Body, Space, and Place in Collective and Collaborative Drawing

Body, Space, and Place in Collective and Collaborative Drawing:

Drawing Conversations II

Edited by

Jill Journeaux, Helen Gørrill
and Sara Reed

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

Body, Space, and Place in Collective and Collaborative Drawing:
Drawing Conversations II

Edited by Jill Journeaux, Helen Gørrill and Sara Reed

This book first published 2020

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-4196-7
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-4196-2

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With a rich and long history of drawing and collaboration at Coventry School of Art and Design (founded in 1843), we have now entered a new and exciting chapter in visual arts research at Coventry University. Visual arts and practice research is a pivotal area within new interdisciplinary research and research-led teaching in the Centre for Arts, Memory and Communities, which has outstanding international research and exhibitions networks with world-leading university, museum and arts-sector partners including The National Gallery, London; the Universities of York, Warwick, and Amsterdam; Compton Verney Art Gallery, Warwickshire; Nottingham Contemporary; The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry; the Finnish National Gallery/Ateneum Art Gallery, Helsinki; Ghent University, and the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels. We look forward to and welcome further collaborations, including work on the third volume in this series: *Drawing Conversations 3: Drawing and Science*.

For their part in preparing *Drawing Conversations: Body, Space, Place*, we wish to thank all our chapter contributors, who have a wealth of knowledge in the diverse and expanding area of contemporary drawing. All contributors' biographies and contact details are cited at the end of this volume. In addition, we are indebted to the hard work and support of our peer reviewers, including:

Dr Angela Brew
Dr Carol Brown
Dr Sarah Casey
Dr Nicola Conibere
Mr Gerald Davies
Dr Andrea Hannon
Ms Emma Le Febvre
Dr Victoria Mitchell
Ms Joanna Neil
Professor Alec Shepley
Ms Lexi Strauss
Dr Becca Wood

We thank our proofreader Dawn Austin Locke, and the Cambridge Scholars Publishing team for their help and support. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the work of the artist Chris Crickmay, which inspired this project and who provided such a thought-provoking and appropriate image for the front cover.

Professor Jill Journeaux, Dr Helen Gørrill and Dr Sara Reed.

BODY

BODY

As I first read the chapters contained in this section of "Body, Space, Place in Collective and Collaborative Drawing", I became acutely aware of the resonances between the artist/writers and the practices they are writing about in this Body section of the book. It seems coincidental, in some ways, that the recurring references in these chapters to seminal artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Jackson Pollock, Trisha Brown, Jasper Johns, ORLAN, Anna Halprin, the collective of artists in the Judson Church and others, should appear as distinct influences in much of the work described across the many expressions of drawing that are given within the pages of this book. However, neither is this surprising given the subject matter and contexts that these artists are writing about today and the influences that have infiltrated the world of performance, art and the body since the modernist experiments of Judson (USA), through New Dance (UK) into the post-postmodernism and new materialism of the twenty-first century. The interrelationship of drawing with the body in a range of spaces and places is truly fascinating and builds on this relatively recent history. The place of the body in art has always been central but the exploration of body in these chapters, in relation to place and space, uncovers a wide range of exciting and different contexts, relationships and materials.

In Chapter One, "In Conversation with Eva Karczag and Chris Crickmay", Sara Reed presents a verbatim conversation with these two seminal artists who have intertwined their distinctive, individual, yet related, practices of dance and visual art over many years. Through an intimate, three-way conversation, the chapter documents their developing and changing collaborative practices. The conversation took place in a dance studio in Arnhem, the Netherlands, during the research and development stage for a new iteration, *Theatre of Memory*, in their ongoing collaboration *Promenade* (2007 onwards), *Promenade 7: A Theatre of Memory*, Zagreb, 2018. Karczag points out that, although drawing is not part of her background and experience, her work with other key dance artists of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has involved her with choreographers whose practice was deeply influenced by other art forms and, particularly, by visual artists; two examples of these dance artists are Richard Alston and Trisha Brown. Likewise, Crickmay is not primarily a dancer yet his journey from architect to artist/dancer has been significantly shaped, through drawing conversations, in his collaborations with dance

artists, particularly Eva Karczag and Miranda Tufnell, thus deeply enriching his and their practice.

Following on from the conversation in Chapter One, Karczag and Crickmay, in their co-authored chapter "Living and Re-living the Moment: An Account of a Collaborative Practice", discus their work and the place of drawing in dance-based, mixed-media performance. They refer to this work as relational, process-orientated and improvisational in nature with its roots in, what they describe as, a "North American and European history of experimental performance"; a period of dance often referred to as postmodern in the USA and New Dance in the UK.

In "Drawing as a Tool for Mapping the Body in Space", Laurence Schmidlin looks at the body's relationship to the spatial field and she begins by citing the early development of this work, relating it to a number of seminal artists such as Pollock, Rauschenberg and Weil. Her emphasis lies in the "production of art as interdisciplinary and phenomenological" and how artists, now, often engage their body as an agent of drawing in a number of different ways such as drawing with the body, drawing as performance, and performance as drawing. She discusses the rise of drawing as a tool for recording the body's movements as well as a device for making, thus using the body in space and/or in relation to different surfaces. Schmidlin, illustrates these different approaches through reviewing a series of performances and comparisons of methods of drawing/dancing with the body as a tool for making, with reference to a number of seminal contemporary artists.

Katrina Brown's chapter "Working-Low: Activating the Horizontal Plane", looks at her own and others' work in this realm. Brown discusses non-human agency relating to collaboration with other materials alongside the body as material. In her research and explorations of working-low, close to the floor and/or other "receiving surfaces", as she refers to them, she cites the "different set of sensory relations between seeing and touching". She relates this way of choreographing/drawing/making work to discussions around viewing the body as present in the space and within the drawing process rather than absent from it. Brown discusses three female solo performances in this horizontal plane and she relates her discussion to Steinberg's notion of the flatbed picture plane (1972): "painting-cleaning, dancing-drawing, scattering-toppling", and reconsiders the flatbed from the 1950s to the present within a contemporary context.

Finally, Sally Doughty, charts her personal approach to dancing and drawing in her chapter "*Hourglass*: Mark-Making In and As Performance". She begins by giving a fascinating overview of artists who, "author documents of their performance work through self-generated mark-making"

yet, she points out, this is unusual and even these artists have their work further documented by others. Doughty's own choreography *Hourglass,* which she discusses, challenges this convention of external documentation through her own practice of self-documentation whilst making material and performing it. She describes it thus, "I interrogated how I could function as a self-sufficient performer-come-documenter and inhabit an 'embodied liminal process'" (Campbell 2014, 37). In this chapter Doughty discusses her use of choreographic scores as a structural framework in her improvisational practice of dancing, documenting, drawing/mark-making.

CHAPTER ONE

IN CONVERSATION WITH EVA KARCZAG AND CHRIS CRICKMAY

SARA REED

Introduction

Dance artist, Eva Karczag and visual artist, Chris Crickmay, have collaborated and conversed over a period of more than twenty years[1]. Although artistic relationships between dance and visual artists are more clearly evident today, at the time of their first meeting, in the early 1980s, this was less usual in the UK. Those collaborations that did occur marked the beginnings of the New Dance movement[2] from the late 1970s in the UK (Jordan 1992) and the influence of postmodern dance from the USA (Banes 1977). When they met, Karczag was working in Europe with the Trisha Brown Dance Company and Crickmay was Head of Fine Art at Dartington College of Arts in Devon, UK[3]. In this conversation with Karczag and Crickmay, we witness elements of the special relationship that has developed between these two artists as part of their drawing, dancing, moving and ongoing collaboration over an extended period of time. They speak of the deep trust they have in each other, their lengthy improvisations, the place of playfulness in their working practices together, and the huge importance of listening. They reveal a shared passion for the use of space, and the body in space, in their explorations and creations together and the inclusion of objects and sounds in those "charmed spaces". The outcome is a rich and detailed narrative of the artistic collaboration between these two artists who cross the boundaries of individual art forms to create drawing conversations of great beauty and integrity.

The interview took place in August 2018 at ArtEZ University of the Arts, Arnhem in the Netherlands, during a short period of rehearsal for a new development of their ongoing *Promenade* work (2007 onwards); *Promenade 7: A Theatre of Memory*, Zagreb, 2018. I used a semi-structured interview process alongside observation and some discussion, thus allowing

in-depth self-reflection through (auto)ethnographic and narrative forms. The telling of personal journeys provides a rich and authentic story line which is both highly informative and has a value as an art form in its own right (Barbour 2011; Green and Stinson 1999). The transcribed interview, in its entirety, is too long to be fully included in this chapter and I have therefore focussed specifically on the ongoing collaborative processes of drawing between dancer and visual artist and the authenticity of the first-person telling of their own story.

SR: From your perspective Chris, as a visual artist who was also dancing, how did the drawing aspects and the drawing conversations come about? Already you were doing that and, from what you have written in your chapter, it was something that you and Eva began together in your collaboration as well.

CC: I had certainly done that with Miranda Tufnell[4], it was built into our studio practice and it was incorporated into various pieces of work that Eva and I did early on, including the exhibition we did at Dartington[5] and also, before that, the event the we did in Arnhem, in 2001, where we took over part of what was then the Dance Academy, and is now ArtEZ, in the old building that was located in the centre of Arnhem.

SR: In your writing (Chapter 2), for this publication, that's where you describe the dusty old rooms upstairs in the old building?

CC: Yes, and it has continued to interest me. I have it all the time in the back of my mind that the kind of collaborative performance work we do together is itself a form of drawing. It's hard to rationalise but it's something to do with our lengthy improvisations that feel like an exploratory drawing process. It's also in the way that we compose things and move them around in space, but that will probably be different for you Eva.

EK: Yes, I can relate to it, but drawing is not part of my background or experience.

CC: It feels a bit like a three-dimensional drawing. Richard Alston[6] talks about drawing in the space in his choreography but that's slightly different, I think, as he talks more about gesture and shape.

SR: Eva, you have talked about Richard Alston coming from that background of visual art. Did you get a sense of that in the work that you did with him in *Strider*?

EK: Well maybe. He was always interested in visual art. Some of the last work we did before *Strider* dissolved was related to the Jasper Johns' paintings that were being exhibited in Great Britain at the time. There was a whole piece that Richard did which was based on Johns' (1930 –) *0 through 9* series (1960 –). That definitely felt like drawing; it was based on the numbers, 0, 1, 2, etc. Spatially, though I can't remember the movement material. More than anything else, that piece felt as if drawing was part of Richard's vision. But more than the actual act of drawing, painting or even installation, it was his connection to visual artists and how that influenced his thinking that then inspired me, through working with him.

CC: I think it's not unconnected that in Britain, in the 1970s and 80s, much of what was then called New Dance was often performed in galleries to a visual art audience and many dance audiences rejected it. Some critics said it wasn't dance at all[7].

EK: That's true of the Judson Church Dance Theatre[8] as well. Robert Dunn was a musician and composer and taught dance making according to Cage-ian (John Cage, 1912–1992) ways of thinking about composing, rather than traditional dance compositional methods. Those participating in his classes began working with a very different inspiration for making work. Pedestrian movement started entering dance vocabulary and the first performances were in the Judson Church. But when dance venues rejected these performers who walked and ran and threw their bodies around in space, galleries and alternative spaces became the places where these performances were shown. There were also visual artists who were involved in Judson, Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) for example, and they left their own legacy.

CC: The thing about a gallery is that it is very often a white space rather than a black theatre space, so this has consequences for where an audience will stand or sit and how light, objects and projection are used.

EK: The closeness to the audience was also very different; the fact that the audience was not separate from the performer was very different.

CC: The audience shared the same volume of space.

Fig. 1.1: Performance documentation. *Promenade 7: A Theatre of Memory*. Zagreb, 2018.

EK: This came at a time when the choreographer Merce Cunningham (1919–2009) had said 'no stories, no emotional baggage, we just want movement'. What was put into galleries was bodies moving.

CC: All of that was happening around the 1970s to '80s and so here we are now, still exploring the same sort of ingredients. Whereas then it was unknown, now it is very well known but, I argue, it never became mainstream.

SR: You've been working together now for around twenty years and you came together in the way that you have described and from the backgrounds that you described. How has that relationship, collaboration, conversation between you changed and developed over those years?

CC: It is difficult to judge when one is in it. In the course of doing my recent drawing work I have spent a lot of time looking at video footage from over the years we have been working together. There are certainly some things about the early work that look a bit creaky to me and probably not as well

put together as I would hope to do now. In the very first of our *Promenade* pieces, for example, which we did at Dartington in 2007, I would say that fifty percent of it works. There are too many objects in the space, it looks a bit cluttered, and the interactions between us were a bit hit and miss. As you'd expect, eleven years on from that time, you do get more selective.

EK: In those days we were messily complex. I think our work has become even more complex but it is much more consciously developed and consciously chosen. The other thing that is interesting is that I've been recently looking at the video that Chris edited of that first ever *Promenade* performance (2007). There were elements that we are still working with today, such as a playing with sticks. In our last *Promenade* performance, *Walking with Water*, that we did in London (2016) there is a really beautiful section where we were also working with sticks. The old video footage that I looked at had the total flavour of what it would become eleven years later. There we were passing sticks to each other and there were other things where I thought, we are still doing this.

CC: I often feel rather jealous of people like potters, people who have a craft that is very constant. They just do it again and again over the years. They get very, very knowledgeable over the years and they know everything there is to know about that particular activity.

EK: That's what we have done…

CC: Although within the spirit of *avant-garde*, there is always that pressure to do something different every time and, if possible, different from everyone else. But there *is* a repeating element in what we do.

EK: Yes, I think that's like any artist in any discipline. I look at Trisha's (Trisha Brown) work and I can see the development of ideas that span decades, or I look at Matisse and I can see the development of an idea that he explores in lots of different ways.

CC: I think with a small group of people working together over time there's an element of challenging each other. In every piece we've done there's been a seemingly impossible side to it. For instance, when we did the piece at the Herbert Gallery in Coventry, in 2009, we elected to do four-hour long performances, which seemed impossibly long at the time, especially for an improvisation.

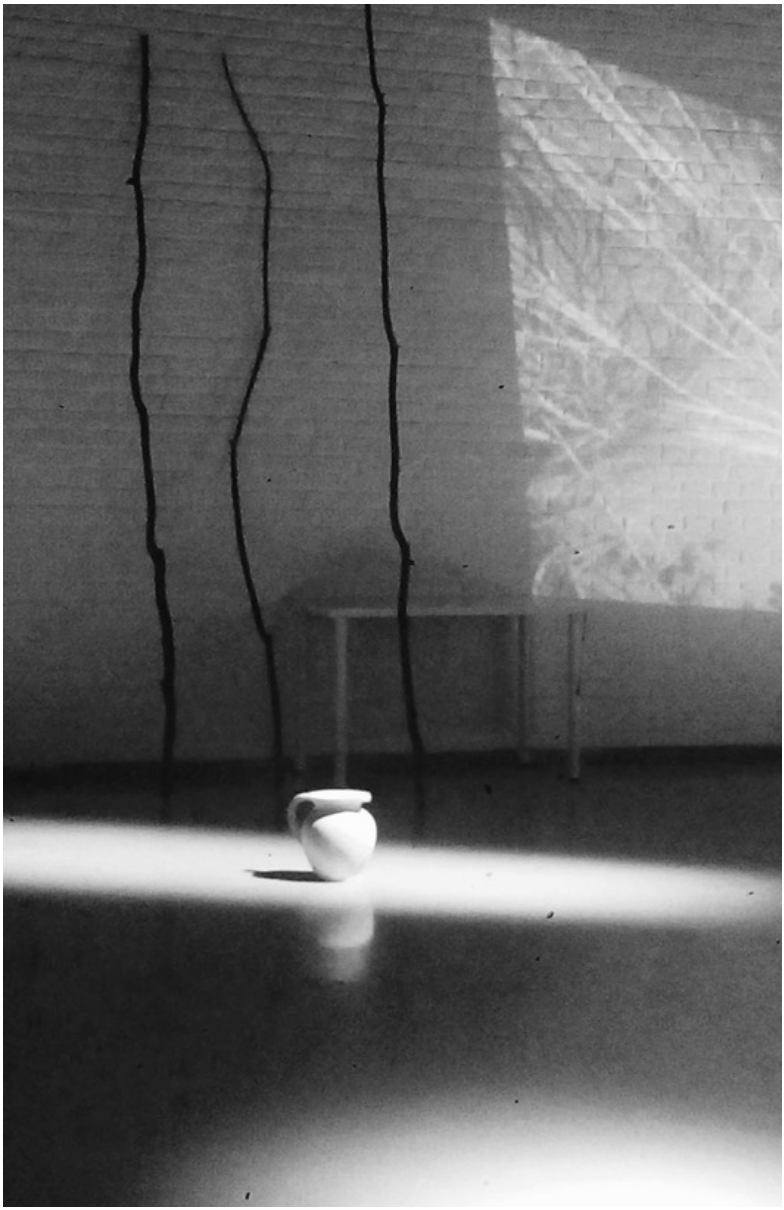

Fig. 1.2: Performance documentation. *Promenade 7: A Theatre of Memory*. Zagreb, 2018.

EK: We actually had the choice of whether to work in that huge public space or to work in a smaller gallery. We looked at it and thought, *well this would be safe, and well, this would be exciting. Let's go for it. Let's do one hour… but no! let's do four hours*.

CC: For our next piece, *Promenade 7,* planned for a gallery in Zagreb (Gallery SC, November 2018), the idea is to do an afternoon and evening of seven hours in all… so it gets more and more seemingly impossible. To begin with we reject it and then think, *well… maybe there is a way*. One of the nice things about collaboration is that it doesn't come from either one of you, but that it somehow arrives between you. That's a very special process because it is so full of the unexpected and there is a certain freedom in not being the sole author, not being alone.

EK: It's a supportive and encouraging environment and we've talked about this before, in the article we co-wrote (Karczag and Crickmay, 2003). You might have an idea and you put it out there, then you think *no, that's not going to work*, and the other person says *but this part can work if we look at it this way*. So, the encouragement is to keep going with it, whereas if you were alone you would possibly give up on that idea.

SR: So that collaborative effect over a long period of time… is it also about trust?

EK: Yes, we have such a huge history.

CC: I think without the other person, you would quite likely give up, and I would probably have done so a long time ago!

EK: Also important are the people who have supported us. Even back in the first Dartington performance, in 2007, and after that when, in 2009, we were asked to do the second *Promenade* at Laban and that led to an invitation from Katye Coe, via Florence Peake, to come to the Coventry Summer Dancing festival. Then we had support for two years running to do *Promenade* pieces. This was very important for us in terms of being able to develop certain ideas. The second *Promenade* performance in Coventry generated a lot of ideas for the following *Promenade* performances. For instance, we projected moving images as well as slides. Then, in *Walking with Water,* the piece we did in Sweden in 2015, we used big moving video images. These small festivals gave us opportunities to develop our work. With our next performance, in Zagreb (2018), we can see how our work is

moving on in terms of certain ideas and interests that we have been exploring previously. We'll, for sure, be reworking some of them and situating ourselves in this new space in a new way.

SR: The use of moving images, were these a development for you?

EK: Yes, in the beginning we used still images. Chris made many slides for each performance.

CC: These projected images always add an extra spatial dimension to the work and they also add content, often related to the setting, and they also partially light the piece.

Fig. 1.3: Performance documentation. *Promenade 7: A Theatre of Memory*. Zagreb, 2018.

SR: You collaborate with each other, of course, but you also collaborate with the musician Sylvia Hallett, and with other people as well. Or is it mainly the three of you?

CC: Yes, just the three of us for this work, but Eva and Sylvia are regularly involved in other collaborations as well and I have also worked with other dancers over the years.

EK: I have been collaborating with musicians from the mid to late 1970s up to now, but with visual artists not so much. Chris is the main visual artist I collaborate with.

CC: What interests me, Eva, is that you work in several different idioms in your different collaborations… there is something in the idiom we work in that brings out a different kind of movement in you. I can see that.

EK: Yes, a different kind of movement and a different kind of mind. Not that I don't use that mind when I'm working with 'abstract' dance. Ideas from all the work that we've done enters that other work as well.

CC: I think there are a couple of key things Eva, one is that we share an aesthetic. When we are working together I know that pretty much anything you do I'm going to find…

EK: Acceptable!

CC: I suppose that would be the bottom line! There is a kind of trust… we're working within a certain range of choices that we both find satisfying.

EK: I think a big part of what we do has to do with listening, which precludes talking all the time. You do have to take moments to listen.

SR: There is something you say, in your chapter for this book, about charmed spaces. Can you say a bit more about that? You write, "Where this work succeeds we could think of it as the creation of charmed spaces, a place no longer as background but playing an active part in the formation of the field or a piece of work*"*. You may not have any more to say about this but I just loved the term "a charmed space" and in a way I think it is related to what you were saying about the spinning of work.

EK: Yes, and I also think it is very much to do with your interest in space Chris. My interest stems from the body. It's very telling, I think, that we come into a space to work together and the first thing I do is lie down on the floor with my eyes closed. Chris doesn't, he walks around looking at the space.

CC: This interests me. I think it's something to do with "gestalt" and our perception of foreground and background. As human beings we tend to focus on *entities*, because that has practical advantages and maybe in evolutionary terms that is to do with our survival. From our animal origins, we're going to focus on things to eat or things that are going to eat us. Also, because, as humans, we tend to be language oriented and we pick on nameable entities in a field of view. It may take a little training to not use that type of looking and instead to look more widely at relationships between things, a world of relationships is so much more alive and more meaningful.

EK: For some cultures, looking at the terrain in order to read it is vital. The work that we do requires more of that kind of wide, softened, receptive attention than a more everyday pinpointed one.

CC: Coming back to the idea of "charmed spaces"… one issue is to do with whether a space feels alive. Charms often appear in fairy tales, (we have just started to look at a book of Croatian fairy tales, as we are taking our work to Zagreb). I've always been interested in fairy tales because of the way that every object mentioned becomes significant and somewhat potent. To bring that feel to objects, spaces, sounds and all the ingredients of this work, so that it all comes to life and has some vibrancy, is the essence of it and why I use that term, "a charmed space" It's like… how does a space become more than neutral? We're so often in institutions where rooms have little character or human feeling to them. You can so quickly transform a space for yourself (and for an audience in performing) through the kind of attention you bring to it. So much of that "pedestrian movement", for instance, in *New Dance*, in the 1970s and 80s, was to do with people saying, 'well you can just as easily walk across a room and that can be dance'; it's to do with the attention you bring to it.

EK: It's a bit different but I often use an expression from Barbara Dilley[9], where she talks about, "kinaesthetic delight". I think the delight and charm of being present, alive, awake and alert to what is going on is very similar to this idea of a charmed space. Things are active in it, it's lively and you want to be in it and be a body that feels kinaesthetic delight. When I encounter that kind of performance, I want to keep watching. One of the things that I find delightful and am excited by is the way Chris will move objects around and create different spaces and views; it's inspiring.

Fig. 1.4: Performance documentation. *Promenade 7: A Theatre of Memory*. Zagreb, 2018.

SR: How has your working together influenced your practice as individuals, in other work with other people, and as collaborators together?

CC: One very obvious way it has affected my practice is that it has given me a whole new avenue for drawing. It's through this performance work that I got into various forms of drawing, as we describe in Chapter Two in this book. It's given me both subject matter and a context for drawing.

EK: I had met up with both writing and drawing before we worked together, in my work with the Trisha Brown Company for example, but it has entered my practice in a much more tangible way through the work that Chris and I have done. I had done a little bit of work with objects as well but not in any big way. The introduction of working so consciously with objects brought that, as an element to be explored, to the forefront for me. When Chris and I began working together our work didn't only involve the times when we actually physically met but also continued by post (see Chapter Two). Our working relationship really thrust me back into my own practice. There is some special quality of understanding and listening together that we had

right from the beginning, but over the years it has developed. It is almost like we feel each other's intentions very easily.

CC: I always think of Eva as a natural performer. I'm not a natural performer so it's only through collaboration that I'm drawn into performance at all. What I'm really interested in, is the performance as form, and it is only this interest in the form that makes me love making pieces. Because our work is improvisational I have to be in it and we make it from within, that is really the thing that drives me on and not specially the performing in front of people. This type of improvised mixed-media performance is a form that really engages me in a way that not many other things do. I like the mix of movement, objects, spaces, projections, etc.

EK: We are both passionate about the creative process in the developing of work. This week in the studio is exciting following on from our numerous emails to each other, back and forth – they are stimulating and we then get into the performance because it is improvised and we're building it on the spot. It is very compelling and enjoyable for both of us.

CC: To have a medium and a way of working with that medium which does not require too much debate about what to do is fantastic. I could not work with people who want to sit down and decide what to do by just talking. We do talk, of course, but there is something about the main exchange when we engage with the material directly and start actively doing things in a studio, that is the part that really counts. When you are working that way it's so fast. You make decisions in a flash because you can just see that this is going to work and *that* is not going to work, it is so obvious.

EK: We are looking for perfect moments but we don't stress out if they don't always arrive. We both understand the nature of improvisation, which is that there are highs and lows and the tides come and go.

CC: The other thing about working with you Eva, is that you are very open about what could work. You're always willing to look around the corner for something we haven't tried and that can be a very liberating atmosphere to do things in.

EK: I get excited by all kinds of things!

CC: When I first started doing any performing I used to tell myself, *you don't have to do anything*. It's really hard to do this work if you are driving