception and inspire a collective imagination of the future?

I engage in ecological performance practice and site specific performance research through a kinesthetic sensng of nature inspired by current research such as Nigel Stewart’s Performing Nature (2010), Susan Leigh Foster’s Choreographing Empathy (2011) Giannachi’s Environmental Presence (2012), and Jackie Clarke’s discussion of ‘liquid perception’ in her article Living Waterscapes (2010).

Engaging in performance as research allows for an active exploration of relations between audience, performer and diverse environments. Briginshaw (2005) suggests playing with interconnected subjectivities in performance, through ambiguities of narrative can provide space for ethical engagement with the world as an ecological consciousness (Briginshaw 2005). Drawing on Briginshaw, LIVING WATERSCAPES morphs between various registers of performance in a fluid play between the abstract, the literal, the fictional and the scientific.

This research follows the paradigm of ecological performance. Performance is seen as an ecology, creating its own changing system of transformations where by products are recycled and reintroduced back into the system in cyclic fashion (Bottoms and Goulidh 2007, Kershaw 2007). There investigations draw on philosophy and ethics that are grounded in current research in performance ecology.

Significance of the research

This research’s significance is to be found in its exploration of performance methodologies in relation to pressing questions around ecological and sustainable practices. WATER SLIDES explores how choreographic thinking can actively contribute to developing new ways of thinking through ecology and sustainability in an era when environmental concerns are becoming integral in the daily theatre of our lives.

References

References


Kershaw, B. (2012a). ‘This is the way the world ends, not ...?’ on performance compulsion and climate change. *Performance Research*, 17(4), p. 5-17


