

A Strange Place 0.1 - Transcripts of Conversations 2018-22

Elysa Wendi and Rhiannon Newton (shared "I")

1

Campbelltown, Nov 2018

It's...it's a strange place - yeah, it's strange.

But I like how it's something we can inhabit together. More like an action.

Because, like - an action it might be singular, but it can be interpreted in all these different ways and the - the body, or the person that you're looking at is doing one thing, but is also doing many things. So that sort of tension between the, - that the female body as it dances can be an 'I' - can be an 'it', can be a 'he', there is this sort of transformative - umm - capacity of the body, or movement.

The body is like... like a strange place.

Campbelltown, Nov 2018

Yeh, so my body was, So - even though I was frozen, ha, I went to... agh, I went to do ritual dancing - agh... in Japan. I went to the shrine and then to do some rituals. The first time when I did it - the steps are not difficult at all, very repetitive right - and it was to follow a manuscript that is 500 years old, so - and I - the priest, the chief priest told me umm - "you are too much performing" - haha - it is not about that - so that is the first time I start to understand - me as a human existing as a body, that has a function which is not performing - that, that was very strange for me because.

Because it's very natural we are performers right - for them it's about - this body is trying to be the medium - which transcends - it's following the order of this manuscript - whereas you are "you" doing the movement - and then it's not me anymore - right? It's the body so it can be anyone.

I found it quite choreographic.

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3

Campbelltown, Nov 2018

There's this sort of repetition of naming an object or a gesture - but there is no - action - there is no table - no. There's nothing in the space and - nothing happens - other than describing these things, but as an audience you see it.

You know the table's there - the plant is over there - and that the - that she took the chair from there to there. So there's this absence, but it's filled in with language.

There was a language teacher I knew and he was teaching pronunciation totally _____ to the whole class and it was the most effective day he had - - he said - he used silence - but with the lips. It was the absence of sound that makes the presence of, the most presence of the, the situation.

So, from what you described I can already imagine the space of the chair.

And I know in my vision that I have saved a picture with a table in it.

Another thing that also fascinates me is the sound of dance - yeah - how can you produce sound when you move - without having, like I mean - it's not just making sounds - it's like when you move - for example _____ this movement or _____ this movement, the sound of this movement, the sound of it.

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4

Campbelltown, Nov 2018

There was once - I was thinking – can we not ‘see’ the dance, but ‘hear’ the dance.

You get, you get like the - almost like the negative space that leaves this sort of gap - that might be the real, real thing - or something?

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5

Campbelltown, Nov 2018

And when I talk about memory it's not because I am - like interested in memorization as this like... catching every sort of thing - but this weird... You know umm sandcastles, you build a sand castle and then a wave comes in and it kind of washes out and you're left with this like... strange little... lumps.... Memory feels like that. Like the things that were important, or where there was the most tension, residue, residue, like traces, and where that is not maybe what the person was intending, but it's where there's maybe _____ gaps, where there's something that is strange, or something that's... where there's an issue.

All the movement just completely disappears.

The body that's moving just becomes this vague ghostly presence. Whereas, the objects that stay still in the space, like the building, they... they don't move and so they remain really concrete and have this weird presence through time.

Campbelltown, Nov 2018

I saw there was a snail walking. I came back maybe 20 or 30 minutes later and I still see the snail walking in the same frame. I really feel angry so I stay. After 55 minutes, suddenly the frame zooms out. So it was apparently in a park and the snail is trying to cross the road to another park - and at 59 - so it's zoomed out and you see the environment where he is crossing, and you see people and the choreography of the situation - and at 59 minutes (and perhaps 30 seconds) - somebody steps - shit - he died.

You know those bits when the conversation goes really fast and there is this kind of nuggets of... nuggets? Where it's almost like you and I are having the same thought. As opposed to coming from here - and coming from here - there are random moments when the brains are almost on the same path.

Sometimes I think we don't have to give an answer, but there is this process that happens after - after a journey - there is some kind of realisation in between - some people think it's cruel, the way it is made - that somebody steps on it - but also that, that is just nature- or it is life. Life and it's about waiting, but also valuing that - that time which is just - just being.

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7

Sydney / Hong Kong, May 2021

There's this gap in between the water and the screen.

And then, so then there's the question of how we - how you and I - orient.

Alongside one another, face to face, on screen, or at the edges of a body - of water

Like the quote you found about the tide in the body...

Just give me - a moment - OK, because the - the internet is a bit, bit

Frozen...

Sydney / Hong Kong, May 2021

But I like this - what you said about orientation. Because when was the last time - when was the last time we - I mean when...

...we left

When we left off it was 2000, 2018 in Campbelltown

There is this character, this elderly woman who has taken care of this studio for the past twenty, thirty years - and - and she had dreams that - about - so the rhino, the rhinoceros, is telling her that you should leave your studio - you should go and find your real voice - and but she, she couldn't leave the studio - she had to take care, you know the studio, the studio is like her zoo, but she belongs to the forest, so the rhino kept telling her you should leave, but she was thinking she cant leave, because she is a zoo rhino.

And in the end... she talks about getting old - as kind of this long sentence - that goes on and on and on - that you have to live - and it's full of these clumsy punctuation marks that don't quite neatly finish off an end.

Sydney / Hong Kong, May 2021

Like - I have this, this friend - I really love her a lot. And she always writes in long sentences, very, very long. And most of the time I can't understand and so I couldn't respond to her - it was delayed for two years - so - and she was so intense - that her sentences were like to me... a chant (hahahah) or like a buddhist scripture - that that it was ringing and ringing for two years and then suddenly - I got it! Hah. But it was too late, because - because after a while, being this wall with short sentences, against these long sentences, the long sentences just give up and go away.

No because, I remember when I first saw you - when we spoke last year - I can feel really like a certain kind of _____ yeah I think - shock I think - about - what had happened - a bit lost - in terms of like - you know all the things that I'd oriented myself by.

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10

Sydney / Hong Kong, May 2021

See - I, I forgot what we were supposed to do - a long time ago but what happened during the process of long merging - we have - we have experienced a certain

Fragmentation... and frozen moments...

Like, like how we notice things as strange.

Because - what is so apparent - is just the question - to stay or to leave.

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11

Canberra / Sydney / Hong Kong, May 2021

(With Dr. James Hitchcock, Aquatic Ecologist)

It's like the area where rivers flow into the ocean... like the river mouth ...you know where the river is kind of spread out.

Like there are tides in the body.

It's like another kind of strange place that we share, that we inhabit together.

So, how can we meet on this horizon?

Well, like... to give you a sense of scale, that's how big my finger is - it looks like the night sky - like a night sky with comets or shooting stars. Some of them move very fast, so they just sort of disappear. What about the things that seem to be staying still? They almost look like lights... They're a kind of algae, they're really beautiful, they're actually a collection of different algal cells, but all joined together to make a circle and they just kind of naturally float around.

These other ones are hard to make out, these are little animals, so this is the smallest animals that exist on the planet, they, they're animals in that they're, umm, they have sexual reproduction and they're made up of multiple cells, but they're still really tiny, so you can see they're 1 tenth, 1 twentieth of a millimeter.

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12

Canberra / Sydney / Hong Kong, May 2021

(With Dr. James Hitchcock, Aquatic Ecologist)

Is it, is it live? It's sort of 1 millilitre of water squished.

They're similar in maybe the same way a forest is similar, like you might go to a forest, and there's big trees and there's small trees and there's decaying stuff on the floor and there's going to be birds, so in a similar way like that, but there will always be different collections of things and how they live and the things they do there, will kind of vary, I guess.

I feel they are doing something using an instrument to look at what is not visible through what is visible... so perhaps there is this different study about what is not seen, and you collect this with instruments, that umm, that give visibility...

... it's about energy, you know we want to, because a lot of instruments don't measure directly the thing we're interested in - mmm - they measure the kind of other sorts of things, ...like if we want to know how many sediments are in water we collect some of that water and shoot a light at it and then measure how quickly the light, how much the light scatters everywhere, and so that is the measurement - even though it's not an actual measurement of the, of the thing.

Berlin / Bendalong / Hong Kong, May 2021

(With Dr. Dadiyorto Wendi, Climate Data Scientist)

Ahhhh...our australia time understanding is a different one

Yes, the Sakura... you know the cherry blossom.

So it is basically a revisit of the pandemic times in 1300-1800 when there was...we had a little ice age.

The yield from crops and harvest failed. So there was lots of famine in the world and then several pandemics of plague. And this little ice age climate can be inferred by the sakura blossom. Because they were described in so much detail in these scholar's writing and painting - and because of what we know from them about - the dates and the description of the trees - we know... the whole northern hemisphere felt almost apocalyptic. And on top of that there was war and colonisation, presumably due to famine as a driving force....and no vaccine, no cure for the plague.

Hong Kong / Sydney, Feb 2022

Where I am, it's kind of a boatyard, so there's the sound of people working on boats. I think our time. It's always missed. When we perform in Carriageworks and we cannot sync in time no matter how much we try..... We are delayed - so how do we comprehend this out of time delay, at a time when we, when we are very much synching?

I think it will be brought by the wind to Hong Kong - right?

We have this landscape - that is choking, which is beautiful - it's misty and it's like smoke, white - you know if you see a painting and it is white on white, a layer of smoke - it's beautiful, but the truth is - it is one of the worst times and the air - it has a lot of choking particles, chemicals, you know your boyfriend says the small particles - because we are in between the sea and the sky, and the sea reflects up to the sky, but right now what happens is... the white sky reflects back on the sea... and it is white too, if you fold it as a book, if you fold it as a book, actually it's all white with all these micro-particles, but these particles are choking particles.

Hong Kong / Sydney, Feb 2022

Yeah because you know - in this place - I feel like I know you as a person but I think it's interesting in that it's the other way around... we're always working together under this, in this strange umbrella, but to be honest I've never seen you move.

Its, its, very much contemporary which I think I, I didn't really know what that was but I think I sort of like liked it - there was always a category in the competitions I did called contemporary which basically just meant like, so to be as strange as possible...

One day I saw the TV news - and it had a person with long hair trying to do a painting with their moving - kind of thing. I always like to do painting - but then I thought wow, you can combine these things using your body to do a visual thing and then I went the audition, because then contemporary was very very much at the beginning, nobody really did contemporary

Hong Kong / Sydney, Feb 2022

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16

I don't know - I mean I guess, I always I worked with women - where, where I'm sort of like the person that they're kind of... not... they don't own you but like they inhabit you, and you can see that they're kind of like, like kind of putting themselves into your body - like this choreographer I worked for, she always had me as some sort of cat or beast sort of thing... and then this choreographer I was working for - it was clear that she intended to make this solo on herself - but she couldn't because she was pregnant and so then I became this like vessel that she like poured all her emotions into - so yeah these sort of like intense relationships that are not bounded.

So in the end we meet in substance and particles, mmhmm. Or something you know. Or nothing. We become nothing... Just a pure gap. Just pure gap.

So we need to find this emptiness at the end.

I think it's interesting because like... listening sort of becomes a metaphor for this more sensitised way of connecting or like being in touch with what's going on.

A Strange Place 0.1 - Transcripts of Conversations 2018-22

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17

It's like, for example I hear the, the, the sound of dance, when I see someone moving I hear the sound of dance, because you know...

I think they're the sort of things - they're these more textural sort of things that it is hard to speak about - but somehow talking about it through the idea of listening makes sense. So, like the shape of movement has sound. So if we do a movement like this _____ it has sound or this _____ has a sound even though hearing it _____ is a sound, _____ is a sound.

Hong Kong / Sydney, Feb 2022

A Strange Place 0.1 - Transcripts of Conversations 2018-22

Elysa Wendi and Rhiannon Newton (shared "I")

18

... so, so it's, it's very descriptive... "A woman is standing and there is a man. She is trying to jump on him and he bends his knees and she falls down" - so it is very, like, descriptive. But it doesn't work for me. If I was to describe this movement I would use like poetic words. But then, you know, they said to me "don't let them hear your subjective point of view, let them see it through your words..."

It kind of talks about the different senses and how they contact us - that smell and taste are these things where the particles from the object have to like physicality touch and chemically react with the surface of your mouth or nose, whereas sound and light, its you know always at a distance, and it's this sort of movement through the space - frequency - I don't know, sound waves, light waves, that put you in contact with things that are not actually touching your body. And that, that sound is not about the exterior of an object but it's about the inside of it, so like you're learning about the inside of the thing when you hear.

Hong Kong / Sydney, Feb 2022

(With Peter Lenaerts, Sound Artist)

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19

For me, I mean I get a lot of sensation out of seeing movement also by hearing the movement and I think that is, that is not just my brain but how any brain works?

The best... the easiest example, you know you are standing, have you been to Australia... standing on any beach in Australia, yeah...the power of the Pacific Ocean is so intense and when you are standing there ...what you hear is all the details, right, of the surf, of the water crashing of the sizzling of the wave that rolls in - and then underneath there is this sort of like - you can sense this really deep rumble - which is coming from like what 40,000 kilometres away. You can just sense this power. Because... I forgot the name now...there is a mechanism in our brain that automatically reduces the low frequency...and then it enables us to have conversations...

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20

Also because the connection to, you know these cables that go under water, that is the connection between us - and because of course - sound does have movement - yeah I mean it is movement.

I did not grow up next to the ocean...it blew my mind...it is a sort of power that...I think it is different in Hong Kong...you know that sort of ...nature is not scary in Europe...

I, I grew up by the ocean so that kind of intensity of waves ...I love that - and like ...being pregnant... I am trying not to let the impact of the waves hit my stomach...but I still find it so energising ..it is such a physical thing...there is something so powerful in that force..and it is something to do with that feeling of... of what is it that, that is producing this intensity ...?

So... so where we are at the site of the sea...the space is like a container, like a parcel that will bring it over...like a filled up balloon with all these sounds...and we release the air with of all these sounds..you know what I mean..like someone fills up a balloon with all of the sound and all the frequency from Hong Kong and Australia and releases it.