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Dr Rochelle Haley is an artist and researcher working with experimental drawing, movement and spatial performance practice. She is an Associate Lecturer and BFA Honours Coordinator at UNSW Art & Design. Her current projects involve live drawing and dance to explore space structured around the sensation of the moving body. She has published on her drawing performance practice in *The International Journal of The Image*. Her most recent solo show *Through Form* was exhibited at Galerie Pompom, Sydney, in 2015.

DRAWING THE IMMATERIAL OBJECT OF DANCE

This paper discusses practice-led research concerning drawing and the moving body. Rochelle Haley uses a live method of drawing the movement of dancers to explore how the drawn line is embedded with past and future movement in volumetric space. Trisha Brown's drawn choreographic score for *Locus* 1975 is discussed alongside Haley's own drawings of an immaterial cube. This comparison will reveal drawing as a medium of conceptual action that becomes an alternative document of the immaterial object of dance.

Introduction

This paper outlines how drawing participates in dance-based movement within practice-led research titled *Spatial Forms*. This research is situated within a developing field of experimental drawing, the study of notational and diagrammatic visualisations of dance and trans-disciplinary practice across the fields of dance and fine arts. Trisha Brown's 1975 choreographic work *Locus* is discussed to explore the complicated relation between drawings that diagram volumetric space and an expression of space through actual performance. By contrasting Brown's work with the author's own experimental drawing practice the paper highlights how drawing interfaces with an abstract geometric form, the animated body of dancers and the two-dimensional pictorial plane. Through this research it is suggested that drawing is a transformational medium of action that becomes an alternative document of the immaterial object of dance.

The paper finds parameters in the volumetric figure of the cube. The cube focuses the discussion of drawn expressions of space in the development of theories and practice in human movement. In addressing the research question – can drawn annotations of the moving body diagram 'immaterial objects' of dance? – the paper first describes the author's practice-led research *Spatial Forms*, introduces Brown's work *Locus*, then compares the two to develop an argument for the role of focus, translation, connection and transformation through drawing.

Spatial Forms

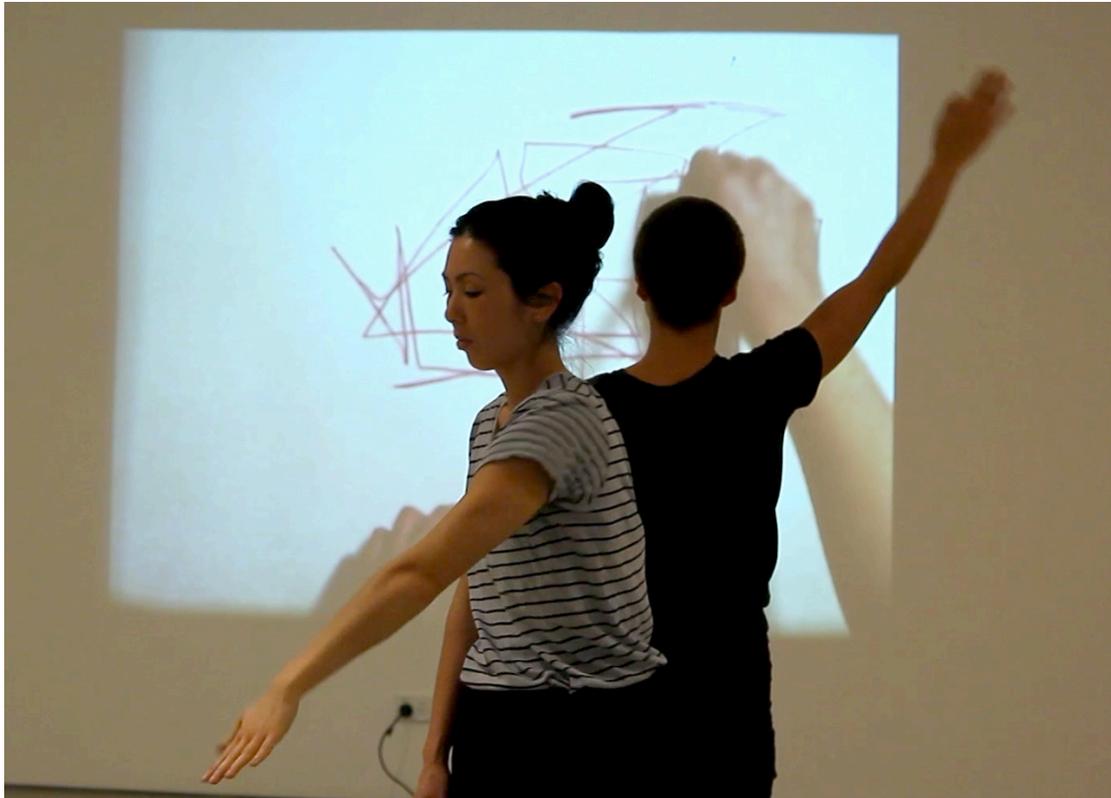


Figure 1: Rochelle Haley, *Spatial Forms*, drawing performance, 2014 UNSW Galleries Art & Design Australia. Copyright the artist. Video still: Gill.

The core of this research is an ongoing experimental practice involving one visual arts and two dance trained artists. Together they develop a set of exercises around the organising principle of a cube that diagrams movement in volumetric space. Movement is diagramed conceptually through an *imagined* cube of available space and visually in the drawing. The exercises extend from a discussion about theories of space explored in Rudolf Laban's drawn "kinespheres", a term developed by the Hungarian movement researcher to describe the action space within the outermost reach of the extended limbs of the stationary body (Laban 1966).

A version of the practice *Spatial Forms* was performed in 2014, UNSW Galleries, Sydney. The exercise produced materials including drawings, video documentation and movement. As the first dancer outlined the edge of the imagined cube with her limbs, the artist inscribed onto the paper the lines of passage described by the geometric formation of the movement. The line trailing the pencil in the right hand of the artist tracked the path of movement of the first dancer's left hand in real time. As the drawing was filmed from above the table and projected onto the back wall of the room, the second dancer (standing back to back with the first) followed the line with her right arm (see Figure 1).

Using one imaginary corner of the cube as a pivoting point, the first dancer walked to another location in the space with a small number of steps. The artist's left hand drawing a line from the original position of the first dancer's feet to the new position indicated the change of location. The second dancer followed this line by taking a number of small steps to a new location while maintaining the connection between her hand and one corner of the cube. The change of location occurred a number of times and was traced by the drawn line connecting the 'anchor points' of foot locations along the path of the dancer's travel.

The first dancer made several choices about the orientation of the cube, the repetition of gesture to describe it and the number of iterations of the cube at different scales and positions in space. These decisions manifested as continuity in the drawing with connected cubes of varying degrees of completion and scale tumbling across the surface (see Figure 2). Progression could also be seen in the performance as the dancers traveled. Repetition of gesture occurred frequently but rarely spatial repetition as there was no overarching consistency of Euclidean space.

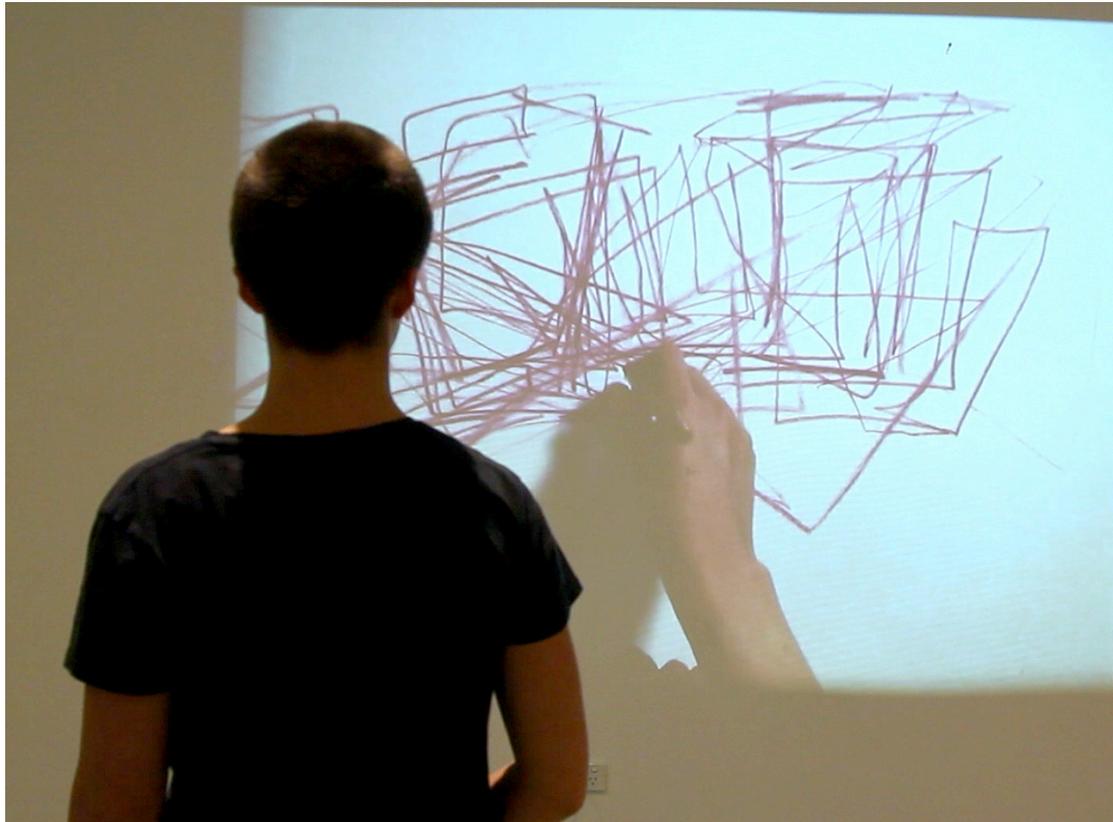


Figure 2: Rochelle Haley, *Spatial Forms*, drawing performance, 2014 UNSW Galleries Art & Design Australia. Copyright the artist. Video still: Gill.

Locus

The systematic visual tendencies in the work of influential American choreographer Trisha Brown have informed much contemporary discourse surrounding the intersection of dance and visual arts. Introducing improvisation via sets of points on a drawn cube, Brown produced a particular space of autonomy and collective accountability for her dancers in *Locus* 1975. Wendy Perron, a former dancer of the Trisha Brown Company, comments that *Locus* was an expression of Brown's "architectural" understanding of the body and its continuation into space (2011). Trisha Brown herself describes the method behind *Locus* as being "organized around 27 points located on an imaginary cube of space slightly larger than the standing figure in a stride position. The

points were correlated to the alphabet and a written statement” (Brown and Livet 1978, 54). Mona Sulzman, a performer of the original *Locus* 1975, writes that Brown broke the text into letters ascribed with a numerical value according to alphabetic order. The numbers were plotted out to specific location points on a drawn cube diagram that correlated with points in space. The movement was then designed by following the order of all twenty-seven points with touch and gesture of different kinds (Sulzman 1978, 122). Across the three parts of the work, four dancers fall in and out of alignment in a grid of four by five adjacent imaginary cubes. The choreographic structure assigns different permutations of the score to the different sections. A solo version of *Locus* was performed by Diane Madden as part of the “On Line/Performance” series at The Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2011. Madden mapped out the coded coordinates using movement phrases that art critic Claudia La Rocco describes as “liquid geometry” (La Rocco 2011).

Focus

The relation of focus to drawing is a primary concern for both *Spatial Forms* and *Locus*. Observation and attentiveness are elemental to the drawing discipline in its many forms of practice. The connection between the eye and hand in looking at the world is a key component of drawing as a technique of perception. From the perspective of the visual artist in *Spatial Forms* attention is focused on tracking the left hand of the dancer, never leaving this point to glance at the paper. Mental effort is spent maintaining the moving focal point and not the coordination between the eye and the hand drawing. The physicality of the hand scaffolds the focal point of vision.

Drawing scholar Deanna Petherbridge (2010) emphasises the communicative flow from active vision to drawn record, as she quotes Paul Valéry's description:

The shapes our sight reveals to us as contours are produced by our consciousness of the concerted movement of our eyes as they register precise vision. This *registering* movement constitutes line (Quoted in Petherbridge 2010, 90, italics in the original).

If recording a moving point constitutes line, then within the practice *Spatial Forms* drawing visualises - stands in for - the focal connection between the eye of the artist and the body of the dancer. The drawing does not describe the shape of the dancer's body, but the contours of her movement.

Similarly, Sulzman (1978) describes a form of "self-containment" in *Locus* that stems from a relation of her body to an imagined form of a cube. Since the cube has no physical planes other than the floor, it is the contours of the dancer's presence, animation and movement that contain her (128).

The second dancer who follows the drawing in *Spatial Forms*, maintains her focus on the drawn lines in the video projection. Her task is to reanimate the lines with her body as she sees them being drawn. In an argument that infers from C.S Peirce's distinction of the index being a transfer of the real, Petherbridge describes how the eye of the observer can reactivate the movement of the lines by looking at a drawing through a casual relation (2010, 90 and 446). The lines *are* the movement of the hand transferring the visual focus of the artist to the viewer. In this case the visual focus is movement.

Translation

In both *Spatial Forms* and *Locus*, the relationship between drawing and movement is not an illustrative one. There is a productive difference between performance and score in which overflow, interpretation and error play a part. Critic Susan Rosenberg describes Brown's interest in this gap as an interest in the "problem of translation" (2014). Improvisation and permutation highlights the gap between choreographic instruction and the actual performance of movement in both practices.

While *Locus* begins with the drawn diagram of a cube, *Spatial Forms* does not start with a static drawing. It begins with the structural field of an *imaginary* cube given only through the animated presence of the dancer. In order for the conceptual volume to be observable to the other participants the first dancer must externalise the abstract object using her body. She does this by exaggerating the linear nature of her limbs, by extending her fingertips, and arranging her skeletal form towards symmetry and order. The expression of the cubic volume is also achieved by repetition of movement lines between common points. This method is not unlike the repetitive sketch technique used when drawing forms that require straight lines or balanced symmetry.

The dancer's instinct to make several attempts at 'sketch' lines before increasing the energy of her gesture towards the final delineating line is significant. Deanna Petherbridge writes of the exploratory, generative and open-ended nature of the sketch that lends the lines their essential function of "rehearsal of the act of making" or spurring on "radical changes of ideas and procedures in another medium or discipline" (Petherbridge 2010, 28). Video documentation of the practice shows several examples of this 'sketching' with the body, so too do the numerous drawings that visualise an overlapping

repetitive line describing an imperfect cube formation. These materials show an attempt to relate the form through gestures of trial and error. The practice produces drawings of volumetric spaces of alteration where cubic dimensions are splayed out across a pictorial plane (see Figure 3). They do not directly translate dance or represent the dancing body.

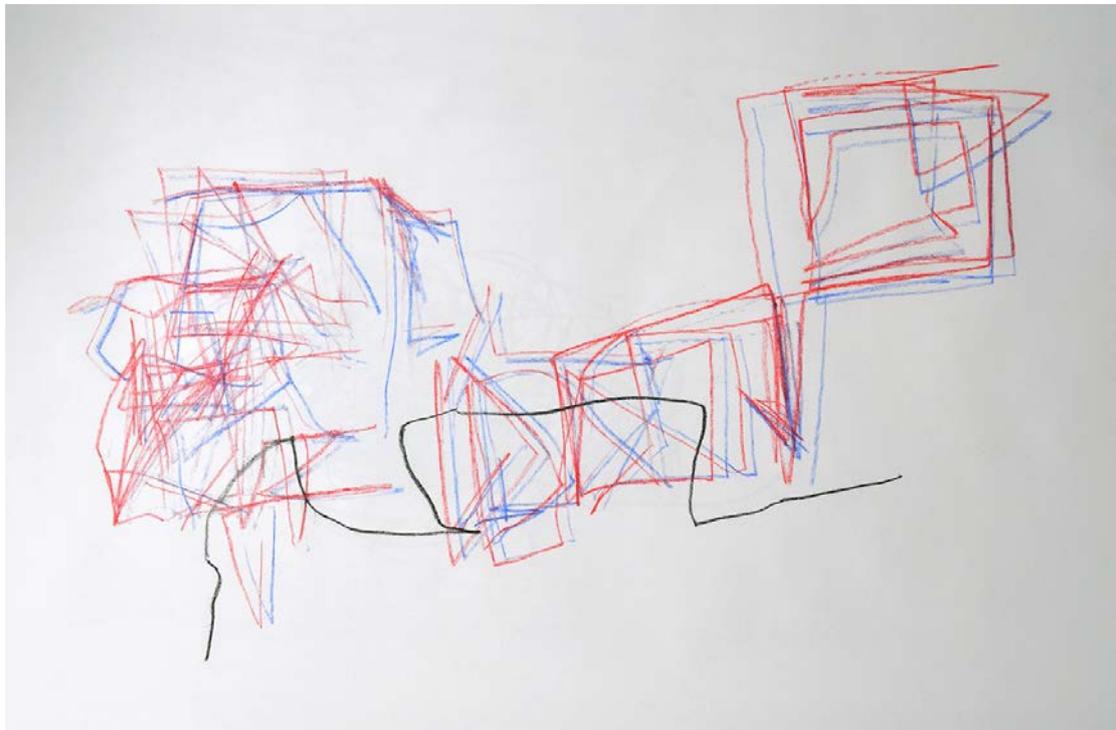


Figure 3: Rochelle Haley, *Spatial Forms working drawing*, 2014, pastel on paper, 2014 Copyright the artist, courtesy the artist and Galerie Pompom, Sydney.

Connection

In *Spatial Forms* there are moments of correlation between the conceptual cube articulated by the first dancer's movement, the second cube-like structure described by the drawn lines and the third cube reinterpreted by the second dancer's movement. Much of the alignment is spontaneous and occurs by chance. There is generally a slight delay in reaction between participants.

Reflecting on the view from inside *Locus*, Sulzman likewise describes moments of “tight” synchronicity that are complex and stimulating for the performers including chance moments when fingertips touch on a shared point between dancers (1978, 126-7). She relates this experience to the sensation of synchronicity with a dancer diagonally across the grid at a distance. The strength of connection between dancers is the points of the cube, however spatially displaced. Essentially Sulzman describes a networked relational movement that leaps between several individual dancers.

Spatial Forms communicates implicit movement connections between dancers, drawing and artist. The drawings of *Spatial Forms* visualise temporal and spatial gaps between performers that movement is able to pass over. The immaterial connection between parts is a way of thinking space and time beyond the platonic solid building block of a cube. It is precisely because of the invisible restriction of the cube that each participant is networked with all others in a similar way to what Sulzman describes as an “expanded structure” that “overflows with boundless and startling possibilities” (1978, 122).

Participation within the technique of *Spatial Forms* allows a vision of the whole from the part. It is the drawn line that connects the points in space and allows communication to be channelled between participants. The sense of participation is strong, connection occurs via the points, gestures and the lines of passage, both drawn and danced. Whereas the structure of *Locus* highlights the relationship of the cube to the grid, *Spatial Forms* opens the cube into a flexible multiplicity. Drawing networks movement across the space in action. The drawn line is both responsive and provocative to movement as it interfaces as another participant amongst the dancers and artist, connecting them all.

Transformation

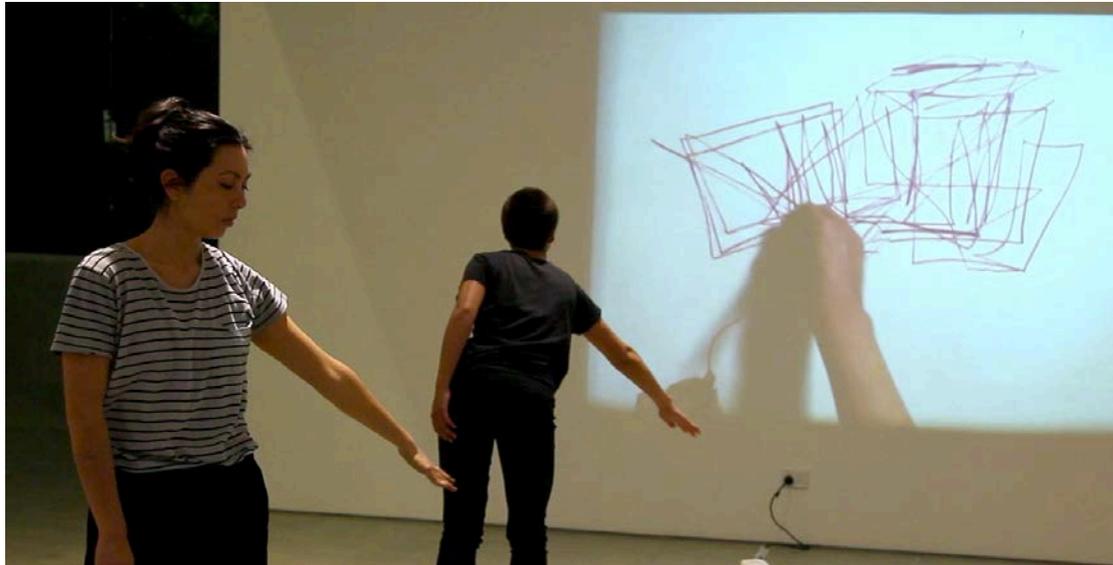


Figure 4: Rochelle Haley, *Spatial Forms*, drawing performance, 2014 UNSW Galleries Art & Design Australia. Copyright the artist. Video still: Gill.

For the viewer of *Spatial Forms*, alignments and order appear spontaneously and momentarily in the practice (see Figure 4). The first dancer appears to move in and out of interaction with the second, who responds in and out of step with the drawing, while the drawing is simultaneously entangled with them both.

Sulzman also reflects on the visual complexity of *Locus* for a spectator describing the structure as a somewhat “indecipherable, intricate ordering” (Sulzman 1978, 117). However, critic Marcia Siegel mentions the unexpected “harmonious sets of diagonals or folded and unfolded body parts” demonstrating the spectator’s ability to perceive an over arching choreographic form despite being unable to decode the movement of each individual dancer (quoted in Sulzman 1978, 117).

Rosenberg (2014) meditates on the apparent cognitive effort required of the dancers when thinking through the body in Brown’s earlier work including

Accumulations 1971. She makes a case for the conceptual “object-like quality” of the dance by explaining that the composition appears to materialise “according to an indissoluble unity of intent and action: the body’s vocabulary as a movement language” (2014). As an observer of Brown’s work, Rosenberg finds this inherent diagrammatic understanding of a compositional object highly satisfying and easily called to mind (2014). Thinking again of the signals given to the audience in *Locus* of the form of a cube – the square on the floor, the geometric nature of body formations, the consistent ‘points’ in space, their proximity to the limbs of the body and the ‘sense’ with which these cubes fit together – it is easy to comprehend the structural form as an ‘object’.

Drawing in *Spatial Forms* supports the perception of the immaterial object of a cube beyond the dancing body *and* without the conceptual order of a grid. Drawing helps to direct attention towards abstracted movement. That is, movement that occupies and produces space on paper, in three dimensions and in the imagination beyond the boundaries of individual bodies. In the act of drawing the artist visualises the cube that is danced around the body. The focus shifts towards a form in the projected image that is not materially present in space. Rather than making dance movement concrete, drawing passes an immaterial cube onto another dancer who transforms this object into movement again.

Conclusion

The proposition of this research is that by drawing an immaterial object of choreographic structure—as it is danced—movement overflows the containment of visual representation as it moves inside and outside of the cube, drawn, danced or imagined. Both *Spatial Forms* and *Locus* use the organising principle of the cube to signal a connection to an audience between the documentation of dance through drawing and the spatial presentation of movement. Movement in both practices is spatially coded as the bodies of dancers improvise with the points and boundaries of geometric form. Drawing provides a language to be interacted with in real-time in *Spatial Forms* and via the dancer's memory in *Locus*. Brown's performers take the drawn diagram of the cube as a beginning point for movement and leave it there on the page. The drawn cubes in *Spatial Forms* however, are elastic in scale and location within the performance space. Brown works with a specific notion of space ordered by the geometric rules of volumetric space as a whole. Space is therefore already determined according to the grid in Brown's practice. In *Spatial Forms* drawing evolves as movements unravel, transforming dance into visual and performative spatial objects.

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Image List

Figure 1: Rochelle Haley, *Spatial Forms*, drawing performance, 2014 UNSW Galleries Art & Design Australia. Copyright the artist. Video still: Gill.

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