

Copyright

by

Ellen Bartel

2012

**The Thesis Committee for Ellen Bartel
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:**

**Watch The Gap
Site-inspired Dance and Pedagogy of Choreography**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Holly Williams

Patrick Corbin

Katie Dawson

Yacov Sharir

Watch The Gap
Site-inspired Dance and Pedagogy of Choreography

by

Ellen Bartel, B.A.

Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2012

Dedication

To my loving husband Dave Woods

Abstract

Watch The Gap **Site-inspired Dance and Pedagogy of Choreography**

Ellen Bartel, MFA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

Supervisor: Holly Williams

This thesis offers two layers of analysis of a contemporary dance titled *Watch The Gap*, a site-inspired work initiated by the architecture, design, and function of the Jamaica, Queens (New York) train station. For the dance analysis, the investigated question is: can a dance that is inspired by a specific location but performed on a concert stage still fit within the genre of site-dance? By comparing its choreographic methodologies within the field of site-dance, a second investigated question arises: can these practices be codified and taught as part of a course in a university setting? Through this study I examine, explain, and analyze the different choreographic tools and aspects of site-dance impacting the field of dance by a comparison study with *Watch The Gap* and a pedagogical investigation into improvisation and site-dance. In doing so, pedagogical applications, key terminology, and methods, discussed in the paper, help to clarify and add to the discussion of this rapidly growing art form.

Table of Contents

THE PROJECT: Watch The Gap	1
Introduction.....	1
The Project.....	1
BACKGROUND AND METHOD: demonstrating the applications of key terms .	6
APPLICATIONS OF KEY TERMS	7
Site-Specific.....	7
Re-sited	9
Site-adapted.....	10
Site-For-Community	11
Key Terms for Watch The Gap.....	12
Transitional Spaces:	12
Site-inspired:	15
Identifying the Choreography of the Space:	17
Site-As-Collaborator:.....	20
WATCH THE GAP: analyzing the choreographic and pedagogical decisions for transitional spaces and site-inspired dance	26
Working with site-dance and pedagogy.....	29
ANALYSIS OF THE DANCE AND NON-MAJORS CLASS: what we did-the outcome.....	34
The Dance	34
The Course	35
Bibliography	38

THE PROJECT: Watch The Gap

INTRODUCTION

Watch The Gap, a thesis project about site-dance and pedagogy, shaped my point of view about space, particularly spaces of transition and how people move through them, in a way that is newly compelling to me as a director of a contemporary dance company. For two decades I have been creating, teaching, and performing dance. In retrospect, the concepts I most often work with revolve around two central ideas: one deals with ongoing gestures, as with butoh or other dance improvisation, where I often explore temporally based concepts thematically and corporally; the second, explores an interest in current events and community and/or acceptance, which situates the work, spatially and thematically, in the present tense. However, until this project, these two focal points were not at the base of my own understanding of my work, they were ideas that I tapped into as I began to create. Now, I am compelled to bring dancers, students, audience members, and collaborators forward with me because I feel conceptually clear as an artist. As this thesis analyzes *Watch The Gap* in its totality, I am connecting my refined creative process to the field of dance by writing about specific choreographic and pedagogical practices that are new to the fast growing study of site-dance, and clarifying for myself the next logical step for my dance company.

THE PROJECT

This thesis has two levels of analysis; the first refers to key terms used in the field of site-dance as it relates to *Watch The Gap*, and the second as the terms relate to pedagogy for a university course I taught. I have identified the dance as using a site-inspired method, which is exploring a site choreographically and performing the dance

elsewhere. The site is the Jamaica Queens Train Station on Long Island, a space I view as transitional. The piece was performed March 8th and 9th in the B. Iden Payne Theatre in Austin, Texas. This paper includes an analysis of the project's methodology, demonstrated through key terminology found throughout the site-dance genre. To demonstrate how this project fits into the broader field of site-dance, I briefly review the terms *site-specific*, *re-sited*, *site-adapted* and *site-for-community*, which are all sub categories within the genre. The key terms for *Watch The Gap* are *transitional spaces*, *site-inspired*, *identifying the choreography of a space*, and *site-as-collaborator*. From this analysis I aim to explain how a site-inspired dance belongs within the site-dance genre. I will explore the question: can a dance that is performed on a proscenium stage still speak to a specific location? Also, within the first layer of analysis, this paper examines the movement development for *Watch The Gap* and how I use the concept of transitional spaces (*Ma*) as a creative practice. The second layer of analysis to this paper examines the outcomes from a semester's length non-majors university course in site-dance and movement improvisation, where the key terms discussed above were used as a framework for the course. The terms were used as jumping off points to contextualize the improvisational studies so they may begin to understand how dances are made for different locations. My question for the course involves whether the students, with no experience in site-dance, begin to see space differently by studying the form; do they start to understand how their bodies can be agents for change in a community. In the course, students accessed information through readings and discussions, movement explorations in the studio, and examination of actual sites. In this paper I will offer a reflective analysis and outcomes of how the students participated in the class.

Site-choreographers are interested in experiencing the now-ness of a moment. Max Van Manen writes in *Researching Lived Experiences*, "to do research is always to

question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings ...we want to know that which is most essential to being.”¹ It is this thesis’ assertion that site-dance is the most current and relevant way of performing new collaborative dance which addresses how we live as human beings in the world today. The very nature of analyzing a site-inspired dance implies “know(ing) that which is most essential to being” through both its creative process and outcome, site-dance re-imagines a place for a community; it lends a voice to the history of a place which creates context and relevancy for the community.

Watch The Gap is based on the observation from one afternoon in September at the Jamaica Station. The dance is a snapshot of a community revealed through patterns and behavior of people when present in a place of transition. Identifying the community in this site-inspired work is challenging because the dance was not available for the people who use the station; it was made for the audiences in Austin. It was important that this work presented itself as an experience of the station for the viewer: in doing this, a surrogate community is created. The success of this idea is analyzed in greater depth in the outcome section of this paper.

I believe that choreography is inherently pedagogical and in teaching a course in site-dance and improvisation I am also teaching students that their bodies can have power in a space. Site-dance often exposes issues about humanity and culture in the present tense; as a result, the body becomes an agent for change. Because site-dance confronts relevant issues in society, it should be considered as a significant part of dance education.

Jill Dolan writes in *Rehearsing Democracy*, “I want my students, through their

¹ Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science For An Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (State University of New York Press. 1990), 5.

Van Manen, Max. *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science For An Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. State University of New York Press. 1990. Print.

investigation into theatre architecture, play texts, performance studies, and theory to be competent enough to participate effectively in an inclusive, diverse democracy.”² As a practice in “diverse democracy,” a student can apply choreographic explorations through the lens of community-space and activism. Within the course work, students, trained dancers or not, will begin to understand that their bodies can be used for radical acts; acts of identity, of relationships, and of awareness to themselves to others. In analyzing the class I become better equipped at articulating the radical act of site-dance as it relates to creating a more democratic and caring society because I believe I have accessed this act after studying these terms in greater depth. I have observed how students participate and engage with the concepts creatively and with intelligent considerations of the methods. The class is positioned in conjunction with the dance *Watch The Gap* because they shine a light onto each other, enabling me to experience the multiple layers and parallel experiences of the work.

The desire to work in the site-dance realm as an artist and teacher is to share an awareness and appreciation of site and contemporary dance as a choreographic process toward community building. It is impossible to separate choreography from pedagogy because the act of creating a dance for dancers is a pedagogical act. A choreographer, like a teacher, needs to be generous in spirit yet yield to the dancers' own development and understanding of the movement. Because site-dance's main premise is to bring dance out of the theatre and into communities, in doing so it is bringing choreography down from

² Dolan, Jill. *Rehearsing Democracy: Advocacy, Public Intellectuals, and Civic Engagement in Theatre and Performance Studies* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. Print),11.

Dolan, Jill. *Rehearsing Democracy: Advocacy, Public Intellectuals, and Civic Engagement in Theatre and Performance Studies*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. Print.

the high pedestal of art to become more accessible. Also, through the integration and collaboration of diverse places and people, site-dance becomes an agent for community building. This encourages civic activism locally and globally, and positions audiences and students as positive contributors to society through creative work. As a whole, this thesis is claiming that when someone begins to understand how people interact in spaces, their perspective broadens and becomes more accepting of difference. If having a “diverse democracy” is important to an artist and educator, site-dance makes accessible ways to begin that conversation.

BACKGROUND AND METHOD: demonstrating the applications of key terms

Watch The Gap follows the methodology of site-dance where choreographers first “connect to spaces sensually and then explore(s) current treatment of such places.”³ To illustrate that statement, *Watch The Gap* began with a visit to the Jamaica Train Station on a rainy Friday afternoon on September 23, 2011. The process involved recording all sensory input, not only by writing observations into a notebook, but also by capturing information onto a digital sound recorder and video, and a still camera. The experience evoked the essence of a New York City train station; the smells of train engines, the sounds of the arrival and departure announcements over the white noise humming of wind and machinery, and also in the gathering of diverse commuters waiting to leave the station. The time I spent recording my observations spanned approximately 45 minutes. Each mode of recording provided the aural, visual, and corporal entry points into the creative process, and also to keep the space alive in my memory. These records became the agents that transferred the experience of the space to my dancers, set designers, video and music collaborators, with the final outcome linking the audience to the site through the dance.

A full analysis of this process is offered in the section below as this paper interrogates my application of each of the key terms as they relate to *Watch The Gap*'s methodology and also within the broader field of site-dance as performance and pedagogy. The next section will show how this project contributes to the conversation by

³ Kloetz, Melanie and Carolyn Pavlik. *Site Dance: Choreographers and the Lure of Alternative Spaces* (University Press of Florida, 2009), 121.

Kloetz, Melanie and Carolyn Pavlik. *Site Dance: Choreographers and the Lure of Alternative Spaces*. University Press of Florida, 2009. Print.

filling some of the gaps within the field. The gaps as I understand them rest within the fluid methods and definitions of terms, and also within dance education.

APPLICATIONS OF KEY TERMS

To briefly review: the terms for the broader context of the field: *site-specific*, *re-sited*, *site-adapted* and *site-for-community*, and specific terms I have formulated for the dance *Watch The Gap* and my pedagogy are: *transitional spaces*, *site-inspired*, *choreography of the space*, and *site-as-collaborator*. After combing through the text of *Site Dance: Choreographers and the Lure of Alternative Spaces*, I have extracted and identified the above terms from conversations with artists in the seminal book by Melanie Kloetze and Carolyn Pavlik. The book consists of interviews with renowned choreographers who speak intuitively and candidly about their work in the site-dance genre. These are the voices of the choreographers who are currently making work in the field. As a choreographer who is also presently working in the field, through this research I am in dialogue current trends, and seeking answers for clarification. These key terms from *Site-Dance* serve to connect *Watch The Gap* to field of site-dance by framing the research within the broader discussions at the heart of the emerging study of site-dance.

SITE-SPECIFIC

The term site-specific evolved out of the 1960's and 1970's visual and performance art *happenings*. Visual artists of this time period began to take their work outside of the studio to work-perform their ideas as means to offer new perspectives and to challenge the status quo. Sculptor Robert Smithson helped to shape this movement. He believed that artwork about a site must be created for and in collaboration with a

particular site in order to draw attention to the work and its process. The terms from that time were: *Earthworks*, *Land Art*, or *Site-Specific Art*; site-specific appears to have outlasted the others.⁴ At that time, dance-makers Anna Halprin, Trisha Brown, and Meredith Monk began to work site-specifically. These artist's works continue to influence today's contemporary dance community by continuing to create new works and reviving older works in this genre. Their legacy exists in a generation of dance makers who, not unlike me, have been part of the hybridization of modern dance for the past four decades.

Some scholars and practitioners in the field would like to put all site-work under the *site-specific* umbrella, implying that any dance performed in an alternative space is site-specific. However, this thesis argues that *site-specific* is a sub category to the broader field of *site-dance* and *site-specific* rests equally, albeit fluidly, in line with *re-sited*, *site-adapted*, *site-inspired* and *site-for-community*. Marylee Hardenbergh examined the words *site* and *specific* for clarification. She states, "A dance is site-specific when the music, the costumes, and the movement vocabulary are created especially *for* that site. They emerge *from* the site itself." She further notes that "*site* denotes the place of the performance and *specific* connotes made-to-order for that particular thing."⁵ Hardendbergh's site-specific definition is in concert with Stephan Koplowitz's notion that site-specific work is "wholly inspired by a specific site and cannot be replicated anywhere else without losing its essence and core meaning."⁶ Arguably, within the history of the used word *site-specific*, most site-dances are viewed as site-specific, but on closer examination, it may be more accurately termed *site-adapted* or *re-sited*. These fluid descriptions need to be

⁴ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 10-11.

⁵ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 158. (my emphases)

⁶ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 75.

defined and honored as distinct choreographic processes and creative choices. In my opinion, by loosely tossing around terms without consideration of their real application, it perpetuates the inaccessibility of site-dance and dance in general. I argue in this thesis that site-dance is accessible to a diverse population. By examining and clarifying these methods and terms we engage in a real discussion about the work, which invites accessibility through its performances and education.

RE-SITED

Re-sited dance is defined as a dance that is performed at a particular location and then re-performed at another location. By this definition, any dance performed on a tour, arguably can be considered re-sited. Or, in respect to site-dance, a dance once performed in an art gallery can readily be transferred, for example, to a botanical garden. This is a process that happens often when performing portable forms of dance such as butoh and other improvisations. A dance is also re-sited when it remains at the original site, but changes its spatial orientation, or moves the audience somewhere else. Choreographers of site-dance often play with shifting the orientation. The effect demonstrates multiple levels to a work. It is a process used when a choreographer is working conceptually. In butoh, the improvisation is different each performance but the performances, wherever it is shown, will remain butoh. As these examples suggest, re-sited dance rests in shifting the original perspective for another performance of the same work.

Ann Carlson created a dance with multiple sites that produced a series of re-sited work; she called this piece the *Night Light* series. She explains that “these series seemed to draw on a similar strategy for multiple sites.”⁷ Carlson’s strategy was to develop new

⁷ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 108.

work from historical photographs by using the image as a means to create movement and imagery, and then performed the work at the location of the photograph, meshing place and history with the present. For Carlson *Night Lights* was a strategic creative process that resulted in multiple performances using different images for a variety of locations. *Night Lights*, similar to butoh, is a portable movement concept that engages in a re-sited method. Along this trajectory, Sally Jacques' aerial dances are conceptually the same dance performed on different large-scale structures and are therefore re-sited works. However, Jacques does not experience her pieces as the same dance in different locations. Knowing Jacques method, she situates her work under the term site-specific or site-adapted because of her spiritual connection to space. She sees each space as unique, influencing each dance differently. As described earlier, these definitions are fluid and can be applied universally across the continuum of site-dance. However, clarification of choreographic process is important when understanding, teaching, and discussing the artistic intentions behind a work.

SITE-ADAPTED

Similar to *re-sited*, *site-adapted* dance happens when a dance created for a specific location is re-worked to fit into a new location. Site-adapted is defined by the changes in movement made by the choreographer and dancers who intend to make the dance appropriate for a new location. In my own experience of working in the site-dance genre, most site-work is *site-adapted*.

For many site-choreographers, *site-adapted* dance is a way to be economical with their choreography in order to give the work a longer production life. In reference to the *Grand Step Project*, a dance project which is performed on famous outdoor stairways

around the world, Koplowitz states, “I’m interested in site-adapted works because I’m hopeful that they [the dance] will be able to travel, they will have more of an artistic life, and they can continue to have an impact.”⁸ Organizations who present dance have also used this strategy to reach a wider audience with their work. In reference to her early site-dance work, Sara Pearson explains, “It all began when a presenter would invite us to make a site-specific work that they couldn’t afford on their own. So they would team up with another presenter ... and ask us to adapt the same choreography for each of them.”⁹ These examples show the malleability of the choreographic practice, because what appears to be a site-specific dance from one perspective may instead be a dance that is adapted to fit many locations from another perspective. Choreographers like Koplowitz use a site-adapted method as a tool for creating dances, so they may have longer life, reach a broader population, and allows the work to continually evolve. To this end, the term site-adapted is the most expansive, and its method widely used, by the field.

SITE-FOR-COMMUNITY

Site-for-community work integrates the location’s community members, history, and social activism, within the creative process and performance. All site-choreographers, regardless of the product they produce, will postulate that part of their work’s intention is to re-imagine “place” for the community they are working in. They each hope that working in spaces will invigorate the culture of its members and allow them to experience “place” in new ways. That being said, there are site choreographers who work specifically with communities to reclaim, or re-shape the meaning of their place.

⁸ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 66.

⁹ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 217.

This lens of site-dance holds the greatest potential for reaching people who have no prior knowledge of dance. This is because the entry point into the work is through community activism. Most people can understand environmental and social issue as it relates to a community and can agree that a creative project will help stimulate awareness of some sort. Leah Stein created a dance in 2000 titled *Falling From The Sky*, which involved integrating a community of Mexican immigrants into her work. She explains her community involvement as infusing “the piece with a different tone” because she included children of the Mexican migrant worker as participants in the dance. Because the audience can see their own community reflected in the dance, it connects them to the site in lasting ways. This can be empowering to people who identify as marginalized, as in the case of *Falling From The Sky*.¹⁰ In relation to community space, choreography becomes an agent for change as movement in a common space is contextualized into the group’s vernacular. This part of my research has become a framework for my pedagogy and a way into the site-dance process for students.

KEY TERMS FOR WATCH THE GAP

TRANSITIONAL SPACES:

Philosophically speaking, there are myriad entry points into making dance, however, Japanese butoh’s *Ma* philosophy has been the guiding principal for my own adult life and career. *Ma* is the state of being in-between, or, transition.¹¹ As an

¹⁰ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 146.

¹¹ Sondra Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press. 2010), 6.

Fraleigh, Sondra. *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy*. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press. 2010.

inspirational source, the *in-between* is where I find beauty and truth within life's everyday moments, where I remember not only what I have accomplished but also that there is more to come, and that through transition I am propelled forward to new places. Based on the symbolism of *Ma* or the *in-between*, this thesis examines transitional spaces as an inspiration for contemporary dance.

I originally titled the *Transitional Spaces* project *Transitional Architecture and Functional Thruways* (2010). As the project developed, the title became concise, and this concision helped to create the point of view I now have for my work. I have identified a transitional space as an in-between location people move through before arriving at their final destination. Examples of transitional spaces are: train stations, waiting rooms, bus terminals, elevators, and hallways. Transitional spaces are compelling because they are often overlooked except for their function. Metaphorically speaking, this overlooking can be directly compared to a person's life when in transition. There is an element of architecture, or framework, to a space as someone shuffles through during chaotic life transition. In bringing awareness to these moments of transition a person may awaken new perspectives, or enrich their experiences in life. If I am going through life not noticing of how often I am in transition, it emulates how often I may not be experiencing life.

Writer Marc Auge describes the phenomenon of transitional spaces as “non-places,” which he investigates as an ethnographic study in *Non-places: an introduction to supermodernity*. According to Auge a non-place can be described as a place that sits in contention with spaces that are clearly defined by social-cultural territorial lines-in-the-sand. For Auge, non places are vast concepts of spaces that exist more or less in our consciousness rather than in concrete definition. Auge describes there to be an overabundance of non-spaces and I argue that this overabundance ironically leads to their

invisibility. Spaces that people are in most of the time are often overlooked spaces. Auge's approach to this invisibility is to observe the scale of non-spaces as "a means of recognition, rather than knowledge" or, in other words to understand, *how* a non-place is used.¹² Non-places are often shared spaces, whether they are small or large, like a waiting room or the internet. Their scale can be fluid. For example: what is the scale of the internet, or how many places can a person access from Jamaica Station? A person not only uses the non-space within the actual confines of the location, but also within a person's *perceived* confine of the location, which can be vast and ongoing.

Many of the locales that site-dance choreographers are attracted to are transitional spaces. Leah Stein created a dance titled *Bardo*, which is a Buddhist term that means "in-between spaces." For *Bardo* the in-between represents the transition from life to death. To best express her intentions, Stein chose to embark on this concept by creating a performance in a space that meshed natural and urban elements during the evening hours when day transitions into night. For Stein the in-between seems to have polarizing bookends; natural and urban, day and night, life and death. In contrast, Olive Bieringa's work explores almost non-perceptual, fluid transitions in everyday moments like the concept of *Ma* which inspired *Watch The Gap*. Bieringa describes, a solo piece *GO*, as movement practice rather than a dance performance because she is investigating the spaces of in-between as a journey between the inner and outer landscape of her body. The piece is an improvisation which spans a particular route in the city of San Francisco; the route is generally overlooked and is seen as background to the everyday user. Her audiences are the people using the space and are usually unaware that a performance is happening. Both artists' aim is to shift their audience's perceptions about the spaces they

¹² Marc Auge, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995), 27.

use every day. For Stein, she hopes her audiences will experience “a different way of being on the planet and of being sensitive to environmental and human issues.”¹³ While for Bieringa the idea is to connect her inner experiences to the outer world and this is the in-between she is interacting with during *GO*.¹⁴

Auge’s *non-places* along with *Bardo* and *Go* are demonstrations of transitional spaces similar to *Watch The Gap*’s creative direction. The train station is a space that people transition through to eventually arrive at their final destination. It is neither where they began their journey nor where they end it. The train itself is a place of transition that propels someone someplace new. In addition, these examples show how actual sites and environments can correlate philosophically with the human condition.

SITE-INSPIRED:

A site-inspired dance is defined as a dance work created *about* a specific location but not performed *in* that location. This means that a choreographer researches a particular site: the planet Mars, the top of an ant hill, or a subway tunnel in China, and produces work based on how the location stimulates him or her. To illustrate, Leah Stein created a piece called *Strata* which was inspired by the irregularly shaped salt deposits in Mono Lake, California. When completed, the dance was very slow, echoing the geological time it takes for the earth to create a salt deposit. The piece was repeated several times, as an installation, in an art gallery and audiences could come and go as they pleased.¹⁵ When trying to place *Strata* within the site-specific dance genre Stein says “What’s odd is that *Strata* was site-specific, but it wasn’t inspired by the art gallery in

¹³ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 122.

¹⁴ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 137.

¹⁵ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 144.

which it was performed” it was instead *inspired* by the original site which was Mono Lake.¹⁶ According to the above definition, *Watch The Gap* is a site-inspired dance, and this thesis argues that there is a choreographic method to making this work. Its method begins by transferring the stimulus of a space into the studio and eventually to a stage, where its method sits as part of the broader discussion of site-dance. The method begins at the source of inspiration: the site. How do I begin to be in dialogue with the site in New York in order to be relevant for the stage in Austin? Record as much as I can.

My records of the site were generated by observing how bodies move through the space, capturing a moment as a source of inspiration for the dance and a way to keep the site present in my memory. In terms of embodiment, the broad analysis of my recordings reveals that the dance, in part, needed to be about different physicalities of waiting. To understand how to do this, I simply needed be self aware of how my body and other bodies move while using the space. People generally, unknowingly, built spatial relationships to one another while waiting for the next train. Individual people tended to shift around their weight in a somewhat meditative swaying side to side. The gentle shifting was often mixed with small quirky adjustments in a variety of places on the body; for example, scratching an itch, or adjusting belongings. When a person walked to a new place on the train platform, this also shifted their weight. As a result, the beautifully constructed tableaux between people in the station become a core component of the dance to demonstrate the station’s particular *performance of waiting*.

To further develop the dance’s movement gestures, I noted observations about human interactions between one another in the station. To illustrate, interactions with a conductor or ticket attendant created infinite physical tensions which oscillated between

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

aggressiveness, politeness, and passivity. I also observed how individuals interacted with objects, such as a wall map or ticket kiosk. Typically when using an automated ticket machine, the physical back and forth was one-sided, but sometimes more animated. A person can reveal physical and emotional frustrations without consequence when facing a machine. These observations illustrate Auge's focus on *how* a non-space may be used. Describing *how* is universal and appropriate for this research because when examining people in specific spaces their reasons for being at the space, *why* they are at the space, are each unique. *How* attends to a space, *why* attends to place, this thesis is attending to space. Examining *how* also clarifies the intent behind the movement generated in the studio so it may translate universally onto the stage as a conversation about the space. The *how* depicts a human quality, a quality which translates the core essence of the site, its corporality, with the space of the theatre.

IDENTIFYING THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF THE SPACE:

When making initial observations about a space for a new site-dance, choreographers often begin by asking a version of the following question: what is the choreography of the space? The objective then is to ask what is the space's architecture and how do people move through it? To achieve this, the choreographer has to allow sensory input about the space to enter their field of vision. Stephan Koplowitz describes his own process of identifying the choreography of the space as "reading the site" where his role as choreographer is to determine how he "wants the viewer to see the site." His examination includes observing "how the site is currently being used" and how to direct the focus of the audience.¹⁷ Further, Leah Stein asks herself "does this place resonate?"

¹⁷ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 68.

In other words, how does the space read choreographically? She continues, “I pay attention to how the elements of the environment interact ...how can we embody it, play with it, push against it ...”¹⁸ Other choreographers look for spaces that “have multiple levels, textures, curious soundscapes or something that is visually arresting” in order to ensure the choreography of the space is interesting fodder for their work.¹⁹ In my own process it was essential to record the Jamaica Station’s architecture as a whole. If I did not represent each of the characteristics of the station I deemed important, the dance piece would have been less successful in linking the audiences to the site.

Jamaica Station has compelling architectural characteristics. Structurally, the station is an open-air atrium with a large elevated section which is connected to the ground level by five different pairs of stairways and escalators. The station’s vastness and beauty is inherently dramatic. This dramatic quality resides not only in its architecture, but also in its capacity to demonstrate the incalculable transactions of its transit system. In order to board the trains, people have to step onto one of the five long individual platforms that span about 500 feet. Each platform has train access from either side totaling ten different access points for any train coming from either east or west. From the platform one can view the entire station, totaling hundreds of square yards, and see the different tableaux being constructed by waiting commuters. From this vantage point one is able to experience the dynamics of the natural elements and sounds: the announcements about arrivals and departures, birds landing on the platform, garbage, wind, rain, sunlight and shadows, all unintentionally in concert together. The sounds become a constant monotone humming. The spectrum of grays that fade into white and black interjected by bright yellow and red colors pulled my eye in different directions.

¹⁸ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 144.

¹⁹ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 129.

These are some of the sensation captured and integrated into the dance. This process of *identifying the choreography of the space* led to clarifying different details of the space, ultimately creating distinct aspects of the dance, most importantly how the stage setting would represent the station.

The stage setting for the performance emulates the five platforms and one of five pairs of the staircases and escalators. The five platforms were outlined by four stripes of yellow tape stretching from upstage to downstage creating five spaces intended to symbolize the platforms. The stair-escalator pair was constructed out of two metal ladder structures placed side by side. The set was capable of holding the weight of the dancers and was used to demonstrate the different levels of the station.

The field of vision of a site can be its most compelling attribute, however, this attribute can be easily lost when the site is transferred to a stage. Meredith Monk, a pioneer in site-dance, states that “playing with distance and scale within the framing of the piece” are essential to the success of the dance.²⁰ Expressing depth is difficult when staging a site-inspired dance and is the biggest challenge of this project. I was most successful in tackling this challenge with the audio and visual elements recorded at the site. Syncing up the sound and editing video with the movement supports the dimensionality of the station while it also offered a new experience of the location.

In reviewing my own process for recording a site and bringing the notes into the studio to work with dancers, I noticed there is another choreographer who works in similar ways. Site-choreographer Marylee Hardenbergh uses a method called *discovering site* in indentifying the choreography of a space. After Hardenbergh discovers the site, she brings recordings of the location into the studio and then reimages the spatial patterns

²⁰ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 48.

for her dancers to interpret.²¹ A task oriented process such as this asks the work to stay true to the space in its intention, but it also allows for expressivity from the choreographer and dancers. Like Hardenbergh, I use the above information recorded about the station's *choreography* to develop the dance's movement vocabulary. Through this process, the site-inspired piece becomes visually and corporally linked to the original site.

SITE-AS-COLLABORATOR:

Space is a collaborator in creating a dance piece in the same way that a composer, audience, costume designer, text, or lighting designer. However, it is important to note that understanding space is not unique to site-dance but to dance performances in general. Space is essential, it shapes the dance like a frame around a picture; visually, sensually, aurally, and also with direction and flow of the eyes of the audience members. The choreographer needs to know the space they are performing in, period. With site-dance this component to the work is heightened. After a choreographer *identifies the choreography* of a site, the next step is to include the *space as collaborator*. However, the process to understanding the choreography, and to finding the collaboration with a site, is fluid and overlapping. It does not follow distinct *steps*, but distinct *processes*. This process begins when a choreographer can articulate what their relationship is with the site. When a choreographer understands this relationship, the collaboration begins much like any dialogue begins. The site's architectural characteristics "speak" to the artist's and shape their relationship to the site. As I understand this experience, a choreographer's

²¹ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 167.

relationship to a site may be any combination of what is described as a spiritual, conceptual, emotional, historical, or communal connection to a location.

For movement director Sally Jacques, sites have a spiritual influence on the creative process. She states, “Because the architecture and spirit of the site inform the development of the work ...we play with movement and with various apparatuses and props. What we learn during this investigation begins to shape the piece.”²² For Jacques the space is alive and generating movement for the dancers to work with and to push against. These dynamics give meaning to her process. Other choreographers view their collaborations with a site as conceptual. Monk reflects on her practice, “I often think more like a visual artist ... I take this sense into the performance experience where I have a dialogue with the three-dimensional space.”²³ Monk will “listen” to a space and consider what a space is “suggesting” to her. Working from a conceptual perspective it is important to understand the space’s dimensionality as well as how people emotionally connect to what a space is saying. Differently, when a choreographer is particularly focused on the historical or communal element of a space their dialogue will include stories and conversations with people who are familiar with the location. When Martha Bowers, a choreographer and community activist, was creating *On The Waterfront* she saw the abandoned site as “hauntingly beautiful” and after her research she saw the “deep, historical connection between the community of Red Hook and its waterfront...” she wanted to “connect what was going to be the next huge economic resource of the community to the people who lived in the housing project.”²⁴ Choreographers who work

²² Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 213.

²³ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 34.

²⁴ Kloetz and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 273.

with a community on a site-dance often experience a renewed positive awareness about the location from its dwellers.

The collaboration between the space and the choreography for *Watch The Gap* rests within the conceptual and emotional dialogue. It is conceptual because of the pure visual stimulation of scale, field of vision, and lines in space; it's emotional because of *Ma's* state or place of being in-between, a transitional space. The title of the piece is tied to the conceptual application.

Mind The Gap was a warning sign first instituted in 1969 in the London Underground. It was introduced to reduce the amount of times the conductors would have to tell passengers to avoid injury by not falling in-between the trains and the platform. At the Jamaica Station the warning is not only painted on the platforms in rhythmic patterns but can also be found on the tickets and kiosks, and heard as passengers enter the trains.²⁵ When I was searching for a specific title for this dance, Watch The Gap simply could not be avoided. However, emotionally speaking to the space, the Jamaica Station is a transitional space for my visits home to my family on Long Island, it is a familiar place that evokes sentiment and is also grounding. While the piece was not emotionally about going home, the manner that I always use the station to go home was influential to the choreography. It dictated where the set pieces were placed on stage and also the arc of the movement. The audience's perspective is situated in the perspective of how I use the station.

The location of the actual performance, the B. Iden Payne Theatre, is also part collaborator. The relationship to the theatre space is strictly conceptual. It is important for the work to acknowledge the site-inspired process in the present tense. To create a sense

²⁵ A short citation from the *Mind The Gap* wikipedia page, accessed January 2,2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_the_gap#Other_uses. Web.

of self-awareness during the performance, the dance integrated live-video feed of the dancers on stage in order to blend the two locations abstractly into one place. Unlike presenting dance site-specifically, in the theatre, I had control over my environment. The audience was sitting in a specific location. I designed the piece to read in respect to the audience's orientation. The audiences' perspective of the dance is the same as my own perspective from where I wait to take the train; the forth platform from stage right or platform number two in relation to the station (stage).

The choreographic arc of the dancer's relationship to the platforms reflects the collaborative dialogue between the two sites, train station and theatre, from the perspective of where I stand on the platform which is also from where the video was recorded. The dance moves vertically from stage-left to stage-right where the performers enter a new platform from upstage and travel indirectly downstage. The movement brings the performers in a vaguely identifiable S-shaped pattern from right to left for most of the dance. The final section rotates the perspective ninety degrees counter-clockwise in order to place the audience within a different viewpoint of the movement and "site." The intention is to address the panoramic view a passenger experiences while standing on the platform from our vantage point. Double ladder scenic structures representative of the staircase-escalator pairs placed in the up-stage center of the forth platform. The ladders were six feet tall and made of metal so that the dancers may share weight and use the space differently by performing on it. The dancers interacted with the set pieces by following the same traffic flow of the passengers at the station; right side goes up, left side goes down.

Finally, the dialogue with the location in concert with the stage is supported by the use of video and sound recordings from the station. Video is seen throughout the dance, but during the introduction of *Watch The Gap*, video and sound are the audience's

only access into the work. The first 16 seconds are only video; after, the audience sees the dancers, some entering and some sitting, upstage stage left, which is one of the entrances one would use is at the Jamaica Station arriving from the JFK airport. Shortly after the dancers enter, live video feed is superimposed onto the video footage. The intention was to immediately integrate the dancers into the space to address the self-awareness and now-ness of the work. With all of these components combined, the dance demonstrated how *site as collaborator* rest at the core of a site-dance.

In conclusion, my main concern with the above section was to demonstrate how *Watch The Gap*, through its process and treatment of space, belongs within the conversation of site-dance. And secondly, I explored how the use of these terms clarifies the vague language about site-dance, and when approached thoughtfully, how these terms can be used as a framework to teaching an appreciation for the form. The following section will demonstrate how the movement choices for *Watch The Gap* stem from the above methods and terms, but more importantly the section analyzes in greater depth the inspiration behind *transitional spaces* as a movement practice, a practice that will continue to influence my work as a choreographer. In other words, it is not a practice that is specific to *Watch The Gap* but one that continues to explore places of being *in-between*. Also, demonstrated below is how the *site-inspired* choreographic method was used in a movement improvisation class at the university as a tool to develop a dance about a *transitional space*. The question of teaching the site-inspired process was to understand whether its method was repeatable and teachable. Thus I expand this process beyond my specific project, to a process that could be used to create many kinds of site-inspired, and site-dance work.



*Figure 1: choreography of the space/site as collaborator: staircase escalator pair: site, studio, stage.
Photo of station by Ellen Bartel, Studio and stage photo by Derrick Fore, Dancers: Amy Myers, Sara Naegelin, Scott Roskilly, Mari Akta, Jude Hicky/also Joey Hood, Cooper Neely, Katherine Hodges, Errin Delperdang*

WATCH THE GAP: analyzing the choreographic and pedagogical decisions for transitional spaces and site-inspired dance

Positioning pedestrian movements next to contemporary dance was a technique introduced into the field during the post modern era of the 1960's and 1970's. Critics had trouble recognizing pedestrian behavior on stage as dance, while supporters embraced the idea that ordinariness could be performed. The technique is now used as a tool for showing dance as it relates to real life, and after decades of experimentation, conventional thinking, can be set aside to allow for contemporary, less predictable outcomes. As audiences became accustomed to seeing pedestrian movements as dance, choreographers were able to tackle social issues such as gender, classism, and poverty with greater impact. Removing the illusion of the weightless female dancer often found in patriarchal dance, and instead, focusing on the actual, the choreographic process became more democratic, more "voices" were heard. This shift in technique allowed for dancers to contribute to the choreographic process in ways that were inappropriate before the post modern era. Dancers were being asked to be themselves, more natural, and choreographers wanted to see the person on stage, not only the dance.

Performing pedestrian as a technique is a guiding principle for *transitional spaces* within my work. The reason why it is important to set pedestrian movements within *Watch The Gap* is to show how the complex relationships between people and their environment continuously change and shape their actions. In the studio, the dancers were asked to generate a non-conventional movement vocabulary from their own corporal histories. In other words, the process did not begin by asking the dancers to work with recognizable dance moves, such as a tendu, or grand battment. For example, if a dancer was asked to walk across the stage, they walked in the manner that they actually walked, and avoided "dancing" walking. The same was true when dancers created a duet about

the concept of *waiting*. The intention was to find honesty in the movement and to avoid gratuitous dance gestures. Pedestrian explorations are compatible with the site-dance genre because the work is about spaces where people are found doing ordinary things.

In performance however, audiences typically want to experience the visual stimulation that is associated with contemporary dance. It was a challenge, therefore, to insert dance movements into a piece that expresses how people move in everyday situations. The question confronting me while choreographing *Watch The Gap* was *why*. Why were the dancers scooting across the floor when no one at the Jamaica Station would every use the space that way? This question can be asked of every movement choice made in *Watch The Gap*. So, what was happening then? The answer rests within an honest method, creative license, and the hope that through choreographic choices the audience is brought into the moment to experience the dance as humanity and as art.

Transitional spaces explore *in-between* as a movement practice. It is the refusal to breakdown gestures into parts or pieces but instead to investigate the on-goingness of one infinite gesture. This gesture continually changes due to the complexity of internal thoughts pushing against outside influences. Working with site-dance, transitional spaces is a study of how a single body can simultaneously become both the architectural structure and the person within the structure. In practice, the dancers improvisationally explore how the joints of their bodies create corridors in space. The joints erase or carve through imagined blocks thus making an imagined space. The space becomes the architectural landscape in which the dancers move. This process creates a movement vocabulary that speaks to the concept of transitional space.

Within this framework, *Watch The Gap* started as an improvisation about shifting bodies around in space. This action created surprising and recognizable patterns between individuals, not unlike what is experienced at the actual train station. In the studio the

patterns are memorized and repeated, however, with each repetition, the movement vocabulary is expanded upon. Choreographically this technique is called accumulation. Through this process, the movements became more dance-like. For example, in the beginning of one section where two dancers are walking around each other in a circle, by the end of that section the choreography has accumulated into the dancers running around, turning, hugging and lifting one another. These movements are recognizable as ordinary gestures but within the totality of the work, the performance becomes a contemporary dance piece. The goal is for the audience to recognize the pedestrian interaction of how people move at the station, while not ignoring the desire to present a dance work, thus, the dance becomes its own distinct expression of the Jamaica Queens Station.

The resulting choreography is comprised of both dancers in the station and dancers being the station, at one time. It is a paradoxical game I use to strengthen my creative muscle, relinquish outcome, and to avoid a predictable narrative plot. This game was replayed each time the dancers moved across the stage and entered each new “platform.” Each platform spoke to a distinct characteristic of the station and refreshed the material as the dance evolved, but conceptually the dance is still connected to its own history. Familiar movement is placed strategically through the dance to give the work structure, for example: scooting, an arm lift and *rond de jombe*, and a floor slide. As the dance reached the fifth and final platform, instead of ending the piece at this moment, the choice was to rotate the entire stage setting ninety degrees counter clockwise; an action that is performed by the dancers and not the stage crew. Four dancers broke from the dance, moved the set and removed the vertical yellow tape, then applied new tape horizontally and walked back into the dance for its final section. Harkening back to the Movement of the late 1960’s “happenings,” this choice was to introduce a new

perspective, and to acknowledge that in a theatre space the performers have control over their environment, which is not true when working at an actual site. While site-inspired work argues that it is part of the site-dance genre, paradoxical to my argument the dance remains fixed in a theatre space. Changing the perspective of the dance brings self-awareness of my treatment of place while offering a twist to the ending.

Finally, video allowed the theatre and the station spaces to communicate. The footage of the station captured its landscape. It was shot with a small handheld camera hidden in an outer pocket of a roller-suitcase. The suitcase was pulled around the station and served as the camera's tripod; the material captured that afternoon remained unknown until downloaded onto a computer. The location of the footage is the same point of view as the stage setting, and the records of that day influenced the broader choreographic decisions. The sections of the video edited for the performance focused on the same core characteristics of the station used in the stage set, completing the dialogue between spaces. The goal of bringing all of these components in concert with one another was to re-imagine the space as a communal site for the stage. It enlivens the action between performer and audience, offering new ways of understanding the beauty of the Jamaica Station.

WORKING WITH SITE-DANCE AND PEDAGOGY

In conjunction with understanding the process of site-dance for performance, I have also crafted this understanding into a pedagogical method to share with students. In essence, no one creates in a bubble. Creativity is information that is shared, and this sharing contributes to the evolution of technique. The best pedagogy defies stagnation. In the spirit of community and accessible entry into understanding choreography, as I

mention in previous sections, I have applied site-dance as a framework for an improvisational dance course. It is a highly creative course designed for the students who participate in order to produce thoughtful work about the world around them, and to share an appreciation for the diverse applications of site-choreography and improvisational dance.

In discussing the second level of analysis of my research, I begin with my experiences of teaching a non-majors course in improvisation and site-dance during the spring of 2012 at the University in Texas at Austin. This portion of my research method rests in analytical journaling, or Reflexive Methodology. In setting aside time to reflect on my teaching methods I am synthesizing how my students participated in each class. In preparation for the class, I paid specific attention to students who may not have any knowledge of site-dance as an art form.

As an entry points into the work, I created a space in the class to talk about out how they can intuitively engage simply by looking at the key terms in relation to popular videos found on the internet. In order to accomplish a broad understanding of movement improvisation, I introduced improvisational dance tools and practices to help the students generate movement on their own, subscribing to a Constructivist teaching method.²⁶ I also assigned weekly readings and discussions from *Site Dance: Choreographers and the Lure of Alternative Spaces* to provide context as they made connections between their bodies and the spaces they move through, and as they explored how artist engage with this form. This method generated a basic understanding of movement theories that became the basis for discussions about the kinds of dance that can happen at a site. On a semi-weekly basis, the students were asked to present written and verbal analysis of

²⁶ Vygotsky, 1978.

videos and readings. Together we scouted sites and analyzed the kinds of site-work that could be presented in them. After all of site-dance terms had been reviewed and discussed, the students fully embarked on a site-dance with the language and context to support their ideas. Using the terms from the above section, we discussed scale, choreography of the space, and how an artist might collaborate with the space. Based on their improvisational studies, the course culminated with a creation of one flashmob and one site-adapted dance on campus. For the final dance we found and identified a site, built the dance in the studio, and then performed at the site.

With my current semester being at the forefront of my thoughts, I reflect back to the first example used in this course from the fall semester of 2011, where *Watch The Gap's* site-inspired methodology was taught to students in a University of Texas at Austin undergraduate course for Theatre and Dance. In framing a single assignment around the terms *site-inspired*, *transitional space*, *site-as-collaborator*, and *identifying the choreography of the space*, the students each created a movement score by recording into their notebooks their observations of a transitional space. The space was an outdoor multi platform twisted stairway which included a small breezeway. They brought their observations back into the studio and created an improvisational dance. I asked how their observations informed their movements. I looked for similarities and differences in each of their movement studies then we discussed each study as a class. The goal was to see what each student observed as the choreography of the space. During their observational processes, they were asked to review how the space is used. They were to explore whether their bodies could mimic the shapes of the space. If the students felt it was important, they were to notice if it evoked any emotions. Each student created a score of their observations and then worked in a group to combine their scores and edit them for a group showing. For the final showing of their work, the student's improvisations were

clear and they performed with authority. Their work demonstrated how abstract movement can still speak to humanity and relate to an audience. While each student used the same site-inspired method, their dances were unique.

The final section of the paper discusses *Watch The Gap* as a completed performance, which is positioned in concert with an analysis of the full course in improvisation and site-dance. As I indicated above, re-imaging space for a community is a significant aspect of the site-dance genre. It is an interesting dilemma to use site-inspired as an argument for site-dance while not addressing one of the main underlying forces behind creating this work. The focus of the analysis below is to examine in what ways, if any, a community was affected by the performance and if I identified whom that community was. Also, the section below concludes how my practice of transitional spaces (*Ma*) will continue to influence my work as a choreographer and company director. I offer a final reflective analysis about the non-majors class as I address its successes in terms of the level of student participation and engagement with the process.

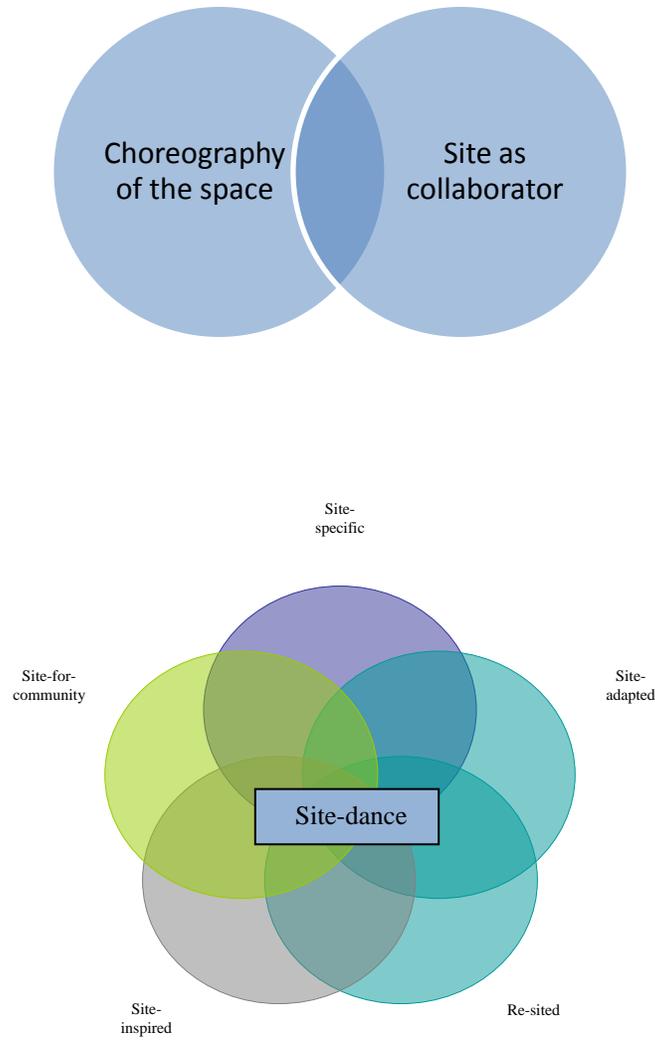


Figure 2: Venn Diagrams of the fluid choreographic pedagogy to site-dance. Demonstrating the overlapping methods of how a choreographer first examines the choreography of the space and discovers ways of collaborating with it. This is a process used in all areas of site-dance where the methods overlap but result differently in impact on the community.

ANALYSIS OF THE DANCE AND NON-MAJORS CLASS: what we did-the outcome

In the following statements I am first going to address how *Watch The Gap* was an expression of the community that exists at the Jamaica Queens station, and how that translated to Austin audiences. Then I will reflect on my experiences from observing the evolution of my students coming to understand the site-dance genre. I will conclude with how I will take my experiences into the field as an artist and educator of *transitional spaces* as site-dance.

THE DANCE

In conclusion, the outcome of *Watch The Gap* and my inquiry about spaces of transition, was successful. I feel this is true on both levels of analysis; the dance performance and the course I am teaching. For this work, success is measured by my own creative desire to continue to explore *transitional spaces* as a movement practice-toward-performance with my dance company and also, how the students participate and engage with the course material. The practice of transitional spaces gives me the opportunity to observe how people use spaces and what those spaces mean to the people who use them. This addresses issues about community and acceptance which is part of my company's core mission. I am able to then bring, to the stage or an alternative space, my insight into a community. This impact resonates within me, the dancers, and within the audience in ways in which we may explore deep and progressive connections to people, so that we may all engage and contribute intellectually in local and global communities.

I made a dance that expressed its own reality of the station, while still being connected to the *actual* space. Important to this work was that it presented itself as an experience of the station where a surrogate community was created for the audience to understand. Interestingly, *Watch The Gap* did ask the audience to imagine a place they may not know, make the connections for themselves, and embrace the re-imagined place which was created. How was this managed? What were the signifiers in the work that enabled this expression to resonate with the audience? Like the Venn diagrams above derived from my choreographic analysis, the dance's interdisciplinary play of sensory output from the station's different recordings and use of each of them within the dance, effectively conveyed the idea in deep and meaningful ways.

THE COURSE

In conclusion, measuring the success of how my students engaged with the course material, the participation from the students resulted in good to excellent work. Our discussions about attending to the difference between space and place, space being about the architecture and lines in space-place being the history and story of the location, and observations about experiencing seeing their world differently had profoundly impacted them, and me. Again, the parallel process between *Watch The Gap* and the course help clarify for myself the difference between space and place creating the lens currently effective in prescribing a pedagogy to my work. In this thesis I attended to space and not place for *Watch The Gap*. If I were to have attended to place, the dance would have considered the history and celebration of the Jamaica station turning 100 years old, I would have considered the half dozen renovations, and the location's impact on the

Queens and Long Island Rail Road commuters. Clearly it would have been a completely different thesis and course objective.

As a graduate student, I was assigned to teach improvisational dance to non-majors and received permission to frame the course around site-dance, as stated in the sections above, to continue to explore my thesis since I believe that choreographing is pedagogical act. In the class, I had 27 undergraduate students from diverse major fields of study. About a half dozen have dance experience, while the rest have little to none. Generally speaking, non-majors courses are to fulfill the student's *Visual and Performing Arts* requirement for their degree. My main objective was to not treat the work as if it should only be for "artists" but to dive right into and speak as if the students already had the tools to understand, dance, choreography, and site-work, but only needed the means to access it. The course was taught from a Constructivist Methodology. In using this method, (and this is why teaching and choreography parallel each other for me,) I enter the studio with a general and broad idea of what will be accomplished and I offer the tools that bring everyone to my desired conclusion. In this method, the students learn how to make creatively responsible decisions that foster their individual roles in the work as well supporting the roles in the group. This learning process empowers students, or dancers, to think for themselves, and although different actions will have different results, any action is more relevant than no action (in this context) and in participating in this a person has power and inherently democratic solutions.

In conclusion, I believe that site-dance is addressing the most relevant issues of our current day. It is important for me as an artist and educator to be in creative dialogue with how people move through our world because I see it as a means to progress to a more caring society. Susan Leigh Foster expresses the effect choreography has on humanity and our connection to space in *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia In Performance*,

“Like maps that identified the boundaries of an established ownership over specific parcels of land, choreography offered specific sequences of movement. It endowed movement with symbolic substance, promising to secure its permanence.”²⁷ Dance has been connected to space since people became conscious of *being* in space. The word choreography comes from map-making which centuries ago helped the word to define property-lines. Bodies moving in space have immeasurable power to communicate and resonate with important ideas about who we are as a society. Foster continues to write about the evolution of the physical dynamics witnessed spatially in the world, “The musculature emerged as a central component of one’s identity, and with it, the capacity to engage forcefully with the world or, alternatively to relax in it. As the body began to acquire a more volumetric sense of itself, its relationship to surroundings recalibrated into one governed by flow, intensity, momentum, and inertia.”²⁸

Similar to how the concept of *Ma*, the state of being in-between, ensures that I continually engage with life at its fullest, so too does understanding my corporal relationship with space. For me, transitional spaces as site-dance is fully recognizing and actively addressing experiencing life’s *now-ness* in its truest form. This is what I want to share with the world as an artist and educator of dance.

²⁷ Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia In Performance* (Routledge. 2011). 176.

²⁸ Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 177.

Bibliography

Auge, Marc. *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. London: Verso, 1995. Print.

Dolan, Jill. *Rehearsing Democracy: Advocacy, Public Intellectuals, and Civic Engagement in Theatre and Performance Studies*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. Print.

Foster, Susan Leigh. *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia In Performance*, Routledge. 2011. Print.

Fraleigh, Sondra. *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy*. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press. 2010. Print.

Kloetz, Melanie and Carolyn Pavlik. *Site Dance: Choreographers and the Lure of Alternative Spaces*. University Press of Florida, 2009. Print.

Mind The Gap wikipedia page, accessed January 2,2012,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_the_gap#Other_uses. Web.

Ortlipp, Michelle. "Keeping and Using Reflective Journals in the Qualitative Research Process." *The Qualitative Report*, Vol 12.4. Charles Sturt University: Albery, Australia, 2008.

Van Manen, Max. *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science For An Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. State University of New York Press. 1990. Print.

Vygotsky, Lev S. *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes*. Edited by Cole, M., John-Steiner, V., Scribner, S., Souberman, E. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1978.