

Project profile

Brief description

Performance-research *in situ* for a video project in a woodland space. A collaborative artist-led project. Specially designed costumes.

Who

Artists: Charlotte Bernstein (Artist-in-residence, Heath Mount School), Lauren Goode and Maria Llanderas. Costume design: Lauren Goode

Where and when

Heath Mount School Grounds, Hertfordshire. Jan-May 2005.

Summary

Lauren: 'In a particular overgrown vicinity within woodland grounds collaborative practical sessions involving performance-research were carried out and directed towards making a video work.

Charlotte Bernstein led an experimental approach to creating the video material and has directed the editing-process of these recordings from which there is potential to develop a video installation and/or video multiples. Costumes were specially designed to work in relation to the site. Additional video documentation of the performance periods have been edited by Lauren and these have captured different aspects from the durational movement and variable light conditions.

The location for this new exploration involving meditative styles of movement and improvisation happened to be a former ice pit (a sunken, walled and circular area of approximately 15m in diameter and 2m deep). This architecture framed attention on the space contained in a way that provided a clear sample area for observing seasonal changes affecting the decay and growth of plant matter. Ideas of environmental toxicity influenced the colours chosen for the sculptural costumes as well as colours of lichen, summer flora and insects seen in the space.

In our exploration neither the sites previous historical use, nor the current school-ground context were relevant for us to respond to. However, other aspects of the sites specific immersive environment were responded to through performance becoming receptive to the changing energies at the site on each occasion: weather and atmospheric micro conditions in the vicinity; the rich soundscape which comprised of a variety of bird song/calls, insects; some traffic noise and small leisure aircraft drones; the difficulties of inhospitable aspects of the space, for example, the forest of nettles it became!'. How a site or situation offers specific conditions and conditioning dimensions that can be amplified through an artists response and interactions has been relevant'.

Charlotte: 'When we first encountered the space, it was covered in snowdrops and over time, filled with stinging nettles; the shape and dimensions of the area continually shifted, and was at times reminiscent of a (toxic) petri dish. Our response has been influenced by the area's persistent 'becoming', which has both invited and challenged us to participate in its transitions. However, the resultant work should not necessarily be considered 'site-specific' or reliant on a contextual narrative'.

Charlotte: 'The piece has evolved through the artists' durational interaction with each other and our attempts to develop our interconnectedness with the environment. There was also much wildlife sharing the space, which we were sensitive to as well'.

Charlotte: 'I have a particular interest in the relationship between live art and video and this project has been concerned with methods to enable the integration of video into group practice. In developing this work, I found the on/off frame and external observatory presence of the video camera(s) problematic and needed to affect its interaction with performers and the environment. With this in mind, an aerial structure was created to provide multiple perspectives and filming also took place from several viewpoints on the ground. This approach meant that the video equipment and performers were able to operate more freely as the environment (for example, the wind) dictated or deconstructed boundaries. Creating the device, also gave us the opportunity to work alongside those with ethical woodland management skills, which were required for elements of the project'.

Lauren: 'About the artists work together (since the autumn of 2004) more generally: processes explored involve establishing movement qualities that embody intensity and poetry. Movement device structures are employed, such as passages, stillness, leaning, rotation and meditation; and techniques used involve oscillation, repetition, momentum, concentration, improvisation and the breath (to affect propulsion and physiology). Work also incorporates coincidental narrative and absurdity. The site-specific work aims to engage with sensitivity to unique environments and contingent events. It is relevant to consider a site as ones body in extension and in-separate – a connected live architecture unfolding – a multiplicity of actual and virtual dimensions'.

Biographies

- Maria Llanderas. Performance training: Grotowskian and Live Art. Santiago de Compostela (Galicia- Spain). Butoh and contemporary dance. Influences: the work of Ana Mendieta. MA Performance. Goldsmiths College.
- Lauren Goode. Thirteen years experience as a practising artist, including installation and performance collaborations, and guided by further study (philosophy and landscape architecture). BA Hons Fine Art (Sculpture). 1991 Central Saint Martin's. MA Fine Art. (Site specific and mixed media installation, film, digital imaging).1995. Royal College of Art.
- Charlotte Bernstein. Video, audio and live art practice. Interests: time-image, multiplicities, human design in relation to artist strategy. Exploration through the dynamics of time, space and motion. Pg Dip. Digital Media Production, West Herts College, 2002, BA Hons Fine Art, University of Hertfordshire, 2001.

Documentation

- Lo-res images [pdf file size: 88 kb]. Hi-res images [pdf file size: 224 kb]. Video stills [pdf file size 156kb]
- Extracts of experimental video edited by Charlotte Bernstein. [dvd. total: 10 mins]
- Extracts of performance-research edited by Lauren Goode. [dvd. total: 30 mins]

Related

- Live Art Garden Initiative. www.liveartgardeninitiative.org.uk

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