

THE PLEASURE OF ENACTMENT: ECLECTIC ARTIST PRACTICES OF
DANCERS AND DANCE MAKERS FOLLOWING THE JUDSON ERA

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DEDICATION

For my parents, Maxine Ann Thompson Livingston and Robert Philip Livingston, and my siblings, Kristine Livingston Larsen, Natalie Livingston Labrash, Roger Philip Livingston, and Brian Thompson Livingston, thank you for your loving presence in my life.

For Dr. Marjorie Schuman, thank you for so gracefully illuminating the bodhisattva path. I am forever grateful.

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ABSTRACT

LORETTA LIVINGSTON

THE PLEASURE OF ENACTMENT: ECLECTIC ARTIST PRACTICES OF DANCERS AND DANCE MAKERS FOLLOWING THE JUDSON ERA

MAY 2020

The territory of this dissertation and the inquiries that drive it reside in features and meaningfulness of *practice* for a purposeful sample of nine experimental dance artists who began their dance careers in the 1980s and 1990s and who have links to avant-garde mentors who came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s during what has come to be known in the professional concert dance world as the *Judson era*. Following the groundbreaking *Judson era*, concert dance making and performance practices opened to broad eclecticism, inviting emergent dance artists to shape their practices in individualistic and innovative ways, mixing and intersecting multiple approaches to dance embodiment through somatic studies, improvisation techniques, martial and contemplative arts, other arts disciplines, and interactions with nature.

In this artist-based qualitative study, the purpose is to listen to artist-participants describe what it feels like to be inside one's practice, and how having a practice supports their lives. The focus of the inquiry is on the subjective experience and personal value of each artist's practice. The artists included in the study through open-ended conversational interviews are Claire Filmon, Kathleen Fisher, K.J. Holmes, Luis Lara Malvacías, Kara

Jhalak Miller, Melinda Ring, Melanie Ríos Glaser, Michael Sakamoto, and Roxanne Steinberg.

As the researcher, I find affinities between my dance making practice and qualitative inquiry that support the dissertation study. I devise a writing style that features a choreographed mix of the nine artist-participants' voices, my informative and creative voices, and the voices of experts and scholars in other disciplines. I invent and employ a fictitious character who brings the total of research participants to nine, plus one. Using the Nine Plus One Voice throughout the dissertation, I offer movement scenes as interludes that invite the reader to experience movement in everyday adventures. I aim for the entire text to embody a sense of rhythm and motion, acknowledging dance and dance-like words as vehicles for knowledge of self and world.

While honoring the uniqueness of each artist-participant's experience of one's self in practice, I acknowledge a deep spirit of adventuresome experimental dance that unites them.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: TO BE ALIVE, TO MOVE, TO PRACTICE

All things are endowed with original practice
within the original face, which is impossible to measure.
—Eihei Dōgen, *Bendōwa*

Awakening, Entering, Learning the Territory

The tiny human being flips, wiggles, kicks, shapes itself, and changes positions in the dark warm space of the mother. Later, leaving the mother's body and coming into a world that receives it, the small being takes a breath. With the breath, a narrative tied to a bigger world awakens, and the little human is thrown into a brilliant chaos of aliveness.

An entrance into a new world offers opportunities for the newcomer to experience fresh sensations, attune one's perception differently, and gather enough initial impressions that the features in a landscape become recognizable. As the newcomer begins to grasp the scale and scope of the territory, perhaps deeper curiosities about it unfold: What and who live in this world? What do the inhabitants *do*? How, if at all, do they fit together in a community? What is their history? What do they share? How are they different? What is it like to be them? The newcomer becomes a researcher.

Or maybe not. Maybe the tiny human being wiggling and kicking in the first sentence of this page learns through time to organize the brilliant chaos of aliveness by becoming an artist. A movement artist. A dancer. A dance maker. The territory that the

little wiggler enters becomes known as *practice*. An artist's practice. Perhaps practice becomes a profoundly resonant space for learning.

Practice as a Topic

The territory of this dissertation and the inquiries that drive it reside in features, utility, and meaningfulness of an artist's practice over time, and the use of eclecticism as a force for expanding range and innovations in practice. In this case, the concept of practice is home for a small group of experimental dance artists who are fully mature and productive, functioning well through their eclectic artistic careers. For an artist in any discipline, practice is a space for many things, certainly, a place for becoming familiar with domains, developing skills, experimenting with ideas, cultivating awareness of self and world, and accumulating knowledge of a "self" within shared communities of disciplines and lineage. Within the territory of practice, the artist engages in an individualized mapping of knowledge required by the art forms she embraces. The artist creates an alive topography, one in which configurations, features, distinct areas, and outlines within practice change as the artist grows.

Perhaps in the fruitful environment of practice, the tiny human we meet on the first page becomes both an artist and a researcher. In addition to perfecting her movement skills, perhaps she takes a breath and begins to write. Perhaps she choreographs a text, invites the reader in, hosts the performance, and allows each participant to define or decline engagement with the work being presented. Her work begins to reach toward and include a community, beginning a moment of intertwined participation — a shared performance event.

This very moment is the time to begin the performance of this dissertation, to allow the audience-reader and artist-author to meet on the page. This is the moment to enter the event (curious), to watch where the mind-eye-heart wish to go (alert), to respond as is authentic for each person (uniquely alive) and to claim some of the territory (together).

In these opening pages, as a dance artist who is also the researcher-author of this dissertation, I propose to the reader that the page serves as a platform, an arena, a stage for a choreography of a text that is meant to hold enough space for a reader to shape a personal experience within it. Inviting the reader in, I gesture and lean toward the heart of the materials — the artist-participants' contributions. In taking a path forward, I experience first-person-to-person encounters that form the layers of this study.

Practice, Eclecticism, Relationships, Lineage

In this research, I look into the eclectic features of a generationally-defined and aesthetically-related group of experimental dance artists as they describe their practices. *Practice* serves as a container, *eclectic* serves as a describer, *relationships* defines ways they work in their practices, and *lineage* serves as a reference point. Within the topic of lineage there is a link, whether strong or less apparent, to teachers and mentors who came to prominence in a time known in the professional field of western concert dance as the *Judson era* (briefly described historically later in this chapter). In using the term *Judson era*, I reference a time of experimentation that serves as a backdrop for the beginnings of my inquiries into eclectic experimental dance practices that serve artists after the Judson era.

I have recruited dance artist-participants who, in varying ways and degrees, have connections through their own dance practices to some of the aesthetics, creative procedures, and ways of training and performing that grew from the dance experiments in the 1960s and 1970s in the Judson era. I give attention to the Judson era not as the foremost topic of the research, but as a shadow, a tether perhaps, that links the participants through overlapping or shared artistic heritage and aesthetic proclivities. How the topic of lineage appears in ensuing chapters depends on how the artist-participants choose to articulate their alignment or deviation from ideas that inhabit a Judson influenced practice.

The dance choreographies that emerged in the Judson era came to be collectively called *post-modern* in early days and later smoothed to a hyphen-less *postmodern*. The term *postmodern dance* originally signaled an iconoclastic approach to dance training and making that flourished in the 1960s and 1970s (Bales; Banes, *Democracy's Body*). The innovations from that time can still serve as rootstock for the continually merging approaches to practice valued by some dance artists today. For dancers following the Judson era as they entered a professional dance life in the 1980s and 1990s — the time frame I establish for the dance artist-participants in this research — there were options for training and creating dances that invited breadth and interdisciplinary utility of movement practices outside of dance that could be applied to *dance* newly defined. The Judson era and postmodern dance are points in time that reference a moment of highly original artistic experimentation that, in part, provokes this research. However, the reference points do not encompass the whole truth of the artist-participants in this dissertation.

With points of reference softly in the background, I go forward as a listener and observer, conversing with artists who occupy present time and bring lively descriptions to defining their ways of working and methods of practice.

Existential Questions: Heuristic and Communal

A purely heuristic impulse in this research inquiry comes from my own personal and professional interest in how, if at all, a practice — regardless of the discipline, orientation, or community in which it resides — becomes a companionable space for the practitioner. For me, practice is a place in which the tiny human works, learns, comes to maturity, and enjoys aliveness. Is practice like this for others? My curiosity is a force that permeates this dissertation and spreads to the community of assembled artist-participants. Here, I alert the reader to noticing how the ensuing chapters carry undertones through the descriptions in interviews of deeply personal approaches to being human and being an artist. As their listener, it appears to me that the existential layer of questioning the nature of life and reality is never far from the surface of their responses. I revisit existential curiosity in the final chapter in this dissertation, “Ways of Concluding: Touching the Inside of Practice.”

Introductions Scattered Throughout

In service of introducing the dance artists who agreed to be research participants, I start by offering the reader my experience of the artists’ presence in our interview conversations. As artists and people, each creates a unique impression that I attempt to describe through a word portrait. My intention is to offer a glimpse of what it is like to spend time with each artist, sensing something about the person in a world of one’s

making. When a portrait appears in this text, I title it with the artist-participant's name and use the word *portrait*. Because the artists live in different parts of the world, I start each portrait with naming the location of our first encounter. Beginning with a snapshot or single scene with each artist in Chapter I, I offer more fully rendered portraits as the chapters progress and the artists inhabit more and more of the space on the page.

The dance artists participating in this study are: Claire Filmon, Kathleen Fisher, K.J. Holmes, Luis Lara Malvacías, Kara Jhalak Miller, Melinda Ring, Melanie Ríos Glaser, Michael Sakamoto, and Roxanne Steinberg. They are the featured and recurring “cast members” of this dissertation. I direct their entrances and exists in the flow of the text, inspired by their natural performances of being themselves. As the featured artists, they reveal the ways they engage with their practices. Their narratives also contribute to examples of ways that artists belong (or do not belong) and contribute (or do not contribute) to a lineage that evolves and flows, river-like, across generations. Through their narratives, I am able to design and choreograph a text for the reader that includes stories and voices beyond my own.

About Writing and Authoring

In this first chapter, I introduce the reader to two versions of my researcher-author voice that I use throughout the dissertation text. One version of my voice is informational, devising language to describe the components of the research project. My other voice comes through the actions and scenes featuring a fictitious character who moves through brief episodes interspersed throughout all the chapters. I explain the

creation and function of this alter ego voice later in this chapter, in a section titled “Introducing the Nine Plus One Voice: A Playful Mover.”

As for the style and structure of the writing for the entire dissertation text, I work to devise a mix of the nine artists-participants’ voices, my informative voice, the presence of my fictitious character — which serves as her voice — and, as needed, the voices of experts and scholars in other disciplines and areas of research whose works add breadth to my inquiries.

Coming from the professional dance world into qualitative research, I align with a writing style situated in creativity, belonging loosely to a “postexperimental” style, in which the “boundaries of qualitative inquiry are expanded to include creative nonfiction, autobiographical ethnography, poetic representations . . .” (Patton 80-81). My choice to work with “creative nonfiction” is an effort that trusts a bypassing of the “fact/fiction dichotomy” (Barone 108) within research and moves toward what is, for me, a choreographic mix of voices and a style of dissertating that speaks from within a place of dance and a space of an artist’s practice. Inspired by Barone’s comments, I humbly hope that my textual mix might foster “the act of reading as one in which a delicious dialectic tension between actuality and imagination may be experienced” (109). Mine is an ambitious proposition, but the attempt is appealing to me as an artist and writer.

As an additional design and content element throughout the dissertation, I place an epigraph at the beginning of each chapter. Each epigraph is an excerpt from texts written by Eihei Dōgen, a prolific and poetic 13th century Japanese scholar and Zen priest acknowledged as the founder of the Japanese Sōtō Zen sect. The purpose of the

epigraph is to provide a small mind puzzle akin to a Japanese Zen kōan, offered to the reader to ponder before or perhaps after reading the chapter. In a traditional sense, I use the literary device of the epigraph to establish a tone or an undercurrent for what follows in the chapter. Collectively, the epigraphs all relate to the topic of practice, forming an additional internal structure for the entire dissertation.

Here, I point out to the reader that I do, indeed, write this text as choreography. The blend of logic and intuition I use as a dance maker guides the composition of this text. Crafting words and composing a dance are not the same endeavor, but there are parallels in the process of moving ideas into bodily form and wholeness of thought. Perhaps the most prominent parallel is in the use of qualitative features that shift movement into the artfulness of dance and words into expressive text. Both words and movement can instill “a distinctive felt qualitative character” (Sheets-Johnstone 122) within a reader, a writer, a dancer, and an audience member. Words and movement also have the potential to bring a human being, dancer or non-dancer, into an awareness of one’s aliveness. The choreographer aspires to create in movement and the writer in words a space and time for sensing not only life but its ephemeral qualitative nature. Once the reader no longer reads and the audience member no longer sees the performance, what remains are the lingering qualities of the experience, and “a reverberating felt sense of its dynamics” (Sheets-Johnstone 132). Remembering bodily sensations in motion becomes a measuring device — a rich, imagistic archive of self-movement — that can power the creation of new choreography or text. Familiarity with being a moving creature on a living, moving planet is a resource.

Compositionally, I share with the reader my use of juxtaposition in offering the introductory contents in this first chapter, often placing an artist's portrait next to an informational section, as well as interspersing the fictional episodes in non-linear ways. I continue using this writing device in ensuing chapters, with the radical nature of abrupt juxtaposition gradually becoming smooth as ideas unfold and become familiar, altering the flow of the text throughout the dissertation.

Stylistically, I choose an abrupt use of juxtaposition in this introductory chapter for two reasons. The first reason is to use juxtaposition as a small homage to *radical juxtaposition* as it was used as a compositional device in the Judson era. The idea of radical juxtaposition often played a huge part in artists' processes and aesthetics across disciplines and genres among the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s avant-garde communities in dance, music, poetry, cinema, Assemblage, Happenings, Pop Art, and cinema, to name a few (Banes, *Greenwich Village* 24-29). It was so prevalent as a dance composition strategy among the 1960s postmodern Judson era choreographers that dance historian Sally Banes declares: "The key post-modern choreographic technique is radical juxtaposition" (*Terpsichore* xxiii).

The second reason for choosing to introduce the reader to components of the research through non-linear shifts and episodes in this first chapter is because abrupt juxtaposition mirrors how I first experience a new set of ideas that will become a composition — a dance, or in this case, a text. Offering bits and pieces in an eclectic fashion, I use the writing device of juxtaposition as another way to offer the reader information. Here, I juxtapose informational sections, historical contexts, word portraits,

and fictional episodes, inviting the reader to move through abrupt shifts, step quickly over seams, and experience the small details within the greater whole of ideas. I offer the reader or audience member an experience of momentary chaos that is, in fact, completely choreographed. Although my attempts may or may not succeed in using juxtaposition in these ways in this text, the strategy is interesting to me as an artist and forms part of my practice and part of this dissertation as well.

Lastly, in these introductory pages, I wish to be clear that although I am the choreographer-researcher-author of this dissertation text, I am not the center of this work. This study is not an auto-ethnographic project. My voice serves as a lead and an organizing force, but it does not speak the only truth. I am one among many who contribute to the aliveness of the ideas and experiences presented. I welcome all readers to enter this text.

Being in the World: Kathleen Fisher, a Portrait

South Bimini Island, Bahamas: Kathleen steps away from the desk and opens the door. Sunlight spills in. The bright Bahamian light momentarily bleaches the video image to a white cloud enveloping her figure as she steps through the open threshold. As she moves out onto the porch, fragments of low green mangroves and vast horizontal blue sky appear on my computer screen as she shifts her location. The door creaks as she lets it close. We are still connected in our Skype call; she is wearing headphones and carrying her portable device with the camera pointed toward her face. She looks into the distance to her left, squints in the light, and briefly smiles. She looks down to her right, then lowers herself into a bright blue high-backed chair. She presses backward to support her

head and spine, with her long sun-lightened hair framed by the blue chair and the white clapboard siding of the island house. She closes her eyes, smiles again, and exhales (12 September 2016).

Introducing a Study of Artists in their Practices

Kathleen is one of the nine dance artist-participants in this dissertation. As is true of the other participants, her ways of being in the world, being herself, and being an artist who manifests her work through the domain of the body help illuminate my research. At a fundamental level my inquiries are both simple and huge; they deal with not only artist practices but also the practice of life. I ask: What is practice? What is it like to be *you*, “in there,” *inside* your practice? How do you know you exist? Cleaving to the existential nature of much of the investigation in this dissertation, the participants reveal ways of integrating the components of their eclectic practices into their lives, making *practice* an enterprise of living one’s life. I maintain sensitivity to a hovering presence of a notion that is mine to ponder: How, if at all, does one grow a *self* through one’s practice? And if a practice provides a space for the awareness of one’s existential expansion, how does one speak of it? I invite the reader to accompany me in the final chapter, when I address more fully the existential questions underpinning the dissertation.

As the “choreographer” of this research, I disclose that I began, and continue, growing a “self” through the practices of movement, meditation, and appreciation of nature. For me, these practices gradually have become simply life, while self and identity dissolve into something else, something to do with aliveness. I feel that through practice I change. In a manner that I feel is healthy for the person I prefer to be, I become smaller,

less important, and more content. I used to call myself a dance artist. I am that, and I still use descriptive titles such as *choreographer* or *dance maker*, but I am also more than that. When I listen to the artist-participants in this research, I am constantly reminded that I am a human, practicing being.

At all times, the participants reveal their humanity as they share their stories. Just as they are trusting of going where their practices take them, I trust their leads and follow their narratives through this dissertation. I invite the reader to go with me.

Being Who You Are: Claire Filmon, a Portrait

Paris, France: With her dark hair pulled back off her face and her trademark long braid wrapped into a knot at the nape of her neck, Claire listens, nods her head, and smiles as we converse through a Skype video call. A single long earring in her right earlobe rests against a blue patterned scarf wrapped around her neck. Her eyes are open and held to a point in the distance forward and to her left, with her right hand held against her mouth in a soft fist. She changes hands and moves her left index finger softly back and forth against her upper lip. She drops her hand, nods, and smiles again. She speaks in English, charmed with a French accent:

It's a very deep question. The practice I do, it is in this practice to be Me. I learned that. That's why I do it. And I know it's a gift. And it's also what I try to share with others. If it's a student or an audience, for me, the importance — let's say the evidence — can be no other way. I hope for everyone to discover who you are. And you never finish. Because you transform. You change all the time. So, it's really to connect with the moment. And it's maybe why I improvise, because I never felt so close before, so possible and acceptable that I can be who I am. (9 May 2016)

Introducing the “Nine Plus One Voice,” A Playful Mover

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I intermittently employ a fictitious character who brings the total of research participants to nine, plus one. Using the Nine Plus One Voice, I offer movement scenes, creating choreography for the mind. My task is to choose words that are nimble enough to bring the scenes to life. The Nine Plus One Voice is a mover, a practitioner of action. In engaging with her, the reader gets to jump, roll, tumble, run, swim, dream, and dance in her narratives. I intend these scenes to provide the reader with an entrance into topics and ideas that appear in the dissertation and can be conveyed indirectly, through images. Through the mover, the research story has a different feel. The Nine Plus One Voice offers kinetic ways of engaging with research “findings,” literally finding her way to the heart of inquiry through her body in motion in a greater living world.

Nested Storage: The Nine Plus One Voice

Imaginative figures rest like worn postcards in her body, ready to move when touched. In the corner of her mind’s eye she sees figures unfolding their limbs, old things from nested storage. Seeing them, she remembers eucalyptus trees moving in the wind and that spider crossing blades of grass, and maybe a bat flying at dusk or a red-tail hawk circling high. That mare with a white blaze down her face could trigger it too — the memory of movement. Something could happen onstage, she is falling, or forgetting, then she links herself to the archive and an image reaches up and grabs her. Movement happens, is restored to expressivity, she remembers it, she remembers herself. Gradually, she makes a sensate autobiography. Movement comes into service of artistic curiosity,

personhood, a vocation, a manner of contemplation, humor. Through movement she makes a world recognizable. Through movement she becomes friendly with life.

Situating and Contextualizing the Dissertation Study

The research participants in this study are of a generation of dance artists who began working as professional dancers in the 1980s and 1990s in New York, Los Angeles, Europe, Japan, Guatemala, and Venezuela. Related through their practices to some of the postmodern Judson era founders and their ways of working, the artist-participants' eclectic body-mind practices are both similar and different from each other in varying degrees, unified broadly through encounters with a lineage of avant-garde, experimental, and improvisation-rich dance.

In service of identifying where I fit as the researcher, I point to my West Coast modern dance training that contained a generous underpinning of improvisation and choreographic exploration but did not include the breadth of training in other movement disciplines available to dancers in the generation from which the research participants come. Although disciplines other than dance, such as Tai Chi, were being offered when I was a student at the then-fledgling California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in southern California in the early 1979s, my training, for the most part, followed an earlier model of learning stylistic and technical dance materials from a choreographer who embodies the lineage in which she trains and creates. After graduation, I became a professional dancer touring internationally in a one-choreographer company, which, in this case, grew from the California-originated lineage of pioneering modern dance choreographer Lester Horton, furthered by his protégé — the extraordinary dance artist, Bella Lewitzky. Bella

was my teacher at CalArts, artistic director of the company in which I danced for over a decade, and a powerful role model for me.

My history of training and performing modern dance puts me somewhat close in age to the research participants, but I am older enough that our pre-professional dance trainings were not the same. The comparison between the generational details of training for the artist-participants and those of mine adds context to an overall consideration of the ways in which the participants and I understand and envision our own practices — what we might take for granted and what we might question and revise.

A major distinction that I perceive between how the artist-participants in this dissertation and I came to maturity within our own dance practices is the influence of the changes in dance making and performance practices that exploded onto the avant-garde art scene in New York in the 1960s and 1970s. I am not old enough to have been part of that 1960s' shift in practices and I am too old to have become a student of the founding Judson choreographers in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. I was already a modern dance professional on the West Coast. I had some knowledge of, but no direct experience with, the Judson artists' work. I lived a continent-width away — the distance between New York and Los Angeles — and I was fully employed in the Lewitzky Dance Company. Generationally speaking, Lewitzky was 35 years older than me and 20 years senior to the Judson artists. For me, as a professional dancer younger than both Lewitzky and the Judson dance makers, postmodern dance was a distant, small presence that grew larger and closer as I matured and began to explore dance and dance making to my own taste

and interests. I admit to another heuristic impulse within this research: I want to know more about what I missed in the sixties and how, if at all, I connect to it now.

About the Judson Name: A Moment in History

Judson appeared in the 1960s as a descriptor for a group of artists coming from diverse disciplines such as dance, theater, painting, sculpture, scenic design, and music, who committed to experimenting and making new modes of performance. Judson takes its name from the physical site of the Judson Memorial Church, a Greco-Roman-styled building located at 55 Washington Square South, in Greenwich Village, New York. Banes describes it as a lively place in the early 1960s: “Already the site of Happenings, the Judson Poet’s Theater, film screenings, and the Judson Gallery, where exhibitions of Pop Art and political art were held, the Judson Church soon became the center for avant-garde dance in the city” (*Democracy’s Body* xi).

In this dissertation, I use the word *Judson* as a point in time referring to seminal shifts in concert dance artist practices. Judson became an adjective of its time, sometimes occurring in titles — Judson Group, Judson Dance Theater, Judson Church — and sometimes describing common nouns relating to activities and people — Judson dancers, Judson concerts, Judson dance workshops (Banes, *Greenwich Village* 66-73). As time passes, more terms have been created to refer to that era as a moment deeper in the past attached to choreographic or training styles, such as Judson legacy, “Judsonite,” or post-Judson. Bales notes: “‘Judson’ has almost become a synecdoche for an artistic worldview in dance, although the explorations represented a multiplicity of world- and other views from the onset” (157).

When referring to the Judson era in this dissertation I designate a rough time frame of 1960 to 1975. I start with 1960 because it marks the beginning of major shifts in American modern dance choreographic practices instigated by a small group of emergent choreographers studying composition for dance with musician-composer Robert Ellis Dunn at the Merce Cunningham studio in New York. Other dance scholars, such as Bales, may prefer to link the Judson era to the records of the performances under the name of the *Judson Dance Theater*. For Bales, the Judson era refers “historically to the years from 1962 to 1964 when works were produced at the Judson Church in New York City” (156). During the two-year period, there were many collective performances shown at the Judson Church by a variety of dance and other discipline artists who participated in Dunn’s classes. For breadth in this study, I prefer the 15-year time frame for the Judson era rather than the two-year period representing the life of the Judson Dance Theater in its production of public concerts. Extending my time frame beyond the 1960s allows aspects of Judson practices to be considered that historians, such as Banes observed, include enduring themes such as the use of humor, physical theater, and improvisation onstage (*Democracy’s Body* xvii-xviii).

Establishing a time frame for the experimental artistic developments of the Judson era as 1960 to 1975 allows me to include the start and rise to fame of the dynamically expressive Judson era collective improvisational performance group, the *Grand Union*, shortened from “its corporate name, The Rio Grande Union” (Banes, *Terpsichore* 208). Grand Union began in 1970 and ended in 1976, extending just one year beyond my time frame, but I include it, nonetheless, as the final collectively directed and performed

Judson group endeavor prior to a general diasporic dispersion of Judson dance artists elsewhere beyond New York in the 1970s. As an entity, the Grand Union vividly retained the identity of iconoclastic work: “There were no answers, no goals, no expectations. Just two hours or so to look at some things. To try out . . . What is preference? What is choice? What, in fact, is improvisation? . . . What is performance?” (Banes, *Greenwich Village* 215).

Historically, the two-year lifespan of the formalized Judson Dance Theater was brief (1962 to 1964), but the dances made and performed during that time continue to have an interdisciplinary reach and experimental touch, marking a lineage of experimental dance making that continues to evolve. The Judson influence appears underneath and threaded through choreographic ideas and artist practices of dance makers and performers who work broadly within aspects of the Judson lineage. The Judson lineage also remains variously linked in its own history to influences by its forebears — earlier experimental artists in the pre and post-World War II years — including composer John Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham in New York, experimental dance maker Anna Halprin in the San Francisco Bay area, dance theater and performance art pioneer Rachel Rosenthal in Los Angeles, Japanese avant-garde Gutai Group and High Red Center, and Japanese butoh founders Kazuo Ohno and Tatsumi Hijikata, who influenced younger Japanese avant-gardist and founder of Body Weather Laboratory and Body Weather Farm, Min Tanaka, an important root figure for at least three of the participants in this study. All this potential artistic upheaval opened many creative doors for generations of artists to follow.

Past and Present: Mentors and Offspring

Although this dissertation study is framed partially by the past, the research is placed firmly in the present through a focus on the nine dance artists featured: Claire Filmon, Kathleen Fisher, K.J. Holmes, Luis Lara Malvacías, Kara Jhalak Miller, Melinda Ring, Melanie Ríos Glaser, Roxanne Steinberg, and Michael Sakamoto. The Judson era artists' contributions to experimental dance practices were innovatively large. In the present time, almost 60 years after the Judson era's revolutionary explorations, there are dance artists such as the participants in this dissertation, who, in varying degrees, touch that lineage through their own exploratory expansions of what practice is and can be. As dance artists living highly accomplished professional lives and operating within practices rich in eclecticism, the artist-participants in this study may be seen as carrying traces of Judson era-related influences, under or mixed with other influences and their own artistic innovations.

Laying out some artistic genealogy for the reader, I offer that some of the research participants were students of founding Judson era artists such as choreographer Trisha Brown, master improviser Simone Forti, and the creator of contact improvisation, Steve Paxton. They also studied with improvisers slightly younger than the Judson founders, such as Lisa Nelson, Nancy Stark Smith, and Mark Tompkins. Others were influenced by parallel avant-gardists during the 1960s and 1970s such as Min Tanaka in Japan and performance artist Rachel Rosenthal in Los Angeles. Over time, the artist-participants' roles as students gradually changed, and some were eventually invited to become artistic collaborators with their mentors. K.J. Holmes danced in Simone Forti & Troupe in the

mid-1980s through early 1990s in New York. Kathleen Fisher danced in Trisha Brown's company for a decade and later became a teacher, stager, and "re-imaginer" of Brown's works. Michael Sakamoto was a member and featured performer in Rachel Rosenthal's performance company in Los Angeles in the mid-1990s. Roxanne Steinberg appeared onstage with Min Tanaka in Japan. Claire Filmon became a longtime performance partner with Simone Forti in Europe and the United States, and now is the designated artist to perform Forti's solos *Striding Crawling* and *Sleep Walkers/Zoo Mantras*. Looking at the professional histories of the participants in this study offers glimpses into how strands and trends in artists' practices might move through time and individuals.

As mentioned earlier in introductory pages, although I use the Judson era as a marker in time, topics central to this research include *practice*, *eclecticism* in experimental dance practices, artists' *relationships to practice*, *practice as a connection to nature*, and *the inside of practice as an existential space*. The appearances of lineage (or lack thereof) is part of this research, but not the whole endeavor. The dance artist-participants in this study are now mature artists who maintain practices that draw from improvisational, somatic, contemplative, martial, and other arts disciplines. The breadth in their choices reflects an openness to an experimental outlook across and within dance practices. As a cohort, they include a collective variety of activities in their practices, such as the Alexander Technique, apnea (breath-holding practice), Authentic Movement, Body-Mind Centering®, Buddhist meditation, Hindu chanting, hatha yoga, contact improvisation, costume and scenic design, improvisation as performance, media art, and

photography. They play musical instruments, sing, write, read, swim (pool and ocean), walk, and ride bicycles. They do what works and what they enjoy.

Looking back to their childhood and youth training in movement arts, they describe their years as teenagers and young adults during which they were introduced to training that included ways of working that were developed in the 1960s and 1970s, a mere (in historical terms) 20 years prior to the start of their careers. Comparing the participants' formative years to the nascent professional careers of their teachers, the oldest participants in this dissertation were born between 1955 and 1960, at the time Judson era dancers such as Trisha Brown, Barbara Dilley, Simone Forti, Steve Paxton, and Yvonne Rainer were settling into urban life in New York and beginning to study composition with Robert Ellis Dunn at the Cunningham studio. The research participants born between 1962 and 1967 were babies and toddlers during the beginning, peak years, and aftermath of the Judson Dance Theater. The youngest participants in this research were born between 1970 and 1971, coinciding with the emergence of the Grand Union, directed collaboratively by Judson artists (Banes, *Terpsichore* 203-218). For the artist-participants in this dissertation, beginning their young adult professional lives following a richly innovative turn in American concert dance and coinciding with the transition between the 20th and 21st centuries made for a unique setting of opportunities in which they could develop their own ideas, practices, careers, and lives.

In becoming professionals, the artists in this study not only had access to breadth in training techniques expanded upon by avant-gardists in the 1960s and 1970s, but also experienced inspirational glimpses of what those artists' practices looked like in

performance. They describe moments of inspiration seeing dancers and dance makers such as Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, and Steve Paxton onstage. The participants also mention being influenced by younger performers who were already working professionally with many of the founding 1960s artists. These younger professionals include performers such as Venezuelan artist David Zambrano and Americans Lisa Nelson, Nancy Stark Smith, Pooh Kaye, and Mark Thompkins. Nelson, Stark Smith and Thompkins became teachers of improvisation who continue to train and influence dance artists in international settings today in the United States, the greater Americas, and Europe. Other influential artists who were working as experimenters concurrent with the Judson era in other parts of the world also have inspirational mentor status with the research participants, including the previously mentioned avant-garde movement artist Min Tanaka in Japan and performance art icon Rachel Rosenthal in Los Angeles.

The Everyday Door: The Nine Plus One Voice

She sits in the house, feeling its presence like a blueprint in her mind, or a child's drawing. Simple lines marked in pencil on ordinary paper are enough to bring her ideas to form. She thinks of the ground floor as aliveness. The four walls work together to surround the floor, negotiating upward in space and never really finding stillness. A roof exists (with palm fronds that rustle), and a window offers an eye to the world. Inside the house, she rocks her chair forward and back, like a recurring bow, deep and respectful. Through the window she sees the landscape: green hills, a turquoise sea, the past, the future. She feels a sense of oneness with the world as it is. It is a rather large notion in a simple structure, like the house. She contemplates some sheep on a hill in the distance

and notices someone walking. A dog runs past, the sun sets. After dark, the window becomes a mirror for her own reflection. Did I say there was a door? There is a door. Hearing a knock, she gets up to answer it.

Changes in Dance Practices

In what follows, I offer the reader some specifics about the 1960s and 1970s models of working with eclecticism in dance training while concepts of *dance* were being redefined. As a Judson documenter, dance historian Sally Banes tells the reader: “The post-modern choreographers of the 1960s and 1970s saw their work as part of a continuing debate about the nature and function of theatrical dance” (*Terpsichore* xxv). Banes re-voices their inquiries: “‘What is dance?’ and ‘Where, when, and how should it be performed?’ and even ‘Who should perform it?’” (xxv). She credits the new dance makers in the 1980s with adding the question: “‘What does it mean?’” As for the 1960s’ Judson era dance makers, Banes answers the questions by noting the 1960s “attitude that anything might be called a dance and looked at as dance; the work of a visual artist, a filmmaker, a musician might be considered a dance . . .” (*Democracy’s Body* xviii). She points to the reframing of art that was happening in the 1960s avant-garde “. . . activities done by a dancer, although not recognizable as theatrical dance, might be reexamined and ‘made strange’ because they were framed as art” (*Democracy’s Body* xviii). The questions Banes describes as emanating from dance artists in a specific era are part of the deep and ongoing disciplinary questions in professional dance fields that flow across decades.

By creating performance events that challenged conventional definitions of *dance*, the postmodern choreographers in the 1960s and 1970s were also asking dancers to go beyond conventional definitions of *performance*, which created a need for different types of training. For the postmodern choreographers in the sixties and seventies, dancers had to be excellent movers, not simply good dancers in recognizable dance techniques. They had to be improvisers who were both bold and thoughtful, able to fulfill improvisational scores not only to the letter but certainly to the spirit of what needed to happen in any given moment onstage. Dance artist and scholar Susan Leigh Foster writes: “Throughout the 1960s, artists working in theater and dance as well as visual arts explored a multitude of methods for reorganizing the creative process to make room for extemporized action in the final presentation” (*Dances that Describe Themselves* 44).

Some choreographers enjoyed making a practice of leaving some areas of indeterminacy in dances made for performance, requiring performers to make impromptu decisions. Foster describes more of the internal workings of outlines for performance: “Many of the pieces presented by the Judson choreographers stipulated specific actions or kinds of action that should occur but left open the amount of time or place of execution” (44). Foster observes that these “framings of extemporaneous action relied on a kind of score or place for the event” (44). In short, the dancers were given a map with which to navigate, and it did not have all the signage in place. At that time, such an open map was an invitation into new improvisational practice.

Ordinary and Everyday Are Not the Same

In addition to being able to solve challenging performance puzzles as they may arise in open-ended choreographic scores onstage, Banes also notes the demand in the 1960s and 1970s that dancers be able to be “ordinary” (*Greenwich Village* 70). In the 1960s and 1970s, being “ordinary” onstage was revolutionary. Although fitting for that time, the word *ordinary* was not fully examined in terms of the assumptions that were being made about what an “ordinary” body or movement might be. The important question is: *Whose* measurement defines *ordinary*? In current professional conversations looking back and reframing aspects of Judson era work, the word *ordinary* is critiqued as being a term that assumes, without examining, a shared normality and range of ordinary-to-extraordinary in terms of bodies and cultures (Chaleff).

In her own historiographies of the Judson era, Banes looks back and points to choreographers’ interests in “quotidian actions performed in a matter-of-fact style incorporated into the choreography” (*Greenwich Village* 70). For me in my role as researcher-artist-practitioner, *quotidian* — the everyday — is a much better word choice because it points to the dailiness of practice. My focus in this dissertation is practice, whether in dance, sitting meditation, or wholly life itself. One commits to a practice and one does it. Every day.

Everyday actions utilized by postmodern Judson artists in their experimental heyday included such performative deeds as “cooking or washing,” “actual eating and drinking,” a “woman ironing the dress she was wearing,” yawning, coughing, laughing, scratching, and ass-slapping” (Banes, *Greenwich Village* 70). I wonder: Where does a

dancer go to learn ass-slapping? Probably everyday life (and currently to online media). Banes offers that the use of “daily actions . . . signaled a synthesis of art and daily life” (*Greenwich Village* 70). Dance historian Don McDonagh looked at the “major modification in the trained dancer’s body” of the 1960s a little differently in his then-landmark book about the “new” modern dance: “The choreographic outlines formed by trained dancers were ‘softened’ so as to include those more related to everyday movement” (66). Rather than “ordinary,” McDonagh chose the ideas of “softening” and being “casual” (66) as marks of the everyday in his descriptions of bodily changes in performers in postmodern Judson era work.

Warm Granite Mambo: The Nine Plus One Voice

She settles into stillness and places her mind at zero. The heat of the morning moves up through her spine as she sits in the sun atop a large granite boulder. A tune pulses softly in her memory. Noises in the distance echo. She shutters her eyes with both hands and squints across the trickling rocky creek bed. Are there people over there? Watching me? She stretches up into a stand and begins her best little mambo, humming the tune. Under her feet, she feels the warm granite as an everyday stage.

Handy Zen

The “everyday” was a term and topic adopted, in part, from Zen studies — such as the Zen axiom “everyday mind is the way” (Harada 54). Everydayness and Zen studies gained popularity in avant-garde art circles in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, changing the ways artists approached their practices following the end of World War II. Everydayness dovetailed well with interpretations and English translations of Japanese

Zen teachings that were appearing in experimental art communities, due, in no small part, to the influence of composer John Cage's interest in applying Zen philosophy to his practice of sound design, composition, and performance. In her text about New York's avant-garde communities in the early 1960s, dance historian Banes opines: "In every discipline, John Cage was the most influential father figure to this generation of artists" (*Greenwich Village* 28).

Zen teachings such as "everyday mind," "seeing things as they are," "practice and enlightenment are one," "no gap between self and world," "form is emptiness-emptiness is form," as well as many illogical Zen witticisms, took hold in various ways across the avant-garde arts disciplines (Kapleau 19-21; Pearlman 165-166). Certainly performing artists, especially in moments of improvisation, embody the Zen teaching of impermanence and reality as life "at this very moment" (Maezumi 118). There is a persistent paradoxical relationship between presence and ephemerality in bringing dance, music, theater, and poetry to life in the moment and then letting it go. Philosopher, art critic and art historian Arthur C. Danto looks back at that time and states from his perspective, "Overcoming the gap between art and life became a kind of mantra for the avant-garde artists of the early sixties" (Danto 57). Banes, too, points to the "general project: to weave together life and art. Previously, art had seemed to stand outside of everyday life . . ." (*Greenwich Village* 128). As an art historian, Danto reflects on the times, and offers connections: "Permission to make art out of anything — to make anything into art — came from Duchamp . . . the combined force of Cage, Duchamp, and Zen constituted an artistic revolution of an unprecedented kind" (57).

From my own triple view as dance artist, researcher, and Zen Buddhist practitioner, I can see the attractiveness of the deceptively simple axioms that exist as teaching tools for Zen principles of practice. In terms of a conversation about the appearance of Zen in avant-garde art-making practices that included dance during the Judson era, it appears to me that the short, pithy, witty Zen sayings presented an understandably tempting path to appropriations and transplantations. Sloganized Zen was handy in the 1960s and 1970s (as *mindfulness* is today, a term borrowed from Buddhism). In no trivial way, however, Zen offered new ways of thinking for people wanting to adopt a practice or world view that might better explain life and the human condition after the scope of destruction that occurred in World War II (Pearlman x-xi).

I see benefit, not harm, in adopting aspects of Buddhist thought, but opine that it deserves a note in this dissertation that the Zen used during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s was deeply felt and studied by some artists and perhaps handy and part of a trend for others. A few examples of artists across several disciplines who chose a Buddhist life and whose work reflects not only Buddhist influences but also aspects of changes in artist practices after World War II, could include beat poet Allen Ginsberg and Northwest Zen poets Gary Snyder and Philip Whalen, as well as female beat poet, Diane Di Palma (Pearlman 129-134; 85). Snyder's and Whalen's poetry depicts glimpses of nature with Zen-like depth and simplicity, while Di Palma's commitment to Tibetan Buddhist practice appears in poetic images mixed with her strong feminist tone and voice. Happenings artist, essayist, and Zen practitioner Allan Kaprow writes about the boundarylessness of experimental art and the richness of life in the everyday, while

Cunningham dancer, Judson Dance Theater choreographer, and Grand Union founder Barbara Dilley left New York in the early 1970s to accept an invitation from Tibetan lama-guru Chögyam Trungpa, and continues to create improvisational approaches to dance in the program she created at the Buddhist Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado (Smith 33-45).

Here, I am faced with a tantalizing mind puzzle when I ponder the most visible artist who incorporated Zen philosophy into his artist practice and held great influence on other artists of his time including dance makers: avant-garde composer John Cage. I feel the pull of a paradox when I read Pearlman's note: "Though he never sat a formal sesshin or became a chanting, meditating Buddhist, Cage identified himself as a Buddhist" (50), or Fluxus artist Alison Knowles recollection of Cage telling her: "You will never catch me sitting on a black [Zen meditation] cushion" (Pearlman 64). Cage evidenced a deep connection to the philosophical underpinnings of an embodied practice yet acknowledged a complete disconnect with the physical practice itself. As a dance artist this is both baffling and fascinating to me. It would appear that for Cage, the philosophy was what enlivened his art making, and to move it into the body was neither necessary nor interesting. Conversely, as a movement artist, I would consider pulling philosophy into the body a very interesting proposition.

Cage's influence spread through the artists across disciplines who studied with him, starting as early as 1956, in his courses in experimental composition at the New School for Social Research in New York. Author Kay Larson notes the beginnings of his teaching at the New School as "A great spiral of Cageian influence . . . setting his circle

spinning in an ever-widening vortex (327-328). A direct conduit for Cage's influence on modern and postmodern dance was through his relationship with his partner, choreographer Merce Cunningham, and secondarily through his former student Robert Ellis Dunn. As mentioned earlier (see page 17 in this chapter), it was Dunn who taught the now-legendary composition classes at the Cunningham School in New York in the early 1960s to the then-young Judson era choreographers who thereafter rocked and shocked the western concert dance world. Dunn created syllabi for his dance composition courses greatly inspired by his studies with John Cage (Pearlman 86-89).

Framing the influence of Zen thought, whether handy or deep, as something useful for the artist-participants in this dissertation and as an aspect of lineage stemming from avant-garde practices in the Judson era, I think Banes points to something salient in noting "a Zen attentiveness to everyday life" (*Greenwich Village* 29). As their listener and observer, I notice a deep attentiveness in all the artists in this dissertation, and even though several mention sitting meditation, chanting, and hatha yoga in their daily practices, it is the attentiveness that creates deep resonance. The artist-participants' cultivation of spontaneity through improvisation and the assertion from several that they are process-based artists fits with historian Daniel Belgrad's placement of Zen arts "in the postwar American culture of spontaneity" in which "the creative process is ideally valued more than the artifact itself" (168). Belgrad's assertion that "Zen discipline cultivated an unself-conscious unity between mind and body, and between self and surroundings, emphasizing spontaneous responsiveness" (168) is beautifully applicable as a description of the skills and mindset needed by an improvising dance artist of today.

Broadening Eclecticism

As more doors to new techniques and attitudes about dance creation and performance opened in the Judson era, dancers responded by putting together eclectic regimens of training for themselves. According to Banes, dancers who aligned with the aesthetic of the postmodern movement in the late 1960s often “forsook regular dance classes for training in such forms as Tai Chi Chuan and Aikido” (*Terpsichore* xx). However, dance critic and author Deborah Jowitt points out that in the early 1960s, “dancers continued to take technique classes,” noting that “many of them could be found at the Cunningham studio . . . in morning technique classes at Robert Joffrey’s American Ballet Center” (322-323). Jowitt clarifies: “however, they viewed class as a way of staying in shape, not as a system for designing bodies . . .” (323).

Dance artist and author Melanie Bales expands this history of shifts in professional dance training by noting the importance of transformative techniques that “release” the body. “Release” techniques embraced “the *idea* of releasing from many things — old habits, old styles, tension, holding patterns . . .” (Bales 157). Bales points out that “Movement techniques that came out of the desire for a more ‘natural’ use of the body developed alongside choreographic pursuits” (158). Since the late 1960s and 1970s, through the burgeoning field of somatic mind-body awareness techniques, dancers have become interested in “the changing relationships within the body, sensing balance, and avoiding unnecessary muscular holding so the body is open to possibility” (Bales 158). Bales asserts that “all of those things can be said about Alexander Technique, Bartenieff Fundamentals, Bainbridge Cohen’s Body-Mind Centering (sic), Moshe Feldenkrais’s

work, Sweigard's ideokinesis, and Klein Technique" (158). Each of the somatic techniques mentioned offers a slightly different approach to refining and augmenting the ways dancers may choose to train.

Foster identifies a key feature of the phenomenon of dancers and dance makers altering their training practices to better suit the shifts in aesthetics and performance modes begun in the 1960s, proposing that by training in "multiple forms and genres," including physical disciplines from sports, martial, and contemplative disciplines, dancers "severed the connection between training and dancing" (Foster, *Choreographing* 68). Prior to the modern/postmodern experiments in new choreographic and performance methods for western concert dancers in the 1960s, typically what a dancer learned and perfected in a dance technique class was directly applicable to what the dancer performed within that genre onstage. Although this concept still holds true in many forms of dance today, it can no longer be assumed as the whole truth for some dancers who follow in a broad Judson lineage by creating dance training practices that feature somatic awareness, first-person bodily research, and improvisation techniques over the perfecting of a repertory of known dance steps.

Segueing now, I invite the reader to take a break from history and return to the present for more introductions of research participants. Below are impressions and glimpses of the seven artist-participants I have not yet introduced through a word portrait: K.J. Holmes, Luis Lara Malvacías, Kara Jhalak Miller, Melinda Ring, Melanie Ríos Glaser, Michael Sakamoto, and Roxanne Steinberg.

Pliant Origami: K.J. Holmes, a Portrait

Brooklyn, New York: It is September 8, 2016, and K.J. is brown from the sun. Her hair is sleek, and her limbs are muscular and lean. It is evening on the East Coast, and she has worked a long day. As we converse via a Skype video call, she shifts her seated positions often, folding her legs close to her chest, resting her left arm, bent at the elbow, on a bent knee, while alternately smoothing and ruffling the hair at the back of her head. She shifts and wraps both arms horizontally around upright knees. As she speaks, she alternates these shapes born of wrapping and folding, a moving origami sequence of triangle resting on triangle, bent elbow resting on bent knee. She manifests the unselfconscious flexibility and kinesthetic self-shaping of a lifetime movement expert. I ask her about her practice. “I’ve worked a lot with Steve Paxton and Lisa Nelson for many years.” She nods her head. “Especially in the nineties.” She nods her head again. “And Simone Forti as well. And I had the opportunity to work with Lisa and Steve this spring for three weeks. They invited twelve long-time practitioners of their work to come together and look at what we have put together about their different practices” (8 September 2016). She folds and rests her bent left arm again on her left knee and returns to smoothing the back of her hair, tilting her head into her hand. I know she is tired, but she continues. “And I realize that even though I’m not directly working with them as much anymore they’re a major blueprint or like a base for everything I do. So, I’ve been working a little bit on a solo that’s directly referencing them” (8 September 2016). She lets her left forearm drape horizontally across her left knee with a relaxed wrist and her hand falling downward. Her gaze is in the distance, and she exhales for a moment. I

notice her eyes are deeply set, her cheekbones form dramatic facial contours, and her neck is long and muscular. Everything about her appears grounded and present. This is a person who inhabits her body well.

Feline Grace: Luis Lara Malvacías, a Portrait

Southern California: I met Luis in a university dance program when he taught a master class, allowing me the pleasure of watching him move in the studio. I retain a vivid impression of his ease and fluidity in motion. With his distinctive dark hair, compact body, and remarkably integrated limbs and torso, he appears to be completely at home leaning into space, falling, gliding, tumbling, and rolling in sequences across the floor. Luis is a mover who seems to partner a flow of energy as a trusted friend. With elegant simplicity he manifests a conversation between body and space, evidencing his fluency with weight, gravity, line, and momentum. There is no hurry, only a seemingly effortless orchestration of action as he travels through space as smoothly and compellingly as a sleek feline (23 April 2015).

Hard Limestone or Sand: Kara Jhalak Miller, a Portrait

Honolulu, Hawaii: Kara's laughter comes easily in our conversation. We are speaking via a Skype video call on May 16, 2016. At ease in her home in Honolulu, Hawaii, she tucks a sweep of her cropped blonde hair behind her ear and smiles. "I would say for me art is a practice, art is a way of life, and I'm never in or out of it. I might ebb and flow. I don't think I'm ever out. It's always alive." Her skin glows with faint touches of sun in the island light. "I mean, think about the ocean, right? The water comes in, these waves have made this journey until they reach the shore. And that's kind of the end of

their journey. But it never really is an edge, right? It just folds back under.” Smiling, she gestures her arm in an over curve and a drop, like a wave. “And it just goes back out.” She rocks forward. “The edge is always a returning point.” She continues speaking about boundaries and edges. “When I was dancing in New York, we would dance for a lot of ritual services — Jewish, Christian, Buddhist — a variety of services that were brought to the Cathedral St. John the Divine. But that floor in New York was made of hard limestone.” She looks down, as if seeing the floor in her memory. “So, I would feel that cold floor and I could feel the edge underneath the bottom of my feet. But I also felt the vibration of the sound of musicians in that space.” Kara closes her eyes. “I felt on my skin the feeling of people that were around me in all directions, in the round” (16 May 2016). In the description of the memory she moves within the images. Her gaze stays downward and inward as she carves space around her body with her hands, gesturing in close brushes against her skin and curved paths that encircle her body in front, over her head, and around to the back. She opens her eyes and continues: “So the edge, even of my body, was not so clearly defined. I felt that the inside reached out and the outside reached back in.” She reaches her arms sideways and outward in space, then curves them forward to gather space and bring it inward, hands arriving at the core of her torso, just at the heart center. “So, there was a kind of reciprocity of inside and out, as if their bodies were my body and my body was their bodies. Whether that’s the hard limestone or the sand,” she smiles, “you know, dancing outside on the beach, it’s the same thing” (16 May 2016).

I Always Come Back: Melinda Ring, a Portrait

Los Angeles, California: It is May 19, 2016, and Melinda is making me laugh. She sits in a red chair across from me that nicely frames her black sweater, vest, black rimmed glasses, and dark hair loosely pulled back from her face. Her intensity, intelligence, and humor are palpable as we converse in an office in the dance building at the University of California, Los Angeles where she is doing a guest artist residency. “I was telling this to you — when does your practice start? I mean I told you nineteen? — What did I say? That I thought of myself as a professional, but that’s not a choreographer. I mean, I was ordering my sister and cousins around when I was a little kid.” We laugh. “Making them put on shows and things.” We laugh more. “So, I don’t know when my practice began. You know, there was a point where I was taking dance classes and we were turning so much I got so dizzy I decided to stop.” She and I are still laughing. Melinda is witty and intense; a born director. Although the memory and the telling are funny, I can feel an iron will for being in command of her art. She explains that her exit from childhood ballet was not really necessary: “I realized later that we were just turning to the right and I turn better to the left.” Laughing, she tells me: “I stopped, but then I found my way back” (19 May 2016). In the midst of her humor, I can sense Melinda’s deep and steady persistence in her focused commitment to becoming the artist she prefers to be.

Play: Melanie Ríos Glaser, a Portrait

Santa Ana, California: On August 31, 2016, Melanie greets me at the gate to the courtyard of her southern California home. She and her ginger-colored dog, Berkeley,

lead me into the cool interior. Following her, I notice her long white cotton skirt topped with a loosely draped delicate white cotton blouse. The house is quiet. We sit perpendicular to each other at one end of a large rectangular wooden table in a dining area. I appreciate the qualitative mix of readiness and quietude in Melanie's presence. With a dancer's lift in her spine, she sits in stillness, with her gaze fixed to a point in the distance. I have asked her a question and she is thinking about it. She inhales, and on the exhale begins to respond: "One of the things that practice does for me is," she pauses without finishing the sentence, maintaining her gaze to the distance. She tucks some strands of her chin-length brown hair behind her ear and her long bronze-colored rectangular earrings oscillate in a tiny visual echo to the action. She starts again: "It requires an open mind. And," she pauses, "a deep trust of instinct." She maintains a longer pause, and I hear a bird begin to chirp outside. "And a belief, or, I don't know if *belief* is the right word, but maybe an understanding that," she pauses while the bird's chirps become louder, "the invisible will be made visible." She moves nothing, only her eyelids, blinking. The dog sleeps on the cool floor near her feet and the bird continues to chirp. I love how her quietude is unhurried. Time extends in her presence. "And," she holds a longer pause, making room for the notes of the bird. "I also enjoy the play" (31 August 2016). Underneath the quietude, I see the hint of a smile.

It's All About the Body: Michael Sakamoto, a Portrait

Chiang Mai, Thailand: Michael asks me: "You know how Robert Wilson calls everything 'theater'?" I answer: "Uh hm." He continues: "I used to call everything

theater.” I say: “Uh hm.” Michael says: “Regardless of what I did.” My turn: “Uh hm.” Michael laughs. We both laugh.

Dressed in casual clothes and wearing headphones to sharpen the audio of our Skype video call, Michael is amiable and generous with his time and thoughts. It is June 22, 2016, and we are half a world apart. He is seated in front of his laptop, while his body is always in motion. His gaze travels from place to place, his hand gestures underscore his rhythms of speech. The shrugging of his shoulders, tilting of his head, smiles, and eyebrow lifting serve as punctuation. When he listens, he swivels his chair side to side. He makes me laugh. And he makes me think. He continues: “Lately, I guess because I now work in a dance department, I’m slowly starting to call everything dance, even though I’m talking about all the same stuff. Even if it involves narrative and character and viscosity and so forth. I guess it’s just a natural function of being more body-based, body-centric these days. I’m about to embark on a media project and a photo essay project and I’m really approaching them as a dancer and a choreographer.” Smiling, he reaches for a white mug with red floral designs and takes a sip of tea. He puts the mug down. Emphasizing his next thought, he points his left index finger straight up and says, “I will say what I would love to do — I wish I could just call myself a photographer.” I laugh out loud because his comment completely surprises me. “Because that’s actually my first medium.” He laughs now too. “Even though it’s not my bread and butter, it is something that keeps me sustained. And it’s something I’ve gone back to seriously in the last four years or so.” He tells me a little about a photo exhibit he just finished. “It’s all about the body!” He laughs. “My photography is all about the body and moving and

dance! And character. It's all the stuff I do onstage" (22 June 2016). Smiling, he picks up the mug again, takes a sip, puts it down, sits back and listens, swiveling his chair side to side, lightly resting the fingertips of his left hand against the side of his head. He maintains his smile.

Keeping All These Possible Things: Roxanne Steinberg, a Portrait

Venice, Los Angeles: Roxanne is elegant in her bodily carriage and artist presence as we speak in her home in Venice, Los Angeles. Her dark hair is loosely pulled back from her face into a long braid that falls down her back. Some streaks of silver hair tumble from the center of her hairline into delicate waving wisps that frame her beautifully symmetrical face, matching the grey linen shirt she wears. The open collar reveals her long dancer's neck. She takes her time speaking and thinking, choosing each word or phrase with considerable care. She appears to draw from an archive, a memory bank of sensations, images, and dreams that she prefers to articulate with words that come close to a perfect match. We speak of many things, but on the topic of sources for her artist practice of dance making and performing she gestures to the interior of her home: "I am a huge collector," she smiles and laughs, "of everything — books, fabric, costumes, objects." She pauses, smiling. "I feel like one of those birds that makes their home, you know?" We laugh, enjoying her comparison of herself to a bowerbird assembling a nest full of brightly colored found objects. "I draw from all of that in my dance work." Her house is filled with objects that spill across surfaces of furniture and shelves — books, stones, fabrics, plants. She adds more to her ways of working: "You know, when I'm working on a piece and let's say I'm working on costumes or designing

a bag or something like that, I'll be thinking about that more. I'll think about the physical things that I want to make, like my mind gravitates to things that I have to physically make." She looks around her living room. "I'm looking around, as you can see." Her arms and gaze sweep the room. "This is mostly me." She laughs. "My books are everywhere! You know, I can't, I don't limit things . . . I just can't limit myself that way. And so I keep all these possible things, all these possible directions that are sources of inspiration or exploration, and it's cumbersome." She laughs. "So, I love it, but it can also get in the way. She shares more about her collections of objects: "It's funny, it's not dead material. It might sit there for a long time, but I'll go through it and I'll go, this article, I picked it up twenty years ago and I put it aside and it's still bringing me questions and materials to explore." Objects become touchstones and triggers for her image-rich dance making and performing. She talks about "a certain kind of mix of choice and kind of lucky coincidence" when she describes the rightness of her fascination for choosing the thing that might tell or trigger a story. "There's a kind of synchronicity of ideas, it seems to be the right moment, the right time for that idea to live and explore, and I love that. And I was going to get rid of this, you know? But I have to keep it" (29 May 2016). She laughs, and her beautiful smile lingers.

Walking Through Light: Chapter Summaries

Just as Roxanne's beautiful smile lights up her presence, so do all the artist-participants illuminating this dissertation as a living text. I hope to keep their presence vivid as I invite the reader into ensuing chapters. In what follows, I give a brief statement of content for Chapters Two through Five.

In the second chapter, “Ways of Research: An Artist’s Methodologies,” my intention is to share with the reader the affinities I find between qualitative research and my artist practice. Noticing affinities supports a larger sense of freedom in my approach to qualitative research. Through awareness of affinities, I recognize a consistent set of behaviors I utilize in the research endeavor, forming features of what I now know to be my practice of research. In Chapter II, I also refer back to ideas and language in the original research prospectus and research questions. I close the chapter with professional biographical notes on each of the nine artist-participants.

In Chapter III, “Ways of Working: Practice is Like This,” I create for myself a task of describing how I see each artist-participant functioning in relation to one’s own practice. In each interview, while listening to a participant’s descriptions of experiences within practice, I simultaneously glean a sense of a contour existing between the practitioner and the practice itself. This dance between artist and artist practice expresses a long-standing working relationship. Additionally, in support of better understanding the artists as highly creative people who are able to master many disciplines and areas of expertise in their practices, I turn to experts within the field of creativity studies.

In Chapter IV, “Ways in the World: Practice with Nature,” I am provided with an opportunity for talking with the artist-participants about their practices as they extend themselves outwardly into the living world of nature. Many of the participants describe their experiences within outdoor environments, their relationships with animals, their responses to weather and climate, and how they enter a landscape as a mover. They use

these features of practice as fuel for their creative processes, thus revealing how dance connects them to a greater world beyond the studio and stage.

Moving toward concluding the dissertation in Chapter V, I make a choice to turn to the *inside* of practice. In “Ways of Concluding: Touching the Inside of Practice,” I reconnect with the basic existential underpinnings of the inquiry, referring briefly again to original language in the research prospectus (as I do in Chapter II), to direct the reader’s attention to my stated research trajectory of “focusing my inquiry on the subjective experience and personal value of an artist’s practice.” What this means in Chapter V is that by listening to the participants “describe how they inhabit their self-designed artist practices,” and how they answer what it feels like “to be *inside* their artful, eclectic embodied practice” (Livingston 4), I learn about their sense of interiority. I cluster the artist-participants’ answers to these “hard” questions about being one’s self “inside” practice, offering the reader the ways they choose to speak about it. I support the topic of awareness of interiority while moving by offering excerpts from essays written by improvisational dance artist-researchers and a philosopher-cognitive scientist. Lastly, I offer thoughts about wholeness and finishing, and I bring back conversations with the reader and the fictive Nine Plus One Voice.

Turning the Page

Thank you for reading the first chapter in this dissertation. I have articulated fundamental research topics and components that include experimental dance artists’ practices during and following a time of change that occurred in the 1960s; a glimpse of each of the nine artist-participants in this dissertation through an impressionistic word

portrait; the naming of influential teachers, directors, and mentor figures; features of pertinent historical reference points; and stylistic choices for writing and sharing information. I now invite the reader to enter Chapter II, “Ways of Research: An Artist’s Methodologies,” in which I share my processes and points of view about qualitative and artist-based research. But first, one more Nine Plus One episode appears.

Luminous: The Nine Plus One Voice

Crouching, she remembers entering the world kicking and screaming, sliding out of a mother’s body like a sleek otter, breathing hard. Aliveness to her means being upside down, reaching into light from shadow. Later it comes to mean being rolled by a wave and tasting salt, stepping into cold white snow, and jumping for no other reason than to feel the jump itself. Through living, she learns to move like a sad person seeing a dying person. She moves like a cat or horse or snake just to feel like a sibling in those families. She sleeps and dreams and knows in the dream that she is dreaming, and when she wakes she remembers aliveness again. At any time, she can experience motion as a life force, diving in and through states of being and consciousness that could certify aliveness if certification were needed (It isn’t). At all times, she can feel the presence of other animate beings, human and not human, in front, above, underneath, touching her consciousness. Or touching her skin. Or touching her heart. She swims and catches glimpses of sun, shade, blue sky, and birds as she turns her head to breathe. She lies down softly to see the moon at full. She understands what “luminous” tries to describe when her heart slows to a rhythm of sleep and her mind can still see the moon as old ivory in a black sky. At times, while moving she understands there is a switch for “off”

and its moment will come to her someday. But in the moment of knowing, she still feels alive. She knows aliveness like this.

CHAPTER II

WAYS OF RESEARCH: AN ARTIST'S METHODOLOGIES

The questioning alone, for its duration, is time.
—Eihei Dōgen, “Being-Time,” *Shōbōgenzo*

Rustling: The Nine Plus One Voice

On close inspection of the group, she notices here and there an eyebrow higher, a mouth smaller, a touch of paint smeared on a delicate representation of a lace bodice. Although their appearance is deeply similar, the ten figures are not identical. She nests them in order of size: large, smaller, smaller, smaller, smaller, or is it small, larger, larger, larger . . .? Leaving them at home, she heads for the tango milonga. In her role as follower, she stays close to her partners, keeps herself pliant, listens through her warm skin, and allows her entire body to perform the rich qualities of expression within each leader's improvisations. Many dances and partners later, she returns. Remembering the nested figures, she picks up the largest (filled with its kin) and puts it against her ear. Inside, she hears a bandoneón, faint conversations, and the rustling of painted dresses.

Giving Form to Inquiry

Questions. Questions. Questions. Questions. Questions. Questions. Questions. Questions, plus one.

Questions emerge from the minds of people who are curious about their world.

Using *their* paired with *world* is a way to state the idea that for humans, it would appear there are many versions of “the world” and “reality.” In this dissertation, the little kicking

human being I render for the reader at the beginning of Chapter I enters her world with enough innate curiosity to survive. It is already “her” world! As I author her, I see her thriving when her questions become interrelated, generating more inquiry, becoming profuse and complex, and allowing her to build a meshwork of support for her developing intelligence. I see her worldview emerging when I tell the reader that over time, a process and practice of inquiry can serve her in understanding related and integrated concepts of self, world, and others. She will come to her own notions about those things. As her author, by now I am sure that she will intuitively seek structure for her ideas as she matures. Her inquiries will eventually become gradated and scaled to fit one within another in a construct of thematic questioning that resides in a recognizable whole, like Russian *matryoshka* or Japanese *daruma* nesting dolls. Whether she forms a question drawn from the interiority of her innermost figure or from exterior presentations of her biggest self to her world, I feel certain her process of inquiry is shaping her worldview. The reverse is equally a truth: Her worldview shapes her inquiries.

Artist-Researcher: Affinities with Worldviews, Approaches, and Methods

In my act of rendering the little figure of aliveness at the beginning of this dissertation, I am revealing my own worldview that “reality” is imaginatively co-created by living creatures who find themselves in relationship to each other in the present moment. This view supports my process of creativity as a dance maker who works in collaboration with other artists to give form to artistic inquiry. I offer the reader the idea that the inquiry itself is part of the artistry. The artist is already dealing with aesthetics within the earliest approaches to a new creation, intuiting what features of a nascent idea

might be exploited toward artistic complexity and wholeness. For me, the *qualities* of a new dance are already tangible to my artist self, even if no particulars or structures have, as yet, been rendered.

Affinities

A truth for me is that an artist's methodologies — the ways in which an artist works from an initial internal question to an outward manifestation of a whole creation — are not that different from the methods a qualitative researcher uses to enact a study. In fact, I could propose that artists *are* qualitative researchers: they question, envision, gather materials, allow a design to emerge, and construct new work in ways that attend to qualities and particulars. By *qualities* I mean the changeable aesthetic modulations in the materials within an artist's disciplinary domain.

As an artist-researcher, it has been important for me to find affinities between dance making and features of qualitative research. It has been my experience that in finding such affinities, I access what I know as a dance maker and fortify a relationship with inquiry that is familiar and also applicable to a qualitative research process. Connections are present, for example, in Eisner's articulations of what makes a study *qualitative*, including naming "the self as an instrument," and identifying the person who "engages the situation and makes sense of it" (34), as, indeed, the artist must do. Eisner proposes a "positive exploitation of our own subjectivity" (34), and links it to the "*interpretive character*" (35; emphasis in original) of a qualitative study. Of course! The artist must pull from within one's own subjectivity and, in the act of transforming an idea into a concrete artifact or a performance experience, the process cannot help but be

interpretive and rich in qualities per arts discipline. As it is in my role as a choreographer coaxing creative responses from dancers, my process of interviewing and observing artist-participants within this dissertation research invites a similar attentiveness to what is unfolding in a conversation. As I listen, I understand that my own point of view as an artist is a subjective component as well. *Who I am* is grounded in kinesthetic provenance, aesthetic expression, and philosophical leanings, and through these features of selfdom come interpretations of what I encounter with others. I accept these interwoven features of subjectivity and interpretation as parts of the entire frame for this qualitative research endeavor.

Having chosen to write this dissertation text in a literary style that includes fictive elements, I find an obvious affinity with Eisner's support of "the presence of voice in text" and "*the use of expressive language*" (36; emphasis in original) in qualitative studies. Writing from his hybrid stance of painter, writer, educator, and researcher, Eisner offers: "We display our signatures. Our signature makes it clear that a person, not a machine, was behind the words" (36). Why is "a person, not a machine" important? I propose that it is because the voice of a fellow human being brings warmth to the reader, a kind of closeness, like dancing with a partner to beautiful music. Elaborating the use of voice, Eisner's words touch the sensibility of an artist's work being unique. He says it this way: "... qualitative inquiry places a high premium on the idiosyncratic, on the exploitation of the researcher's unique strengths . . ." (169). I trust Eisner's statement that "good qualitative writing helps readers experience the heat . . ." (38), like the warmth of close dancing. I aim for this warmth in my choice to offer the reader experiences of

movement scenarios through the stories the artist-participants tell as well as in the episodes and adventures of the fictitious Nine Plus One Voice.

Eisner points to qualitative research writing as a way of offering the “flavor of the particular situation, individual, event, or object” (38) rather than losing the flavor in an attempt to broadly generalize a research outcome. I view his mention of “*attention to the particulars*” (38; emphasis in original) as analogous to the necessity of attending to the “flavors” and particulars in dance making. As a choreographer, I must balance the smallest details with the largest concepts in the growing container of configurations that give heft and wholeness to an overall performance event. The evidence, so to speak, and the “believability” of a qualitative study reside, in part, in the “weight” and the “coherence,” and in the “cogency of the interpretation” (Eisner 39), just as those features serve as measures of artful dance offered to audiences and critics. Eisner states a beautiful echo between art making and qualitative inquiry when he writes a simple declaration of process, worldview, and measurement: “We try out our perspective and attempt to see if it seems ‘right’” (39). This can be a mode of inquiry for dance makers as well: We try it and we intuit its rightness.

Worldviews

From the perspective of my own worldview, I can align with Creswell’s note that “reality is subjective” and, therefore, there are “multiple realities” (*Qualitative* 17). Given my view of a co-created, moment-to-moment improvised world, Creswell’s assertion feels like an important affinity: “Different researchers embrace different realities, as do also the individuals being studied and the readers of a qualitative study” (18). A way to

say this in dance world language would be that the choreographers, dancers, audience members, and critics are all meeting at a performance event that they experience from their own professional roles, agendas, histories, values, expectations, and biases, and, they are all influencing each other in the shared moments of engagement. Charmaz states the idea of mutual influence well: “Neither observer nor observed come to a scene untouched by the world” (15). Her values as a researcher are resonant for me when she follows with the remark: “Nevertheless, researchers, not participants, are obligated to be reflexive about what we bring to the scene, what we see, and how we see it” (15). For example, as a researcher I might interview everyone at a dance event and ask: What was the performance like for you? Certainly, there would be hundreds of uniquely expressed responses from an equal number of worldviews, all of which influence each other. I would assign myself the responsibility to “be sensitive to the significant” (Eisner 170) in what occurred, rather than attempting to name what is real. My task would be to write what I saw and sensed in “the language of research” that I have chosen, which, in my case for this dissertation, is “a literary, informal style using the personal voice” (Creswell *Qualitative* 17), offering a reader some of the “flavor” (Eisner 38) of the event.

Within my philosophical assumptions as a person and dance maker, I work to be sensitive to the varying worldviews the artist-participants in this dissertation bring to their interviews. Having been recruited, in part, for a shared generation and a loosely-connected aesthetic lineage, they are, nonetheless, remarkably individualistic. In my approach to working with them, I am conscious of the need for a respectful relationship, carefully attempting to “lessen distance” (Creswell *Qualitative* 17) while we

communicate, yet equally careful to not overreach appropriate boundaries. I learn through the interview process that there is delicacy to be noted in cautioning one's self to make no assumptions about the worldviews of others. This same caution is appropriate in how I work with dancers in the studio, regardless of how they might appear to be aligned with my own aesthetic and artistic process. Within this care, however, is my enthusiasm for the quality of the unexpected in a collaborative process that invites intersecting differing worldviews.

Approaches to Inquiry and Research Design

Although my approach to qualitative research is artist-based, I also recognize an alignment with aspects of a narrative research approach and a phenomenological approach. Resonant with narrative research is my choice to focus on descriptions of individual *life stories* as told to me by participants in interviews. I agree with Creswell's proposal that the "information is then often retold or restoried by the researcher" (*Research* 13), in an effort to illuminate salient themes and topics arising in this dissertation. As for a phenomenological approach, I focus on valuing and listening to the *lived experience* described by each participant. I deviate from a classical phenomenological study in that I do not aim for essence, but, instead, point to truths that I hear from individual participants. There exist both similarities and differences in their lived experiences, yet all descriptions of their realities are truthfully essential to who each artist is. Simply said, they tell me what it is like to be them.

Within this mix of approaches to inquiry I use an emergent research design governed by inductive discovery. Because the cohort of artist-participants are "bounded

by time and activity” and the strategy is to “explore in depth . . . one or more individuals” within the bounded group (Creswell, *Research* 13), the research design also aligns with a case study approach. In this instance, the bounded group — the case — is a small generational slice of postmodern experimental concert dance artists with links to avant-gardists in the Judson era.

Methods and Features of a Research Practice

The most obvious method I use within a frame of conventional qualitative research is conducting open-ended conversational interviews with research participants. Within this method, a set of consistent features have emerged that I recognize as components of what I now consider to be a research practice for myself. The features function as a researcher’s attitude, stance, process, and commitment. The features are not what I would call *methods* per se, but are behaviors by which I abide as I work with the interviews, data gathering, analyzing, and writing of the dissertation. In what follows, I articulate a few of the features as I experience them. They have served me in ways that are lively, challenging, and grounding.

Staying Close

To focus and maintain a connection to the research participants, the information they so generously share, and the progression of a research plan, I had to teach myself to *stay close*. This feature of a research practice has been crucial as a remedy for my wandering and drifting in big territories of thought. Because the range of a dissertation is so large, when I could no longer see or hear the artist-participants’ responses, when the interviews were, for the most part, over, I felt I was losing touch, and touch is important.

Devising ways to restore a sense of contact was as simple as, for example, handling and marking paper copies of interview transcriptions, keeping paper prints of images of the artists in view, and making all materials easy to reach. These simple strategies manifested a feeling of touch, having proximity, and building familiarization with what the participants were saying. I eventually came to know where every salient comment resides in a paper transcription by visually noting the placement on the page. I could easily utilize this little library of paper goods when I needed to check notes, and I could quickly pull up video recordings of interviews to check gestures and body language. Staying close over time offers constancy, which fosters a slow and persistent awareness of a process unfolding. Through staying close within the chronology of a long research endeavor, I notice overall topics and themes that persist, and, through the persistence, I discern salience, telling me where my attention needs to be placed. The resultant attentiveness frames and supports a full elaboration of ideas, including choices to be made about what stays and what needs to fall away. The pertinent content stays close to me as I stay close to it.

Doing the Work

The statement is beyond simple: *Doing the work* is necessary. Within an imaginative mind, brilliant works of dance and products of research reside. However, although dances can live in perfection within the minds of choreographers, only dances tested on real bodies have a chance to actually become brilliant. Likewise, the daydream of a perfect text does no good unless written. In this dissertation endeavor, notions of a perfect text have broken me many times. The perfect text is as ephemeral as a vision of a

perfect dance, as yet not manifested. In *doing the work* as a practice, the effort becomes a regular, demystified, everyday intentional endeavor, like rolling around on the floor or sitting and breathing. A truth in my research practice is that to *try it* (a nod to Eisner), meaning to *do the work*, is to actualize the only antidote to inertia.

Paying Attention to the Things at Hand

Another obvious and simple feature of practice — whether it be, for example, qualitative research, dance making, meditation, Tai Chi, archery, or cooking — is to focus on the experience of being in a relationship with the thing being studied. Dance historian Sally Banes captures it nicely in her mention of “The phenomenological exhortation ‘Zu den Sachen!’ (‘To the things!’)” (*Democracy’s Body* xvi) when she writes her observations about “the manifestoes of artists in every field” (xvi) in the 1960s. “Poetry, music, theater, and dance stressed performance more than the literary aspect of their forms, aspiring to more immediacy, more ‘presentness,’ more concrete experience” (xvi). More than just a respectful nod to Banes for her descriptions of phenomenological penchants in 1960s and 1970s artist communities, or Moustakas’s phenomenological “first method of knowledge” that begins with “things themselves” (41), the demand for a full examination of an idea, topic, or subject requires an exercise in perception (What am I hearing, seeing, feeling, experiencing?). There is a “moment of absorption” within “a direct encounter with an art object” (States 370) or a qualitative research subject that requires “reality” to be assessed in that very moment. It is the immediacy of the encounter that hones the artist-researcher’s perception.

Choreographing a Text

Why not let a text move? Following the path of thought can be dance-like. Language has direction, shape, rhythm, drive, stasis, balance, asymmetry, texture, and qualities. It moves. I propose that having a writing practice that includes utilizing the pull, weight, and flow of ideas can be fruitfully calligraphic and choreographic.

Self-restraint

Silence gives an interviewee a chance to shape thoughts and offer them when ready. Self-restraint on the part of the researcher provides a frame that can be productively asymmetrical; it is an unusual dance filled with listening. The actions are not obvious, not known like repertory; they are improvised within a structure. Part of the practice of self-restraint in speech is to wait. Wait more. Wait for the best parts.

Trusting a Bodily Measure

Throughout this dissertation research, my body has offered feedback and commentary on my choices, progress, (or lack thereof). Each time I waver or doubt a direction of thought, my body agrees that the path is neither fruitful nor fitting by producing physical malaise. Every time I have felt overwhelmed, my body has manifested a sensation of unmovable leaden weight. In moments of flow, my entire musculature relaxes, and I feel something akin to happiness. When I have the task of articulating a complex thought, my entire body rallies to the focus needed, leaning into the effort until finished. When I am exhausted, my body toggles *off*. Simple conversations between us occur; my body tells me, or confirms, what I should do.

Being Sensitive to Form

I offer the reader the notion that not only discerning artists and researchers (and readers), but also other living creatures understand, at some appropriate level, patterns, cycles, invention, aesthetics, display, and wholeness of form. Aliveness in creaturehood has sensitivity to form. A feature of practice is intuiting the completeness of an effort, the wholeness of rendering, the manifestation of something envisioned and produced. Trusting a sensitivity to form is an asset for the researcher.

The selection of features of my research practice as articulated above, is offered in a sincere effort to provide the reader with a glimpse of the possibility of dual devising for dance making and qualitative research. Shifting now to more standardized features of a research endeavor, I move into referencing the particulars of the original, approved, research prospectus and five formal research questions.

Low to the Ground: The Nine Plus One Voice

She starts by pushing her nose through the leaves. There is a scent she is interested in following.

Referencing the Original Research Purpose and Questions

I return to the language of the dissertation prospectus to find the scent again. The trail I have wanted to follow as a researcher has remained the same throughout the entire process of inquiry: What is it like to sense one's aliveness and existence inside an embodied, eclectic movement practice? The query is existential, yet also practical, framed within a dance artist's experiences inside the activity of movement. In referencing

the original wording within the prospectus, I remind myself of the first searching impulse, shaped into a purpose statement.

The Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to listen to a purposeful sample of experimental dance artists who began their careers in the 1980s and 90s and align themselves within the spectrum of Judson/postmodern and avant-garde ideas, describe how they inhabit their self-designed artist practices. What does it feel like to be *inside* their artful, eclectic embodiment practice . . . in what ways do they *experience* a movement life that is highly individualistic? (Livingston 4)

Words and phrases that have remained key to this research include: *listen*, *experimental*, *describe*, *inhabit*, *artful*, *self-designed*, *artist practice*, *feel like*, *inside*, *eclectic*, *embodied*, *experience*, *movement life*, *individualistic*. The words grow from within the notion of an internal inhabiting of an artist's practice, using feelings of aliveness as a measure of being "inside," and using *practice* as a vehicle for awareness of self and world.

I offer more original language from the research prospectus below, shedding light on the particular trajectory of this research:

Focusing my inquiry on the subjective experience and personal value of an artist's practice differs from a more common research trajectory that asks artists about their accomplishments and philosophies but fails to address their embodied experience. Scholarly texts often examine artist practice as a creative process that leads to innovation and the production of master works. Although important, this concept of artist practice as a means to an end misses varieties of an entirely different model adopted by dance artists who consider themselves to be researchers as well as performers and dance makers, and whose personal artist practice offers daily immersion in the aliveness of bodily-being for its own sake. (Livingston 4)

Because many pioneering Judson era dance artists have been studied and interviewed primarily in ways that identify the particular of what they *do* in their practice,

but not so much about how they experience *being* in practice, I describe a point of departure for working with the dissertation participants as an “opportunity for learning more about their worlds, examining the uniqueness of ‘practice’ and the pleasure of its enactment.”

Original Research Questions

I devised the five formal research questions to be both broad and dense, allowing a large conceptual territory for me to investigate. Not all points in every question can be addressed, but key areas of interest have remained, including practice as a space for individual interiority; eclecticism in dancers’ practices; ways of forming a relationship with a practice; practice as a method through which to connect to life forms and environments beyond one’s self; the value of practice for the practitioner; internal interplay in practice between embodiment, creativity, and consciousness; and practice as a way to connect, reflect, and contribute to a lineage while allowing it to change, cleaving to the innovations of the practitioner.

1. What is there to be learned about contemporary experimental dance artists’ knowledge, curiosities, preferences, and pleasures by listening to the ways individual movement artists describe inhabiting their self-designed artist practices?
2. How might the long-term effects of change initiated by an avant-garde wave within dance and performance be tracked through individual dance artists who align with the new directions, yet feel free to elaborate or tailor aspects of those changes in individualized ways?
3. In what ways has the integration of physical practice that is not dance, such as Tai Chi, Qi Gong, yoga martial arts, somatic practices, Zen studies, and meditation disciplines affected choices for dance artists in their research, training, and dance

making following the Judson era and/or parallel post World War II avant-garde forms such as butoh?

4. How might the possibilities for supporting wellness and longevity in dance artists be informed by listening to artist describe the value and benefit over time of their self-designed artist practice?
5. In what ways might deeper understandings of the intertwining of embodiment, creativity, and consciousness in an individual dance artist's practice offer new knowledge about the personal worlds of dance artists and the ways in which they contribute to development and innovation in the field of professional dance?

Waiting for Partners: The Nine Plus One Voice

Arms positioned as if she has a ballroom partner, she slowly dances in a square of sunlight. Although empty, her arms feel full. She changes her facings, seeks a breeze, hears a bird. Wind scatters a tangle of shredded paper and floats a small brown paper bag up and out of sight, weightless and empty. She continues dancing and changing. The light shifts. Someone is coming.

Who Belongs in this Research?

I include participants who are contemporary concert dance artists who self-identify as experimenters, movement researchers, improvisers, and interdisciplinary art makers. Their professional histories occupy a certain time frame touched by older teachers and mentors who came to prominence as avant-gardists in the 1960s and 1970s in creative hubs such as New York City, Los Angeles, Paris, and Tokyo.

A Generational Frame

Specifically, I chose to recruit artist-participants who entered their professional careers in dance performance and creation in the 1980s or 1990s, born between the late 1950s and early 1970s. All have been working as artists for 30 plus years and continue to create and contribute to their selected areas of artistic expertise in present time.

Links to Avant-Gardists from the 1960s and 1970s

I looked for dance artists who have training or performing links to pioneering Judson era choreographers who came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, such as K. J. Holmes's close artistic relationships to Steve Paxton, Simon Forti, and Lisa Nelson, and Claire Filmon's long history with Judson era improvisation training from Mark Tompkins, Simone Forti, Lisa Nelson, and Nancy Stark Smith. I also include parallel time frame influential avant-gardists coming out of different communities, such as the influence of Japanese movement artist Min Tanaka and his Body Weather Laboratory syllabus on participants Roxanne Steinberg, Melinda Ring, and Michael Sakamoto. However, to be clear to the reader, linking the artist-participants to mentors does not overshadow the impressive eclecticism in practice that they have built in their own individualistic ways, the vitality of which is what attracts me to their work.

Eclecticism in Practice

I identified dance artists with broad practices comprised of multiple elements including, but not limited to, other arts disciplines, such visual art and design, photography, film, voice techniques, theater training, and creative writing. I also include artists who maintain an emphasis in somatic body-mind techniques such as the Alexander

Technique, Authentic Movement, Body-Mind Centering®, and the Feldenkrais Method. I looked for backgrounds in martial arts, sports, and contemplative body disciplines such as yoga, Zen studies, and meditation techniques. The research participants' dance training and movement techniques range from conservatory dance training at The Juilliard School, university preprofessional dance programs, Min Tanaka's Body Weather Laboratory explorations, urban street dance, and improvisation techniques. Among all the artist-participants, the one common element they share in their eclectic practices is the use of improvisation as a foundational reservoir for movement exploration, discovery, creation, and performance.

A Bigger World Beyond Dance

Although not originally included in my criteria for participation, in my early considerations of artists that I might approach for the research, I noticed that many include an aspect of artistic practice that engages with a bigger world of phenomena such as natural environments, animals, weather, seasons, elements, oceans, and landscapes. They include aspects of nature either as part of the content of their performance materials or as actual on-site outdoor locations for dance events. Therefore, I added an "interest in a bigger world" to the criteria, which ended up forming the basis for Chapter IV in this dissertation, "Ways in the World: Practice with Nature."

Avant-Gardisms Crossing Geographic Lines

In my search for participants, I noticed that the spirit of adventuresome avant-gardism I seemed to be chasing has easily crossed international lines. Influences in the ways in which dancers and dance makers create eclectic practices came, in part, from the

audacious creativity that grew out of the big changes in concert dance begun in the 1960s and 1970s. That quality of creativity was offered to students by Judson era artist-teachers who chose to work in locations in Europe and the greater Americas in the 1980s, 1990s, and beyond. The artistic processes and aesthetics appealed to artists with experimental leanings who resided in different cities and countries. For example, Venezuelan-born Luís Lara Malvacías, French-born Claire Filmon, and Guatemalan-born Melanie Ríos Glaser received the benefits of rich dance and performance training in their native countries as well as influences from American modern and postmodern dance artists who chose to travel and teach. There were other blends of avant-gardisms available to the artist-participants in this dissertation in cities such as Los Angeles, where strongly individualistic artists such as Rachel Rosenthal produced her performance art, and Japanese butoh dancers came from Japan to perform and teach.

When the artists who serve as participants in this research were emerging as professionals and encountered avant-garde artists and practices that resonated with them, they began a process of absorbing and transforming the influences into their own versions of experimental movement research and cross-disciplinary dance and performance.

A Research Cohort

Searching for participants with aspects of the influences and training I list above, I assemble a cohort of artists who said “yes” to my proposal to include them in this research. As named earlier and given impressionistic word portraits in Chapter I, they are: Claire Filmon, Kathleen Fisher, K.J. Holmes, Luis Lara Malvacías, Kara Jhalak Miller, Melinda Ring, Melanie Ríos Glaser, Michael Sakamoto, and Roxanne Steinberg.

What Is Practice? A Definition

Because this dissertation is grounded in artists' practices, here, before I extend further into the artist-participants' backgrounds, I offer a definition. Particular to this research and my role within it, I refer to *practice* broadly as an observable phenomenon the research participants understand and claim in their professional lives. In this study, practice is an assemblage of eclectic movement disciplines and behaviors that serve the participants in the context of being professional dance artists. *Practice* has enough common usage that it is also understandable to a reader and can serve as a reference point through which I describe, in my role as researcher, themes and topics that arise for the dissertation.

In societal terms, I propose that practice is a construct, a human concept of enacting a set of behaviors to be done regularly, with intention and commitment, in ways that are purposeful beyond habit. Practice could be a solitary endeavor, a community effort, or both. Typically a practice has a context, a history, a lineage. At the deepest level, it is the individual practitioner who must enact the phenomenon of practice. It cannot be done by someone else. In the heart of practice reside the reasons one does it — the values, benefits, pleasures, curiosities, beliefs, and doubts. The rigor of practice is to regularly engage with it for its own value, not necessarily for gain or production, although those could be results. Practice is an endeavor that is both familiar and unpredictable. The practitioner can repeat a structure of practice, but the experience of it is never the same.

Intruder: The Nine Plus One Voice

The air smells like rain. She lies down halfway between a stretch of trampled grasses and untouched stalks, adding herself to an immense design of earth, fields, moisture, and her human self. After imagining what her design looks like from the sky, she turns her eyes to the earth and watches insects as they scurry in a miniature world. She feels a shrinking sensation in her body, centered in her heart. How tiny they are! She pulls her limbs in close, making herself as small as possible. Understanding that she could be a flattening force, a crop circle intruder, perhaps mysteriously attractive, possibly not real, she notices the insects don't seem to mind.

Delicacy and Laughter in the Interview Process

Here, I attempt to describe a dual sensation of intrusion and invitation I experience as the researcher in the interview process. All the research participants gave informed consent through the appropriate process defined by Texan Woman's University's Institutional Review Board. They agreed to respond to my questions, whether in face-to-face interviews or in writing. And, yet, meeting in person, or facing each other through a Skype video call, my inclination was always to shrink a little, to tread carefully and maintain delicacy in case my presence was an intrusion. I waited to understand the flow (or lack there in) in the conversation. I had a list of questions as an outline, but, as was approved by the IRB, I could also use a self-designed strategy of following any conversational trajectories a participant might instigate that has vitality and moves the interview into new territory. In this way, akin to my description of practice in

general, the structure of the practice of interviewing remains constant while the experience of it is always different.

In this dissertation research, wisdom and humor became the dominant characteristics that floated each interview. Laughter was the audio score. Having recruited mature, highly inventive, and successful artists, I assumed they would be articulate (They are). I was notably impressed, however, with their wisdom, and delighted by their humor. Wisdom and humor seemed to touch and steady the experience of being human, asking, listening, conversing.

Biographical Notes: The Artist-Participants

I am happy to tell the reader that the cohort of artist-participants is indeed, comprised of accomplished, mature, eclectic, and educated individuals. The artists have critical acclaim as dance makers and performers, and multiple degrees from prestigious universities and schools. They are high-achieving, open-thinking, unique people. In what follows, I offer the reader more information about their practices that reveals, even in short form biographies, a breadth of interests and expertise.

Claire Filmon

Based in Paris, French artist Claire Filmon is a dancer, improviser, and international performer and teacher, as well as artistic director of her company, *Asphodèle Danses Envol*. Trained in ballet throughout her childhood, Claire discovered modern dance and improvisation through university studies and professional workshops, which foregrounded her entrance into a professional dance life in 1985. In 1990, she received a grant from the French Ministry of Culture to study Lester Horton dance

technique with Bella Lewitzky in Los Angeles and improvisation with Anna Halprin in the San Francisco Bay area. Returning to France, intensive studies with company dancers in the Trisha Brown Company and Judson era founder Simone Forti, as well as workshops with improvisers Lisa Nelson, Nancy Stark Smith, and Mark Thompkins pointed Claire in the direction of her true calling: improvisation as performance. Since her commitment in 1995 to work entirely in improvisation, Claire uses voice, song, spoken text, collaborations with musicians, and her “composition in real time” technique to create performances in the moment. Since the year 2000 Claire has often been invited by Simone Forti to be her duet performance partner in Europe and the United States. Claire is now one of the few artists appointed by Forti to dance her iconic solos from the 1970s: *Striding Crawling* and *Sleep Walkers/Zoo Mantras*. Claire has taught and performed improvisation in Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Korea, Los Angeles, the Netherlands, New York, and Switzerland. Claire holds three French degrees: Licence STAPS (Sciences et Techniques des Activités Physiques et Sportives) from the University of Poitiers; Licence Sciences de L’Education from the Université in Lyon, and the Maîtrise Arts de Spectacle en Danse in Paris.

Kathleen Fisher

Dancer Kathleen Fisher moved to New York to join the Trisha Brown Company after earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. During her decade in the company — 1992-2002 — Kathleen was an original cast member in many new works and performed two of Brown’s solos. She also danced in New York in other prestigious companies such as Bebe Miller Company and

Jane Comfort and Company. Kathleen is an accomplished performer, improviser, artistic collaborator, and teacher, as well as a Certified Kripalu Bodyworker, Nationally Certified Massage Therapist, a practitioner of Craniosacral Therapy, a yoga and meditation practitioner, and an ocean swimmer. Since meeting wild spotted dolphins in their natural habitat in the ocean surrounding the Bahamas in 2003, Kathleen has cultivated her interest in the dolphins, developing a long-standing movement-swimming relationship with them. She is a participant in Chisa Hidaka and Benjamin Harley's *Dolphin Dance Project*, in which dancers and wild dolphins are filmed moving together in sequences they have developed through their multi-year interspecies acquaintance. Kathleen is a founding partner of Bimini Healing Arts and Bimini Tours, and lives on the island of Bimini in the Bahamas. Still active as a mover and teacher internationally, Kathleen continues to teach, restage, and re-imagine dances by her inspirational former director, choreographer Trisha Brown. In October 2017, Kathleen returned to New York to dance in the memorial for Brown, who passed away at age 80 in March 2017.

K.J. Holmes

Based in Brooklyn, New York, K.J. Holmes is a dance artist, improviser, actor, singer, poet, and movement educator who has been participating in and creating experimental and experiential dance art since the 1980s. Starting her movement studies as a child, she was diverse in her interests in chorus, sports, martial arts, and dance. With deep and long-standing ties to Judson artists Simone Forti and Steve Paxton, with dancer/videographer Lisa Nelson, as well as with the Avant-Jazz music community, K.J.'s teaching, choreography, and performance modes reflect her experience in

improvisation and the creation of art through inquiry. Considering teaching as part of her artist practice, K.J. teaches nationally and internationally, and is currently on faculty at Movement Research NYC, the dance program at Sarah Lawrence College, and NYU/Experimental Theatre Wing. K.J. has completed intensive study programs in Sanford Meisner acting techniques, Satya Yoga, and Body-Mind Centering®. In addition to creating her own dance projects, K.J. is a sought-after performer, often invited to perform in other artists' projects, on stage, in film, and on video.

Luis Lara Malvacías

Born in Venezuela, Luis is a choreographer, performer, visual artist, costume and scenic designer, movement researcher, educator, innovator, and experimentalist who has been presenting his trans-disciplinary works in a variety of venues both in and outside New York since 1995, and in multiple sites throughout the greater U.S.A., Europe, the UK, Asia, and South America. Luis's diverse background as an artist and thinker includes studies with improvisers David Zambrano and Mark Thompkins, acting, postmodern dance, visual art, Klein Technique, Body-Mind Centering®, Feldenkrais Method, and Alexander Technique. Luis's investment in his practice is ongoing, featuring cross-disciplinary approaches to creation and the instigation of projects and international events that bring together artists from diverse countries and points of view. Since 2003, Luis has presented his work under the title and concept of 3RD CLASS CITIZEN, originally conceived as an interdisciplinary arts collective featuring and supporting Latinx artists, and, which has subsequently served to inspire Luis's creation of the NOT FESTIVAL. An admired and sought-after international educator, he has taught, served as an artist in

residence, and created new works for students in locations in the Americas, England, Europe, and Scandinavia. He graduated from the Instituto Superior de Danza in Caracas, Venezuela; holds a Master of Fine Arts in New Media from Donau University in Krems, Austria; and earned a Certification in Painting from the Arts Students League of New York. In addition to developing his research and creating new and ongoing projects, Luis shares his ideas with students in his role as a professor in the Department of Dance, University of California, Riverside.

Kara Jhalak Miller

Kara Jhalak Miller is an international dance and media artist, improviser, choreographer, dance educator, and long-standing yoga and meditation practitioner currently based in Honolulu, Hawaii. Exposed to classical, modern, and postmodern dance training from childhood through teen and young adult years, Kara moved to New York to train at The Juilliard School, and began working as a dance professional there in the early 1990s. In addition to working as a performer in New York, she was also the artistic director for Omega Dance Company, in residence at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in Manhattan. Having grown up in Indiana with exposure to the beauty of nature, Kara's deep affinity for the natural world underpins her visual, video, and movement art. Often working with themes of water and oceans, Kara's dance and video projects have been shown in China, France, Guam, Hawaii, India, Korea, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and southern California. Kara holds a B.F.A. in Dance from The Juilliard School; an M.F.A in Dance and Video from University of California, Irvine; and a Ph.D. in Performance Studies from the University of California, Davis. In addition to doing her

own creative projects, Kara is a tenured professor in the Department of Theater and Dance, University of Hawaii, Manoa, Honolulu.

Melinda Ring

Interdisciplinary experimental choreographer Melinda Ring creates dances, performance events, videos, and visual art/kinetic installations. Shifting her professional base to New York in 2001, Melinda is a movement researcher who directs Special Projects: Melinda Ring Choreographies and Collaborations, a performance company serving her integration of visual media, sculpture, film, and performance in events shown in both traditional and non-traditional performance spaces. Born and raised in Los Angeles, Melinda's earlier dance experiences in the 1980s included studying in Japan with Japanese avant-garde movement artist Min Tanaka, dancing in Los Angeles in the company of transplanted Judson era pioneer Rudy Perez and initiating the teaching of Body Weather classes in Los Angeles with peer artist Roxanne Steinberg. Expanding her interests to film and video, Melinda has often been a performer in video projects created by sculptor, painter, performance artist, and film artist Paul McCarthy. The themes of her own performance projects often stem from her interests in nature, weather, and atmospheric conditions as metaphors for human nature. Melinda holds a B.A. in Dance from the University of California, Los Angeles, and an M.F.A. in Dance from Bennington College. She teaches as a guest artist nationally, and since 2014 has been a faculty member at Yale University School of Art as a critic in sculpture. Melinda is a 2017 recipient of a prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship.

Melanie Ríos Glaser

Born and raised in Guatemala, Melanie Ríos Glaser is an improviser, choreographer, curator, and consultant for non-profit organizations. Coming to New York to attend The Juilliard School, Melanie discovered “downtown dance” and improvisation, igniting a passion for creating her own improvisation-based choreographies and performances. Named a Kennedy Center Fellow after graduating from Juilliard, Melanie studied and created works in New York and soon was living an international freelance dance life, sharing time between Guatemala, Europe, Morocco, and the USA. In 2005, after finishing a year-long Fulbright Scholarship in Europe, Melanie accepted the job of Artistic Director and Co-CEO of The Wooden Floor, a non-profit organization in southern California that helps low income youth through dance, academic, and family services. After serving 11 years at The Wooden Floor, Melanie stepped away from the job in 2016 and is reclaiming the fullness of her life as a dancer, improviser, and dance maker. Throughout the shifts in her career, Melanie has engaged in Authentic Movement as an anchoring force in her practice, feeding into her ongoing commitment to improvisational approaches to dance. Melanie holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Dance from The Juilliard School in New York.

Michael Sakamoto

Dancer, actor, performance artist, photographer, visual media artist, dance scholar, educator, and arts consultant, Michael Sakamoto, creates performance projects that foreground the body in performance as a site for intercultural dialogue. Born and raised in the vast intercultural mix of Los Angeles, Michael’s work carries influences of

pop culture, cinema, hip hop culture, butoh dance, Zen studies, philosophy, and the avant-garde. In his earlier years as a performer, Michael was a featured soloist in the Los Angeles-based company of pioneering performance artist and “total theater” director Rachel Rosenthal. Active as a performer, Michael creates his own productions that feature unexpected cultural juxtapositions in movement practice, such as butoh and hip hop, thus offering space for contemplation and conversations about differences and unity within human experience. Michael has shown his performance work in multiple sites in Asia, Europe, and North America. He holds three degrees from the University of California, Los Angeles: a B.A. in Communication Studies, an M.F.A. in Dance/Choreography, and a Ph.D. in Culture and Performance. Michael has been a guest artist and lecturer in many prestigious university dance departments and has held fulltime professor of dance positions at Goddard College and the Department of Dance at the University of Iowa. As of 2019, Michael serves as Associate Director of Programming and Director of the Asian Arts and Culture Program for the Fine Arts Center at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Roxanne Steinberg

Choreographer, performer, improviser, artistic collaborator, and artist-educator Roxanne Steinberg has a robust physical practice invested in and expanding upon the Body Weather Laboratory training created by Japanese movement artist Min Tanaka, and out of which come her inspired performances and image-rich choreographies. Early layers of creativity came from childhood and young adult training in improvisation, creative dance, and both classical modern and postmodern dance. While earning an

undergraduate degree in dance at Bennington College in the 1980s, Roxanne was introduced to the work of Tanaka. She encountered him again while on an exploratory dance-making trip to Paris where she and her sister, artist Morleigh Steinberg, worked with the pioneering French urban intervention artist group, Zig Zag Dans La Savane. Many subsequent trips to Japan in the late 1980s to study and participate in Tanaka's Body Weather Laboratory training and experience residencies at the Body Weather Farm led Roxanne not only to a deepening knowledge of Tanaka's technique, but also to an acquaintance with Japanese movement artist Oguri, who became and continues to be her artistic and life partner. Returning to her native Los Angeles in 1990, Roxanne, with Melinda Ring and later Oguri, began teaching classes and developing performance projects, thus giving Southern California roots to Body Weather Laboratory. In addition to her work with Oguri, Roxanne has collaborated with numerous musicians and composers in the USA and abroad, choreographed for international projects, performed in works by video artist Bill Viola, interdisciplinary video and installation artist Carole Kim, interdisciplinary Buddhist artist Hirokazu Kosaka, and, with Oguri, was featured in Morleigh Steinberg's film, *Traveling Light*. Roxanne is named as a City of Los Angeles COLA Individual Artist Fellowship recipient for 2020.

Turning the Page

Having offered the reader information about my research practice, original language from the prospectus and research questions, groundwork for assembling a research cohort, and biographical information about each artist-participant's professional life, I invite the reader into the next chapter. In "Ways of Working: Practice is Like

This,” I offer my observations of how each artist-participant creates and maintains a relationship with one’s practice. A send-off comes from the Nine Plus One Voice.

Rocket Science: The Nine Plus One Voice

Wearing a red dress, she dances up to the brink, eyes open. She bends her knees, swings her arms backward and then forward as she pushes against gravity with her legs and catapults herself into her next adventure like a lively ruby speck.

CHAPTER III

WAYS OF WORKING: PRACTICE IS LIKE THIS

Honored practitioners . . . do not be afraid of the real dragon
. . . or spend a long time touching only one part of the elephant.
—Eihei Dōgen, *Fukan-Zazengi*

It's in the Doing: The Nine Plus One Voice

She lands feet first with springy knees in a field with rocky outcroppings and solitary trees. Upon arrival, a small seismic tremor passes under her bare feet. She rubs the bottom of one foot against the opposite shin, sending small bits of grass and soil back to the earth. She dives forward in a grassy patch and rolls once like a ball. Coming out of it, she jumps into the air, jolting and shaking her limbs. Running, she gains momentum and propels herself from sturdy trees to stacks of rocks with arms and legs pushing, pulling, and leaping. Spanning the gaps with verve, she stays the course. Throughout this joyous parkour, she knows the attraction is in the doing.

Introduction: Relationships to Practice, Creativity, and the Everyday

In this chapter, I invite the reader to join me in an investigation of ways the artist-participants in this dissertation create relationships with their highly eclectic practices. Choreographing the flow and groupings of my ideas, I enjoy noticing the contours the artists create within their practices and learning the ways in which they navigate multiple components. Interested in underpinnings, I look for features in the overall structure of practice that might serve as a substructure, motivating and supporting the endeavor.

Integrated into my interest in this outward choreographic shaping and internal scaffolding between artist and practice is the notion of finding links between practice, creativity, and the everyday. The tiny door that opens within this linkage reveals practice at its simplest: a daily commitment to doing and being with structures that makes the endeavors possible. The door is small because dailiness is a humble notion, a workaday mode, yet hand-in-hand, practitioner and practice make dailiness a space of discovery.

The artists in this study are creative people who orchestrate, manage, and perform well in diverse activities across domains. Working steadily as artists since the mid-1980s and early 1990s, they have tremendous capacitance and expertise in the disciplines they choose. This is not surprising given that eclecticism within practice and artistic maturity are criteria for being included in this dissertation study. What does surprise me, however, are the ways the artists shape their relationships with their practices, manifesting pliable, lively contours that serve their interests — much as if they are dancing with practice. They variously and individualistically underpin their enterprises with a unique stance, a point of view that could be artistic, kinesthetic, philosophical, intellectual, ethical, or spiritual, to name a few.

Using the theme of *relationships to practice* as a frame for this chapter, I work to shape thoughtful and plausible commentary about what I observe about the artist-participants at work. In this interpretive process I remind the reader that my endeavors grow from my perspective — an informed, yet subjective, space. I share how I see the artists' ways of working as their "signatures" — expressive marks that reveal something about who they are.

In this chapter, I continue my commitment to writing with a mixture of voices, including what could be considered “creative nonfiction” (Barone 108). I propose that any fictions I might devise are momentary fabrications of necessity, mental frames that I devise to help me see, identify, select, excerpt, and deeply ponder notions that arise from larger amounts of information I gather in participants’ interviews. Ideation is always a fabrication of sorts, a space of the imagination from which thoughts emerge to support my work as an artist-author. Using my imagination does not rule out the potential for finding resonant truths within the research.

Perhaps my use of different voices mediates any spaces that might appear between the appearance of truths versus fictions in this dissertation and offer choral harmony in the blend. In this chapter and those that follow, I persist in weaving the strands of my informational voice, the words of scholars and philosophers, the voices of the artist-participants themselves, and the fictitious Nine Plus One Voice, to serve in the creation of a provocative thinking space for a reader. My intention is that all voices in this dissertation, whether leaning closer to a truth or a fiction, create marks to be pondered in conversations about practice.

What follows are a section called “A Love Affair with the Everyday” that brings up notions of dailiness within practice and artistry, and a segment called “The Usefulness of Creativity Studies” that delineates the support I find in creativity research. I follow with “Doing Many Things Well,” inviting the reader to consider with me the large multidisciplinary practices maintained by Michael Sakamoto, K.J. Holmes, and Luis Lara Malvacías. In “Steady, Persistent, Deep” I offer observations and responses to the ways

Roxanne Steinberg, Claire Filmon, and Melinda Ring persist within a rich and preferred avenue of practice over a long period of time. Lastly, in “Shifts and Cycles,” I notice the ways in which Kara Jhalak Miller, Kathleen Fisher, and Melanie Ríos Glaser maintain relationships to their practices in the midst of shifts in location and changes in life circumstances.

Upon Hearing One’s Name: The Nine Plus One Voice

She hears the surf pounding and sucking at the sand all night. Although the darkness prevents her from seeing, she knows there is a white lace border on the curl of each wave, announcing the last moments prior to dropping its full weight onto the shore. The ocean is heavy, dense, and relentless in its practice. In the morning, she opens all the windows and doors and feels small.

A Love Affair with the Everyday

For many practitioners, the relationship to practice becomes something enriching and perhaps irreplaceable in a daily, ongoing manner. Creativity theorist Howard E. Gruber states a wonderful obviousness about what is needed to be a lifelong working artist, noticing that “serious creative work does take a long time” (14) and “making oneself the kind of person who can do the creative task” (15) speaks to the rigor and long-term effort involved in establishing an artist practice. Practitioner and practice grow together. The relationship is a shaping tango marked with a good amount of improvisation, trust, and curiosity about what might happen next. What is the structure supporting the footwork? Who is leading? Where is the center of gravity? The partners press front to front; no gap is visible as they lean and twist, legs intertwining in call and

response like lower body snakes. All components of this event are performed in oneness; there is no separation between the partners. Is it possible that anyone or anything could squeeze between practitioner and practice? A musician or two? A painter? Is there room for a filmmaker? How many more things could be included in a multidisciplinary artist's practice? As for the tango between practitioner and practice, is it an exercise? An exploration? A habit? A love affair? An art?

In a Skype video interview with Paris-based French artist-participant Claire Filmon in 2016, she describes what practice used to be for her: "Practice was a way to go in the direction to become better and better and better and better. You know, to *become* better. So it was linked with the results." But Claire notices her thoughts toward practice have changed and continue to evolve throughout her life. She laughs, and tells me, "I feel like I met a friend forever. Without this friend I would be never the same. Maybe I understand now that I will need that all my life." Claire's practice helps her envision and structure her life. "This gives me the permission to hear and see the world . . . I am more able to listen, you know? Or I am more able to receive information and relate." She creates another analogy: "It's like a house that you have all the things closed, and the practice gives me some arms to open the window, to open the doors easily, and to communicate with life. So it's impossible to stop, to not do it" (9 May 2016). Practice is no longer simply useful to Claire; it is essential to the quality of her life. She changed from using practice to "become better" to understanding practice as a space from which she experiences the world, each day.

In Henri Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life*, I appreciate his distillation of an essential feature of the everyday: "It is in everyday life and starting from everyday life that genuine *creations* are achieved, those creations which produce the human and which men produce as part of the process of becoming human: works of *creativity*" (338). My thoughts in response to Lefebvre's words are that one's creative nature is revealed in the smallest units of practice — the tiny, daily actions within a frame of conscious attention and intention. Thus, practice embodies an alert stance that is a pleasurable feature of its enactment. Acknowledging the sensory qualities possible when putting attention on details in everyday life, Lefebvre proposes that "the eye learns how to see, the ear learns how to hear, the body learns how to keep to rhythms" (339) in daily practice. Lefebvre tells the reader: "What is most important is to note that feelings, ideas, lifestyles and pleasures are confirmed in the everyday" (339). Whatever humans have made in "superior realms of social practice" whether in "art, philosophy or politics" has to "turn back towards everyday life to verify and confirm the validity of that creation." He adds: "These superior activities are born from seeds contained in everyday practice" (339). In this dissertation my inquiry is that of looking into an ongoing commitment in a daily manner of turning one's attention to activities one does as an artist, for the process and pleasure of its enactment. An everyday practice is, indeed, a space for growth.

The Usefulness of Creativity Studies

Although I built creativity studies into my literary base early in my dissertation preparations, I did not know until much later in my process how salient to my inquiry the information might be. In returning to creativity studies, I find concepts, terms, and areas

of inquiry that provide additional perspective to what I hear, observe, organize, and eventually offer to a reader about the artists in their ways of working.

In the materials of this chapter, I use elements of the “four P’s of creativity,” *process, product, person* (or personality), and *place*” (Kozbelt et al. 24; emphasis in original), with a primary emphasis on the creative person. *Place* naturally comes into view when, for example, an artist speaks about creating entire worlds in performance or directly making work for specific sites. I address process, and, as applicable, product as well, when they arise in conversations about practice as the site of artistic growth and production. I admit, however, that I focus the least on product, in keeping with my research trajectory that explores the subjective experience and personal value of practice rather than production.

Eclecticism in practice demands multidisciplinary expertise on the part of the practitioner. Therefore, my interest is piqued by studies that find traits among creative people that manifest across domains, in particular, the traits of “intrinsic motivation, wide interests, openness to experience, and autonomy” (Kozbelt et al. 25). These four cross-domain traits apply to my inquiry, but intrinsic motivation has my attention, given that a strong guiding interest in my research is the idea that practice is pleasurable and attracts the practitioner for the doing of it, regardless of gain, reward, or production. Creativity researcher Gregory Feist refers to intrinsic motivation as “the pleasure the process of discovery or expression brings” (122). He adds: “intrinsic motivation is often associated with highly creative thought or behavior,” and “when pleasure and excitement are the drive and energy behind a task, then the end product often is more creative than if the

drive is lacking or extrinsic” (122). Theorist Howard Gardner joins in the description and adds the adverb “sheer” to the pleasure of entering the “flow experience,” being “fully alive, totally realized, and involved in ‘a peak experience’” (Gardner 25-26). Does one do this every day? Practitioners who return to practice on a daily basis, whether to a meditation cushion or a studio, are responding to various motivations, including the pleasure of doing it.

For artists who consider themselves process-based, the end product, even if a creative one, can be outshone by the sensation of pleasure in the process of creating it. For example, artist-participant Melanie Ríos Glaser, who names hers “a heavily process-oriented practice” (31 August 2016), recalls that even in childhood play scenarios, “when everything was ready, I didn’t want to play anymore. So, it was in the preparing and the making that I was happy, and less in the execution” (2 May 2018). She acknowledges that this preference manifested early and stays present in her life: “I’ve always been that way. I prefer the experimental moments of making work. Those are my highlights.” She is clear to state that she does “love performance,” but prefers “to not have an end product in sight when I’m producing choreography or improvisational performances. I’d rather it tell me back what it needs and speak to me as we go along” (2 May 2018). Intrinsically motivated, Melanie manifests a tangible partnering with her practice (it is that tango again), listening as the dance itself comes to life. Through Melanie’s example, the reader is offered a picture of a creative person deeply invested in the pleasure of process, and a bit less so in product. Similarly, artist-participant Kara Jhalak Miller acknowledges, “I love the act of making something! . . . I think the public performance, or the public

presentation, is really wonderful and brilliant, but not as engaging to me as the process of discovery” (16 May 2016).

As improvisers and experimenters, the artist-participants in this study reveal their appetite for working in situations that require wide interests and openness to experience in order to test their creativity. They juxtapose diverse arts disciplines and enjoy being surprised by the results. In providing me with written responses to my interview questions, artist-participant Luis Lara Malvacías, for example, expresses his interest in “exploring the interaction between dance, design, installation, video, new media, sound and the visual arts,” and within his cross-disciplinary investigations he is “always looking for a result that can be metaphoric and surprising to myself, and hopefully to others” (1 September 2016). Luis’s willingness to be surprised rather than preferring to control a particular outcome speaks not only to the creative person’s trait of openness to experience, but also to the expansion of creativity possible in open-ended structures. Feist points to studies reporting “creative behavior was highest if very open participants were given tasks that were open . . . They are most creative when the situation and task is ambiguous and not well defined” (121). The correlation is that the artists who enjoy improvisation rise to the challenge of creating with very little structure.

Later in this chapter, Claire talks about determining “the minimum” she needs in her practice to be able to go onstage and create an entirely improvised performance for an audience (4 November 2017), while Kara clearly states her preference regarding structure: “I’m interested when there are not clear directions to follow . . . the edges are more blurred, then they become clear, because that allows for transformation” (16 May

2016). Made lively in ambiguous situations and energized by a supple (or non-existent) tether to structure, the improvising artists in this dissertation flourish in their inventiveness.

Creative behavior expressed by the artist-participants in this study is offered without reference to any scale of creative “magnitude.” There is depth and intensity to be sensed in their descriptions, but neither the artist-participants nor I are measuring how deep, how intense, how important their work in practice is. Rather than asking “how much?” perhaps we are simply noticing the presence of meaningfulness.

Regarding the measurement of an artist’s creativity, Gruber asks a provocative question: “Can creativity be measured? . . . We might better ask, *Should* creativity be measured? What good will measurement do?” (5; emphasis in original). Gruber is clear that measurement is largely used in trait theories of creativity, which is not his approach. His is an “evolving systems approach to creative work” that asks “how creative work works. What do people do when they are being creative?” (4). As a researcher of dance artists, I perceive being in practice as an aware, active, engaged space of creativity. “Doing” practice is what they are enacting when being creative.

As for measuring magnitude in this dissertation, I find the concept of *creative magnitude* useful in the area of “small” creativity, the realm of tiny details that arise in the everyday. When I write “tiny” I am referring to *mini-c* or *little-c* creativity. *Creative magnitude*, as defined and used in creativity studies, is a spectrum that runs from the *mini-c* or *little-c* creativity within everyday life to the *Big C Creativity* of highly eminent creators (Kozbelt et al. 23). Researcher Simonton names **Boldface-C** as the ultimate

grade — perhaps creative genius — of creative achievement (Simonton 175), while Gardner declares, unapologetically, that his study of creativity “reflects the ‘great man/great woman’ view of creativity” (Gardner 37). Indeed, the works produced by creative giants across disciplines and through time offer what creativity researchers consider “unambiguous examples of creative expression” (Kozbelt et al. 23). However, in looking at practice as a regular, daily, ongoing commitment that contains internal goods for the practitioner regardless of magnitude or product, it is the works of researchers such as Ruth Richards that captivate me. Richards focuses her inquiry on little-c everyday creativity, framing it as “originality of everyday life.” She highlights two criteria: “*originality* and *meaningfulness*,” and states it is “not only about *product* but is also about *process*, about *how* one does a task” (Richards 189,190; emphasis in original).

The originality involved in making a task “creative” can also speak to the resourcefulness of artists as they establish a practice in their everyday realms. Participant Claire Filmon describes a time early in her career when she did not have the funds to pay for classes. “So I had to work as a cleaner. And one day I discovered that when I clean if I practice over my hips and my head and my arms—it was like a *practice!* So I said, ‘but no, I practice all the time’” (9 May 2016). She recalls other times, even in the Paris Metro, when she could “feel my spine and be careful where my head is on my spine, be careful of its direction and my breath. So I learned through time not to worry if I don’t have the practice I would like or need, because I believe that it’s more a way how to *be*.” Claire is wise enough to consider the other end of a practice too — the *not* doing: “I have to accept that I need also to *not* practice. It’s very important to breathe. It’s like inhale

and exhale — you need both” (9 May 2016). Participant K.J. Holmes also articulates in a Skype video interview a mature wisdom in the *doing* or *not* doing of practice through time: “I think there’s an artistry to a way of living. But it’s not about ‘everything is a dance’ or I’m always in my work . . . a big part of what I’m wanting is time, a different kind of time, a listening kind of time” (8 September 2016). These are examples of sensory awareness that supports a person engaging with the world from the deeply personal *source* of one’s body engaged in a uniquely personal *space* of one’s practice, wherever or whenever the practitioner might be.

Sensing nuances of *scale* within an artist’s practice which may, but does not always, result in a product is quite different from measuring the product itself, whether it is a performance event or an object. It is precisely this delicate notion of internally measuring for one’s self the value of creativity within practice that is part of an artist’s internal dialogue. The topic of creative magnitude is one that does not easily fit within an artist’s self-measurement, yet it offers perspective within this dissertation. I propose that magnitude can be considered not so much as a measure of greatness, but as a way to think about the value of roaming through an immense range of body-mind experiences from the tiny to the huge within practice. It is my opinion that the ultimate measure of the “magnitude” of creativity within an artist’s practice resides in the meaningfulness for the artist herself.

Lastly in these notes about the usefulness of creativity studies in this dissertation, I turn to Gruber’s *network of enterprise*, finding it to be salient in addressing ways in which the artist-participants create order (or purposeful disorder) within the many

working parts of their eclectic practices. Some of the artists in this study cycle through different disciplines in their practice, doing a project in one discipline at a time. Others move fluidly from point to point across all their disciplines, ultimately integrating the diverse materials into a presentation such as a multidisciplinary performance, installation, book, or film.

I offer the reader an example by participant Kara Jhalak Miller of a rotation style of managing a network of enterprise composed of various disciplines. Kara tells me about the cyclical nature of her multidisciplinary practice, starting in her professional life when she was much younger. Early on, she learned that the things she was interested in would have to wait their turn. During a time when she was accepting a lot of choreographic commissions, she understood that “there were other things I wanted to develop, and those things were being set aside. What I recognized in that creative time was there would be a time and a place for everything” (16 May 2016). Now Kara can see that “in terms of my practice as craft making, that goes in cycles.” Although she maintains consistent expertise in several disciplines, throughout her career she has, by circumstance, worked in designated episodes, foregrounding one discipline at a time in a succession of disciplines. For example, the time of being a performer, the time of being a choreographer, the time of being a media artist, and the time of being a writer have each held a centered position in her practice. Now she lets herself “be drawn to the opportunities that arrive, but also to the feeling of what I really want to do . . . not to force myself to do something.” In this way, “the actual manifestation of projects is an improvisation” (16 May 2016). Although her projects have big scope, I notice Kara maintains her connections to the little-c

creativity in her dailiness, listening to what she would like to do. Her style of dealing with her multi-focal expertise has the softened edges of an experienced artist who allows disciplines to come together freely and organically to support ideas and projects within a network of enterprise.

Gruber created the term *network of enterprise* “to describe the pattern of work in the life of a creative individual” (11). He observes, “Enterprises rarely come singly. The creative person often differentiates a number of main lines of activity. This has the advantage that when an enterprise grinds to a halt, productive work does not cease (11). Gruber also points to the “longevity and durability” in his idea of a network, which I correlate (but do not equate) with practice as a long-term, reliable space for a creative artist. Through time, Gruber’s creative person (and, for my purposes, an artist-practitioner) has time to find rhythms that can encompass fallow times, creative exhaustion or distraction, periods of rest, time to cope with unforeseen difficulties or obstacles, and, if necessary, time to re-create one’s self and one’s practice. Gruber considers this part of “the usefulness of a diversified network of enterprise, allowing the creator to be by turns daring and secure, as emotional needs wax and wane” (12). To be clear, Gruber’s term, *network of enterprise*, and my use of the word *practice* are not precisely interchangeable. Both terms, however, point to what a creative person (in my study, an artist) *does*.

Even Nothing is Something in Practice: The Nine Plus One Voice

She rolls onto her back and shifts her attention to the sky. The clouds, though far away, seem immense and near, as if they might drape their white nothingness over her

body. She logrolls down a grassy slope, imagining herself surrounded by nothingness, but, in reality, she feels the rough truth of hard earth and open sky in a rhythmic descent: earth-sky, earth-sky, earth-sky, earth-sky. At the bottom, she rests on her back with eyes closed. Although her body is still, she feels an internal swaying, as if she has spent many days at sea.

Michael, K.J., and Luis: Doing Many Things Well

I place participants Michael Sakamoto, K.J. Holmes, and Luis Lara Malvacías together in this section of the text because they maintain big multidisciplinary practices. To use Gruber's term, each of these three artists has a large network of enterprise. How does Michael integrate being a performer, filmmaker, media artist, photographer, writer, and educator? How does K.J. have time to sing, act, dance, write poetry, perform in fellow artists' works, teach, and learn to play the mandolin? How does Luis manage being a costume and set designer, a visual artist, a choreographer, a performer, a festival curator, and an educator? What is the experience of being able to manage such breadth in practice for each practitioner?

Michael Sakamoto: Creating His Own Fun

Michael lights up a conversation. In speaking with him via a Skype video call in 2016, I appreciate his scope, humor, and agility as a communicator. Just keeping up with his intellectual parkour has me out of breath. Encountering the complexity of his descriptions of his practice, I admit to needing a serviceably loose outline to help me choose what I see as key features that make his eclectic practice cohere. My aim is to

provide clarity for the reader by offering my perspective on the lively interactive layers in Michael's practice.

Beating vividly in the innermost layer is the heart of Michael's practice as he defines it: "My practice is using my bodily experience and that of my collaborators, in relation to society, in relation to their social identity, in order to better understand our relationship with each other and with the environment and with the world." He narrows the specificity: "My work right now is very much focused on the idea, the principle, and the activity of intercultural dialogue." He refines his stance: "At this point in my career and in my life it's really about dialogue. It's really about mutual understanding." Lastly, he adds a personal hue to the life context of his choice of practice: "I put emphasis on *intercultural* because I grew up as an intercultural person, being Asian-American in a crazy intercultural metropolis like L.A." (22 June 2016).

I see *intercultural dialogue* as playing a dual role for Michael, serving both as a practice but also as a foundational underpinning of his *relationship* to his overall practice in art and life. Is this possible? I think, yes; Michael's "cultural DNA," as he describes it, is that of a "fourth-generation Japanese American" and "a typical *Angelino*" who grew up with not only the lively cross-pollination of cultures possible in a big city with a huge history of diversity, but also with the ubiquitous presence of the entertainment and media industries, all of which appear in his artistic and scholarly interests and output. Paradoxically, Michael's upbringing in Los Angeles means he quite naturally and authentically owns what he names a cultural "fluidity of identity," but his fluidity with identity is not always matched, understood, or recognized in his surroundings elsewhere.

Michael self-describes as an artist of color, and in listening to him, I am privy to a powerful undercurrent that I sense is a shaping force in the way he guides his practice of intercultural dialogue. Certainly Michael's "fit" is as unique as any artist in any milieu, but what I hear from Michael are his questions about privilege and placing one's work in worlds of artistry and scholarship shaded with privilege that is not one's own. This topic resonates for me as a meaningful underpinning of Michael's practice, that, by his admission, is ongoing and as yet unresolved. I see this point as both a formidable density and a driving motivator in the way he shapes himself with his practice.

As I discern it, Michael's practice is conceptual, metaphoric, emotional, strongly visual, and physical. I see the disciplines he chooses to use as the *means* for the expression of his practice. He describes his accumulation of disciplines this way: "My first medium was photography. My second medium was film. My third was media art. My fourth was performance and my fifth was writing." He points out the cyclical nature of his practice: "It's full circle; the writing is what really brought me back to photography." Knowing Michael has invested in Zen studies, I think of his circle as an *ensō* — a Japanese Zen black ink drawing of a circle, sometimes with a small opening, sometimes closed. The single sweep of the thick sumi brush purposefully shows the speed and expertise of the artist. Michael quickly connects his circle, telling me he "suddenly realized that so much of the way I approach performance is based in my love of photography and film and cinema. That's the loop that's in my head, that I'm involved in, every day. I think of all those elements every day." To be sure, I ask: "Photography, film, media art, performance, writing — those five?" He smiles and nods his head.

“Pretty much. It’s funny, I never, until I just said that, I’d never thought of it before. But it’s totally true” (22 June 2016). In addition to considering his collection of five disciplines as the means for his practice, I also see the entire loop of disciplines as a usable structure unto itself, serving Michael as a large and playful ground for experimentation and refinement of ideas that is, within in Gruber’s terms, a big network of enterprise.

As a choreographer, I sense Michael’s “loop” as both a shape and a ride that require his navigational skill when inside his practice. As his viewer, I see *navigation* as a strongly contouring dance he does with his practice. (Yes, it could be a tango). At times, it seems his loop becomes a labyrinthian path along which he flows from point to point across disciplines, following his ideas. In what follows, I offer a little clip of Michael’s description of a typical work session in his practice, in this case, writing a book chapter: “Okay, if I’m going to write about that video . . . I go to YouTube and I watch it. Oh! I remember, there’s that one move! . . . And I’m thinking, well, what does it do? So I had to get up and do it.” Now he navigates through writing, media, dancing, and recall, connecting the disciplines, following the flow of ideas. When writing, he remembers movement from his physical history (“b-boy moves,” “popping moves,” “judo”). In order to put the memories back in his body he sources media, reconstructs the movement vocabulary, follows the activity into a “two-hour dance workout,” and ultimately follows the thread back to his writing. “Okay, so that’s the body, so I just spent two hours moving, dancing the body that I’m talking about in order to write this essay.” In this episode of practice, from nine in the morning until midnight, Michael navigates the loop,

shaping and being shaped by his practice, willing to ride the twists, spirals, and slip knots that need his attention. How is this possible? He laughs, “I’m sort of equal parts performer and intellectual.” He admits to being “extremely back and forth between being very much in my head and very much in my body, and that’s probably why that’s what my work as a scholar and as a performer is often about” (22 June 2016). He smiles and swivels side to side in his chair.

I offer the reader another consistent feature that surfaces in Michael’s ways of working, calling it his *questioning practice*. I notice the idea of *questioning* seems to be an undercurrent of repeated phrases such as, “going back and forth,” and “constantly checking in,” pointing to a crucial substructure of his overall practice. It seems that questioning keeps Michael close to his values as a person and an artist. There are times his questioning is “much more of an active interpersonal dialogic process,” and other times “it becomes more of an internal dialogue, more of a reflective dialogue.” There are times his questions are fundamental to a dance artist: “What am I moving? What am I being? What am I embodying? What does that look like? How does it feel for me?” However, Michael’s questioning also applies to his authoring of written and performance projects: “Is this a dead end? This is interesting to me, but how’s this going to be interesting to anybody else?” Other times his questions are philosophical, sometimes relating to his Zen training: “I am constantly, constantly, constantly, constantly checking in on myself” (22 June 2016). I see Michael’s questioning practice as a feature that permeates his practice. It seems to be his temple bell, ringing as a reminder to check in.

I glean information about an aspect of Michael's creative process through hearing him state what I would call *a basic guide for creation*. He makes a deceptively simple remark about how he takes measure of what he is making: "If I start to second guess myself, then it's bad. If I just stay honest with myself and follow my emotion, my passion, and see the intellectual armature that can surround that, then I know I'm okay" (22 June 2016). The steadying force seems to be his recognition of the potential for a theoretical structure surrounding his ideas, and the igniting force seems to be his passion. Both glow in his bright intellect.

How does Michael succeed in a relationship with a practice that requires his excellence in activities ranging from group collaboration to completely solitary endeavors, such as photography? Another underpinning captures my attention, seeming to connect many layers of his work. Youthful years in Los Angeles provided Michael with a lively grounding in overlapping cultures and ethnicities, exuberant popular music, ever-inventive street dance, cinema, and media, while circumstances invited him to shape that ground by himself. He shares the particulars: "I grew up as an only child," and he adds the important descriptive note of "growing up on media." Due to "a series of factors," when at home (as opposed to school, where he had friends), Michael "rarely had someone to play with or to hang out with." Time spent in solitude could have gone myriad ways for a child, but in Michael's case, it began a life process of creativity. He explains it this way:

I've spent my whole life creating my own fun. And in a way, you know, I guess I could still use those terms, in a way I'm still doing that. And maybe that's just a

habit. Maybe it's just a function of the fact that I keep ending up, or choosing, or both, environments in which I have to do that. (22 June 2016)

It appears to me that Michael must create; it is in his nature. He has to make his ways of practice valuable for himself. His ownership of practice is both humbling and natural in an everyday way. Michaels's qualities of warmth, alert intensity, and intelligence mark his ways of embodying his practice of dialogue. In my opinion, a signature of his relationship to his practice emerges as a complex, self-actualized, direct, passionate, funny, and caring way he shapes what he does through his practice, offered to the world.

K.J. Holmes: Strong in the World

In a Skype video interview with K.J. in September of 2016, it is the end of a long day of teaching for her. Although perhaps tired, she manifests a grounded, focused, experienced, and elegant physical presence. In the late hour she continually shapes her body with ongoing fluidity as she listens and responds. Seemingly as natural as breathing, she contours with the space around her body, folding and wrapping her limbs around each other in ongoing sculptural geometries. She moves her center of gravity, finds a new angle, changes her gaze, smooths her hair at the back of her head, and punctuates ideas with gestures that give a spatial landscape to words. My sense is that she literally carves a physical presence into the room. Bypassing the obviousness of knowing she is a dancer, I ponder her distinctive physical presence. Not all dancers have her level of presence. I ask, and she explains: "I think the physicality of needing to engage has always called me." Even as a child she knew what she wanted and what she did not want. An example of

knowing what she wants is when she stopped her ballet lessons. “My mother told me it was the first thing that I ever said no to. And I remember very clearly what that was: I didn’t like the hierarchy in the class. I loved moving, but . . . you know? I got into sports instead” (8 September 2016). As her listener, I can hear that K.J. searches for movement experiences on her own terms.

I invite the reader into this section about K.J. starting with what I see as two distinct yet related underpinnings in her relationship with her practice: a profound physicality that drives her to engage as a mover and a persistent search for movement experiences that are exactly as she prefers them, that feel right to her, and which change as she matures in her career. For example, earlier in her career, contact improvisation and the social aspect of group improvisatory jam sessions were a large part of her life. Like a sailor whose sleep carries sensory remnants of the tides, K.J. tells me, “I don’t wake up feeling like I’m dancing” anymore, but she reveals that she used to do that: “I used to roll in bed the whole time when I was doing a lot of “contact” and contact was my social life.” She rocks back and forth in her torso, smiling as she makes me laugh. Now her preferences have changed: “I don’t go to jams anymore. I’m not that interested in that. I feel more selective. And it’s not like I’m judging that lifestyle, but I did it, and I’ve moved into other things” (8 September 2016).

K.J. is wise about her attraction to physicality, the ways she prefers it, and the subtleties of the sensations that inform her self-knowing. I am surprised by a connection she makes between contact improvisation, swimming, and physicality. Swimming, although dependent on weather, season, and location of pools, is one of the many

disciplines she includes in her practice. “I always love to find a pool wherever I am. It’s really good for me to be in water and surrounded by support, just to feel myself.” She connects this awareness to contact improvisation: “I guess that’s what I’ve liked about “contact” for a long time: that feeling of moving with resistance.” I tell her that it’s an interesting correlation between swimming and contact improvisation because “contact” is a duet form that relies on physical support and, to a degree, resistance. What is her support when she swims? The weight of water is her partner. She nods her head. “Yeah. It’s different, but there’s something about having that kind of feedback that I really like. Maybe that’s what I liked about judo, you know? It’s like that contact sport of things” (8 September 2016).

Judo was part of K.J.’s experience of physicality as a child. Some of her childhood training included ballet (before she chose to stop), musical theater, singing, judo, and fencing. I ask her if she can recall what that felt like to be in those physical practices as a girl. She acknowledges the pull of physicality and can remember knowing it as a child. “As a little girl I think I was pretty tuned in. And maybe I lost some of that over the teenage years, but I think we do that. We get shaped by other things.” During times when she fell away from physical practice, something was missing: “Looking back at the times when I wasn’t doing that, I felt I wasn’t as strong. I didn’t feel strong in the world” (8 September 2016).

When K.J. was establishing herself as a professional dance artist in New York in the 1980s, she was trying to find the right frame and home for the work that felt right to her. “In my early twenties, coming back to it [dance], you know this is it, but what is the

form of it? That took a long time.” She searched: “There was a period of time before I really discovered improvisational work that I was on a search for something. And through a series of rejecting different things I think . . .” She lets the sentence drop and thinks about it. “You know, that kind of search is . . .” She pauses again. “The frustration is a really powerful tool. Not knowing, but knowing something is not right, but wanting to move toward something . . .” Again, she lets the sentence fall away. Ultimately K.J. found an entire community in New York working with improvisation as a mode of performance and as a movement research tool. Prior to that time, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, her studies and experiences with using images while in “constructive rest” with Andre Bernard in Ideokinesis prepared her for being able to take those images into motion when she found the right outlet for it. Bernard’s work “was very rich and held potential, and through that, I went to a workshop where we were moving with those kinds of images” (8 September 2016). From there, K.J. was on her way to joining and contributing to interconnected communities of movement practice.

While K.J.’s relationship to her practice is physically robust, I notice that she is also open to a range of size and effort in what she does. I am interested in the change of scale in her body when she tells me about playing the mandolin. “It’s small, it’s like a place I go to where I can just hold something and move it.” She holds her body perfectly still except for her hands, which are delicately indicating the precise movement needed to play her invisible mandolin. “It’s very hard. It’s a hard instrument” (8 September 2016). She smiles, still playing the air with her fingers. Her physicality is obvious in a tiny precise scale, providing a qualitative variation that offers a contrast to her experience of

full-body robust movement. It appears to me that differences in range are pleasurable for K.J.

Regarding scale and scope in one's career, K.J. has a long-standing reputation as an expert performer, creator, and educator. She sings, writes poetry, is an actor, a dancer, a choreographer, and a much sought-after performer in other people's works. She teaches in national and international workshops, at The Juilliard School, and in the Experimental Wing at New York University. "Big-C Creativity" is everywhere in her resume. But when I speak with her, it is the presence of the humble little-c everyday creativity, the dailiness of life-as-practice that captivates me. When I ask her to tell me what she does, the highlights seem to rest between the small notions like walking in the city, singing, riding a bicycle, swimming, teaching students something simple yet profound, like how to listen. I appreciate K.J.'s wisdom. It appears to me that wisdom is a defining feature in her practice. She reflects on the theme of practice in her life in this way:

I feel like in a lifetime, how to maintain a connection to practice is really a question. Like when to not do a practice, or who you are doing it for, and where is it going? And the idea of stepping away from a practice is really valuable to feel the lack of it, or even just to feel what it is doing, you know? Or, how is it keeping me here? In some ways I really envision a place of ongoing practice, like with an ensemble or a group or something that you just have a lot of time to just drop in. You don't have to do anything else . . . like that ongoing-ness of space and a group of people. (8 September 2016)

K.J. nods her head and yawns. It is late. I tell her she articulates beautifully, but what I really mean is that she is wise. The shapes she creates while speaking of her practice float and fly as contours of self-determination, knowledge of self-in-the world, and a unique perspective that is entirely hers. She is strong in the world.

Luis Lara Malvacías: A Citizen of Art

Offered the choice between conversing in an interview or responding to interview questions in writing, Luis shares his thoughts in beautifully articulated and deeply thoughtful prose. He shapes his language precisely, inviting me into features of his multidisciplinary practice. As I read, I notice a stance as an artist and person I would name as Luis's *ethical autonomy*. Certainly he demonstrates the cross-domain traits often discernable in creative people who do many things well: wide interests, openness to experience, intrinsic motivation, and autonomy. But as his reader I sense that his "signature" as an autonomous being appears to work in tandem with ethically aware standards he sets for himself. He describes it in this way:

In my artist practice, I have been concerned with the creation of multidisciplinary works with a great focus on movement practices. As an experimental and trans-disciplinary artist, it is paramount that the outcome of my research and process reflects my experience of the everyday events that affect me as a Latin immigrant and queer artist, and a minority in many aspects of the social spectrum. (1 September 2016)

I point out to the reader the beautiful dance of balancing that seems emerge from Luis's relationship to his practice. I see it as a duet that he designs, a partnership between his freedom as an artist and his self-defined responsibilities toward society. I think of Luis as an "ethical citizen of art," a practitioner who meets his own standards of rigor, seriousness of intent, thoroughness of investigation, and respect for participants who engage as his collaborators and audience members. In his writing, Luis describes his sense of freedom as it relates to the counterpart of responsibility, grounded in circumstance and situation: "I usually work with a general feeling of freedom and

responsibility, and I know that the more freedom I allow myself the more risks I can take” (1 September 2016). It appears to me that he does not take his freedom lightly, stating that the “freedom comes with a great concern and responsibility regarding the relevance of my work.” That Luis foregrounds a self-defined ethical practice and keeps his ego on a short leash appears evident to me in his language: “It is not purely aesthetically or self-indulging, but it is important how it can contribute to society at large.” Even his self-criticisms are deeply grounded in serving his practice: “I am very critical of my own choices, not necessarily in judging myself, but with a serious respect for the art form” (1 September 2016). It appears to me that Luis places his practice at a center point, not himself.

Luis is modest about his role and generous towards people who encounter his work. This feature of generosity appears in how he writes about his concern “with the role of the audience and the idea of ‘authorship.’” He states his choice in presenting the audience with “questions rather than with answers; with problems rather than with solutions; with unfolding events rather than with didactic linear structures; with multiple situations rather than a with a mono-focal imposed final tale” (1 September 2016).

The idea of presenting the audience with questions rather than answers ties into a *questioning practice* for Luis — similar to the ways that both Michael and K. J. question their practices — underpinning his overall ways of working. When in the studio, he questions “the relevance of those movements for the ‘thing’ that I am interested in working during a particular period . . . I am always asking myself: what I am doing, what I will do, how I will do it, for whom I will do it . . .” (1 September 2016). Questioning

gives a qualitative texture to Luis's relationship to his practice; it is a strong thread in a well-woven fabric of artistry that is sturdy in the face of being tested, pliable enough to handle change, and beautiful without need for showy adornment.

Luis's sensitivity to influences from everyday life catches my attention. It is an interface between the ordinary *being* of dailiness and the extraordinary *doing* of art making. He writes that when working in the studio, "The sensations particularly related to moving can vary and relate directly or indirectly to what I see around me, what I hear, the way I relate to the space . . ." Luis seamlessly moves his practice out of the studio and into the world, where he assumes a collaborative stance with what he encounters:

This also expands to how my everyday experience affects me through the news, the people that surround me when I walk the streets . . . I am very much affected by things that happen around me, whether they are social issues, political issues, news, personal issues — they directly or indirectly shape and affect me, as a person and as an artist. (1 September 2016)

In his exposition and contemplations of the everyday, philosopher Henri Lefebvre suggests everyday practice as "the springboard to the sublime," supporting the moments when products or process are ready to be shared with the world (336). I suggest that Luis pulls information from the everyday into his creations, and the everyday pulls Luis into appreciating the small levels of doing that exist in his practice.

I propose to the reader that Luis's large network of enterprise is methodically cultivated, defined by his values and desire to contribute to and situate himself within society. By his hand, his wide interests converge in international projects for performance, installation, festivals, and pedagogy. It appears to me that the scope of his work emerges from a stance of active curiosity in how individual disciplines might

intermingle and reconfigure into new areas in the arts. It seems that a substructure of his practice exists in his questioning of how he fits in the world through his many professional identities: dancer, director, collaborator, choreographer, visual artist, costume designer, set designer, somatic practitioner, educator, and inveterate artist-experimenter. In my consideration of Luis as “an ethical citizen of art,” I notice his deep responsiveness to the world. For these reasons, I see his relationship with his practice as a daily improvisatory duet that features an unusual complement of qualities: hard-working and humble, genuinely curious, respectful and determined, ethical and elegant.

Pink Tango: The Nine Plus One Voice

Fuchsia-colored bougainvillea petals scatter erratically in the wind across the yard. For the two cats and one human watching the scene, the quickness and delicacy of the blooms in motion form a glorious seduction, an invitation to dance. The cats cannot resist; they burst into a frenzied pink chase while the human hangs back, watching. Later, she choreographs a few little tango steps here and there throughout the everyday hours, thinking pinkly with hips, head, spine, feet.

Roxanne, Claire, and Melinda: Steady, Persistent, Deep

On a daily basis, the relationship of an artist to practice requires constancy. Some artists embody constancy by finding an area of work with which they prefer to stay for a long time, investing in what it has to offer and feeling the rightness of the fit. In the choice of a long-term commitment, the artist establishes a reliable rigor. A long-term practice might be a prescribed daily regimen, a structure of several different techniques that the artist rotates or combines freely, a single technique with defined parameters, or

perhaps simply a commitment to show up in the studio or on the page for a certain amount of time each day. A long-term commitment could also simply take the form of an attitude or philosophy embedded in anything and everything the artist does. Roxanne Steinberg, Claire Filmon, and Melinda Ring have stayed with the vision of what they want their individual practice to be through a steady progression of years, moving forward with singular focus.

Roxanne Steinberg: A World of Her Making

In the darkness, the audience can hear Roxanne shuffling her feet against the floor. The sounds are scratchy and sandy to the ear, evoking little animal narratives and images of restlessness. Slowly, illumination reveals her figure: a poetic character, completely engaged with a landscape of her making. At one point she rises effortlessly from a folded squat like a small white egret becoming a slender standing woman with a single long braid. Later, she inches her way across the floor, attracted to an intensely bright beam of light. She pushes her face into the beam, smiling like a wild child in front of a lantern or a wolf cub confronting a campfire, teeth bared, surrounded by blackness (Steinberg, *Person's Body*). Roxanne has an uncanny ability to bring a *place* into being and vividly change her person into something completely other. How does she manage these metamorphoses?

I invite the reader to enter this provocative world of Roxanne's creation as I attempt to identify features and qualities of her relationship to her practice. In an in-person interview in Venice, California, in 2016, Roxanne tells me she always begins with the body-mind as the foundational layer: "I follow what my body needs." I hear the broad

strokes of her transformational artistry as she describes starting with the body and the breath, following somatic streams of ideas flowing from her sensory self, cohering in an organic emergence of a performance narrative. In her relationship with her practice she is both a follower of the body and an agent of the body. She is physical, like a cat: “When I’m on my own I’ll stretch things I didn’t even know existed in my body — Oh! There’s a place where I can move! . . . I usually like to stretch completely before I do anything.” Conversely, her practice can just as easily begin at the robust end, with full-body zest. “When we do our workshop training we usually start with running, jumping, and really warming up the body through movement first” (29 May 2016).

Physicality is a starting point for the conversation Roxanne cultivates with her practice: “I think that begins my kind of dialogue with myself, and discovery.” She may start with a “very focused, orderly training, or I might just say, ‘I don’t want to follow any order.’ And then I’ll just start with moving my body where it takes me, usually starting with the breath” (29 May 2016). I appreciate her flexibility in allowing her daily body-mind to unfold and propose that it is an underpinning of her artistic sensitivity onstage as she pliantly follows improvisatory threads. She evidences a remarkable progression of image to impulse to idea to motion. She trains to conjure entire worlds.

What Roxanne refers to as the “workshop training” is what she and her partner Oguri utilize for their own practices as movement artists, as well as what they have offered in workshops and classes to dance and movement communities in Los Angeles and elsewhere since the late eighties. Their practice is Body Weather Laboratory training, as originated and taught by Japanese avant-garde movement artist Min Tanaka, founder

of Body Weather Farm in Japan and originator of the Body Weather Laboratory syllabus for movement exploration, creation, and performance.

Roxanne describes aligning with Min Tanaka's Body Weather practice when introduced to him and his work as a student at Bennington College in the early 1980s. She recognized a resonance between her nascent improvisational work with musicians and Tanaka's approach to improvisation in performance. She recalls Tanaka's performance of a duet with musician Milford Graves at Bennington. It provoked her thinking:

‘Well, that’s what I do! But then I thought, ‘No, that’s not what I do! And I really connected to it. So, the exercises that we practice now I was first introduced to them way back then when I was at Bennington, and then during the two-week time in Paris it really got ironed in. (29 May 2016)

Roxanne has stayed with the Body Weather materials since the 1980s because they work for her. Within the exercises and activities are vast areas for movement explorations and investigations. The training comes to form through each dancer's authentic engagement. I ask Roxanne to tell me about it. What follows is a synopsis of how she describes three major parts of the training. The first — *MB* — allows many concepts to be explored, with the initials standing for big categories such as Mind-Body, Movement-Balance, and Muscle-Bone. *MB* includes the robust, full-body locomotor patterns and rhythms through space that ignite the performer's body and set the energy at full speed. The second — *Manipulations* — invests in a series of seven groups of exercises with passive-active partner participation. The third untitled section is rich in varieties of “sensory exercises, image work, theater games, mirroring work, ‘receiving’

space, ‘putting yourself in space’ and all kinds of explorations . . . no limits there” (29 May 2016). For artists, the Body Weather training offers invitations to discover a deeper self.

Roxanne clearly embodies the values of Body Weather training when she is onstage, revealing her remarkable attentional skills, strength, flexibility, improvisatory ease, and a gift for working poetically in image-based movement. Her work is decidedly *hers* yet reveals strengths of the Body Weather training. “It pretty much covers the whole body. I just connected to that in combination with this kind of very un-stylized running, jumping, turning, rhythmic movement. And so, it became my own practice” (29 May 2016).

It would appear to me that the Body Weather Laboratory has provided Roxanne with a meta-template that she has fulfilled and developed as an extraordinary artist for over 30 years. This is a long dance with a practice that has proven its worth. Roxanne does not unnecessarily complicate the relationship; she has stayed with a rich vein of work, making the contour of the relationship of self-to-practice smooth, integrated, and trusting. She speaks of it as “a mind-body discussion — but it’s more about keeping it whole, thinking with your body instead of keeping it as words and keeping it in a logical place” (29 May 2016). As I have seen many times onstage, Roxanne manifests a body-mind unity, with the body-in-performance taking the lead, revealing how “to be able to think with your body, to be able to just take it out of your mind and say, ‘Oh, my body knows how to do that, just leave it to my body.’” There is also a humble quality, a preference for allowing the *work* to be what is presented. She points to the danger of

“defining it too much and controlling it too much,” creating a feeling that she has “polluted it in a way.” She voices her preference: “I just want it to be wild and true. But then I also really like things when they’re simple, when it’s become whittled down to if I just stand here, or if I just smile” (29 May 2016).

I have seen that smile. Watching a performance by Roxanne, Oguri, and company on the third-floor outdoor balcony of the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles (Steinberg, *Caddy!*), I suddenly notice that Roxanne is present, near me, to my right. She is wearing a delicate little dress patterned with red cherries and flowers on a dark background. She is barefoot, hair divided into two long braids hanging over her shoulders, pale white body paint on her face, neck, chest, and bare limbs, holding something in the folds of her dress like a pouch. With her head tipped to a tiny degree, slightly bent knees and toes inwardly turned, she carries her weight lightly on the balls of her feet. She shifts from foot to foot, scanning, looking for something, looking for someone. Blinking, her gaze moves from point to point. She is girl-like, woman-like, distant while present. She smiles, and the smile is faint, like a memory resting on the surface of a long, deep story.

Steeped in work with which she has a deep affinity, Roxanne performs in ways that are both completely natural and right for her, as well as remarkably other-worldly. Fueling her performative narratives, she collects stories, stones, feathers, dreams, images, and messages from far away. Persistently, she gathers worlds, transforms them, and brings them to aliveness in performance.

Claire Filmon: The Minimum She Needs

Claire made the decision to devote her entire dance practice to improvisation in performance — what she names “composition in real time” (13 May 2018) — in 1995. Keeping her vision steady and keen, she has developed an international career manifesting the practice she loves, as a solo performer, a director of large and small group performance projects, a creative collaborator with other artists, and a teacher in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. A deep underpinning of her practice is trusting “the preparation and the tools” (4 November 2017) for improvisation as composition. She asserts: “It’s a technique” (4 November 2017). In the most individualistic aspect of her expertise — the creation of solos for herself— she crafts unique presentations from within a nuanced internal network of enterprise. Onstage, she composes her work in the moment using highly personalized techniques she has developed over the years, including spoken text in several languages, songs, stories, and movement invention particular to her body.

Through several Skype video interviews between Paris and Los Angeles, Claire’s commitment to improvisational practice as a container for both her artistic life and her existential questioning becomes clear. In our conversation in 2016 she describes what happens inside her practice: “I go closer to being who I am. Who am I? I feel I’m still in process. For me, this is just the consequence of my practice.” Within the act of improvisation, Claire understands her aliveness in ways that operate differently than those of language or logic. She tells me: “You know it by doing it. And I discovered that it works if I trust the process. There is a moment when you have to let go.” Working

within this fluid space of letting go is an immense substructure within her practice. She describes: “You have to trust the process will bring you someplace. You are not able to judge it, but you can taste it. It’s like you are *taken by it*. You are not *making it*.” She feels her role in the relationship with her practice is clearly defined. She tells me that at a certain point in her earlier training, “I understood that I am like a channel. And the only work I have to do is to clean the channel. And after that — that’s the part of learning to let go. You can’t grab it . . . you just touch what has to be touched” (9 May 2016). As her listener, I hear the features of an internal creative flow, moment by moment in her practice, that permits ideas and impulses to come to bodily form.

Allowing flow to happen, as opposed to controlling the process, is perhaps easier to do if everything is going well. When things are not going well, this part of practice is tested. Listening to Claire, I can feel the tension in repeated narratives of feeling she has reached a dead end in her career, causing her to feel it is time to stop, only to receive a reprieve, an offer for work, or a new door to open at the last moment. I begin to appreciate this “warring” as a strong feature of Claire’s relationship to her practice. She meets obstacles but persists in her desire to continue her performance practice. She feels it is an end, and then, like watching a cat go around a corner, she grabs the tail. She catches the practice! She does not let it disappear! In our 2017 interview she is able to articulate this scenario with humor: “There are two ways. There is that you think this is the end, but you still think, well — it’s like *Life* asks you: ‘Do you like me? Yes or no?’ And I say, ‘Oh, still yes’” (4 November 2017). She laughs.

Several intertwined features of Claire's relationship to her practice arise here, coming up through the little wars, in particular, her persistence and her optimism, punctuated often with her wit and robust French laugh. Themes of finality, new beginnings, unexpected gifts, and despair test both her persistence and optimism. She offers a lesson she learned from one of her valued and influential teachers:

Lisa Nelson gave me a word, that, for me, it's a word that explains what I went through. Because it's what she said about her technique that I really love. She speaks about survival. It's a survival way. You need to survive! So, you need to eat. You need to have food. You have to have some money. How will you do this? You know? Because, you know, if you have to eat something you look in the cupboard. What do I have in my cupboard? You have some sugar, some flour, an egg—what could I do with that? So, I look in my cupboard. What do I have? Oh, I still have a bit of dance in there! (4 November 2017)

I appreciate that Claire recognizes she still has some dance in the cupboard. In listening to the manner in which she shares her narratives, I understand that her wit serves as an interface, helping to mediate the sobering economic realities of being a free-lance solo artist who works primarily in improvisation. Connected to her wittiness is a philosophical wisdom. I recall her wise words from our 2016 interview: “The practice I love and do is improvisation. And I notice this practice is not so easy. But it is the core of everything. It's not so easy to be You. And when it happens, we say it is ‘la grace.’ Grace” (9 May 2016).

As her listener, I hear two other factions as having been at war in Claire's relationship with her practice: *artist identity* and *identity dissatisfaction*. In the 1980s — before finding improvisation — Claire was not happy being an “interpreter” for other choreographers when she danced in companies. In the early 1990s, she met and studied

with Judson era artists and other avant-garde dance makers and improvisers — including Anna Halprin, Trisha Brown company, Mark Thompkins, Simone Forti, Nancy Stark Smith, Lisa Nelson, English improviser Julyen Hamilton, and expatriate American jazz musician Barre Phillips — and her world became alive with possibilities. Her career shift to improvisation allowed her sense of identity to deeply settle. The warring died down after a realization occurred in the early 1990s after taking a year to study improvisation and modern dance in the United States. She tells it this way: “I came to America with my question: ‘Am I a dancer?’ And, I left, one year later with the understanding: ‘I am a mover’” (9 May 2016).

I invite the reader to share my astonishment of how Claire seeks and embodies grace in her practice: she simply steps onto the stage and begins. That is it. Claire’s requirements to walk onstage and make an entirely improvised event are surprisingly modest:

What I’m interested in is this: What is the minimum I need to compose onstage in front of an audience? And that it gives something; it is a performance. It’s not ‘nothing;’ it is a *performance*. So, it’s what I’m doing. I know it doesn’t interest so many people, because it’s a bit risky, but it’s what I like. And it took me a long time to get support from people that trust my work. (4 November 2017)

Claire’s artistic autonomy is apparent in the uncompromising manner in which she persists in her practice. In our conversation in 2018, she was able to look back at her path with additional insight. Contemplating the difficulties she encountered in starting a career in solo improvisation, she proposes that her naiveté played a positive role: “I think if I was not naïve I would never try to do all that I’ve done. It was a bit crazy, you know?

I think everybody thought ‘She’s crazy. She will never manage!’’ (13 May 2018).

Contrary to that opinion, Claire has built a unique international career.

Claire’s long-term commitment to a single practice of improvisation in performance has come to fruition in other unforeseen ways, in particular, through her relationship with the iconic improviser who came to prominence in the Judson era, Simone Forti. Initially invited by Simone to dance in her work in 1998, Claire eventually was asked by Simone to be her duet performance partner and is now the artist Simone has designated to perform her solos, *Zoo Mantras/Sleep Walkers* and *Striding Crawling*. The irony here is that in dancing Simone’s solos, Claire is, in fact, in the role of “interpreter” — the identity she rejected as dissatisfactory earlier in her career. But now the context and moment in time are completely different. Claire sees these opportunities for performing Simone’s work as something “that has come from Heaven.” She talks about this gift from Simone in this way: “I am just thankful. Because it makes me more peaceful. I still believe I can be a dancer. And an artist. And I can do something that has roots in the history of dance. So I feel like, okay, I’m not a completely crazy girl” (13 May 2018). To watch Claire inventing a performance in the moment is to see a captivating artist, not a crazy girl. She creates beautifully, with just the minimum she needs.

Melinda Ring: It Is What She Is Here to Do

In our 2016 in-person interview conversation in the dance building on the UCLA campus in Los Angeles, Melinda talks to me about her ongoing interest in location, place, and space. In particular, the topic arises when she talks about the creation of her

Forgetful Snow project. The content of the project grew from ideas that supported earlier projects, but the site for the work revealed itself to Melinda during her visits to The Kitchen in New York to attend performances and workshops in the white gallery. She could feel the white-on-white gallery space taking hold of her imagination. When she noticed how the walls seemed to be floating in space, she knew she wanted to create something there. She recalls: “I really was so attracted to the proportions of the room, and besides the proportions there are these odd things that are going on in there.” She shares details: “They floated these walls out from the real walls so that they don’t go all the way up to the ceiling, so the entire room feels like it is floating” (19 May 2016).

Considering space is an underpinning in Melinda’s relationship to her practice. She tells me: “Part of my practice is, probably from the beginning of making work, has been very, very concerned with location” (19 May 2016). Wanting to make her own work, she initially felt encumbered by her lack of access to theatrical spaces, but when she was in Japan studying with avant-garde movement artist Min Tanaka, he and his community members modeled something alternative. She recalls being around Min and his artists: “I realized that they were doing a lot with very little. And that they were working in sites. And that really, I could make a dance anywhere. So I started to do that first.” This fundamental interest still holds her: “Since that time, whatever place I’m working in, I always consider its properties.” Mature in her practice now, Melinda “is in a place where I’m asking for things from institutions that I want to be involved with or make a work for their space” (19 May 2016). She approached The Kitchen and proposed a performance project for the white gallery.

Melinda premiered *Forgetful Snow* in 2014 in two spaces: the white gallery at The Kitchen in New York and The Box Gallery in the Arts District in downtown Los Angeles. Still working in sites and considering properties of space, Melinda fabricated an environment of cool arctic whiteness in the walls and floor, with a large white shag rug in the middle of the space as the habitat for the event. In contrast to the polar white environment, the flesh tones of the nude dancers provided warmth and color to their bodily landscapes.

I invite the reader into what I glean as Melinda's choreographic process because what Melinda makes and the manner in which she does it reveal her intensely detailed interiority in practice. Her dedication to a persistent and precise actualization of what she envisions is her practice. The triptych components of *Forgetful Snow* provide an opportunity to sense the breadth and imagination of Melinda's work. The three segments of the work include an afternoon durational activity of the dancers carefully creating and rearranging sculptural terrain with their bodies in *The Landscape*. In another section named *(Memory of) Snow Machine*, Melinda offers a viewer-participant one-on-one speaking and listening installation in which real time "snow memories" are spoken by a dancer in prone, blindfolded stillness on a small sleeping palette, covered by a white towel. The listener-audience member can lie on a cot with a pillow and listen to either the real time spoken memories or an audio archived version. The final event of *Forgetful Snow* is a 60-minute completely choreographed evening dance in a white-on-white scenic environment. I experience Melinda's narrative about the conceptualization and creation of *Forgetful Snow* as energized and intense but not hurried. The aliveness of her interest

in what she creates is palpable. She chooses *Forgetful Snow* to talk about in our interview because it exemplifies her “most fully realized” recent choreographic event born of a process she has worked for years to refine. In simple terms Melinda states: “Basically, my practice is to work as a choreographer and to make dances. I currently am not dancing in my dances. My job description is Outside Eye” (19 May 2016).

In refining her job as Outside Eye, Melinda tells me about a certain point when she began “curating” herself. Having accepted an invitation in New York to serve as a curator at Dance Space Project and interview an artist of her choice, she began contemplating questions to ask, and one question provoked her about her own work: “My idea was [to ask about when] you felt you had come into yourself. So, in doing that curatorial project, it really made me start to think about acting in a way as my own curator” (19 May 2016).

It appears that Melinda’s Outside Eye also engages with *questioning* in her practice, as similarly noted for artist-participants Michael Sakamoto, K. J. Holmes, and Luis Malvacías. Her ability to question her process forms a substantial substructure in her relationship to her practice. She gives me examples: “What I’ve been doing more recently is challenging myself to just be aware of what comes into the rehearsal process and to see if it’s of value in some way.” Melinda asks herself and her collaborators: “Is there something here? What’s interesting about this? What doesn’t work about this?” (19 May 2016). Questioning becomes a subtle dance of alternating restraint and freedom in her relationship to her practice, taking the necessary time to notice what is emerging in exploratory sessions in the studio.

What I notice most profoundly in Melinda's descriptions of her meticulously detailed process is her capacity for imaginatively developing and extending an idea, passing the concept for a project through multiple manifestations, making connections not only to other disciplines and sensibilities but also to her life experiences. She articulates, for example, that creating *Forgetful Snow* is linked to her upbringing in the landscapes and weather in southern California — including the rarity of snow — and to earlier dances she made about western atmospheres, called *The Weather Condition Dances*. It appears to me that this is her Outside Eye linking to her Inside Self. She guides her directorial touch with an understanding of and connection to both the obvious and the less obvious components and features of a project. She brings all her information into finer and finer points of composition.

As a director, Melinda enlarges possibilities for the form a performance may need to take while establishing micro controls for precisely creating the effects and qualities she wants to appear in her choreography. An important substructure in her practice is her desire to consciously construct a quality of spontaneity found in improvisation and maintain that quality consistently in the set choreography. She explains: “What I’ve been trying to do is create a process that would keep that spontaneity, somehow . . . I feel like *Forgetful Snow* is really successful in that realm . . . it feels improvised.” But at the same time, in the choreography there are “things that happen between the dancers that they couldn’t possibly do by improvising” (19 May 2016).

Another element that feels improvised is the unforeseen quirkiness of “failures” that occur in the process of learning movement vocabularies. Melinda acknowledges, “In

order for the work to have the quality I want it to have, it has to retain some of that failure in the execution of the movement.” In order to maintain the interest of the failed performance of movement in the final project, Melinda directs from within her own “realms of restraint” and consciously “subverts” her training. She describes her process of “having the dancers subvert their training . . . to not fix things . . . to step back and not tidy everything up right away. So there’s a kind of anti-doing, and then there’s a doing” (19 May 2016).

I see that these carefully constructed protocols that maintain idiosyncratic details precisely to Melinda’s specifications are what gives her relationship to her practice such intensity. Clearly, by her own declaration, she will “not settle for what I imagine are the limitations of my form, whether it’s the form itself or how it gets produced.” As her listener I sense that underpinning her entire network of enterprise is Melinda’s intense drive: “I really want to make the work I want to make. There’s no other point to doing it. That’s the privilege of being an artist, to make the work that you want to make” (19 May 2016).

Melinda explains what she means by *privilege*: “I’m trying to live in two places right now, which is that I’m very deeply involved in choreography, and I’m also allowing myself the privilege that I feel visual artists have, of doing whatever they please” (19 May 2016). She laughs, but I perceive this as a serious point in the development of her practice. I hear her articulating a freedom she prefers in being able to engage with multiple arts disciplines and a variety of presentational modes as expressions of her ideas. I also hear her equating the freedom she gives herself with a self-privileging she observes

among visual artists: “like working with whatever, within whatever realm of making that suits what they have decided needs to be made” (19 May 2016). As her listener, I hear Melinda questioning how much liberty, if any, she might take in using other arts disciplines. Regardless of any comparison to what visual artists do, I hear that she is simply asking these questions of herself.

I imagine Melinda out in a field, picking up stones, looking underneath each one before putting it back down. The field of stones becomes deep. To reach depth — and I feel that is a feature of her intention within her practice — requires time. Her search for a methodology for making the work she wants to make has taken patience, ingenuity (real genius), cultivation of collaborative partners, an exacting process of refinement, and a highly developed capacity for immensely extending the evolution of an idea. Making dances is what Melinda does. She states simply: “Being in dance — I can’t not do it . . . It’s what I’m here to do” (19 May 2016). I believe her.

All Directions Lead Somewhere: The Nine Plus One Voice

Swimming, she spirals. In water, space feels devoid of reference points. As she glides she asks herself: How do aquatic beings understand direction? Rising to the surface and leaving her watery world, she becomes a land creature with heavy limbs. Trusting gravity, she begins to slowly spin, grounding her body’s revolutions in the certainty that she will not rise and drift out into space like a tiny planet of one. Gradually, she changes the shapes of her arms and the tilt of her head. A slow-motion dervish, she enters a meditative state, letting the dance take her.

Kara, Melanie, and Kathleen: Shifts and Cycles

Kara Jhalak Miller, Melanie Ríos Glaser, and Kathleen Fisher began their young professional dance careers in New York in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They continued to develop their practices and artist personae throughout their 20s and into their early 30s. They steadily flourished as company dancers, improvisers, experimenters, choreographers, and, at times, artistic directors, with New York as a professional hub. Their practices were eclectic, containing components of their trainings in ballet, classical modern dance lineages, mixtures of experimental “downtown” dance, somatic approaches to movement, contact improvisation, and improvisational approaches to creation and performance. By 2006, all three artists had left New York. They each made a major change that involved a radical geographical relocation and a large shift in their life circumstances. They exited New York at a similar age and within three years of each other, intuitively responding to a door that opened as an opportunity, an invitation, or an appealing possibility. Their relocations were exercises in autonomy requiring huge openness and willingness to let go of what they had. Each shift was an improvisation.

Kara Jhalak Miller: Finding the Ground of Practice

As an impressively independent 17-year-old, Kara studied in a summer intensive at the Erick Hawkins School in New York, living with family friends in New Jersey and navigating the city on her own. In our 2016 Skype video interview, Kara laughs as she recalls being “the only high school student and everyone else were grown-ups” studying choreography, Hawkins technique classes, and attending evening sessions in which “Lucia and Erick would give these talks, read poetry, talk about various philosophies

from Japan and Zen meditation.” A precocious teenaged mover and thinker, Kara had already been given special permission as a high school student to study modern dance and Body-Mind Centering® with Bill Evans and Vera Orlock at Indiana University before coming to New York. “Monday and Wednesday would be our modern dance technique and on Friday we would listen to our spleens” (16 May 2016). Kara laughs with delight. She knows that much of her early life was unusual.

I invite the reader to join me in hearing how Kara underpins her relationship to her practice with an expansive view of life that includes, yet goes beyond, dance. Kara points to features of her early years that encouraged an openness to life. She came to love the natural world by playing in the hilly forested terrain and exploring the stone quarries in Indiana. She understood service to others as modeled by her parents who were pastors. She felt the richness of cultures beyond her own through meeting the refugees her parents helped resettle. And she spent a heart-opening summer studying dance in Bali, which she names as an experience that “greatly informed my spiritual self and my choreographic sense.” In Bali, she was gifted with the understanding that “people practice dance differently in different places” (16 May 2016), which forever changed her worldview.

While training at The Juilliard School in New York, Kara’s wide interests sometimes pulled her attention away from dance and provoked questions. During the time when she “became enamored with everything in Bali” (16 May 2016) through learning about it from a humanities professor, the feeling was strong enough to generate thoughts and questions about a change in disciplinary focus. She was not sure she wanted to stay in dance. She considered other disciplines and other coasts: “I thought about going

to UCLA, film and anthropology. At that time, I had at one point seriously thought, ‘I’m going to leave dancing here and I’m going to go study film in California.’” But she realized that “If I was going to dance, I believed I should stay in New York . . . I knew that later in my life I could go to California” (16 May 2016). For Kara, these periodic forays into thinking about shifts in her disciplinary focus demonstrated “a very early recognition” that her interests in global practices of dance represent an appreciation of a wider world — something meaningful that needs to be included in her practice.

It was Kara’s exposure to yoga that shifted the earth under her feet and slowly brought about change, ultimately influencing her departure from New York. She describes the meeting: “I was introduced to the practice of yoga the fall after I graduated [from Juilliard]. In 1994, in upstate New York, and then the year following I began a practice of meditation and chanting. I was in India in 1994” (16 May 2016). At age 23, Kara found what would become the ground of her true practice. On this ground, she continued to build her professional dance practice in New York as a choreographer, performer, and artistic director of Omega Dance Company at St. John the Divine Cathedral in Manhattan, a position she held from 1995 to 2002.

Looking at Kara’s CV, I ask her about a gap in time after she left the directorship of the Omega Dance Company. She explains: “I spent one year at a meditation retreat, volunteering, and I spent another year, as a result of that, working in Los Angeles in television and film” (16 May 2016). After radically shifting her focus and moving to the West Coast, Kara considered — perhaps for the final time — leaving dance, “thinking that I was going to make a complete career change, and then realizing that I was truly a

dancer at heart and needed to remain the dance field.” She laughs in the telling. My use of the word *gap* catches Kara’s interest, and she reflects on the concept:

As I think about it, it’s those gaps of time between set periods where I was in some way defined by a location or a place, that were probably the most moments of discovery for me, and really informed everything that was to follow those spaces in between. Because they were periods of unknown, and in the unknown I had to really listen and be open to whatever would come, but also to try to manifest at the same time. So that led me on interesting journeys and places and things I thought I never would do, things that I do now! (16 May 2016)

As her listener, it seems to me that having arrived at new ground on the West Coast, a path was cleared for Kara’s broad interests to both spread and integrate within her practice. In her 30s, she began to manifest what she had imagined in her 20s: projects integrating dance, media art, film, performance, and world dance studies. International projects in film and new media began to come her way with a natural flow. The skills she refined earning an MFA with a focus of dance and new media and the scholarly writing she honed while earning a Ph.D. in Performance Studies now serve her interests in the intersections of performance, yoga, world cultures, and spiritual practice. A professor position is now hers at the University of Hawaii, shifting her even farther west to the middle of the Pacific Ocean, to the island of Oahu. She responds to my question about what her practice is now:

As an artist, I would say that I experience myself as a dancer, as a choreographer who is improvisation-based. I also engage with visual media in dance, and also writing. So, as an artist I would say I have three areas of practice in my training and my craft. But my artistic practice, really, I would say is meditation. It’s offering, it’s recognition, it’s gratitude, it’s reciprocity. I would say that my true practice includes all of those things, which stem from a twenty-three-year practice of yoga and a life-long practice of how I understand the world. (16 May 2016)

The continuing integration of the components of Kara's eclectic artist practice has an uncanny sense of wholeness. I would say it is holistically assembled through an illuminated sense of trust. As her listener, I hear that yoga forms the ground — the great underpinning — of Kara's dancing life and creates the organizing principle of her daily experiences as a human being.

Melanie Ríos Glaser: Practice as a Place of Giving

As an emergent dance artist, Melanie shaped a remarkably productive 11-year period of international freelance work following her graduation from The Juilliard School in 1994. She danced in New York companies, investigated experimental “downtown” dance, involved herself in contact improvisation and improvisation in performance, formed a company based in her native Guatemala City augmented by New York guest artists, and created performance projects that dotted an international map while maintaining ties to the dance world in New York. In a 2016 in-person interview in Santa Ana, California, Melanie tells me about the international reach of her work: “During those 11 years I divided my time between Guatemala, New York, Africa — Morocco — and Europe, mostly France, and any other available part where there was work available . . . anywhere where the next project would take me” (31 August 2016). As a young dance professional, Melanie created something exciting; I hear it in her voice as she talks about it. What event or situation changed in her life that she would leave it?

Melanie released her freelance agenda to make room for something else. She responded to an invitation and opportunity that came to her in 2005, when she was in her mid-30s. At the time, Melanie and her husband were each at the completion point of

prestigious Fulbright awards, both in Europe. It was a pivotal moment of endings and beginnings. As if responding to that moment, an invitation came to Melanie from The Wooden Floor, a prestigious and visionary dance learning center based in Santa Ana, California, that Melanie describes as “a non-profit organization that helps low income youth through dance, academic, and family services” (31 August 2016). The Wooden Floor needed a new artistic director following the retirement of the founder, Beth Burns.

Although Melanie was well-acquainted with the organization, having been regularly recruited by Burns as a guest choreographer for the students since 1999, accepting the job would mean altering degrees of freedom in her freelance life to become primarily an arts administrator. Answering my question of why, Melanie tells me that “every time I had been there as a choreographer, I had had a wonderful experience.” She was honored that the founder had “handpicked” her. She was also attracted to “the scope and the mission” of The Wooden Floor. By accepting the job, she and her husband could return to the United States and both have jobs at the time they were “trying to build a foundation for our burgeoning family” (31 August 2016). It seemed the right thing to do.

Paradoxically, Melanie was hired, in part, because of the artist she is, and yet due to the understandable needs of the organization, her ability to maintain a full artist practice was curtailed. Reflecting, in our 2016 conversation, on her role as she passed the decade mark in the job, she knew the equation of art to administration was uneven, “especially in the last couple of years, my artistic practice became smaller and smaller.” She tried different models of the job, hoping to better balance being an artist and being an arts administrator, such as a co-CEO model, “so that I would have weeks of the year

to do my own artistic projects.” But that model had “mixed success, really, because it was hard to bookmark the time. The organization’s demands would often creep into the time to be a practicing artist” (31 August 2016). Ultimately, with the ever-increasing time needed for the organization and the decreasing time available for her artist practice, she decided to resign. Her telling of the resignation is both graceful and simple: “I decided to resign from The Wooden Floor because the organization, through no fault of its own, but due to its success, partly, and its plans for growth, required that I dedicate more time there” (31 August 2016). Melanie made the decision she had to make, preserving her practice as an artist.

In a pattern parallel to her 11-year span as a freelance artist, Melanie’s resignation from The Wooden Floor also marked the end of an 11-year period as the director. Also parallel was the period of adjustment needed following the departure from one situation and the arrival in a new one. When Melanie left her freelance life and its ties to New York, she had a designated landing place. When she left The Wooden Floor, was there a new destination? Perhaps her landing place was a space with a loosened sense of time, allowing Melanie to reconnect to herself and her practice.

Although not a geographical shift, the transition out of the leadership of The Wooden Floor took time and necessitated rest and reflection. Having held onto some aspects of her artist practice while she was in the job, she was not without resources. In particular, she had maintained a weekly session of Authentic Movement with a small group of fellow artists, created her own choreography whenever possible, taught contact improvisation as a guest artist, and cultivated her reading practice enriched by a

windfall: “I inherited a library of books on dance, so I voraciously read through those” (31 August 2016). Even in the most demanding of times in her leadership role, Melanie had “kept alive” her practice. She had persisted in her effort to keep it, to save it, and to maintain a meaningful relationship with it.

I see *giving* as a hallmark of Melanie’s relationship to community, but also to her own practice. I note the two symmetrical 11-year periods of her work, each followed by a major shift in circumstances and a requirement to change in some way. Through this pattern of change, I see her ability to *give* as distinctive. As the architect of her freelance career, Melanie gave her developing artist practice the energy, time, and professional focus it needed to flourish. When she relocated to southern California and changed her disciplinary focus to becoming an arts administrator for The Wooden Floor, she repeated her gifts of energy, time, and focus for another 11-year period followed by another major change brought into being by her resignation. In the aftermath of resigning from the responsibilities of the organization, she was challenged again with giving, this time to herself and her own practice. In our 2016 conversation, Melanie was just one month past her resignation, and she tells me: “I’m in transition.” A bit later in the conversation she admits “I’m in recovery” (31 August 2016). I could feel her exhaustion.

I find the concept of *creative magnitude* useful in contemplating Melanie’s time of resting and letting go during the big shift that followed resigning from The Wooden Floor. Rather than engaging in activities that would measure as “Big C Creativity” (Simonton 1975), I see Melanie’s true achievement in her process of recovery as an artist in her choice to engage in what creativity researcher Ruth Richards calls “everyday

creativity,” finding the “originality of everyday life” (189). Resting and allowing her practice to be fallow, Melanie employed the range of the tiny and the ordinary to inhabit time and space without pressure. She describes her days as “Walking . . . I have my movement group of Authentic Movement . . . a lot of naps . . . playing with my children, doing more around the house, reading . . .” (31 August 2016). At the time of our 2016 conversation, directly after her resignation, she had decided to “give myself this month to just putter around, basically, before really doing some introspection, finding out what comes next in my artistic practice.” She was honest about not having a plan, except to not have a plan. “At this moment I really don’t know. I know that I have the same interests. I definitely am still fascinated by improvisation. And I’m fascinated with Authentic Movement and its depth of touch to body and soul . . . I’m just letting things fall where they may . . .” Letting her creative work be fallow and her body rest, Melanie acknowledged it was an unknown space: “This is all very new to me. Because 11 years in a demanding job — it’s the first time in a long time that I am finding my voice again” (31 August 2016).

I invite the reader to see the portrait of gentle days and small doing as a gift that Melanie gave to herself in order to restore health, well-being, and artistry. If she had not invested in the gift of little-c days of creativity and tiny doing, what would her “recovery” have looked like and would it have happened at all? The questions are ponderable but unanswerable by me. Melanie forms her own questions: “What were my last 11 years? And how do I come to terms with that? (31 August 2016).

Melanie was able to offer answers to her own questions during our 2018 in-person interview in her home in Santa Ana. It had been one year and nine months after her resignation. She tells me about her year of “hibernation” in this way:

Well, I’ve come to terms with the time as being of service. That it was more about caring for the lives that were put into our hands to change. And caring for this large organization at some points by myself in the leadership position. And directing it towards growth and towards possibility, to expand the reach and breadth of our mission. So as those years were of service, the free-lance years were . . . [She interrupts herself, pauses, then starts again.] Making art is always being of service, in my opinion. (2 May 2018)

In our 2018 interview, I ask Melanie how she identifies herself now. Her voice is firm: “I am a movement artist, improviser, choreographer, curator, and a consultant for smaller non-profit organizations.” Using skills she acquired in her Wooden Floor position, she has added consulting to her resume and works pro bono for small organizations. I see Melanie’s relationship to her practice as characterized by a willingness to change — which is a way of giving to life. And even within the challenges of change, she persists in modeling the validity of maintaining an artist practice for herself. She understands what it takes to be both an artist and a leader. She serves, and she gives.

Kathleen Fisher: Finding Beauty

Kathleen reaches her arm forward and points her index finger downward as if identifying a place on a map: “I saw this, and I said, ‘Oh! I’m going to go right there!’”

In a Skype video interview in 2016, Kathleen is telling me about a chance visit to the Bahamas that changed her life. I invite the reader into hearing about Kathleen’s shift from New York to an entirely different world.

From 1992 to 2002 Kathleen had held the enviable position of being a dancer in the internationally renowned Trisha Brown Dance Company. Finishing a BFA in dance from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, she was a stunning young dancer who manifested a remarkable performance quality, as if illuminated from within. The Brown Company wanted her. The decade she spent dancing in the company was rich with experiences. But by 2003, she was exhausted and needed a rest. She needed a vacation. Hence the map, followed by a tale of change.

There is no small amount of kismet in Kathleen's story of choosing on a whim to go to the islands of Bimini in the Bahamas and swim with wild dolphins in their habitat. She had intended to go to someplace more known, maybe Florida, and was not prepared at all to engage with wild marine animals: "I'd never used a snorkel before!" (15 May 2018). But meeting the friendly, intelligent dolphins who love to spiral and jump and look deeply into the eyes of other sentient beings touched something immeasurably resonant within Kathleen. For a few years after meeting the dolphins, she continued to dance in New York for choreographers such as Jane Comfort and Bebe Miller, while crewing for dolphin excursion boats in Bimini during the summer. But the calling of life on the island was strong, and although she tried to live in both places, by the beginning of 2007 she had chosen to be based in Bimini and had moved there.

I point out for the reader some of the ways in which Kathleen's relationship to her practice was fluid enough that she could give over to becoming a part of a world previously unimaginable. As her observer, I see a deeply creative and thoughtful ability in Kathleen for making connections across time, distance, disciplines, environments, and

species, integrating seemingly unconnected and disparate activities into her practice as an artist, mover, thinker, and human being.

In relocating to Bimini, Kathleen placed three existing aspects of her eclectic practice — yoga, meditation, and somatic approaches to bodywork — at the center of a business she established with her husband called *Bimini Healing Arts*. She added a daily rigorous ocean swimming practice and apnea (breath holding) practice for free diving and working underwater, as well as more boating skills for supporting dolphin excursions. Becoming a mother required her to enlarge her practice to include another human being — she calls it “remaking my life with her” (12 September 2016) — which changed the manner in which she could participate in dance projects. Although she has “more responsibility, more complexity” in her life, Kathleen found new ways to work as a creative artist, in a sense, streamlining what she does: “I am really practicing going into projects and not having an attachment to the end product, but having more courage.” She links the idea of courage to the entire enterprise of being the artist and person she is, making the life she wants:

I think it has something to do with dance and life for me. I think that an artist decides to do that when they decide to be an artist, in a way. There’s a perceived level of risk, somehow, at one time or another. In creating things or trying to make things, you know, it’s almost impossible to get free of the models. And yet, the most exciting making is when something hits new ground. So I try to find that in my life. (12 September 2016)

A unique and vivid example of how her life works outside models and how she has hit new creative ground is Kathleen’s participation in *Dolphin Dance Project*. Invited to join the project in 2010 by co-director and New York friend and dancer, Chisa Hidaka,

Kathleen collaborates as a dancer and improviser underwater with wild dolphins. Meeting a few times a year, the sessions are filmed by co-director Benjamin Harley for film and video-based productions featuring relationships between humans and other species. Kathleen and Chisa connect through a shared love of the wild dolphins, preferences for collaborative creative projects, and love of dance improvisation and performance, all of which come together in how they create spontaneous dances with a population of wild dolphins.

Kathleen tells me some of the foundations for the work: “What has happened in that we have developed, with some of them, really a common and known [movement] vocabulary. But we don’t really know what’s going to happen.” For example, she describes having familiarity with some of the dolphins’ favorite behaviors, such as knowing “these two are going to go down; they like to swirl. But you don’t know exactly what they’re going to do!” (15 May 2018). She laughs. She has found deep connections to aesthetics and artfulness as well as physical rigor in the ongoing practice demanded by the project. The responses of the dolphins do not escape her attention: “We try to refine how we are using our bodies for aesthetic purposes. Which is something the dolphins seem to respond to really positively. I think they really respond to grace, and when humans are being aquatic” (15 May 2018).

For Kathleen, in certain ways the *Dolphin Dance Project* is a link to the artist life she lived in New York. Both she and Chisa notice how working with the dolphins is a bit like contact improvisation in the sensitivity needed to work with a partner, but it is different with wild creatures underwater. With Chisa, Kathleen notices: “she and I are the

ones [in the project] whose frame of reference is really in the art scene” (12 September 2016). After leaving New York and moving to Bimini, Kathleen had not returned to the city. But when Chisa invited her into *Dolphin Dance Project* it brought and continues to bring a bit of the New York dance, music, and art worlds to a completely different setting in the middle of the ocean. Kathleen sees this transposition of activities to an unlike environment and notices the link: “It has served as a kind of connection to that way of making things . . . the collaboration is emerging, which is what I like to do . . . To me, that is very juicy and important.” In terms of constraints on her dance life by living in Bimini she adds: “For a while I didn’t know if I would have any continuation of my dance life. I welcomed Chisa . . . I really welcomed having a creative thread that also included what my life really was, now” (12 September 2016).

As her daughter matures, Kathleen has returned to being more active in the contemporary dance world, serving as one of the designated artists teaching, restaging, and re-imagining the choreographies of Trisha Brown in international settings. Rich professional dance experiences have come full circle, with the difference now that Kathleen works her professional life from her base in Bimini.

I invite the reader to notice with me, that as a creative person, *place* figures hugely in how Kathleen has shaped her life, her practice, her creative work. The blue skies, white clouds, turquoise waters, green mangroves, and promise of dancing with dolphins appear to define a mysteriously charmed turn that her life took, and that she risked much to accept.

When Kathleen and I converse via a Skype video call between Bimini Island and Los Angeles in 2018, I remark to her that leaving New York seems to be a kind of marker in her life. She agrees but confirms: “It was a choice. I knew I was giving up a lot. I didn’t know as much what I was going towards; it was more intuitive.” She was aware of letting go of important connections and access to theaters and presenters in New York if she walked away. “I was cognizant that I was letting a lot go.” But looking back at her life there, she tells me, “I got to do what I wanted to do. I got to fulfill working with her [Trisha Brown] and working with an enormously talented group of people and groups of people.” She considers another possibility: “You know, I don’t know if I would have moved from New York if I hadn’t fulfilled this.” Getting to do what she wanted to do, by her own accord, unleashed something: “It freed me to do other things” (15 May 2018).

Perhaps the reader can agree that in Kathleen’s case, doing other things has meant enacting a life change and shift in location so profoundly different from her previous life in New York that they cannot be compared. Kathleen knows it is unusual, and reflects on the life she has chosen:

I feel a tremendous amount of gratitude in my life, and a major question that comes up for me is how much do I need or want to bridge what feels like a really non-mainstream life with the mainstream? . . . Is it something I should do for any reason? I mean that comes up for me. And yet, I really love my life. I really, really love my life. And my life has so much variety, and so much incredible beauty. I get insecure sometimes and think, ‘Is this sustainable?’ . . . and sometimes I get afraid if I start to think about the future in the same terms that everyone tells me I should think if it, or even in the present . . . And then I just realize there are certain compromises I won’t make. (12 September 2016)

As her listener, I hear how fiercely important her world and all that it offers are to Kathleen. I ask what her practice gives her amidst all that she loves in her chosen place.

She is clear and firm in her response: “It makes me be able to live. I think it gives me the courage to live in a way that I actually want to live.” She looks into the distance and thinks for a while before speaking again: “And, of course, it uncovers some things that are difficult. And so practice does many things. But I can’t think who I would be, what my life would be, without it” (12 September 2016).

The Grand Canyon of Self: The Nine Plus One Voice

Little by little she lets her weight settle into the earth. On her back, legs stretched to full length, arms by her side, palms up, eyes open, she looks at a night sky. She tries to remember all the layers of her Self. How did she get to this moment? Before she sleeps, an image lingers: a river runs through her body from head to feet and beyond. As the weight of the water carves earthward in its path through her flesh, all her colors are revealed. She cries, but she is not sad. She is in and of her world.

Turning the Page

I am grateful to the artist-participants in this dissertation who have so generously and ingeniously shared their narratives, allowing me to listen, observe, interpret, and write about their ways and relationships with practice. Their generosity continues as I follow them into a bigger world, a world of life forms and environments beyond themselves that enliven their movement practices.

As always, I invite the reader to come with me, entering Chapter IV, “Ways in the World: Practice with Nature.”

CHAPTER IV

WAYS IN THE WORLD: PRACTICE WITH NATURE

There were those who flowed into the buddha way drawn by
grasses, flowers, mountains, or rivers . . .

—Eihei Dōgen, *Bendōwa*

The Hum: The Nine Plus One Voice

The air is thick with heat. Under a furnace-like atmosphere, the flat surface of the pond creates a mirror for a neutral sky and stray clouds. A frame of slick brown mud at the edge of the water draws soft muzzled creatures to drink, hooves and paws sinking into the wet rim. The cicadas practice loudly in the bushes. Sitting nearby with legs folded, she brings her eyelids down like half-closed shades. Softly, she sways and hums with the insects' chorus, the heat dissolving the borders between self and world. At this very moment a constellation of humming, listening, and breathing suggests a universe in attunement. Micro movements bring her body into harmony as the world around her fluctuates. Timelessly, the afternoon expands.

Introduction: Bigger Than Self

A research theme that I had not initially envisioned for this dissertation appeared midway in my search for research participants. I noticed that many of the artists who fit other criteria were engaging with nature as artistic inspiration, drawing from outdoor environments, climate and weather, bodies of water, and relationships with animals. The theme gained strength through interview conversations with the artist-participants as they

talked about their experiences with wildness, encounters with flora and fauna, and ways of moving in specific elemental environments such as oceans. As the researcher, I followed what began as identifying the inclusion of nature as a feature in some of the dancers' practices and became a rich area of investigation filling this fourth chapter. Nature, as she appears in terrain, bodies of water, plant life, atmospheric phenomena, and other animate species, became a vivid feature in the artists' movement practices, shifting them out of the studio and beyond conventional stage settings.

It appears to me that the *presence of nature* influences the nature of presence for the research participants as performers, dance makers, and people. By naming *nature*, I mean it as a reference to “natural” environments — places with an absence or small degree of human intervention or alteration — but also include it as the subject of the participants' narratives about interactions with life forms encountered in a variety of environments on a spectrum of wild, semi-wild, urban, suburban, and cultivated. As their listener, I hear the participants speak about how nature changes them and enlarges one's creative practice.

In choosing to embrace a bigger world beyond one's familiar human self, a space is created for interspecies, cross-habitat, and cross-environmental engagement, enlarging questions about *where* dance can occur and *with whom*. These two questions can also be applied to situations in which an artist-participant might be fully immersed in an environment with a sense of “wildness” that grows from an estrangement or loss of one's own home-base location and puts one in a place where other humans seem to be unfamiliar animals. Thus, “wildness” within a place can also mean a quality or feature of

life in an environment that demands navigation through feelings of foreignness, displacement, dysphoria, homesickness, or nostalgia when a human animal does not recognize a territory as one's own.

Pondering the *where* of practice beyond the studio or stage invites elaborations of the concept of *place* and continues a link to the “the ‘four Ps’ of *creativity*’: *process*, *product*, *person*, (or personality) and *place*” (Kozbelt et al. 24; emphasis in original), introduced in Chapter III. In this chapter, *place* comes alive as an organic entity — a bigger dancing partner — demanding a different sort of rigor for movement artists working in a setting extremely different from a studio, such as in open ocean waters. In the following stories about engagements with nature, creativity traits introduced in Chapter III that work across domains — wide interests, intrinsic motivation, openness to experience, and autonomy (Kozbelt et al. 25) — are crucial in fortifying the artists' willingness to cross biological, geographic, elemental, climatic, and psychological borders.

The artist-participants in this research who choose to engage with wildness reach across demarcations of species and habitat, and, in some cases, *time*, when remembering landscapes of the past and acknowledging feelings of nostalgia in the present. Nature-immersed work can become cross-cultural or cross-temporal in provocative ways. For example, when human artists work across human cultures in collaborative art making, they bring concepts of creativity anchored in one's own culturally appropriate manner (Lubart 266). Each participant stretches across cultural differences to find, establish, and share a new platform from which all can create and produce. Cultural challenges arise for

some participants in this dissertation, when, for example, a movement artist attempts to cross into an outdoor environment with non-human animals or proposes to reenter time to change or extend a relationship with an environment established in the past. No handbook exists for these kinds of cultural exchanges; the artists are constructing collaborative, improvisational, cross-domain, and cross-temporal practices in the moment.

In the narratives that follow, I offer the reader examples of handbook-free human and animal artistic interactions such as when artist-participant Kathleen Fisher describes her long-term commitment to improvising underwater with a group of wild dolphins in the Bahamas or when Claire Filmon talks about establishing a movement rapport with wild animals as they exist in zoo captivity. In an effort to move across species differences, the artist-participants take responsibility for their own responses and refrain from projecting what their animal partners might be experiencing. Thus, they open themselves to cultures of the wild, heightened in uncertainty because of the unknowability of their non-human partners' thoughts. In being willing to enter such a collaboration, the artists step into a bigger life-world.

Revisiting Aliveness

It appears to me that the artist-participants choose not to position one's self (or one's species) at the center of the universe, but rather to work toward integration into a larger environmental whole, sharing movement encounters with animals, plants, and entire eco-systems. This notion of engaging as a human being in artistic partnerships with varieties of non-human life revisits and expands a core idea introduced in Chapter I of this dissertation: *aliveness*. To be alive, to move, to interact with creatures and territories

of a living planet in motion are aspects of practice elaborated in this chapter. I remind the reader of the opening words of Chapter I by presenting them here anew to continue a conversation about aliveness and self-movement: *The tiny human being flips, wiggles, kicks, shapes itself, and changes positions in the dark warm space of the mother.* To carry the metaphor of a nascent being in relation to its mother further, I propose that the image expands through the stories the artists share in this chapter as they connect with features of a bigger “mother” — the planet — allowing their practices to become larger spaces for care and creative exchange across species. Perhaps the overall “cultural” ground that can be shared by both the human artist-participants and their non-human partners in nature is that of *aliveness*.

Supporting *aliveness*, I turn again to philosopher and former dancer Maxine Sheets-Johnstone for the ways she addresses aliveness in her 2011 text, *The Primacy of Movement*. She states: “*Aliveness* is thus a concept as grounded in movement as the concept ‘*I can*’” (116; emphasis in original). I notice an exclamation point in my mind every time I read her short statement, thinking: Yes! Is it not obvious? I am drawn to her strong sense of embodiment rooted in a phenomenological approach to researching movement, delivered through high vitality kinetic language. Sheets-Johnstone points to a fundamental feature in human development in which we recognize moving as a way to become human: “Indeed, we intuitively grasp the coincidence of aliveness and animation from the very beginning. . . . With no prior tutoring whatsoever, we take what is living to be that which moves itself” (116). She acknowledges with gusto her preference for a felt, sensed, phenomenological approach to movement-based research, stating it this way:

“This primal animateness, this original kinetic spontaneity that infuses our being and defines our aliveness, is our point of departure for living in the world and making sense of it” (117). From infancy and early days, humans are attracted to movement like metal filings to a magnet. Sheets-Johnstone points out: “What moves straightaway captures our attention” (116). She names this phenomenon of human and other animate creatures placing attention on life forms that move a “focal tethering to movement,” asserting that it is “no less first-nature to other creatures than it is to ourselves. We are all of us attuned to the animate over the inanimate” (116). It appears to me that this attunement to the animate resides as an undercurrent in the practices of the artist-participants in this dissertation. In their choices to intertwine themselves through motion with features of “nature” as they define it, they expand ideas of how experimental dance movement practices might be reconfigured, expanded, and relocated.

I stay with Sheets-Johnstone to illuminate a point about working with wild animals. Following Husserl, she identifies aspects of her (and his) research process in which the method is to adopt a phenomenological attitude when observing living creatures, aiming to see them in what I would call ground-zero innocent perception — as devoid as possible of personal associations and attachments. The challenge is to simply see “*animate organisms*, i.e. live things, beings that move” (Sheets-Johnstone 114; emphasis in original). Sheets-Johnstone’s practice is to operate “in a neutral way without the values — whether social, religious, or even scientific-medical—that one ordinarily brings to one’s perception” (114). Is this possible? I think it is possible to practice the challenge. I liken this to an improvising dance artist who attempts to sense an open

palette of possibilities for spontaneous movement invention by utilizing “beginner’s mind” (Suzuki 16) — a term borrowed from Zen studies that refers to seeing phenomena as a baby does before having learned to name and categorize. Sheets-Johnstone, as a phenomenological researcher, works to see aliveness and animate life with fresh eyes, trying to capture qualities of an initial encounter before familiarization alters her perception with definitions cached in her mind.

Whether or not Sheets-Johnstone is able to finesse this aspect of her observational practice and manifest a state of neutrality is of less concern to me than my interest in the aspect of her practice in which she, following Husserl, is able to foreground a “non-species-specific sense of animation” (114) as an important feature of her research of animate creaturehood. This “non-species-specific sense of animation” shines in Sheets-Johnstone’s investigations and descriptions of an observable “pan-animate” world (115). As she commits to a process of shedding bias in her observational practice, she, by her own account, “sees animate organisms *as living, moving things that by their very animate nature are continuous in kind, there being no fundamental break between nonhumans and humans*” (114; emphasis in original). In this chapter, an animate manner that is “continuous in kind” between humans and non-humans appears to reside in descriptions of artist engagements with non-human fauna offered by those who choose to include such endeavors in their practices.

With my imagination engaged, I read the vivifying aliveness coming through Sheets-Johnstone’s text and notice theatrical images appearing in my mind. Her description of her *Primacy of Movement* project as “a fleshing out of the

phenomenological distinctiveness of the animate organism that is human against the background of what is phenomenologically pan-animate” (115), inspires an image of a large theatrical backdrop painted with myriad creatures of the world, captured in time, gesture, and environment, in front of which move the humans — the featured performers foregrounded on a proscenium stage. I read closer: “while an understanding of pan-animate aspects of animate life are required, so also are understandings of animate organisms in their uniqueness” (115). I adjust what I envision, repositioning the human performers away from a place of prominence in front of a backdrop of the ironically frozen pan-animate, and, instead, see them in deep and open space made vivid by human and non-human performers integrating themselves into a bio-artistic community event.

Although my reimagined scene is idealized, it allows me to consider ways in which the artist-participants in this dissertation continue to adjust and reconfigure how they envision and work in their practices. Rebalancing their practices to include engagements with a bigger life-world is part of an ongoing process of continually questioning and adjusting their overall relationships to practice itself. Thus, through the artist-participants’ descriptions of adventures in wild environments offered in this fourth chapter, the reader and I can further our understandings of the umbrella topic of *relationships to practice*, which appears first in Chapter III. It would seem that the topic, as it surfaces through stories in this chapter, shows its pliability in the face of additions and variations in practice made in a pan-animate container.

At the Edge of Beauty

As the reader and I enter Chapter IV we could become dizzy with a romanticized vision of nature. We could become excited and beguiled by the stories of encounters in locations that demand expedition gear. We could imagine ourselves equipped with insect repellent, hiking boots, bottles of water, sun hats, walking sticks, hammocks, towels, swim fins, snorkels, and underwater face masks. We could be astonished: Who thought the middle of the ocean could be a dancer's studio? Who thought jungle encounters with crocodiles and monkeys would produce artistic nostalgia, shaping topics of an artist's longing through decades? We could be tempted to glorify wildness while forgetting about the mosquitos. Perhaps, then, in our roles as armchair explorers, the reader and I can respect nature's profusion while deepening our contemplations of the complexity of interspecies encounters.

I propose that somewhere within myriad views of nature that may include the virtual, the romanticized, the exotified, the harsh, the captive, the destroyed, and the human-altered, dwells a space for beauty as an invigorating force for many human artists. Certainly *beauty*, as a human-named concept through time, bears the burden of multitudes of definitions by the beholders, as does the experience of beauty remain unique to the individual. The expression of the experience of beauty is the beholder's best effort to share. As their listener and witness, I have sensed the forces of beauty in the voices of the artist-participants in this dissertation as they describe experiencing awe in the presence of wildness. Observing a sense of awe in the artists brings to mind the *numinous*, a term shaped by scholar of religion Rudolf Otto that implies "an 'extra' in the

meaning of ‘holy’ above and beyond the meaning of goodness” (Otto 6). The *numinous* is something more, something felt, a “clear overplus of meaning” that “contains a quite specific element or ‘moment’ which sets it apart from ‘the rational’” (5). For Otto, this is an irreducible state that “begins to stir, to start into life, and into consciousness” (7) as a way of knowing one’s humanity in relation to a larger reach of existence. Because Otto points to a *felt* sense apart from thought, I consider the *numinous* an embodied state, working as dance does, through the body, pre-linguistically in a register of sensory qualities. It appears to me that the numinous is a feature of a cognizant state of aliveness, and is related, sibling-like, to an aware state of beauty and wildness.

Is love of wild beauty what links humans to a love of outdoor places? Continuing to ponder the influence of *place* on a creative artist’s practice, I notice that for some artist-participants in this dissertation, engaging with outdoor wild, semi-wild, or cultivated nature is an impulse with wide parameters. For others, the attraction is driven by a single specific environment or type of environment. Perhaps French philosopher Gaston Bachelard’s “felicitous space” is a fitting term for identifying “the space we love” (xxxv). Similarly, the concept of an attraction to nature-as-location is inherent in geographer Yu-Fi Tuan’s definition of *topophilia*, meaning “the human being’s affective ties to the material environment” (Tuan 93). It is not simply the location itself that attracts; it is also the intensities of qualitative experiences within one’s body-mind that are evoked by seeing and dwelling within a specific environment that create the attraction. Tuan points out: “The most intense aesthetic experiences of nature are likely to catch one by surprise. Beauty is felt as the sudden contact with an aspect of reality that

one has not known before” (94). Beautiful nature has the power to evoke a heady mix of responses that could be emotional, aesthetic, ethical, religious, and more. Difference, surprise, the unfamiliar, and perhaps an inexplicable sense of life at a vivid brink bring the presence of wildness into sharp focus for the humans who encounter it.

At the edge of beauty and the notion of nature as chaos (the uncontrollable, the abundantly excessive) there are links to be made between aliveness, sensation, movement, art, and wild nature. In the passages that follow I turn to feminist phenomenological philosopher and Deleuzian scholar Elizabeth Grosz, who, in *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*, proposes that the substructure or “roots” of art are “not in the creativity of mankind but rather in a superfluosity of nature, in the capacity of the earth to render the sensory superabundant, in the bird’s courtship song and dance, or in the fields of lilies swaying in the breeze”(10). Grosz singles out “the haunting beauty of birdsong, the provocative performance of erotic display in primates, the attraction of insects to the perfume of plants” (7) to say that nature is excessive and tantalizing, designed to attract. Following Deleuze, Guattari, and Irigaray, Grosz asks how nature interacts with embodied beings through “the forces of the earth (cosmological forces that we can understand as chaos, materials and organic indeterminacy) with the forces of living bodies, by no means exclusively human,” in the creation of “something not so much useful as intensifying, a performance, a refrain, an organization of color or movement that eventually, transformed, enables and induces art” (2-3). I ponder Grosz’s proposition of a dynamic exchangeability between inhabitants in nature marked by an “overabundance of resources beyond the need for mere survival,”

producing “the pleasing, the sensory for their own sake” (7). Grosz points out: “Art and nature, art in nature, share a common structure: that of excessive and useless production — production for its own sake, production for the sake of profusion and differentiation” (9). I add that into these realms of production go curious and open artists who wish to intensify experiential knowledge of existence, giving the endeavor purpose.

I weigh the idea of nature’s “profusion and differentiation” and consider the phrase a buoyant point of departure for examining a more thoughtful version of nature that is celebratory but not exoticized. Accepting nature’s profusion without judgement or attachment, I invite the reader into the artist-participants’ descriptions of environments that are beautiful but often test their stamina and strength. There are challenges and harshness to be found in nature.

Before the Adventures

In these introductory pages before launching into adventures with nature, I have incorporated a literary base by bringing voices beyond my own to the conversation. To support broader points of reference for the reader in the adventures to come, I have offered excerpts of texts by philosophers interested in movement and aliveness, researchers within the field of creativity studies, geographers who study love of place, and philosophers of religion who connect nature and the sacred. Through these cultured voices, the dailiness of practice is also reinforced, touched by awareness of nature’s endless, day-by-day cyclical presence. Additionally, throughout this fourth chapter, I continue to write with a literary style that incorporates the fictional research participant,

The Nine Plus One Voice. She is small within the dominate scale of Big Nature, but bold enough to hold life in her hands.

In what follows, I create groupings of artist-participants under broad topics that touch larger worlds of nature and environments outside a studio. Starting with perceived commonalities, I follow ways in which their practices differentiate. “In the Presence of Wildness” offers descriptions by Kara Jhalak Miller, Claire Filmon, and Kathleen Fisher working empathetically with features of natural environments and wild animals. In “Weathering” I start with an artistic base shared in early professional years by Michael Sakamoto, Melinda Ring, and Roxanne Steinberg in their studies of the somatically rich environment-sensitive training called *Body Weather Laboratory*, created by Japanese movement artist Min Tanaka. I follow by noting their highly individualistic performance practices grown, in part, from early seeds of Body Weather training, as well as influences experienced in younger years living in Los Angeles, where nature exists within the seismically active edge of the Pacific Plate. “Nature Nostalgia” features a single artist, Melanie Ríos Glaser, immersed in a longing for the landscapes, flora, and fauna of her native Guatemala. Time and place unite as a force upon her practice, with provocations of memory forming persistent questions about her own wildness and wanderings.

What follows are adventures, stories, and accounts with room for the reader’s individual expeditions into thought, imagination, and kinesthetic imagery. The artist-participants in this dissertation acknowledge life that is larger than one’s self, allowing them to create and contemplate aliveness in varieties of scale. Dancing becomes larger, smaller, differently contained and framed, and more inclusive in surprising ways. Pan-

animate worlds are profuse and ubiquitous as they come alive in the artist-participants' stories.

Moss: The Nine Plus One Voice

If the slope were not so steep she could make the descent with more control. As it is, she slips and slides fast and heavily down the incline with the sounds of her feet stumbling and falling muffled by the dense forest of manzanita and conifers. At the bottom of her slide a carpet of green moss in a tiny alcove of light surprises her. Something white on the green catches her eye. She picks it up and looks at the delicate bone structure of a skull, noticing the long jaw, the herbivore teeth. Recognizing the trace of slender grace, she looks into the empty round eye sockets and sways. In the quiet, she begins a light-footed mossy dance for the deer.

Kara, Claire, and Kathleen: In the Presence of Wildness

I listen to stories told by Kara Jhalak Miller, Claire Filmon, and Kathleen Fisher that reveal their sensitivity in interacting with aspects of wild nature found in their worlds. Kara's receptivity to motion and beauty found in trees, landscapes, bodies of water, and the islands of her current home in Hawaii evokes a sense of the sacred, while her reflections of animal participation in performances are complex and deeply considered. Claire's performance practice of animal-inspired solos she has inherited from master improviser and Judson era founding figure, Simone Forti, requires Claire to observe animals in zoos and transform the information into performance vocabularies onstage. Watching animals' movement patterns in enclosed spaces brings up the artists' emotional responses to captivity and provokes the unanswerable question: What do

animals feel and think? Kathleen brings her perspective to partnering wild animals through descriptions of her multiyear practice of improvising underwater with wild dolphins in their open ocean habitat. For all three artists, a notable feature of their practices is that they enact their artist research through their own bodies, sharing their presence as living beings among many on earth. Their armchairs remain empty at home while they physically engage in movement situations with fellow creatures in situ.

Kara Jhalak Miller: The Sacred in Nature

“Meditation in art practice, for me is,” Kara pauses and closes her eyes. She opens her eyes and continues: “listening to the environment.” In our Skype video conversation on May 16, 2016 she is describing the force and influence that living environments have within her life. Recalling being outdoors in the hills of rural southern Indiana as a child, she acknowledges the importance of physically integrating herself into features of a landscape: “A lot of time as a kid I just spent roaming the woods, the rivers, and the limestone quarries, crawling up on the stones, lying on my back in the leaves, and looking up at the trees.” Trusting her young body to be embraced by nature’s forms, Kara was learning how to be human: “I spent a lot of time in those kinds of spaces, and I consider that part of my training in a way. I mean, it wasn’t *training*, it was just life, but it informed my relationships with the world” (16 May 2016).

As her listener, I hear Kara’s sensitivities to manifestations of nature in the distinct environments she has encountered in different phases of her life. In our conversation, Kara often mentions her practice as “listening” to natural phenomena. She acknowledges how encounters with features of nature affect her practice, for example: “I

notice the way that the wind moves through the trees often informs choices that I make or ideas that I make toward any project that I might be working on at that time, or the next dance video, or writing.” I hear references in her speech that point to a refined practice of attentiveness. Tipping her head, closing her eyes, and making tiny curling gestures with one hand, she tells me she was “listening just for how the waves were coming into the water, and that sense of connection was there. Very, very deep connection.” She recreates the commitment to attentiveness in her whole body, leaning into the words.

Kara makes sure I understand the nuances of her attentiveness in this way: “Maybe ‘listening’ is not the right word. I’m using ‘listening’ as a way of reflection. It really is a meditation. I meditate on visual images, sounds, sensorial things” (16 May 2016). She is able to let go of her “thinking-word mind and drop into my physical-listening mind.” For Kara, this is “a state of being.” She tells me she achieves this state often in meditation, as well as in performance as a way of connecting with other people, and also when there are no people near, such as: “At the beach I’ve had that experience with the ocean.”

Within Kara’s ability to open herself to experiences of motion-empathy with other living forms and elemental “bodies” such as the ocean and wind, she describes a sense of transparency. In our conversation, she credits her yogic awareness of “four bodies” — the physical body, the subtle body, the causal body, and the supra causal body — as her vehicle for experiencing “the idea of porousness in the body,” a “feeling that we are passing through,” not just in the ocean, but “in land and trees, as well.” Her ability to manifest mobility characterized by transparency and porousness with nature goes beyond

an exclusive attraction to other animate beings, such as in Sheets-Johnstone's naming of a "focal tethering to movement" (Sheets-Johnstone 116) among fellow animate creatures. Kara is attracted to and bestows a concept of aliveness and animation not only toward plants and animals but also bodies of water, land formations, volcanos, and atmospheric phenomena such as wind and storms that function in massive action patterns on her island home. The meaning she bring to her pan-animate cosmos is expansive, including immense features of nature that move with intermittent animation (such as a volcano) or with such an enduring sense of time as to appear virtually motionless (like quiet mountains).

Water, particularly in the forms of oceans and marine life, has shaped long-standing features of the qualities and content of Kara's history as a dancer, dance maker, and media artist. She tells me: "Since 1995 water has been a part of almost every piece that I've created, in some way or another. . . it's all been connected to water" (16 May 2016). Her relationship to how she includes water in her practice has shifted according to the environments she calls home and how she physically engages with water's various bodies. As a child, Kara "grew up swimming in lakes in Indiana in the summer, spending a lot of time in water." When Kara left New York and shifted to southern California, she began an active practice of ocean swimming in a nearby protected cove designated as an ecological preserve. She describes her introduction to the Pacific Ocean in this way: "I had a regular practice of swimming, at least three times a week. Being in the water, being around a lot of kelp, swimming a mile and back" (16 May 2016) became integrated into her practice. Having moved to her current home on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, Kara

maintains the inclusion of water in her practice, but in a new way: “The ocean is very different here. It becomes a reflective surface for me. My practice is more about actually being at the edge of the ocean than being *in* the ocean” (16 May 2016). She is sensitive to the isolation of the islands which adds to the huge presence of ocean: “Here in Hawaii we’re surrounded by so much water. We are the most isolated land mass in the entire world.” Linking her body with that of the ocean, she tells me: “Our bodies are made of so much water . . . So it seems to be an endless source of inspiration for work. I’ve had many dreams and meditations with the ocean. I’ve spent time, so much time, in the water” (16 May 2016).

Framed by her foundational commitment to spiritual practice, it appears to me that Kara’s rapport with nature is, in part, a result of her view of life as sacred. I am reminded of French philosopher and scholar of religion Paul Ricoeur’s words about characteristics of the sacred: “To see the world as sacred is at the same time to *make* it sacred, to consecrate it. Thus, to every manifestation there corresponds a manner of being-in-the-world” (Ricoeur 51). It appears to me that Kara’s “manner of being-in-the-world,” as revealed in her stories, reaches into nature’s resources as inspiration for her practice in a way that reciprocally bestows grace and status on the phenomena she encounters. Through Kara’s artful attentiveness and inclusion of features of nature in her art making and ways of being in the world, I propose that the phenomena she encounters become what Romanian scholar of religion Mircea Eliade names “‘hierophanies’— a term in its widest sense as anything which manifests the sacred” (Eliade xviii). For Eliade, the hierophany “ceases to be itself, *as* a natural object, though in appearance it

remains unchanged” (30; emphasis in original). Ricoeur, in his phenomenology of the sacred, follows Eliade: “That a stone or tree may manifest the sacred means that this profane reality becomes something other than itself while still remaining itself” (Ricoeur 49), thus, a paradox of a doubled state of being arises.

Within Eliade’s and Ricoeur’s descriptions of the paradoxical features of hierophanies there is room to compare the idea of a doubled state of being in a dance artist’s performance practice. The quality of being transcendentally more of one’s self when in a heightened state of performance while at the same time being physically grounded in the immanence of one’s everyday bodily self is a phenomenon sensed by Kara and included in her descriptions of being in meditation, in performance, and sometimes simply being in the presence of and connecting to the beauty of nature.

Ricoeur points to human interactions with hierophanies as “belonging to an aesthetic level of experience rather than a verbal one,” effectively “attesting to an inscription of the sacred in a level of experience beneath that of language” (50). I observe Kara’s practice in which she physicalizes an aesthetic experience, using movement not as a surrogate for language but as a path to expression that operates differently than words, manifested in collaborations with her non-human partners in nature. Ricoeur discloses that by “aesthetic” he means “a sense of articulation in space and time” and that his phenomenology of the sacred “can be described as a manner of inhabiting space and time” that is “delimited” and “oriented” toward the center of a sacred space (50). It appears to me that Ricoeur’s stated parameters of sacred space and time in the presence of hierophanies find an artful match in the focus of Kara, the dancer, shaping her

movement events aesthetically with rich animated qualities and clear delimitation in time and space, embodying an operation that functions differently and beyond a common verbal parlance. Here, we have the art of crossing into the culture of wild animation shared by a human who has the means through intention and openness for singling out and creating resonance with non-human partners within her practice.

Turning attention to Kara's movement experiences with animals, I invite the reader into her story about the *Missa Gaia* in New York, a key event in her artist history that she continues to process. Two years after she graduated from The Juilliard School in New York, Kara became a dancer for, and subsequently the artistic director of, Omega Dance Company, "a professional sacred dance company" (Omega, "About"), serving in the director role from 1995 to 2002. During Kara's tenure, the company was in residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. Kara tells me about the annual *Missa Gaia* — the earth mass — which included a procession and blessings of household companion animals, rescued and sheltered farm animals, and the occasional captive wild animal. In our 2016 Skype video conversations about bodily boundaries and edges, experiences of physical and emotional porousness, and connections to nature, Kara shares memories of the spectacle of the mass and her feelings of responsibility for the animals. She explains the scale of the event: "Five thousand New Yorkers would come in with all their animals into this great large Gothic cathedral, and it included snakes, earthworms, llamas, and elephants" (16 May 2016). She notes the effect of proximity, commenting on how the animals' presence in the cathedral "greatly informed me in my understanding of body and edge." Kara's role was to dance with and direct forty dancers and conduct

participatory seated unison movement for the thousands of humans sitting in the pews with their companion animals. In this lively setting Kara recalls “this feeling of being deeply, deeply connected to and responsible for not only our human bodies and our earth bodies but also these animal bodies, and the recognition of a connection between all of these elements was especially alive when I would dance” (16 May 2016).

After our 2016 Skype interview, Kara continues to include me in her contemplation of dancing with animals. She shares her slide notes for a July 2016 conference presentation about the *Missa Gaia* for Performance Studies International, held in Melbourne, Australia that year. Her notes are rich with qualitative details: “The sounds of whales, wolves, and birds are accompanied in the performance by the Paul Winter Consort, several dance companies, and the presence of elephants, llamas, earthworms, cats, and blue algae.” Her embodied experience is vivid:

As a performer, when the music begins and the sounds of the piano, drums, and 500-member chorus begin to sing, my heart opens. When I stretch my arm and carve the space with my fingers, I feel as if my energy goes beyond the ceiling and walls of the Cathedral. My arms reach around the earth. I feel porousness of skin. The skin of land, the skin of beings. (Miller, “Dancing” slide notes)

I find her notes poignant: “As I pass by the front altar dancing my way to the back of the cathedral, I catch the eye of the elephant who is only three feet away. He winks at me. His wink though does not seem to be one of celebration, instead, somehow it feels sad within me” (16 May 2016). As her reader, I am sad too.

Kara acknowledges: “some might argue that I am anthropomorphizing the elephant’s experience,” but the emotional truth of the moment for her was vivid. “His wink affects my movement. While the music resounding is grand, my dancing shifts into

a quiet state . . .” She recalls that “in that moment, the elephant and I perform a duet of hope. He sways, I sway. We are moving together in time” (Miller, “Dancing” slide notes). I feel the sense of time too, as I read and imagine the event.

In a 2017 iteration of her presentation of “Dancing with the Animals at the Missa Gaia” as an article published in *Global Performance Studies*, Kara continues her contemplation: “As I reflect on this performance journal note from the 1990s, I realize I was anthropomorphizing the elephant’s experience. The experience of the dance from the elephant perspective is impossible to truly know.” She wonders: “Was I offending the elephant by swirling in front of him?” She states a painful truth: “The elephant was brought there in chains. This reality and the elephant’s visible physical state cause me to focus on my own experience of emotion in that moment . . .” (Miller, “Dancing with the Animals”). In her personal notes for the Melbourne presentation, Kara defends the truth of her emotions: “. . . from a yogic perspective, my own practice of 23 years, experience is a primary form of knowledge” (Miller, “Dancing” slide notes).

Kara offers no “truth” or solution for her dilemma about captive animals. She simply creates a space for them in which she is attentive. In both her 2016 slides notes and her 2017 published article about the *Missa Gaia*, Kara shares the following:

Trees, grass, clouds, rivers, and animals do not need to speak in words to communicate to us a need for survival. What the Missa Gaia does for me is to create a performance of quiet. A liminal place, even in the middle of the sounds of whales, dolphins, and music, to sit and reflect with my responsibility for the planet. (Miller, “Dancing” slide notes; “Dancing with the Animals”)

With a sense of inner quietude as an artist and person, Kara articulates her connections to aliveness and animation in the presence of wildness, honoring and

learning from nature, and igniting the hierophany within the phenomena with which she engages.

In considering Kara's practice, I think again of Rudolf Otto's *numinous*, a quality within one's self that arises as "a unique original feeling response" in an encounter with something powerful and awe-inspiring outside one's self (Otto 6). Abundantly residing in environments throughout history are phenomena such as stones, trees, animals, landscapes, bodies of water, atmospheric events, and celestial configurations that become manifestations of the sacred through the intentions of the humans who encounter them. Kara's respectful embrace of her experiences with nature's inhabitants helps create a practice for her that is unique in its range of aliveness and inclusivity and suits her commitment to a worldview of the sacred and spiritual in life.

Claire Filmon: Empathy in the Zoo

French dance artist Claire Filmon's artistic involvement with animals came about in an unforeseen way through her relationship with Judson era founder and master improviser Simone Forti. Claire's initial interest in beginning her studies with Forti in the mid-nineties was to learn about Forti's process of speaking and moving in improvised performance events. At that time, Claire was not aware of Forti's movement research involving animals in zoos. Sharing with me her written responses to interview questions from a 2017 seminar in Berlin about Forti's animal studies, Claire recalls learning about the animal work in a workshop she helped organize for Forti in Paris a few years after they met. Claire writes with a clear memory of Forti's response when workshop participants asked if they could learn her process with animals: "No, I don't want to. It is

too sad.” But a few days later, Forti said to Claire: “Let’s go together to the zoo” (*Berlin Seminar*). The surprise of Forti’s invitation, delivered through playful informality, appears to me as characteristic of the quality of artistic inquiry that has attracted Claire to Forti’s practice in areas she might never have investigated on her own. I ask Claire about it in an email in 2019, and she responds: “I’ve done it because it was Simone. Without her, I would never have done animals movements, never. I was not at all attracted by it. I was attracted by dancers [sic] movements only” (“Re:”). It appears to me that a magnetic combination of serendipitous discovery and Forti’s quixotic and charismatic approach to her artist practice drew Claire into previously unimaginable ways of researching movement and performance. Also completely unforeseen at the time of encountering Forti’s work with animals was the possibility that Claire would, in her future, be designated as the performer of Forti’s animal solos, *Striding Crawling* and *Sleep Walkers/Zoo Mantras*.

Curious about Claire’s earlier relationships with animals, I learn that although domesticated pets were not present in her childhood family home, animals were part of her world. She responds to me in an email, telling me about animals in her childhood: “If I think about animals in my childhood they are not really connected with dance. They were in nature, in sky, in field, in my life as flowers or ocean or cities or streets were. Present, but nothing special link me to them (sic)” (“Re:”). As her listener, however, I propose that there was perhaps an unnoticed experiential link for Claire between animals and dance in the French city of Saumur where she grew up. Although there was no zoo in Saumur, it was and continues to be the home of the famed French military riding

academy, the École National d'Équitation, with its in-residence *Cadre Noir* of elite teachers and world class competitive equestrian athletes. Claire remembers seeing the horses perform throughout her childhood, loving “that horses were moving to music!” She admits “It was like dance at that time for me . . . and I liked and was surprised about the fact that horses were dressed with costumes sometimes too (sic).” For a girl who was passionate about her ballet studies, the experience of watching horses perform with human riders to music while wearing ribbon-like costumes and performing equestrian versions of steps from the ballet vocabulary such the *cabriole*, was captivating. It was also kinesthetically instructional. Claire was already learning to observe movement mechanics in other animate beings: “So the movement of a horse became familiar for me from that time.” To Claire as a child, the performances were “so playful,” and seemed to “make everyone happy” (“Re:”).

Horses such as those that Claire watched in the *Cadre Noir* are working animals, athletes in training with human partners. Although their inner lives are unknowable, I propose that the training schedules, competitions, and performances provide the horses with rigorous activities and engagement. Conversely, I would propose that the daily lives of animals in captivity in zoos are entirely different.

Forti has written often about her practice of animal studies in zoos and her point of view as a dance artist: “. . . because I’m a dancer and not a naturalist I can take poetic license and simply believe what I see. I do a lot of testing on my own body” (“Full Moves” 8). In Forti’s practice, “testing” on her body means matching the animals’ movements on her own human structure from a biomechanical point of view and

experimenting with how it feels. She has developed a rigorous exploratory studio practice that follows her observation sessions in zoos. Forti offers readers the origins of her work in zoos in her *Handbook in Motion*, linking it to a time of being an artist in residence in Rome in the late sixties following a personal upheaval. She discovered that visiting animals in the zoo had a beneficial effect on her emotional health. Finding relief from being alone and separated from her friends and home environment, Forti found solace in watching and developing empathy with the captive animals. She noticed she was “falling into a state of passive identification with the animals” (*Handbook* 91). Like Kara, Forti questions her human view: “You might say I was anthropomorphizing.” Also like Kara, Forti uses her own emotional state as a truthful point of reference: “Those animals, too, were cut off from their natural environments. . . . Yes, I felt a kinship with those encapsulated beings” (*Handbook* 91). Developing emotional and physical empathetic rapport with the animals provided Forti with a starting point for a lasting aspect of her artist practice.

Claire has worked to develop empathetic rapport with Forti as a person and as the artist-originator of the animal research and the creator of the solos that Claire now dances. Through her knowledge of the history of Forti’s methodology, Claire creates a foundation for her own performance practice by developing a felt, kinesthetic kinship with the animals observed. As an example of the rigor involved, she describes a specific exploration of a bird’s movement after she and Forti visited a zoo. She tries to match the action she saw in the wings, describing: “sometimes the elbow as we have and also the wrist, and their way of the shoulder (sic). And I worked hours, hours about moving. It

was so hard. And I still have a lot of difficulties to do that (sic)” (*Berlin Seminar*). Claire describes the difficulty beneath the seemingly easy assignments: “when you do it, it is not so simple . . . you have to go deep in what is life, a human being where we come from and the link with the animals. So from something so simple you go in very deep layers of seeing life” (*Berlin Seminar*). Claire’s empathy is broad, embracing a fundamental layer of aliveness in the creatures she observes.

Claire approaches her role in dancing Simone’s animal work as “being an interpreter” and, because of Forti’s prominent role in Judson era choreographic contributions, Claire understands that her work cannot be interpretation without context. She exclaims: “there are roots! And it is huge! So when I do this dance there is so much I need to know to really do the work, in honesty, for Simone. I am not just a copy” (13 May 2018). The tensions between being an interpreter, being herself, and avoiding being a copy become complicated by Claire’s intense drive for excellence. As her listener, I hear Claire’s pain when she questions her ability to do the work. She covers her face with her hands, remembering episodes of crippling self-doubt. Learning the solos, she often asked herself: “What am I doing here? I’m not a good interpreter!” She recalls her constant internal question: “Simone! What is this work?!” Finally, Claire hit the bottom, declaring: “I was dead.” But at that moment, Forti told her: “You know, Claire, that’s fine what you are doing. That’s fine! Do what you do, and it’s okay” (13 May 2018). Praise from Forti reduced Claire’s highs and lows of feeling able or unable to perform the work in a standard she sets in relation to Forti. In a way, Claire was freed from the captivity she felt in the presence, not of wildness, but of the prominence of Forti. Claire’s

nuanced expressions of wildness and captivity (of several kinds) reside richly in the movement vocabularies she rehearses for *Striding Crawling* and *Sleep Walkers/Zoo Mantras*.

Claire speaks of the benefit of doing Forti's animal work in this way: "... animals give you back their life and their games. And it makes you feel again this pleasure of movement" (*Berlin Seminar*). Finding pleasure in game-like movement creates a plausible platform upon which Claire and Forti meet, with playfulness softening their 27-year age difference. Claire describes watching two young bears with Forti in the zoo in New York: "The two little bears were very fun. They were playing a lot, they were digging the earth, making a lot of holes . . . they had a stick and they jump [sic] in the pool, play with the stick, push and pull . . . and we loved it." Returning to the studio Claire and Forti played: "... we were trying to do these two young bears, pushing, pulling, and rolling . . . it is amazing to be with Simone and she was more than 70 years old. And we were doing two small bears, playing . . ." (*Berlin Seminar*).

With Forti now in her 80s and Claire in her late 50s, their process together is durationally long and organic. Forti's animal observation practice has become a known postmodern dance research methodology and the solos have become iconic in the greater postmodern dance canon. Neither Claire nor Forti make claims to know what the animals are feeling or thinking. They "read" the animals' movement patterns and expand their contributions as performers with the knowledge gained. Forti, like Kara, voices a trust in her knowledge of movement itself: "I'm a dancer, not because I'm such a good mover, but because I can read movement. I can tell when an elephant is passing the time of day

with a little dance, I can tell that a bob-cat pacing at the fence is doing a kind of movement that I know is not dancing, though finally maybe that too . . .” (“Full Moves” 8). Physical movement-matching with animals has allowed Claire and Forti to experience resonant and shared animation, just as when Kara tells of swaying in a duet with the elephant in the cathedral.

I invite the reader of this dissertation into the notion that as movers and artists, Claire, Kara, and Forti experience synchronous attunement with animals in motion as a *connection-in-kind* and trust it as a deeply felt personal truth. Perhaps, following Sheets-Johnstone, there is also a momentary “continuity in kind” as they match and sway with animals. Perhaps there is “*no fundamental break between nonhumans and humans*” (Sheets-Johnstone 114; emphasis in original), in their sense of belonging to a meta category of animated life forms. And for the animals? Is there a continuity in kind for them? It is unknowable. Wisely, Forti offers: “What we have in common with other species are the rudiments of dance. But I would say that even a sense of beauty is rudimentary” (“Full Moves” 12). I agree that beauty can be seen by humans to reside in the vivid presence of non-human animate creatures as they devise their movement sequences, find stillness, move into action, and frame their bodies precisely in space. Perhaps unwavering focus and integrated kinesthetic intention are the internal forces that illuminate animals’ bodies in motion, allowing them to become aesthetic to human eyes.

In closing this section about Claire, I offer the reader my view that there is a complex and complicated sense of beauty underscoring Claire’s work with wild animals in zoos. Pushed by her innate desire for details, her artist curiosity about her iconic

mentor's work, and her determination to meet high standards of performance, Claire picks up threads she finds in Forti's research of animal movement and creates a performance practice rich in newly envisioned movement mechanics colored by themes of empathy, isolation, connections, sadness, and playfulness. She integrates Forti's stories into a narrative that supports her own point of view as a unique performer, neither a "copy" of Forti nor of the animals she watches.

Kathleen Fisher: Becoming Aquatic

Kathleen is turning her head to her right as she wraps her arms around to her back, trying to indicate a full circling action around her body. Laughing, she is reenacting a scene in the ocean waters of the Bahamas: "They went around me! . . . There's another one! And another one! And another one! And another one!" (15 May 2018). Her recollection of delight is palpable as she conjures an image of a carousel of sporty fast dolphins playfully encircling her. Before the marine mammals' unexpected arrival, Kathleen and the other tourists on a dolphin excursion boat had decided to take a leisurely swim, resigned to the probability of no animal sightings that day. Drifting away from the group and supported by the salty body of the ocean, Kathleen felt her deep fatigue following a tumultuous year in New York. The choice to go to the Bahamas to swim with dolphins was meant to be fun and restorative. Looking back to that moment in 2003, Kathleen acknowledges that it became something more. When the dolphins appeared and included her in their exhilarating wildness, she tells me that meeting them "changed my whole life" (15 May 2018). Now, after more than 15 years of swimming with them, Kathleen knows that circling on the surface is one of their familiar social

movement patterns. At the time of meeting them, however, she responded to their presence and actions in more symbolic terms. It seemed to be an event of extraordinary freedom and generosity, inviting her into their culture of the wild.

As her listener, it appears to me that the internal gesture of openness Kathleen felt in meeting the dolphins continues to characterize her interactions with them, while provoking questions about what they and she experience in their shared underwater improvisations. She describes being in their presence this way: “It’s a really joyful experience for me. And I feel it all over my body. I always wonder what it is to them, you know? I always wonder that.” And, although “sometimes the young ones do look really joyful and are clearly playing,” Kathleen will not assume she knows what the animals feel. She tells me: “. . . a lot of people come and they interpret the dolphins for other people — they ‘communicate’ and ‘interpret.’” Kathleen smiles. “And I just can never really say what they feel or what they are ‘doing’” (12 September 2016).

Kathleen tells me that she decided to make her first approach to “learning” the dolphins a completely embodied experience. She began with discovering and sharing underwater movement sequences with them, diving down and spiraling up, making circles on the surface, and sometimes simply observing them. She tells me that at first, she “didn’t want to ‘ID’ them” (12 September 2016). Elaborating, she says, “I didn’t want to think analytically with these animals at all. I did not want to read the science. I did not want to have a frame of reference outside of my own experience.” Initially, she “swam with them for a good, almost nine years, ten years” learning their patterns and ways of being physically before reading about them. She explains: “I just didn’t want the

idea of a scientist saying, ‘This movement means this.’” She acknowledges, “The way I see movement is very different from how most scientists see movement.” From swimming with them, Kathleen considers the idea of interpreting the dolphins’ patterns and actions to be entirely “context dependent” emerging within their everyday social and familial behaviors. As a dancer, Kathleen is keenly aware of her manner of perceiving movement: “I see different things. And if I read about it before, then I would not see what I see as easily” (12 September 2016).

I invite the reader into my notion that as an experienced mover, Kathleen intuitively chooses to observe and “learn” the dolphins using her own version of philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone’s phenomenological approach to observing animate creatures. As with Kara, Claire, and Simone, Kathleen trusts the validity of her own emotional and physical experiences in the presence of the dolphins, without attempting to explain them. As a dancer, she learns through her multi-year regular practice of underwater improvisations, ways to bring herself into attunement with the dolphins.

Kathleen runs her hand through her long sun-lit hair and looks into the distance. She makes a little descending spiral gesture as if diving downward with one hand as she continues talking about “learning” the dolphins. “After a certain while it started to feel rude . . . like maybe they know me and I have not bothered to know them as individuals” (12 September 2016). She laughs softly. Taking an active role in knowing the community better, and gradually reading some of the science in recent years contributes to Kathleen’s enjoyment of the dolphin individuals. She can see “so-and-so is getting in

trouble today,” or so-and-so is really being an instigator today,” or “she is always the care-giver, always the baby sitter, always with four juveniles.” Kathleen feels it is “fun to ‘learn’ them more now” because she has a foundation of her own experience. But what she cares about is “where we are with wild creatures,” rather than “what I think is a ‘fact’ about the wild creatures I know” (12 September 2016).

I ask Kathleen if she thinks the dolphins know her and she answers in this way: “I think so. I think some of them definitely do. They know the boats, they know a lot of the individuals that live here that are around them regularly. I mean it seems that they do.” On a practical note, she offers: Why not just think they’re very smart? So if they want to know me, I think they know me. Because I think they are really, really smart” (12 September 2016). She talks about the movement activities they like to do together such as circling and spiraling, and how they allow her in their inner circles. “What I see over the years and particularly recently makes me think maybe they know me.” She elaborates: “There is just a level of comfort where I can be more with a group of them, just kind of in the mix of whatever they’re doing.” She feels that “sometimes I’ll be in the middle of a group and there are other things going on between them, when, you know, normally I think they wouldn’t really let me be in that,” but her many years with them have shifted her into a place of being accepted. She looks away, then sits back in her chair. “It’s hard to explain. I feel that shift a lot, even more this summer” (12 September 2016).

Kathleen quickly discovered that having a dancer-on-land practice and being a confident swimmer were not adequate for the ways in which she wanted to be able to create underwater dances with the dolphins in their habitat. “You have to be really pretty

able.” She is clear that “the wild experience is amazing, and it really is not for everyone!” (12 September 2016). A diving-with-dolphins dancer has to “have a real appreciation of the wildness of it,” meaning no one can make the dolphins do what they want them to do. The location itself is taxing and unpredictable: “In dance you have to get people together in a studio,” but in the *Dolphin Dance Project* filming sessions (see Chapter III, pages 56 – 58), “you have to get people together in the middle of the ocean, and maybe or maybe not these wild animals will show up, right?” She is forthright about the rigor needed and acknowledges that it has been “hard to find dancers that are committed enough to being aquatic.” Her experience is that “it is fun to be in the water, but it’s work! I mean you really have to make a devotion to becoming aquatic, enough to bring the dance skills into the water” (12 September 2016).

In our May 15, 2018 Skype interview conversation, I ask Kathleen to elaborate what “becoming aquatic” means. She responds this way: “The way the body is most efficient and streamlined under water is completely different from land . . . and there’s also the huge fact that we are practicing *apnea* — breath-holding diving.” For Kathleen, “becoming aquatic *enough*” means “both the use of the body, and very much the ability to have a decent length of apnea” in order to permit moving both aesthetically and practically. As an artist, Kathleen and her *Dolphin Dance* collaborators are interested in continuing a practice of “choice-making in our dances” and extending efforts to “make continuous dances” underwater. She explains how they are creating real-time dance performance continuity to be captured on film while moving both above and below the surface: “I might be under water a minute, above water only a minute, underwater 30

seconds, above water 30 seconds, under water 45 seconds — you know? And you have to work up to it, so you don't pass out!" Laughing, she says: "You have to train for it!"

Apnea — breath-holding practice — is a daily endeavor, which, over the years, has provided Kathleen with a mechanism to cope with "the need to breathe" when under water, carefully extending the time between each new impulse to take a breath. Now, she considers the practice "very relaxing," but admits that "at first it can be hard," and, for some, "scary." She explains: "There is definitely a practice to it" meaning she and the other divers carefully monitor their awareness of the changing relationship of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood as they hold their breath. "The body has some responses," such as "bringing the blood away from the extremities into the core, into the most important organs and to the brain." Because "the brain is a real oxygen hog," Kathleen and the other divers keep their minds clear and relaxed, in a manner akin to meditation techniques. Kathleen affirms that apnea practice is "meditative." Being underwater, for her, is "beautiful." She tells me: "For me, it's the best place!" (15 May 2018). As her listener, I hear that Kathleen's *topophilia* — love of place — resides not only among the mangroves and open sky of the Bahamian islands but also under the surface of the clear turquoise ocean.

Kathleen further articulates ways in which her practice has expanded through adaptations of dance expertise in an underwater environment with the support of diving skills. Artistry, athleticism, and willingness to enter a wild culture come together as she commits to "harmonizing" underwater with both human and dolphin partners. She acknowledges "it is actually quite difficult to do a duo or trio with dolphins." Admiringly,

she admits “they are way better at it than we are. Way, way better at it!” She explains that although she and her collaborators have “a vocabulary that’s known,” “the exact thing is not known” (15 May 2018). Being alert as a mover is key: “To be improvisational is a really important part of it. There is an element of improvisation at all times, and there has to be, because they are wild animals” (15 May 2018). Kathleen begins to smile as she tells me: “You don’t know, I mean, they are really jokers! And they will really decide, like, this time, okay, I’m going to follow your lead, this time I’m not. Like it could be a real movement conversation with these guys.” I am laughing, and Kathleen nods her head and smiles. “They are really testing us too. I think they are training us! I think we are more trained, like, can you do this? I want to do this! You want to go down? I want to stay right here!” (15 May 2018). Kathleen’s version of dolphins training humans makes me laugh and gives me a sense of her generosity toward them. She is not their trainer. In acknowledging the dolphins might be *her* trainers, it seems to me that Kathleen is deeply curious about their intelligence.

As part of Kathleen’s relationship to her practice, she also ponders her relationship to the dolphins. She expresses astonishment “that this relationship exists.” She speaks of the way they use their senses: “They make very, very deep and sustained eye contact . . . it has a very powerful impact on a lot of people . . . people feel that they have been seen and recognized by a creature with no agenda.” But Kathleen’s question is penetrating: “What is their agenda? She expresses, “They do have an agenda, and I don’t know what it is” (12 September 2016). But Kathleen is clear about her reasons for

continuing to interact with, learn, and know the dolphins who are her neighbors and collaborative artist partners:

What I really hope being with them the more I know them, is that I learn something about how they sense the world. That I'll actually change my frame of reference from doing this. That I'll sense the world in a new way. Because I know with them, I think I see something new, but maybe it was there all the time and I just learned how to see it. Whether it's in their behavior or their interaction with us, or something I've never seen them do before, I'll never know if it was new, or I just learned to see it. That's really what I hope. I want to learn to perceive the world in a new way. (12 September 2016)

Justice: The Nine Plus One Voice

Creeping quietly up the orchard hillside, she judges the distance between a sturdy branch of an almond tree and the back of the strawberry roan mare with the white blaze down her face who is grazing beneath it. There are three horses there, but it is the mare she wants to ride. No saddle. No blanket. No bridle. No halter. No rope. No polite request: May I ride you? She climbs the tree and drops down onto the back of the mare, wraps her fingers into the tangled hair of the mane and holds on tightly with her legs. As she knows it will, the horse runs. She loves the terror she feels at being completely out of control of the situation. Later, another day, she rides with full human-designed restraints and comforts — bridle, bit, blanket, saddle. The mare bolts beyond the restraints and heads for the orchard and the nearest tree with the lowest branches. Without slowing, the mare races under the tree limbs and scrapes her off like an annoying unwanted appendage. Her landing is dusty. Picking twigs from her hair, she thinks it was a fine duet.

Michael, Melinda, and Roxanne: Weathering

Of the nine artist-participants in this dissertation, Michael Sakamoto, Melinda Ring, and Roxanne Steinberg were born and raised in neighborhoods of Los Angeles. Roxanne and Melinda were born the same year, Michael a few years later. They lived their childhood and young adult years in the immense human metropolitan mix of the city with its unique features of nature, geography, culture, and history. In this section, I propose ways in which aspects of the environment of Los Angeles seem to surface in the three artist-participants' practices. Because all three engaged in earlier professional training in movement methodologies created by Japanese avant-garde artist Min Tanaka — a dancer who commits to physically integrating himself with nature in outdoor sites — I also look for ways Tanaka's Body Weather Laboratory might appear in or support their current practices.

Meeting Min

Following in the flow of the initial postwar 1950s and 1960s emergence of Japanese avant-garde dance that came to be called *butoh*, Min Tanaka developed Body Weather Laboratory and the Body Weather Farm in Japan in the late 1970s and early 1980s, respectively, as distinctly articulated projects that radically experimented with sensitizing and awakening one's body-mind-spirit to nature in an omnipresent life-world. In a 1985 interview with performing arts writer Bonnie Sue Stein, Tanaka reveals what I would identify as a numinous state in his body when performing in outdoor sites: "I know about religion but my simple feelings about god is nature. I have danced near Shinto shrines. Sometimes the trees give a stronger energy than the human beings. Before I start

dancing, there are many people standing. Once I start dancing I don't see the people, only the trees standing" (qtd. in Stein 149).

Tanaka's choice to work independently and develop his own manner of moving in his improvised outdoor performances grows, in part, from his stated admiration for the pioneering butoh artists Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno, and his concern about being overwhelmed by their mastery. Tanaka tells writer Stein, "I thought I was so strongly influenced by them that I shouldn't study with them. I decided to keep to my own research because I wanted to know 'what is dance'" (qtd. in Stein 144). In keeping with the focus of this chapter I would add that Tanaka's practice also asks: *Where* is dance?

Echoing early dance training choices made by Hijikata and Ohno, Tanaka studied the Western dance practices of ballet and modern dance as a young adult in Japan. In 1974, he turned away from these forms to invest in the development of his own practice as a space for deeply somatic inquiries into movement in the body. He also envisioned and manifested ways he could offer dance as an expressive form of activity for all people. Tanaka tells Stein: "Body Weather is not only for performers, it is for anybody. School teachers, housekeepers, monks. Everybody" (qtd. in Stein 148).

Tanaka's experimental work in dance from the 1970s to the present have included elements of movement research and performance that also engaged the original cohort of Judson era choreographers in the 1960s and 1970s in New York. They, too, were asking: What is dance? Their practices included investigations of improvisation as performance, site-specific events, eclecticism as a method for assembling hybridized dance movement vocabularies, and an integration of dance into everyday life. Body Weather dancer and

author Zack Fuller points out that Tanaka's work is unique in that he "combined all of these into a practice of dance and sustained that practice . . ." (484). I invite the reader to notice the plausible compatibility of placing Tanaka's artist practice within an overall theme of bodily investigations into ways of coexisting in a living, fluctuating, pan-animate world. Fuller says it well:

Tanaka maintains that Body Weather is not a type of performer training but an ideology or personal philosophy of life informing all of his activities, including his farming work, dance, and training methodology. Body Weather considers the body as omni-centric and, like weather, in a state of continual flux. Body Weather values personal autonomy, collaboration, and constant variation as means of resisting the stratification of habituated form. (485)

A convergence exists in Tanaka's practice in the intertwining of the relationship of the human body to environments in nature, the importance of the integration of dance and everyday life, and the practice of improvisation as an embodied performance of aliveness. When initially encountered by Roxanne and Melinda in the 1980s, and by Michael in the 1990s through Roxanne and her partner Oguri, Tanaka's converging streams of his approaches to the body and perception, his rigorous body-mind training, and his remarkable performances created an irresistible resonance. Approximately 15 to 20 years older than the three artist-participants, Tanaka was old enough to be inspiring as a teacher and mentor artist but not so much older as to be unrelatable for the three artist-participants in their younger adult years. Encountering the practices of Min Tanaka created a mark on the ground of their own work.

Los Angeles Ground

In service of proposing that Los Angeles is not only a site for human activity but also a potential place of practice that can include influences of nature, wildness, and dynamic elemental movement, I invite the reader into brief descriptions of selected features of the environment, offered as examples of possible visual, cultural, and energetic resources for Michael, Melinda, and Roxanne. As a native Californian who has lived in the city nearly 50 years, I admit my undisguised affection for the ways in which nature appears within the persistent density of human occupation. In addition to my affection, however, I offer that there is a process of physical education and aesthetic instruction available within an environment, relatable here to the formation of three movement artists' practices who are natives of the city and the terrain upon which it exists. For example, the tourist-attracting feature of the mild climate can offer a lesson in physicality and motion, demonstrating a relationship of elemental forces in a living environment. The climate exists because the land upon which the city is constructed sits between the tempering forces of the Pacific Ocean and the atmospheric shielding created by the mountain ranges to the east that surround the basin. Ocean, land, and air currents are in a dynamic dance, a trio configuration with a message: Climate is a daily performance of nature. Human residents, too, learn to perform intermittent seismically-provoked improvisations that require agility in body and mind in episodes of unexpected jolts, rolls, and wobbles as the ground shifts under one's feet, challenging concepts of stability. Somatic education becomes nuanced as skin responds to changes in the air when semi-arid currents meet moist marine layers, resulting in rhythms of fog and sunlight,

coolness and warmth. The aesthetic body learns to appreciate light, color, and progressions of motion by witnessing atmospheric phenomena skating across expansive pastel skies in fantasy shades of pink, blue, grey, and gold. Force, action, direction, and shape become understandable when the dry Santa Ana winds come into the basin from the inland deserts and stir the region, tearing the fronds from the palms and holding the surf in perfect off-shore curls. Humans learn cohabitation, even if begrudgingly, by having to share space with the wild animals that inhabit the city and environs in clever survivalist ways. Smart urban coyotes, skunks, possums, red-tail hawks, peregrine falcons, mountain lions, and black bears persist in their claim to wildness among the humans.

Depictions of Los Angeles on postcards are real places for residents, but residents are free to notice or ignore what is framed for tourists. People interact with the environment of Los Angeles as they are inclined and able. Visual and sensory information are available in the dailiness of the place, whether in nature or neon, purple blossomed jacaranda trees or giant billboards, mountain hiking trails or Hollywood Boulevard. The ubiquitous rows of tall palm trees, for example, offer lessons in rhythmic choreographies for the thin and naked trunks with distinctive little palm frond heads, performing in silhouette each dawn and dusk. Depending on the neighborhood, views of the city can serve as visual textbooks of history, economics, immigration patterns, fashion, lifestyle, architecture, landscape design, street art, and preoccupations of media. I feel the subtexts of the city, the mixed neighborhoods, the Pacific Ocean, the

skies, and the land when hearing Michael, Melinda, and Roxanne speak about their practices.

Although native to the city and linked generationally and artistically in this study, the three artists are, however, unique individuals, influenced differently by the immense historical mix of race and culture in Los Angeles. Family roots in the region are often tangled in historic borders with Mexico and countries across the Pacific Ocean. For many *Angelinos*, family histories feature arrival stories from China, Japan, Southeast Asia, Korea, Mexico, Central America, and the American Midwest perhaps more commonly than Europe. Generations of Japanese-heritage families, after persevering through war time internment, continue to contribute in meaningful ways to the cultural landscape of Los Angeles, maintaining and fostering an influential historical and contemporary bridge to the arts and culture in Japan.

Links between Los Angeles and Japan give understandable ground to the influence of Japanese experimental dance on the dance practices of Michael, Melinda, and Roxanne as Los Angeles natives. Japanese post war avant-garde art groups such as Gutai and Hi Red Center were known to American avant-gardists on both coasts, including some of the Judson dance artists, as early as the 1950s and more profoundly from the 1960s forward (Banes, *Terpsichore* 24-25; Larson 402-403; Pearlman 90-95). The work of butoh originators Kazuo Ohno, Tatsumi Hijikata, and the generationally younger Min Tanaka began to be known outside Japan in the late 1970s and early 1980s when a gradual dissemination and diaspora of butoh performances and training methods started to appear globally (Fraleigh).

It was during the butoh diaspora that Roxanne, Melinda, and Michael were exposed to butoh in general and specifically to Tanaka's practice of Body Weather Laboratory, adding another layer to trainings in modern and postmodern dance and improvisation for Roxanne and Melinda, and, in Michael's case, photography, media, and performance art. For Roxanne and Melinda, immersion in Body Weather training at Body Weather Farm in Japan in the 1980s solidified their commitment to further the practice and share it. In 1988, they began jointly offering Body Weather Laboratory classes in Los Angeles. One year later, they were joined by the remarkable Body Weather-trained Japanese dancer, Naoyuki Oguri, who became and remains Roxanne's husband and artistic partner. Michael began studying Body Weather materials with Roxanne and Oguri in Los Angeles in the early 1990s, after being inspired by photographs of butoh artists, followed by witnessing the then 87-year-old butoh founder, Kazuo Ohno, perform in Little Tokyo, downtown Los Angeles. Finding a powerfully resonant sense of identity-connection, Michael eventually claimed butoh as his performance practice.

Michael Sakamoto: Undercurrents

Michael leans elegantly against nothing but sky and clouds. Sleek as a fashion model with his round dark glasses, shaved head, and androgynous dark clothing, he anchors the center of the black and white photograph. Michael and the sky are one, an integrated existence brought to life in a single still image. The lines of his garments extend downward and off the page, holding onto an unseen bit of ground. There is an undercurrent to the image, a proposition or question that is not visible or knowable to the

viewer. The undercurrent pulls a viewer into narratives of one's own making, provoked through a pairing of ambiguity and beauty.

The eclectic fluidity of Michael's multidisciplinary practice has space for ambiguity through the various media that form his artist network of enterprise, including photography, film, media design, performance art, butoh dance, and autoethnography. I invite the reader to share my curiosity about Michael's ability to create space for ambiguity while also offering precise images in the settings in which he installs himself, in motion for performance or in stillness for photographic portraiture. In his photographic essays, scholarly writing, and performances, it appears to me that *nature*, in Michael's work, is a space that holds a human, who, in turn, holds an internal landscape marked by identity and personal history. Through hearing his descriptions of growing up in racially and culturally mixed neighborhoods in East Los Angeles, his appetite for popular culture and media, and his complex professional path from photographer, media artist, performance artist, multidisciplinary performer, butoh practitioner, and writer, I develop an impression of Michael's expressions of self-in-nature, his personal terrain, his landscapes, as mirrored internal-external geographies containing his own versions of wildness within his investigations into identity.

Here, by *wildness*, I mean perhaps a singular creature loose in a landscape that is not entirely one's own territory, a native animate being in an environment shared by others and Others. What comes to mind in relation to Michael's butoh performance and photography practice is the Japanese folk animal, "the mythical 'kamaitachi' creature — a weasel-like beast able to move invisibly and soundlessly through villages and fields,

wounding the villagers' limbs with deep cuts . . . and making their children disappear" (Barber 82). Relative to Michael's commitment to his art making that addresses both the exterior of *place* and the interior of self and self-history, is the photographic essay carrying the weasel-demon's name, *Kamaitachi*, collaboratively created in Japan between 1965 and 1968 by photographer Eikoh Hosoe and butoh dance founder Tatsumi Hijikata (Barber 82-83). There is inspiration of wildness in the powerful black and white images in which Hijikata's body moves like dark weather across cultivated fields. Photographic perspectives are forced as Hijikata crouches on a far corner of a fence, appearing as a tiny human being against a big sky, or resides face down and naked on textured earth. Hijikata is fierce as the embodiment of the wild weasel-demon "pitched against the landscape" of the "dilapidated village of Tashiro" (Barber 82) in the Akita region of northern Japan, Hijikata's place of origin, and near where Hosoe was sent as a boy during wartime evacuations (Barber 81). Sometimes the images in the Japanese northern environment are all sky, while other times they are full of rural clutter with villagers in auxiliary performance roles, laughing, watching, carrying Hijikata on an open palanquin. The human figures and features of the landscape are inseparable from each other, forming a narrative that seems surreal. The ephemerality of the performances on location that Hijikata enacted for Hosoe's photographs and that was seen only by the villagers in Tashiro, is matched by the brevity of the presence of the original book of photographs itself. Designed "as a huge visual object so that its images could possess a sweeping, filmic quality" (Barber 85), and "despite its aura of monumentality . . . *Kamaitachi* rapidly vanished" (Barber 81), having been printed only in approximately 1,000 copies,

which were quickly purchased and acquired. (Since that time retrospective catalogues of the images have appeared in celebration of Hosoe's work.)

I see the power of inspiration, transformation, and ephemerality of both the *Kamaitachi* folk animal and the iconic Hosoe-Hijikata photographs, when I look through Michael's multi-year photographic essay in progress, titled "MuNK" (Sakamoto, "Work"). Michael photographs himself in situ in carefully selected environments that reference his life narratives and cultural-personal history, differently, powerfully, and distantly connected to the *Kamaitachi* collaboration. I invite the reader to consider with me the proposition that in his photographs, Michael is crossing into a culture of time intersecting with place, reiterating, reconstructing, and reframing memory in his present time practice. When he references "my butoh" in our conversation I understand that he acknowledges claiming the form for himself, and that this claiming is part of his territory of identity. He tells me that in his dissertation he starts with a quote from Hiroko Tamano, identifying her as "the seminal butoh teacher in America for the last four decades" (22 June 2016). When a student asks Tamano for a definition of butoh, Michael describes her response: "She just looks you back straight in the eye, and in her best sort of scratchy old butoh woman voice says, 'Who are you?'" (22 June 2016). As his viewer and listener, I am alert to the question: Who is Michael? He gives me clues in the art he produces.

Michael is the sophisticated figure wearing black against a backdrop of sky and clouds. Michael is a modern-day Siddhartha Gautama wearing the same round dark glasses and black jacket in the sky-and-clouds photograph, but now as a costume for

Prince in the Bardo, excerpted from his *blind spot* solo performance project. Fascinated, I watch a dark video of Michael blending butoh aesthetics with hip hop, equally liquid, equally still. Where is Michael's bardo — his Buddhist transitional, liminal space? Do the clues of his identity fluctuate according to the environment into which he fits? Now that he no longer lives in Los Angeles, how, if at all, does he choose to cross in and out of place and time in his own wild version of the *Kamaitachi*? In the "MuNK" project, a color photograph shows Michael as a Japanese-American man in front of the watchtower in what remains of the Manzanar Internment Camp for citizens of Japanese descent during World War II. The photograph offers desert hues typical of the dry east side of California with striated blue sky and a north-south spine of rugged grey mountains. It could almost be a nature photograph, but with Michael there, a narrative is implied within the environment. Which part of the photograph, if any, might tell the viewer that Michael's paternal grandparents were married in the camp and his father was born there? Or that both sides of his family were sent to camps? Responding to the way Michael has installed himself in the Manzanar photograph, I absorb his referencing and reimagining of Hosoe's style for *Kamaitachi*. He frames the shot from a low angle, forcing the perspective to make the height of the tower immense. The expanse of sky occupies two-thirds of the image and, by comparison, the size of the human is small but foregrounded, while snow-dusted mountains are reduced to a low row of molars on the horizon. Nature is harsh in the desert environment. Also harsh are narratives condensed into a single frame: history, war, family stories, social injustice, and racial bias.

Just as Michael has “his” butoh, so, too, does he have “his” Los Angeles, his past, overlapping but different from aspects of the environment familiar to Roxanne and Melinda. As Michael’s listener and observer, I feel the tug of undercurrents beneath his artist practice, flexible and changeable like weather, and adaptable to any sort of landscape in which he enters. He describes creating space for practice wherever he is, including the Body Weather materials with his own mix of street dance. Not always afforded a big studio space, Michael describes a solution: “I’ll work in more, not quite stationary, or not quite covering as much ground, a more stationary version of Body Weather workout, you know? Because that’s my grounding, from working with Oguri and Roxanne” (22 June 2016). It appears to me that Michael is also grounded in the scope of his thinking, the imagination behind his art, the humor he applies to things as they are, his sensitivity to locations as sites for personal narratives, and the directness he offers in considering race and culture. Perhaps rather than crediting the presence of nature as an influence on the nature of Michael’s presence, I invert the thought: Michael brings an environment to life through consciously inserting himself as a player in the scene. As for his wildness, here I mean the palpable but unknowable undercurrents that give his art its edge.

Melinda Ring: Landscapes and Atmospheres

Melinda is linking her past with present time in our conversation taking place in Los Angeles, where she is finishing up a guest artist engagement at UCLA. Although a resident of New York since 2001, in the early 1980s she was not only a dance student at UCLA but also a member of the dance company directed by Judson era artist Rudy Perez,

a transplant to Los Angeles from New York in 1978. Melinda performed Perez's postmodern choreographies for Los Angeles audiences more accustomed, in those years, to the classical modern dance works of Bella Lewitzky, but also open to adventuresome performances by visiting artists such as German dance theater choreographer Pina Bausch and butoh group Sankai Juku in the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival, followed by many visiting butoh artists in the early 1990s. After leaving Perez's company, Melinda traveled to Japan, studied with Min Tanaka, and began developing improvisationally-structured solos for herself, often in outdoor sites, and participated in many Body Weather-related projects with Roxanne and Oguri. In the mid-1990s Melinda began making work inspired by the Southern California environment, in particular, the weather and atmospheric phenomena. In quixotic weather-like fashion, the resultant dances appeared in performance for Los Angeles audiences and then went away like a faux rainy season while Melinda made two major shifts in her life: entering a two-year Master of Fine Arts degree program in dance at Bennington College in Vermont, followed by a move to New York City.

In our 2016 conversation about her practice, Melinda chooses to focus much of it on the creation of an evening length, multi-year project premiered in New York in 2014, called *Forgetful Snow*. The hybrid dance and installation creation offers audience members a metaphoric meditation on terrain, weather, landscapes, and memory. As Melinda speaks, I listen for her values and interests as an artist. She has already mentioned to me the importance of *place*, referencing the early influence of Min Tanaka through her studies with him in Japan and her fascination with his ways of placing a

moving, responsive body into living landscapes, transforming them into sites for performance. She moves our conversation toward a description of a portion of *Forgetful Snow* that she calls *The Landscape*. Pausing, Melinda looks upward for a moment and smiles. She explains her hesitation: “I’m trying to think of how *The Landscape* — Oh! Yeah. Well. *The Landscape* came about because it was actually” — she changes course again — “the *Forgetful Snow* was a dance” — she stops. “Maybe this is too much information?” (19 May 2016). She underscores the question with her body, looking at me with her arms out to her sides, palms up, and shoulders lifted. I tell her: “Let’s go with it. Why stop?” She continues: “Before I left Los Angeles, it wasn’t the last work I did, but I made some work that was called *The Weather Condition Dances*, and it had to do with — they were inspired by Southern California. One was called “Glare,” one was called “Long Rain,” and “Dense Fog.” These were the works Melinda created and performed in Los Angeles in the 1990s, inspired by familiar climatic conditions such as multi-year drought, seasonal marine layers that roll over the city like foggy blankets, and periods of rare rainfall. She recalls her intentions: “. . . at that time I also thought I was going to make this other piece called *Forgetful Snow*, that was going to be a film, and I think I never made it because I don’t think I — like, the idea I had was too simplistic. So it just never got done” (19 May 2016). Perhaps an appropriate extension of her sentence above would be: It never got done *at that time*. But how could she have known what would follow?

As her listener, I am open to hearing clues about her return to the reservoir of sensations and images provided by her life in Los Angeles. I wonder how she transforms the embodied archival information into foundational layers for new work in her current

home environment of New York. Contemplating the trajectory of her dance making that brought her to the eastern edge of the continent, Melinda looks back and sees the moment in which she knew she had entered her own space of practice as a choreographer. The moment was in Los Angeles in the nineties, when her work was alive with investigations of climate, weather, and environment. Connecting to present time, she admits: “I started to think about *The Weather Condition Dances*.” Questioning what she should do next, Melinda decides: “I should go back to *Forgetful Snow*.” Her original concept, in which “the idea of the film was going to be this idea about the body as a landscape,” needed to change. In the new iteration, the work is a live dance-installation performance, not a film. For Melinda, *The Landscape* becomes “a compositional proposition” (19 May 2016). The dancers *are* the landscape.

I pay attention to Melinda’s transition from placing the body *in* landscapes, to treating the body *as* landscape. She provides details about *The Landscape* in a Contact Quarterly Chapbook devoted to *Forgetful Snow*. She writes: “One person arranges the other members of the group into tableaux that evoke a landscape within the terrain of the room” (13). Referencing her geographical roots, she continues: “My idea of this landscape is the American West, heavy on rock formations and full of dramatic simplified forms . . .” (13). Giving evidence to her interest in sculptural forms and film, she includes a task for the cast to take turns using a camera: “While the landscapes are being made, one member of the group, equipped with a small video camera, documents details within the terrain, capturing the bodies as mountains, canyons, valleys, gardens, topography . . .” (12). She provides another task for the camera operator dealing with a

painterly approach to scale and proportions: “Search for microlandscapes, framed by the camera, within the larger landscape” (“Forgetful” 12-13). The instruction could also serve as an artistic questioning of scale within her practice: What is small? What is large? What are the proportional relationships between humans and nature? What is important? What is real? *Where* is real? She is articulate about the metaphors available to audience members in her dances inspired by earth, landscapes, skies, and weather. In an interview with Julia Vickers for a *Gibney Dance* “Dance in Process” residency, Melinda shares:

I have made several works that look to nature and imagining the potential of an atmospheric condition to induce an altered state. My last work *Forgetful Snow* was one of these projects. It wasn’t exactly about snow, but more about the power dance can have to transfix and transport, in the same way falling snow can. . . .It was a ‘snow’ of activity, meant to induce a kind of meditative state, the state of ‘forgetful snow.’ (Vickers)

I invite the reader into the irony of the use of an atmospheric phenomenon that is extremely rare in Los Angeles — snow — that has resulted in profound artistic productivity for Melinda. Her renewed link to weather and climate in her former life in Southern California is strong.

Here, writing about Melinda’s atmospheric work, I volunteer again as a tour guide of sorts for the reader, offering my perception of potential resources available in the open Pacific skies. Because of the predominately horizontal nature of Los Angeles, with “low-rise” architecture in much of the city, the sky and its spaciousness have a robust presence. Eyes go to the skies for the rewards of color, clouds, shapes, movement, and the progressions of weather. When able (if so inclined), the mind can rest or wander in the openness. Often painterly, the skies offer lessons in concepts such as foreground, middle

ground, background, center, periphery, and distance. These concepts are also available as metaphor, a template for perceiving one's self, knowing the placement and proximity of one's presence, work, purpose, and progress. As her listener and observer, I feel happy for the success brought about by Melinda's sense of purpose and her progress at this time in her life. In the past, when she premiered *Collected Weather Condition Dances (Glare, Long Rain, Dense Fog)* in Los Angeles in 1997, reviewer Victoria Looseleaf closed her report about Melinda's performance with: "This is a singular performer whose transcendent vision — much like the weather — is inescapable" (Looseleaf). Now a mature dance maker, Melinda continues to explore the possibilities of creating work inspired by environments and natural phenomena, producing deeply considered physical, visual, temporal, and metaphoric experiences for her audiences. Her vision, noted critically in her past at the moment of coming into her own work, is recognized in the present even more profoundly. Twenty years after making the *Weather Condition Dances* in Los Angeles, Melinda was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for Choreography in 2017 (Guggenheim). Continuing her practice of unique dance making, she premiered *c lo u d* in New York in 2018. It is another meditation of time and presence, inspired by overlaps of atmospheric manifestations and human states of being.

Roxanne Steinberg: The Nature of Transformation

The audience can hear Roxanne before they can see her. Advancing from the back of the hall toward the performance area are the sounds of one shoe and one foot, alternately striking the floor — loud-soft, loud-soft, loud-soft, over and over. The church-like interior of the historic Southern California Mission Revival Style building holds the

audience to capacity, the high vaulted ceiling and curved archways framing and containing the event as it unfolds. Seated in chairs, on the floor, and standing, everyone is quiet in the warm August evening, seeming to breathe as one body, listening to Roxanne's uneven gait as she approaches. The tightly packed, people-filled chairs are many rows deep, forming a semi-circle focused on the musicians and their arrangements of instruments, with a single bench in the center and yards of pale fabric draped dramatically in a free form backdrop designed to catch projections and lighting design. When Roxanne comes into view she is 99 years old. Her spine is deeply curved, her knees are unable to straighten, her body is covered in layers of ragged garments, and her entire frame is encumbered by carrying a huge bundle on her back — and one shoe. She is the embodiment of the Japanese ninth century poetess Ono no Komachi, an historic figure featured at the center of the Nō play, *Sotoba Komachi*, written in the 14th century and reworked by 20th century writer Yukio Mishima as part of his *Five Modern Noh Plays* in the early 1950s.

In both versions of the story, the character Komachi must be able to physically conjure an environment of transformation and ghostly possession. Watching Roxanne perform, I see her move from 99 years old to a beautiful young woman in seconds. With a lightning fast upward shift of her spine and a twist that drops her garments off her now-young shoulders, she turns her head to a perfect profile, neck lengthened, swan-like. Just as quickly she becomes a demon with a bloody mouth and uncontained wildness in her eyes. Then a rough village girl emerges, skirts held high off her legs, feet flexed and knees rising in fast weaving steps, back and forth, over and over. As her watcher, I am

not alone in being transfixed. It appears to me that all eyes, all ears in the gathered audience are experiencing magic. At the end of the performance Roxanne is ancient again. She crawls over the dead body of the male poet protagonist, pulls antique spectacles out of her robes and puts them on, looks very closely at him, inches away from his face, then gathers her belongings and leaves slowly and heavily the same way she entered. The audience is stunned. Her wildness is both rogue and controlled, a female wolf on a long leash. Rather than placing herself *in* an environment, Roxanne becomes one. Her body is the terrain of the narrative.

Roxanne was invited into this project by multidisciplinary artist and director of Open Gate Theatre, Will Salmon, in the making of his 2018 opera inspired by the Mishima version of *Sotoba Komachi* (Salmon). Roxanne has worked with Salmon many times and enjoys the freedom he gives her to create. In an effort to talk more about the project, we meet in an outdoor seating area of a café in the Arts District, downtown Los Angeles, a couple of days after the performance. I ask her about her preparations for the role. She tells me that Salmon brought the idea to her two weeks before the performance. (My mind pings: Two weeks?) After listening to Salmon's proposition for the production, followed by collaborative discussions, Roxanne, the musicians, the vocalist, and director-performer Salmon agree to create and perform the *Sotoba* score live, semi-improvisationally, without any rehearsals. (My mind pings again: No rehearsals? All those performers?)

I invite the reader, with no small delight, to share with me an appreciation of Roxanne's and the other artists' appetite for performing live in an improvisational

structure. Improvising performances with musicians is a strand of Roxanne's practice that dates back to the eighties and resonates with her vivid glimpse of Min Tanaka performing an improvised duet with jazz musician Milford Graves at Bennington College. I remember a previous conversation in which Roxanne tells me: "I've always honored exploration," and states "it's more about coming to that moment with the knowledge that you have and using that, begin able to respond to change." I hear her truth when she tells me: "That's why I am such a believer in improvisation, in that moment, to be able to respond to everything that the moment presents you with" (29 May 2016). It appears to me that improvisation is also an imaginative landscape for Roxanne, a creative territory pliable enough to foster the appearance of entire worlds.

In our discussion about Salmon's opera, I ask Roxanne what it was like for her to create the role of Komachi. She is easily enthusiastic: "I loved doing it! The bundles, the squatting — that's part of why I feel so at home in Japan." Her long-standing connections with her Japanese partner, Oguri, in their work and life together are also part of her inner landscape. She speaks of "living a life so influenced by Japan, living with that imagery" (3 August 2018). Curious about her pre-performance research for the role of Komachi, before our meeting I peruse images online of Japanese *Nō* masks and *Ukiyo-e* paintings — "pictures of the floating world" — dating to the 17th through 19th centuries. I look for the images I saw in Roxanne's body in performance: her high stepping bare legs with flexed feet and knees, the downturned bloody demon mouth, a beautiful young woman with her head turned over her shoulder, an old hag carrying a large bundle on her back, and a woman with a ghost partner. I find *Ukiyo-e* images that contain near-precise

renditions of the visual and energetic elements I saw in Roxanne's performance. I ask Roxanne if she researches *Ukiyo-e* images and she tells me no. She pauses, then says with a self-knowing smile: "I am a gatherer, not a researcher" (3 August 2018). We spread the color prints I have downloaded out onto the café table, so we can look at them together. She points to one with a woman carrying a large bundle on her back and tells me that the image matches how she felt in her costume. The costume was a testament to Roxanne's declaration that she gathers things. It is an assemblage, put together from her habit of collecting things that interest her — clothing, fabric, shoes, photographs, letters, books, stones, feathers, and keepsakes — with each object available for use in her transformational performances.

As we talk about her personification of Komachi and the *Ukiyo-e* images, it does not escape my attention that as we do this we are not in Japan, we are sitting in the sunshine of present-day Los Angeles, a few blocks from "J-Town," Los Angeles's Little Tokyo. The daily three o'clock breeze off the ocean is already moving the tops of the tall palm trees. I think of the house in Venice Beach that Roxanne and Oguri share, featuring a spectacular open-air rooftop studio space continually bathed in Pacific light and close to an ocean marking the edge of the continent. I think of these Los Angeles features superimposed with Roxanne's completely natural links to Japan. I observe her fluidity in mixing her artistic and personal base of Los Angeles with adopted aspects of Japanese art and culture. These mixtures appear both as cultivated and natural, by choice and by circumstance. Roxanne has maintained clear and unbroken links to Los Angeles, Japan, and Body Weather Laboratory. Simply, through these links, she knows her home and her

practice. Through skillful means of gesture, posture, action, stillness, facial expressions, gaze, and the touch of simple scenic features such as a long tree pole or a bowl of water, Roxanne manifests place, nature, person, and creatures. Underpinning her performance practice are years of dailiness and commitment to Body Weather Laboratory.

Respectful to the roots of Body Weather and acknowledging ways the practice supports performance skills, Roxanne recalls Min Tanaka's modeling of making dance performance a daily practice, anywhere and everywhere, when she studied with him in her earlier days, in Paris in the 1980s. "He performed every day. Every night. And he was very much a street performer. He did a lot of that" (29 May 2016). She thinks quietly for a long time, looking down, touching her lip with her left index finger. Looking up, she begins again: "I just felt that direct engagement with people, direct interaction on the street where, in a subway car, on a bus, wherever it was, I felt that that was an important place to share dance." Roxanne asked Tanaka for advice about her interests in dance practice at that time. She remembers his response: "Just dance, dance, dance, everywhere. Put your body everywhere. Posit yourself in space and nature, and dance" (29 May 2016). Certainly, Roxanne does this.

Abalone: The Nine Plus One Voice

She is walking south on wet sand. On this western continental edge, walking south means the ocean is on her right as she follows the shoreline. She knows the gerunds that apply to the waves and sings them: "Curling, crashing, spreading, shushing, sucking, gathering, curling, crashing, spreading, shushing, sucking, gathering." There is no beginning and no end to the chant and the surf. She sees something in the distance rolling

in the shallow muddy mix, revealed just as the wave pulls back and tugs hard against anything left behind. She moves toward it, slowed by a foamy wet layer, ankle deep, resembling a useless but beautiful white lace shawl flung over water and gelatinous sand. She is exactly on time for this gift. She lifts the rough old half-oval out of the dark wet sand and turns it over to see the pearly colors. She knows that the soft-bodied being who lived under the protection of this shell suctioned its aliveness against a rocky cliff and now does not exist. This is the great matter: life and death. Just a girl, she takes the artifact and runs.

Melanie: Nature Nostalgia

As a listener for artist Melanie Ríos Glaser, I hear the quality of her voice change when she speaks about her native Guatemala. Although she still visits her birthplace, Guatemala City, it seems to me that a portion of “her” Guatemala lives under a bell jar of memory. In this final portion of Chapter IV, I invite the reader one last time into a place of nature, a habitat of both past and present time, an environment both real and remembered. More than a thicket, certainly a jungle, Melanie’s vivid and complex internal landscape forms an important part of who she feels herself to be and where she belongs.

In our first conversational interview in 2016, I ask Melanie what it is like to be herself in her practice. She offers some qualities and features of behavior that she recognizes about herself as an artist. Still curious, and sensing perhaps something is missing, I return to the question a little later in our conversation. I ask: “Is there anything you’d like to add to what it’s like to be you? Because there is only you in the you of your

practice” (31 August 2016). She smiles at my phrasing. She sits back and looks off to her right in the distance. The house is silent, and I can hear a bird outside. Very softly she repeats the question to herself: “What is it like to be me?” I am listening, and I can still hear the bird singing. Quietly, Melanie tells me a few more things that come to her mind. I am still listening for what seems to have not been said. She pauses, keeps her gaze distant. She moves her left hand up to her neck, then puts it down. She blinks several times. She begins again: “I live with — I am always melancholy and longing for Guatemala.” I’m not sure I hear her correctly, so I ask: “You said, longing and?” She responds: “Melancholy. Melancholy for Guatemala. And everything that Guatemala entails — family, friends, landscape, smell of the air, sounds, wildness” (31 August 2016). She is silent for a long time.

I think a lot about Melanie’s words and wonder what her homeland is like for her. What is it that seems to represent her identity as an artist so strongly, and how does the environment of Guatemala, as she experiences it, affect her art making? In a second interview I ask her if she could tell me more about her homeland. From my transcription of the first interview, I read back to her what she told me, and she smiles and nods her head. I tell her I’ve never been there, and I want to know: “What are the smells? What are the sounds?” She smiles more. I ask: “What is the wildness? What is it like? What are these things like?” (2 May 2018).

Melanie inhales, and on the exhale begins to speak: “Well, to me — and I’ve traveled a lot — Guatemala is passionate. Everything that happens there, kind of has to happen in the midst of either turmoil, or blossoming” (2 May 2018). When she says

“blossoming” she makes a generous opening arc with both hands, like a large flower opening. Her speech becomes increasingly rhythmic: “Plants grow quickly and abundantly. There are trees, there are beaches, there are lakes, there are volcanoes — thirty-two of them.” She puts her gaze to her right and brings both hands together on her chest. “You can smell the humidity of a recent wet season rain. You can smell flowers.” She softly rubs her hands against each other. “My parents’ house has a smell that I can’t describe.” She tells me her parents live in Guatemala City, where she was born, and now it is “a city of about eight million people, with skyscrapers everywhere and a gourmet restaurant opening every week.” She acknowledges the growing cosmopolitan nature of the city, “a sophistication,” with “a growing art scene.” The city itself “is cacophony!” but in residential neighborhoods one can find “a lot of peace and tranquility.” The environment is a mixture of nature’s excessive beauty and its threats. She tells me that from “almost from every place, you can see a volcano” (2 May 2018).

In particular, I ask Melanie about her use of the word “wildness.” She responds: “Wildness! Yes, that is referring to the jungle” (2 May 2018). I ask her to tell me more. In service of assisting a Guatemalan writer friend with his novel set in the rain forest area of Guatemala, Melanie and he “took tours and land rovers, and boats in rivers,” exploring the jungle. “We took a trip that was supposed to last six days to get to an archeological site,” but it “took nine days instead.” They were “trapped in the swamps, with mosquitoes, trying to sleep in hammocks, not knowing what you would encounter — either friendly people, or migrants, or unfriendly people where the rule of law can’t reach.” She explains that although it is beginning to change now, at the time of these

adventures in the mid to late 1990s, “the rule of law is not something that works very efficiently in Guatemala.” She adds, “It’s like the Wild West, both the jungle and the city” (2 May 2018).

Melanie is quiet for a while. She speaks again, adding another layer to descriptions of wildness: “In the jungle you have monkeys throwing things at you, and snakes, and crocodiles” (2 May 2018). I laugh, and she smiles. The image is funny, but I can sense she will offer its menacing side in this story. She continues describing the trip to the archeological site: “We had finally arrived at this place, coated in mud to avoid the mosquitoes. And there was this lovely little pool. We were fantasizing about finally dipping into the pool and taking all the mud off, until a crocodile head came out of the water.” My response is an intake of breath: Oh! She laughs and ends the story: “So we decided that was not such a good idea, that we would have to find another way to bathe” (2 May 2018).

Melanie makes me laugh, but I feel sad too. The homesickness, the nostalgia, the sensory memories, all seem to be powerful. She clarifies that it is not simply the sensory features of the natural environment she misses, it is the time of intense generational artistic focus fueled by a commitment to freedom and social justice. She was in her late 20s, filled with a sense of purpose. It was a five-year period for her, formative years, influential years for her as an artist. I ask her if those years live within her as the artist she is today. She replies: “I had so much nostalgia for that time period because it was a time after the signing of the peace treaty [1996], when artists kind of opened the,” She makes a strong opening gesture, separating her hands. “. . . took the top off the pressure cooker

and were doing a lot of performance art about the war, about a newness . . . this was a time that was full of camaraderie and wild discussions into the wee hours of the morning. . . it just felt like something really important was happening” (2 May 2018).

Melanie created a dance premiered in Los Angeles in 2012, called *La Tribu* — the tribe. “That’s what we used to call ourselves” (2 May 2018). Because the work grew from a place of nostalgia, I ask her if making it changed her feelings of longing. She tells me that creating the work in Los Angeles “helped at the time, but certainly the nostalgia is still there.” In making the project, she recalls that “one part of me wanted to just reconnect and have myself be a presence there again. Because I was a very active member of the artistic community and people know who I was.” At this point in our conversation, I am alert to Melanie’s words about *presence*. I ponder the presence of wild nature and environments in Guatemala having such a deep effect on the nature of Melanie’s presence as a person and artist. In terms of strengthening or renewing her presence, Melanie’s artistic research for making *La Tribu* was also a way to revisit, reclaim, and reconnect with the Guatemala she lost. She tells it this way:

I had been away for so long that I felt that I had no presence in that community and I wanted to reclaim some presence there. So I went down to Guatemala specifically on a trip to talk to the artists and the curators and the key people in the movement, to tell me more about what their sense of what had happened. And what I found was that they did not cluster the time in the frame I was clustering it. . . it didn’t end in the two thousands, it kept going, obviously. I just wasn’t there!. . . And speaking to them, it reassured me that they knew I was still working. That I was still interested. That I might come back. (2 May 2018)

Melanie is quiet, with a soft downward gaze. I tell her: “It’s vivid.” She says, “Yes.” She is quiet for a while again, then speaks: “Actually, the work feels like it’s not

finished.” As choreographers, we talk a little about how a work gets brought back into performance after being put away. Later, away from the conversation, in my role as Melanie’s listener, I ponder the effect a confluence of time and changing circumstances can have on a person in relation to a place, a career, a life. I also consider the powerful role wild nature can play in allowing a human to sense her existence and question where she best belongs.

Turning the Page, Leaving Nature

If the reader and I stand on the precipice of the world and shout, nature sends back her echo in glory and wildness, aiming for the heart of the tiny human beings. In awe and wonder of the abundance of aliveness found in the narratives shared by the artist-participants in their experiences in nature, my attention now leans toward the questions I pose that ask for descriptions of an inner realm — the inside world of practice. After visiting vast territories outdoors, returning to interiority invites other opportunities for understanding more about artists and their practices. Going inside is another way to understand one’s place in a living world. I invite the reader to go with me as we approach one final chapter, “Ways of Concluding: Touching the Inside of Practice.”

Low to the Ground, Returning: The Nine Plus One Voice

She lifts her nose out of the leaves. After such a long search, there are still scents that linger. She has one more to follow and it appears to be moving inward.

CHAPTER V

WAYS OF CONCLUDING: TOUCHING THE INSIDE OF PRACTICE

Is the Way attained through mind or body?
... the body and mind are not separate ...
the Way is attained through both body and mind.
—Eihei Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzo Zuimonki*

Revolving: The Nine Plus One Voice

In the late afternoon the springtime light pulls color from the hills in the shift from day to dusk. As the light dims, the promise of owls is imminent. Until darkness comes, she plays in a clearing in the weedy side yard of the old adobe house. Over and over, she tries to master the wheeling aerial action of a forward handspring. Running and picking up momentum, she dives downward with both arms, flips her legs over her head, pushes off with her hands, and tries to land on her feet. She fails every time. Unconcerned, she continues for the pleasure of enactment. Finally, she lets herself rest. The scent of almond blossoms from the orchard tells her another yearly trip around the sun is almost halfway complete. But in the twilight, there is nothing to finish. The universe is perfectly empty and perfectly full. She watches pinpricks of starlight appear in the sky. A back door opens, light spills in a long rectangle, a voice calls, she goes inside. The planet slowly spins.

Persistent Questions

When I look at the end, I see the beginning. In this moment when the researcher typically sums up the work, presents findings, and concludes, I notice my preferred

position is to remain in wonder, poised within a continuum of questions about being alive in a world filled with movement. As an artist-researcher, I have contemplated a bedrock question for myself throughout this dissertation: How does a moment of awareness of existence become available to a human being? The question resides underneath and within the layers of declared content for this study, articulated for the reader in Chapter II by revisiting the research prospectus and formal research questions. Although not articulated as a formal research question in the original prospectus, my fundamental existential inquiry persists. It flows as a trace idea among the other topics that the participants and I discuss in interviews about embodied dance artist practices. I intuit that I do hear the artist-participants addressing, in one's own way and either directly or indirectly, moments of recognition when one is aware that one exists, that *existence* exists, that *one knows that one knows* existence exists. I do feel these moments are articulated well by the artist-participants in this study when they talk about the value of practice in their lives and the qualitative experiences they have inside the space of practice. It appears to me that they are able to speak with great candor and clarity about what it is like for them as movement artists to be alive in their worlds. A feeling of a cosmic scale to the curiosity appears, when the artists express their awareness of existence as it extends beyond the human being and out into the world of other animated life forms. As the researcher, I hear these musings as notions of co-creating worlds on a spinning and orbiting planet that is also a living entity. From the innermost to the most obviously exterior manifestation of a movement practice, the artist-participants speak about their work in the studio and in their worlds at large.

Because of the power of existential undercurrents, I invite the reader into my choice in this final chapter to turn to the *inside* of practice. Throughout the interviews, I posed questions that probe values, inspiration, vulnerability, benefit, and satisfaction in their practices. I collect their responses to some of these most inner questions here, clustering their answers into an illuminating force for understanding their experiences. As their listener, I hear that practice is a deep and personal space in which a practitioner can shift to the interior, not to the exclusion of the exterior, but with a qualitative expansion of one's inner awareness of selfhood within a larger world. I propose that it is this inner space that fosters the necessary alchemy for the transformation of creative inquiry into form, experiences of the everyday into uniquely personal artistic or intellectual offerings, wildness into wisdom, and seemingly unconnected ideas into wholeness. Here, within the inside of practice, the artist can return to the reservoir of *self* and all that it knows.

Thus, my effort in this chapter is to draw the dissertation back upon itself in a circular fashion, bringing the concept of practice "home" for the self, and noticing how the self comes home to practice. In this gesture, I am cleaving to the notion that the deepest artistic lineage is a space in which a practitioner creates an inner lineage of one: one's self. The inner lineage of one's self manifests in access to realms of imagination and ideation in interiority. External influences abound, of course, in how the artists in this dissertation have selected eclectic interdisciplinary components and integrated them into an embodied practice, but my thought is that it is the singular artist within her practice that contributes to ideas begun by others and forwards them into future time through envisioning and exporting one's own innovations. I propose here, in these introductory

pages to this final chapter, that the internal contours of practice have offered the artist-participants in this dissertation a holistic space for long-term self-realization and individuation as artists and human beings. In finishing this dissertation, I share with the reader ways in which I hear the artist-participants describe and respond to some of the most deceptively simple yet “hard” questions, such as: What is it like to be You?

Hard Questions

I am aware of a distinction between the *experience* of one’s interiority and attempts to *describe* the experience. The two ideas are related, but not the same. Depth of experience depends on self-awareness, and a deep description of experience relies on imaginative structures of language that illuminate an inner state of being, unique to the individual. Hoping to evoke attempts at articulating interiority, I pose what a few of the artists call “hard” questions in the interviews. The artists respond with spoken and written words, modulations in voice, and expressive gestures. As the researcher-writer, I am tasked with, and simultaneously liberated by, both the limitations and remarkable possibilities of language. Together, the artist-participants and I work to articulate for the reader what it is like for the artists to experience both an inside and outside of practice; one cannot be understood without the other. However, at times, there is a blurring followed by a clearing, as the inner and outer edges of practice become one. In these moments, the borders between interior and exterior are softened, perhaps gone.

The distinction between experience and description of experience becomes a nuanced complexity in the interview process. As the researcher, I consider: What sorts of invitations might I extend to each artist-participant to evoke, for example, what practice

is, or *where* it is, or perhaps *when* it is? How might I learn if the participants sense that practice has boundaries, such as an *in* or an *out*, or a quality of being *on* or *off*? I listen for the grace notes, the subtle personal ornaments of language and gesture between the questions and answers, waiting for expressions that point to awareness of consciousness and existence. In this case, I am using *consciousness* to mean a meta awareness of awareness, and *existence* to mean aliveness. In the broadest sense, beneath my inquiries into existential embodiment and interiority are questions common to human beings, regardless of time, place, and circumstance: *Who are we? What are we? Why are we?* In this existential layer, the inquiry never ends: What is the world? Whose world? What is reality? Whose reality? These kinds of questions are ponderable and perhaps always unknowable, yet the yearning to contemplate them provokes the inquiry. It is from this enduring layer of human curiosity that this research emerges.

One of the “hard” questions I pose that I consider to be appropriate for the research is: What is it like to be *you in practice*? The question seems to charge the atmosphere of the conversation, causing a little weather front to pass through. Some of the artists burst with laughter and ask, with a mixture of humor and indignation, something like: How can you expect me to answer that?! The conversational space momentarily whirls as they implode with laughter. Other participants remain poised without the appearance of cyclones but need time to consider and form an answer that feels accurate. In sequencing this final chapter, I decide to wait for a space nearer the end of the dissertation to share the participants’ answers to questions about interior experience. As the writer, it seems appropriate to offer a gesture of wrapping up and

saying goodbye through lingering glimpses of the artist-participants' descriptions of their innermost realms of practice, a home to which one returns.

Through the interview process, I notice another question that seems to invite humor. When I ask the artists about doubting their practice, they laugh. Why is doubt funny? Perhaps laughter is a relief from the features of doubt. Perhaps laughter makes the internal adjustments that are required when experiencing doubt, more pleasant. Perhaps, as described by artist-participant Melanie Ríos Glaser, there are demons in doubt that deserve to be laughed at, to break the hold, soften the spell that doubt can conjure. As their listener, I consider the artist-participants' humor a mark not only of their obvious wit but also of their maturity. They are able to laugh and step lively on the shaky ground of doubt.

In their responses to my questions about interiority in general, I notice that the participants often offer a mixture of aspects of the inside of practice. These aspects can include personalized descriptions of what practice *is* — such as a state, a feeling, a zone, a vibration — as well as attempts to articulate a *qualitative sense of self* within practice. Also, as the questioner, I ask the participants to tell me how they “get there,” how they know they are “inside.”

Looking back through the particulars of the interview process, my sense is that all the “hard” questions about interiority provoke a loosening that allows a lively initial response followed by a deeply considered answer that is crafted and offered from a point of stability within the body. When the artists speak from an anchored bodily space, it

appears to me that they are settling into a physical certainty that connects to their foundational subjectivity.

Findings are Sometimes Not Found

Existential themes such as aliveness and consciousness have moved through the dissertation in tandem with other major themes such as artistic eclecticism, traits of creative people, ways of forming relationships with multidisciplinary practices, the dailiness of practice, and dance artists' engagement with worlds beyond themselves. I aim for a flexible integration of the themes, moving ideas toward a wholeness. In my effort, I make room for the textures of imperfection and probable flaws, finding them interesting for future inquiry. It is my intention for this dissertation, that the inquiry has enough delicacy to invite contemplation, and adequate weight to maintain a presence of both tangibles and intangibles as they appear in the layers of thought.

I admit to the reader, however, that at the end of this inquiry and among my selections for concluding, I am surprised that the backdrop of the Judson era does not more directly appear in my “findings.” I enclose the word *findings* in quotation marks to show that I am a bit uncertain — have I “found” anything? Certainly, I have deepened a space with myself, making more room within my own interiority for appreciating what appears to be unlimited imagination, bravery, intelligence, and humor exhibited by the artists whose practices I have studied. I understand now that through conversations with the artist-participants, the focus of this work has become increasingly centered on their lives and individual ways of being human within their practices, rather than on a dance lineage, history, or heritage. In many ways, this shift to the *person* rather than the

generation or *lineage* allows a softening through which existential questions can be better considered and the individual features of the participants become paramount.

Findings from the Inside

In my thoughts about practice in the early stages of this dissertation, I understood that I could not assume anything about the experience of another practitioner. My own sense of practice is that it is a private place that serves me as a container for my thoughts, personal narratives, and creative ideation. Within practice, my sense of interiority is spacious, indeed vast. As a writer, such vastness offers a dimensional space for the expansion of ideas, as well as a place large enough to hold the many individual descriptions and responses offered by the research-participants in this study. In what follows, in ways that are personal, introspective, and thoughtful, each artist reveals a singular view in response to the question: What is it like *inside* your practice? What is it like “in there”?

Luis Lara Malvacías: Pleasure

Luis writes: “Yes, I could speak about reaching a particular state. Sometimes I even directly quote the expression of ‘being in the zone’ to describe some deepened mental place where I find myself during some of my explorations” (1 September 2016). He acknowledges: “this particular state has a very important effect on the physicality that arises in my improvisations.” Modestly, he admits, “when I find myself in this mental space, I feel that my process reaches a very ‘satisfactory’ place of achievement.” As his reader, I smile at his assessment: “being in that state is a very good place to exist, a utopian place of pleasure” (1 September 2016). My smile endures.

K.J. Holmes: Totality

K.J. tells me, “You know, I don’t know if it’s one thing. I think it really depends on the situation and meeting it. I mean that’s something I learned from Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, you know, how to meet what’s right there” (8 September 2016). She sweeps her hand across the space in front of her body as she talks about the pairing of interior and external realities: “There’s a totality of being able to witness from within, but also in relationship to what is happening around.” This wholeness in her artist worldview — a completed sphere with inside and outside — allows her to consider what a practice might do, perhaps in the most fundamental of existential ways. She says it this way: “To me there is something about the practice of dance and theater that is shaping reality” (8 September 2016). I nod, thinking: there is a kind of alchemy inherent in her statement.

Claire Filmon: Obvious

Claire is looking into the distance, smiling. She looks at me and says, “I was thinking about this — that state — it’s why I’m doing what I’m doing. And I’m continuing. It’s because it’s a place where there is no question. Everything is obvious. You know? And that’s amazing!” (9 May 2016). I can feel her excitement as she describes her sense of arriving in a place of certainty; her path is illuminated. Because Claire’s performance practice is entirely improvisational, I sense that this place of practice is a force that provides the confidence she needs for creating a complete performance event that is entirely improvisational as the audience watches. She admits: “Sometimes it happens, or not, but I know that it exists, and I know that it’s a place, you know, where everything is obvious!” So, you know, it helps you to *be* there.” It appears

to me that Claire experiences a kind of euphoria in this state of *being*. She tells me: “I know it’s happened when I was onstage, when I was moving, and sometimes when I was doing something I agree with, and it happens, it happens to me, no question. *I love this place!*” (9 May 2016).

Melanie Ríos Glaser: Flow

Melanie speaks quietly with a sense of being deeply inside her practice, which, like Claire, is improvisation. She tells me: “I recognize when something feels more authentic, and more connected to source than when it doesn’t” (31 August 2016). She changes the position of her head and lifts her eyebrows as she picks up the verbal thread again: “When I don’t have to rely on tricks of the trade, or my suitcase of tools, or my triggers to unblock . . .” She pauses again, sitting in stillness. Her presence is composed; she waits. After a time, she continues: “when things flow, and when I know what’s next, and change my mind about what’s next, and change my mind again . . .” She smiles, looks down, and relaxes her face (31 August 2016). I laugh softly, because I hear her enjoying giving herself permission to her change her mind and follow ideas as they arise within the interior of her work as an artist. These are choices within her purview as an improviser. She is an artist who is willing to be in the flow of whatever might come her way.

Michael Sakamoto: Loud

I ask Michael: “Is there an ‘in’ in there?” He smiles and nods. “Yeah. Oh, there is a lot of ‘in there’ there” (22 June 2016). He laughs. “Well, I don’t know, actually, there’s probably not much ‘in there’ there, but it’s a very loud place!” He laughs again (I do too),

and I sense his thinking space as a place filled with the vibrations of his lively intellect. He continues: “It’s a very noisy place because I’m constantly thinking and reflecting. It’s a very visual place because I’m also constantly looking, and visualizing, and perceiving” (22 June 2016). When Michael talks about “looking,” he gestures with his left hand, back and forth, horizontally, and matches his eyes to the scan of the hand. His gesture conveys a sense of spaciousness and an alert to sensation and thought. I do not hear any noise, but I can feel the energy of activity.

Kara Jhalak Miller: Synchronicity

Kara brings up her use of media as a way to talk about a state of practice in which there is “no separation” between herself and the world; there is no separation between herself and her practice; there is nothing separating “time and distance.” She tells me that in working with media, “those boundaries of space and time are just instantly dissolved” (16 May 2016). She relates this boundarylessness to accessing her own interiority. She says it this way: “I think that reflects my own inner state of how I perceive and experience the world. There is a synchronicity there, that happens.” She elaborates: “I experience synchronicity, I experience oneness, I experience a connection. A deep, deep connection.” As she continues, Kara acknowledges her position in a world that is far bigger and older than she is. She describes it like this: “I also deeply experience my ancestors and all that is living in the trees and nature around me as well” (16 May 2016). Then she is quiet, giving me time to contemplate the images left behind by her words.

Roxanne Steinberg: Source

As her observer, I am aware of Roxanne's extraordinary connection to her body. She has a persistently graceful embodied presence in carriage, speech, gesture, as well as in performance, which I've been privileged to see many times. It does not surprise me to hear her sense of the phenomenon of practice as not so much a place, or a zone, or having edges or boundaries, or being "in" or "out," but as a direct connection to her body. Her meta practice seems to be her capacity to live fully as her embodied self. She appreciates "being able to observe the body and seeing all of it as dance" (29 May 2016). She tells me: "Movement is still existing, right now, here . . . even the idea of 'ephemeral'—like we do it and it goes, but then we keep talking about it." Roxanne credits the connections between the fleeting, the changing, and the enduring in dance, owning the concept of "having my body, with its memory, is a source, you know? A reliable source." She pauses to think, then continues: "But, at the same time, the movement goes, but I don't know if it really dissipates." She smiles. I ask her if she means the memory dissipates, or the movement dissipates. She answers: "The movement. I mean, you know you do a movement, but I always think of it as being fleeting or changing, but you know, the memory — there are things about it that are indelible, indelible because you've done that. And indelible because it's been seen by somebody else. . . .it all becomes part of your own memory" (29 May 2016).

Melinda Ring: Clarity

Melinda is talking about "being in dance . . . like, who will stay in dance? Who will continue?" (19 May 2016). As a mature artist she has continued to make the choice

to “stay in dance,” and the realization deepens her self-knowledge at this point in her life. She tells me: “It’s become clear to me — I mean I know I could do something else — that I could be a lawyer, or I could be doctor, or I could be an architect . . . there are other things I could be doing. But I just feel like this is it.” She laughs when she tells me: “I mean I’ve actually been told, like I’ve taken IQ tests and aptitude tests that say that my intelligences are for choreography!” (19 May 2016). As her listener I think this is very interesting, and I lean in to hear more. She tells me: “I see three-dimensionally very easily. Like I can understand the other side of something really easily. So, that could be good as an architect, right? There is a kind of envisioning, there is a spatial envisioning with that. But, um . . .” She pauses to think, with her left hand to her mouth, her gaze downward. She knows her choice is dance, not architecture or law, and she is clear about why. She says it this way: “Understanding the world through the body is very essential to who I am . . . understanding the world through the *experience* of the body.” I tell her: “That’s beautifully stated.” She smiles and says, “Good.” Then she throws her head back and laughs (19 May 2016).

Kathleen Fisher: Perception

Kathleen moves her gaze upward and into the distance. “It’s all different things,” she says, and points out “Everyone’s story is so different of what is happening at any given moment” (12 September 2016). She looks at me and tells me: “It’s amazing to me how vast that is, how our perception of the world *becomes* the world to us.” As for her world in the Bahamas and the surrounding ocean, she is aware of how she perceives, and, therefore, creates that world internally and externally for herself. I sense that Kathleen’s

overall practice in the past many years includes a huge commitment to being inside the fullness of her extraordinary life in the Bahamas. She says, “My perception is that my life is so full of beauty that it’s like an incredible privilege to have this, this bizarre life, you know? (12 September 2016). In wonder, I contemplate her passion.

Roads to the Inside

Listening to the participants’ descriptions of what practice is like from the inside, I am curious how they “get there.” What sorts of structures, procedures, and scaffolding, if any, do they create in order to find their way “inside”? Do they design transitions, negotiate distractions, provide themselves with reliable routes, paths, markers, steps, and ways of measuring an arrival? In what follows, I offer remarks from Claire and Luis, both of whom speak from a deeply somatic space of being in movement.

Claire’s Road

Claire Filmon smiles when I ask her if she has a way “in.” She responds: “It’s a big mystery” (9 May 2016) but as she describes it, it appears to me that her process is not so much mysterious as intuitive. Claire references one of her longstanding improvisation teachers, Judson era improviser, Lisa Nelson: “She was asking us to notice how we go from our daily body, to our physical body, to our dance body. And, so, yes, I think I made a road. I know sometimes I don’t get there.” Other times Claire says she is “just focusing on my breath,” and in doing so, she senses: “I’ve felt I can start to move deep.” Part of her “road” toward interiority is simply to follow the breath, a technique common to many dancers, somatic practitioners, martial artists, yogis, and meditators, to name a few. She tells me: “The first thing is to breathe and to be *in* my breath. And to be in each second,

many, many seconds of my breath.” She continues with her description of her “road” into practice this way: “Then, after moving precisely, as precisely as I can, I ask: Where is my awareness?” Then Claire activates internal sensations: “I follow the way,” she says, “and I feel, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, I feel that something is *right*.” Claire describes this rightness as: “like a vibration, it’s like you have a cord in your body and when you move the cord there is a sound, and that sound is so good that it is *right*. You know? And you think: Yes! It’s good!” (9 May 2016). Claire’s road into the deep states of practice is a progression of gestures and guiding actions. She touches familiar scaffolding along the way, trusting intuition to help her choose the direction and measure of rightness in the moment. Claire arrives “there” holistically.

Luis’s Regimen

Luis Lara Malvacías shares features of his ongoing practice that guide him inward. He writes: “Some of the activities that I consider regular and that are components of my practice are, first and foremost a warm up based on somatic practices: for me it is very important to fine-tune my physical awareness . . . ” (1 September 2016). Luis achieves his fine-tuning through his somatic commitment to “observe the movement in my joints and articulations, perceive the connection with my breath and movement, rolling on the floor to give and receive from gravity and observe and get familiar with the space where I find myself at any given moment.” Following a rigorous physical and sensory sequencing allows Luis “to have a close observation of the state of my body and mind. This makes me ready for the rest of the activities that I do during my studio practice . . . ” (1 September 2016).

I ask Luis to tell me about any sorts of signals or sensations he might receive though his body-mind that confirm he is “in” practice. He writes: “Some of them are: a clear sense of gravity, a more clear perception of time, and understanding more clearly my physical limitations. Also, a more sensorial relationship to the surrounding space including the architecture, lights, sound textures and objects” (1 September 2016). Luis acknowledges that his experience within interiority changes when someone else is in the space. He describes it like this: “When working in collaboration and someone else is in the room with me, this affects the way I relate to my own body and to the person watching. I could say that my feelings, sensations, and signals become a combination of the two energies in the room . . .” (1 September 2016). Duet or solo, Luis has a deep and respectful understanding of his own approaches to the states and zones of practice that serve him as an artist and collaborator.

Who Else Speaks about the Inside of Practice?

I would feel remiss if I did not include in the closure of this dissertation some examples of how a few dance practitioners and researchers have written about the interior experiences of one’s practice. Although it is not always foregrounded, I consider interiority a dance disciplinary topic. Directing the reader’s attention back to Chapter II, for example, I note in the original prospectus that a perceived lack of research about the internal experiences of a dance practitioner versus the exterior accomplishments is part of the provocation for this research. The two artists whose writing I reference in what follows are examples of the few who *do* research the topic of being *inside* one’s practice.

I choose excerpts from two long-standing practitioners of improvisation, founding Judson era performer and movement researcher, Steve Paxton and inveterate improviser and movement researcher, Kent de Spain. Lastly, I add comments from French philosopher and cognitive researcher Claire Petitmengin, from her research into interior moments of intuition.

Paxton's Interior Techniques

Paxton's essay catches my eye because it is, to a large degree, about the inside of practice, framed within his descriptions of the origins his creation of *contact improvisation* in the early 1970s. In "Drafting Interior Techniques" he recalls for the reader his explorations toward defining a practice that has become a global phenomenon — an "improvisation when communicating via touch with another person" (183). In the essay he shares many aspects of formative discoveries, but it is his notes about how to observe one's inner self while moving and a refinement of attentional stability that feel pertinent to this dissertation. From his own experiences as a mover, Paxton proposes: "The consciousness can travel inside the body. It is analogous to focusing the eyes in the external world" (177). Paxton is clear that in the 1970s, in his emergent form of duet improvisation, consciousness "had a job;" its assignment, for the purpose of training movers to do contact improvisation, was to "hang in with the body, during real time, and stay alert," functioning as "a witness" (Paxton 178). At that time, he suggested a "*steady state* of watching the reflexes" (180, emphasis in the original) as a component of fundamental procedural skills needed by the dancers with whom he was experimenting.

Paxton's term, a "*steady state* of watching the reflexes" interests me. His choice of language speaks to an aware, repeatable process of internal attention that produces reliable mental stability through time, applicable not only to dance improvisation but also to dance performance, martial arts, meditation practices, and other physical disciplines that engage with mental precision. Certainly for the dance artist, whether performing set choreographies or investigating improvisational techniques, the pairing of a stable and clear mental state with a ready and creative body-instrument can be foundational for movement invention and performance expertise. The mental focus invites the dancer to be dimensionally nimble, moving back and forth between a perceived inside and outside, rendering the activity whole.

De Spain's Existential Border

The topic of a dissolution of boundaries between inside and outside while improvising arises in an essay by improviser, movement researcher, and author Kent de Spain, titled "The Cutting Edge of Awareness: Reports from the Inside of Improvisation." In writing about the limits of verbal language in relation to his desire to learn about the experience of improvisers in the aliveness of the moment, de Spain points to "the places where our ability to articulate our experiences begins to break down" and he proposes that "improvisation can take us into realms of awareness that extend beyond literacy, a place of synapses and chaos and unvoiced intention" (36). De Spain admits there are "some experiences in improvisation that are not easily categorized — not inside, nor outside; in fact, somehow dissolving that existential border" (36). This idea wraps around to the opening of de Spain's article in which he tells the reader that in an interview he

conducted with Steve Paxton, the older artist “explained to me that there was no longer a clear dividing line between his everyday life and his improvising” (27). In my experience as the researcher with the nine research participants, I resonate with de Spain’s observation: “. . . most of the longtime practitioners I know treat it less as a tool and more as an end in itself. For such people, the primary purpose of improvisation is simply to experience themselves improvising” (27). I would say it this way: A reason a practitioner enacts a practice can be for the pleasure of doing of it, for being alive in that moment of existence, and recognizing it from a self without borders.

Petitmengin’s Interior Gestures

Curious about interior structures used not only in dance practices but also in other situations in which awareness within interiority plays a key role, I turn to a study of first-person accounts of the “intuitive experience” by Paris-based French philosopher, cognitive scientist, and professor, Claire Petitmengin. In interviews, her research participants describe what occurs in the inner experience of intuition. Petitmengin notices an overall “generic structure of the intuitive experience, which is made up of an established succession of very precise interior gestures” (59) such as letting go, listening, “deep-rooting,” and “interior self-collecting” (59).

Following the phase of letting go, Petitmengin notes the participant “finds himself in a state of interior calm and presence which enables him to listen very closely to his own sensations” (66). I find this akin to the deep concentration for movement artists when improvising and performing. Petitmengin makes the point that a calm state is a

“transformation, which abandoned the abstract discursive mode for an imaged, kinaesthetic (sic) mode anchored in the corporeal experience” (63).

Like both de Spain and Paxton, Petitmengin points to a feature of interiority in which boundaries dissolve, reporting that “certain subjects, at the end of their phases of letting go and of connection, the limits between the interior and the exterior worlds become hazy, vague, which renders this distinction of internal and external attention of little pertinence” (67). I find this akin to many descriptions by artist-participant in this dissertation, for example, Kara Jhalak Miller, when she speaks about her experiences of the body, time, and space falling away in meditation, performance, and in a state of receptivity with nature, or Luis Lara Malvacías describing being “in the zone,” a “deepened mental place” that has an effect of both the interior and exterior of his physicality. In such moments, borders are neither discernable nor necessary. Everything flows.

Possibly impossible: The Nine Plus One Voice

Having committed to it, she realizes there is a good chance she cannot do it. A heavy metal chain attached by metal rings to the steps on the exterior of the aged stone pyramid serves as a handrail. She pulls hard on the chain with both hands to drag herself upward. She has vertigo, is afraid of heights. Don't look down! Eye level, she looks out onto an infinity of dark jungle lit by the moon. Why did she come to these ruins? Why did she think she could climb this monument — a Yucatán dream, guarded now by iguanas and frogs? Years later, she remembers these things: her fear, her determination, her doubt, her achievement, and the beauty afforded by the view from the top.

A Finding: Doubt Accompanies the Way

I look at Michael and ask: Have you ever doubted your practice? Michael looks at me and says: “Oh yeah.” His expression makes me laugh. He laughs too, and says, “Don’t we all? Yeah, I mean you know the answer to that one!” (22 June 2016). I’m laughing harder now, and he continues pushing the humor: “Yeah, every day.”

I come to understand that under the gentle cover of humor, themes connected with doubt are sometimes painful for the artist-participants, or, on a smaller register, nagging. Uncertainty, fear, self-criticism, comparisons to others, questions of self-worth, wondering about the value of one’s work — all this arises. But what also arises is the thought that doubt is important for a healthy ability to assess one’s own work. In what follows, each artist articulates a response to and relationship with doubt.

Michael Sakamoto: Pause and Reflect

With his Buddhist training and approach to life, it seems to me that Michael understands the Zen triad of “great faith, great doubt, and great determination” (Maezumi 55-56). Michael uses doubt as part of his questioning practice; he checks in with himself. He tells me: “I don’t doubt that I should have a practice. I don’t doubt that the practice exists in and of its self and has its own value for itself as a way of life. I don’t doubt that there are plenty of people — sometimes a handful, sometimes a lot — who get value out of it, or this or that manifestation of it” (22 June 2016). He looks up and away for a few moments, thinking, then he returns his attention to me: “When I say I do, of course, doubt it, what I mean is I feel an obligation to constantly check myself. Check *in* on myself, and *check myself*, as in pause — not stop — but pause myself and say and reflect: “Is this a

good way to go? Is this a productive path? Is this a benevolent path? Is this selfish?"

Here, Michael laughs at himself as he continues: "or is this, as you always tell people, Michael, a good way to be a part of the world?" He looks away, pausing for a moment, then re-centers his gaze. "Is this helping people?" (22 June 2016). I hear Michael using doubt as a reminder of his values. Doubt reinforces his practice of questioning. In Zen terms, quoting Sekkei Harada, one could say: "'Questioning' means doubting" (135), or, said another way: "Great questioning, or great doubt, is to investigate this very point!" (Maezumi 56). I see Michael integrating doubt into big, ongoing questions and investigations in his life and practice.

Melanie Ríos Glaser: Demons

I look at Melanie and say to her: "I want to ask you if you've ever doubted your practice" (31 August 2016). She looks at me, "If I've ever doubted my work? Oh, absolutely!" Her answer makes me laugh. She pauses, "Um, but I could, I can honestly say I've rarely, if ever, doubted my passion for the form, for the genre of dance." She tells me that she often can "doubt the product." Doubting the product has to do with her worries about her development and currency as an artist. She says it this way: "I have the deep fear of staying stagnated in a certain era of dance." She explains it a bit more: "So, my fear again, would be just to end up" she pauses, then continues, "looking like Brooks Brothers." She laughs and asks me: "Do you know the store?" I tell her I do. She continues: "I want to stay up to date . . . following the progress that others are making in the genre." We talk about generations and genres of art coming and going. She continues defining the particulars of her doubts: "Part of what I doubt is whether I have the

courage, at this age, to be daring. The courage to be, to push the envelope, still . . . making myself vulnerable” (31 August 2016). I ask her more about doubt, discord, dissatisfaction, perhaps agitation, in her practice. She tells me that feelings such as agitation might be “a sign that you are entering unknown territory, which could be a good thing, or uncomfortable territory, or that the demons are rising.” I laugh, and she continues, “And the demons always show up early on, and they just need to be scared away,” she looks into the distance and holds her body very still. Then she quips: “or defied.” I laugh, and for a fraction of a second, I see a tiny smile at the corners of her mouth. She completes her thought: “Or invited! You know?” She shrugs and looks down. Her smile is faint, but it lingers (31 August 2016).

In a subsequent conversation I ask Melanie about those demons again and she tells me, “They stack up at the front” (2 May 2018). Her answer provokes a big laugh from me. She continues: “I don’t usually start with a fight. The fight comes in, sets in, about one third of the way through, and as I always say, the demons stack up at the beginning.” I laugh more, and she keeps going: “You have to break through those and get going.” Melanie takes a big breath and exhales, then continues: “But the fighting is really what I call dealing with self-doubt. As I said, it’s not that I have any misgivings about my passion for dance — that’s unrelenting — but sometimes, even though I can think that I have the talent and the resources, I have some doubts about what I’m doing [and whether] it’s working or not working.” As her listener, I make a little hum sound. Lastly, she adds: “I’m also fighting when I want something and I’m not getting it” (2 May 2018). Again, all I can do is hum and feel a compassionate resonance. Demons appear. Often.

Luis Lara Malvacías: Keeping Work Alive

When I ask Luis if he has ever doubted his practice, his response is forthright and direct. He writes: “Yes. I have doubted my practice especially after the creation of a large production or the performance of one of my works, or after an exhausting rehearsal that didn’t go well. I have questioned some of my ways of presenting and producing, and my aesthetic” (1 September 2016). But he sees doubt has having value, saying it is “an important part of my practice.” Luis doesn’t allow himself to become fixed in his ways of creating. He explains: “Since I don’t believe in masterpieces or styles, two definitions that I see as very dangerous, doubting keeps my work alive.” The aliveness through doubt supports his efforts as a practitioner: “I work with a lot of conviction in my practice. Rather than seeing doubt as a negative feeling about my work and myself, it always helps me to find something that is satisfying” (1 September 2016).

K.J. Holmes: Good Doubt

Like Melanie, K.J. repeats my question back to me: “Have I ever doubted it?” She looks upward and pauses. “I think so, yeah. I mean, I think,” she pauses again, then continues, “but not in a way, I mean I believe that doubt is a really good tool” (8 September 2016). As a mature professional, she makes an interesting distinction between kinds of doubt, pointing to “a doubt that is necessary towards the work itself, revealing itself, or if it’s a doubt based on social beliefs in one’s work.” She is referring to a kind of doubt that is a result of concerns within the social body of a professional field, worries that cause doubt, such as “who is popular and who’s not in the world of performance” or “who is going to get the funding and not get the funding.” She tells me this kind of doubt

is “not so good.” Her maturity shows again when she states: “But doubt within your work, regardless of how it’s seen, I think is really good.” She nods her head, as if agreeing with herself. “It’s a phase of devising and developing” (8 September 2016). I tell her it is a beautiful distinction, a mature distinction, and she nods her head again.

Kathleen Fisher: No Reason to Doubt

Kathleen takes her time after I ask her about doubting her practice. She widens her eyes, then closes them. She opens them and looks upward and away and presses her lips together and makes a soft sound: “Hmmm.” She asks me: “The practice?” I say, “Yes.” She says: “I’ve doubted myself, certainly” (12 September 2016). I repeat the question: Have ever doubted your *practice*? She answers: “I don’t think so. No.” She adds a bit more: “I will say that there are times when I give up a practice — I’m just done with that. I’m done with it. And that happens. But that doesn’t happen from a sense of doubt in the practice or the utility or anything. I’m just done with it. And I’m doing something else. So, no, I actually cannot think of a time when I’ve doubted the practice.” Kathleen’s clarity makes her easy to believe. She adds: “Even when I realize I’m going to stop a practice, it’s not out of doubt . . . I have no reason to doubt” (12 September 2016).

Roxanne Steinberg: Doubting Choices Made

I ask Roxanne: Have you ever doubted your practice? Her answer is a quick burst: “Always! Yeah! Yeah!” (29 May 2016). We both laugh. She tells me: “I always think that somebody else is probably doing a lot better than me!” We laugh more. “Because of my inability to say, ‘This is the best way’ or I’m going to stick with this’.” We are still laughing. Roxanne continues telling it: “I’m always changing! Well, if I had just stuck

with that for a long time . . . yeah, it's a real watery way." We are both laughing to the degree that we border on losing all composure, and I wonder why? Why is this funny? It *feels* funny. Something is provoked in both of us. Roxanne continues: "It's just that I am unwilling to say, 'Oh, that's the best way, I'm going to stick with it'." I offer her a comment: And yet you persist! And she answers, laughing: "Right! I still try! I wake up every day and I try again! (29 May 2016). Are we laughing because we can so easily accept the role of being the object of the joke? What is the joke? Is it that we keep making the effort, keep getting up in the morning, even when we doubt our efforts will ever meet the mark of excellence and acceptance? Do we doubt that we can fully realize the immensely daunting job of being an artist? Maybe we have humor to soften the marks that doubt etches on the inside of practice.

Melinda Ring: Uncertainty

Melinda is also quick to answer my question about doubt: "Oh yeah" (19 May 2016). We both laugh. She tells me about "the early doubting" in childhood ballet class. It is a funny story, but it has a worrisome edge. She laughs, but she also talks about fear: "Yeah. Yeah, definitely. I think it's quite scary." She points to "living in this realm of the intangibles" as a potentially "scary" place, having chosen to be an artist. She admits, "I know it's so impractical . . . what I'm saying is that dance itself, as a pursuit is, you know, the kind of choreography," she interrupts herself, then starts again: "To be an artist is very uncertain and is not practical." I tell her, "There is no good reason to stop being the artist you are." She responds, Yeah, I mean, the other thing is fear." I ask: "Fear of . . .?" She laughs: "Fear of living in your car!" (19 May 2016). It is a worst-case scenario. It

is funny, but it is not funny. Uncertainty appears to sometimes reside very close to both the inside and outside of Melinda's artist's practice.

Claire Filmon: The Tea You Prefer

When I ask Claire about doubt, she smiles. When she speaks, her words offer a mixture of pain and humor: "You know, I went thought SO MANY things that it's very hard for me to remember everything" (9 May 2016). Claire has been at the brink of putting an end to her dance career many times, exacerbated by doubt. She explains that often the doubt was linked not so much to her practice, but to whether or not she was getting offers for work: She tells me: "When nobody was proposing a job for me for nine months, you know, I just said, 'You are not good. You don't need a practice anymore. You're not good! Stop!'" She laughs in telling me these things, but it is a painful laugh. Looking back at her career, Claire can see: "I had more doubt about the *result* of the practice than of the practice." But at this point in her life, Claire's maturity supports her; she knows that the practice itself is rewarding and can be satisfying even if others don't support her work. She makes an analogy: "It's like a good taste. You choose a good wine, you choose good tea. But everybody doesn't choose the same tea. But this is the tea you like, and you know it" (9 May 2016).

Kara Jhalak Miller: Never!

In a telephone conversation I ask Kara if she has ever doubted her practice. Her response is like a waterfall: energetic, brightly reflective, cascading. She says, "No! Never! Never, never, never, never!" (21 October 2017). We laugh, and she tells me: "I've

doubted the rest of the world, but I've never doubted my practice. Not once. And I can say that without a doubt!" (21 October 2017). We laugh again. Laughing is good.

Holding the Line: The Nine Plus One Voice

She wakes up at intervals in the night. Through the bedroom window she sees the progression of the bright sphere moving silently across the sky. There is an illusion of stillness, but she knows an arc of movement is there, in the orbit. Every time she wakes, the shining globe is in a new location. Her eyes become heavy, sleep takes her, but she wants to wake up and see the path clearly. The whole path! The line! It is a line in space and time! In her dreams she sees it. She reaches for it, stretching, digging her fingers into the celestial matter and holding on to the generational thread. In the morning, she remembers being pulled.

A Finding: Lineage is Not a Straight Line

Lineage in the arts implies successive generations of teachers, students, and professional practitioners who follow within recognizable parameters of certain kinds of making and doing. Lineage becomes eclectic when someone or something unexpectedly arrives. A teacher who doesn't seem to belong in a discipline or style or aesthetic becomes important in an unforeseen way, bringing new ideas that reshape the contours of the generational links. Looking back through time, perhaps one can spot an irregularity, an expansion, a twist, a turn, a stretch, a knot, perhaps a fissure made by the unexpected guide, the outsider, the influencer who stepped in and gave new options for the expression of heritage. Lineage is not a straight line.

As mentioned throughout this dissertation text, the artist-participants have connections to teachers who came to prominence in the Judson era or in the same time frame in other avant-garde communities. The mentors and teachers were, and still are, instigators, rebels, and experimenters who continue their practices as inspirational creative figures in the fields of dance, experimental choreography and performance, improvisation, and movement research. However, the artist-participants have also spoken deeply about additional mentors who are not in the field of dance and who influence them in indelible ways. In what follows, I highlight three artist-participants' accounts of mentors outside of dance who affect them significantly. I choose to do this because the adoption of mentor figures outside the discipline of dance exemplifies a willingness to expand the parameters of practice, resulting in broader eclecticism.

Michael Sakamoto and Rachel Rosenthal

When I talk with Michael about his widely eclectic and accomplished practice that includes professional expertise in photography, film, media art, performance, and writing, I offer the understatement that his practice has big scope. Michael nods his head and answers with a soft "Yep." I ask him if he had a model for such breadth and depth. He nods and says, "Yep. Rachel." He means Rachel Rosenthal, an extraordinary artist, a European emigre who spent time in New York before relocating to Los Angeles in the fifties. Rachel stands out as a pioneering figure in performance art and the development of a collaborative, integrated, interdisciplinary approach to movement-theater. Michael tells me that he met Rachel when she hired him as a film maker to create a video mini-documentary about a project she was working on. He notes that working with Rachel so

closely within an intensive time period “allowed me to really see her intellectual process as well as her directorial process, And, of course, her approach as a performer, herself, as well” (22 June 2016). Michael is clear is crediting Rachel as having an important hand in his own practice: “Rachel is, was, is still, my model, in a lot of ways. First of all, she was an autodidact.” He clarifies: “I mean, she had some of the most amazing teachers of the 20th century in western modern and early postmodern art, and with whom she worked very closely, but ultimately, she was very self-taught. She had a way of delving deeply into any subject she was interested in.” Rachel’s ways of working were a good match for Michael. He knew, “from the very beginning of my experience, to that intimate exposure to the world of performance, how important it was for all of that to be integrated. It really resonated with me. I am an intellectual, and I am reflective, and I am visual, as so was she” (22 June 2016). Inspired by Rachel, Michael made his initial forays into being a theatrical stage performer as a member of her performance ensemble, working with her from 1995 to 2000.

I make the connection that at least part of Michael’s own practice of questioning comes from Rachel. He says it like this: “I still, to this day, ask myself the same questions that she would ask us, and, I assume, ask herself. You know? Like what is my body? What is happening to my body here? Who is being affected by this? And she always told me, ‘there are no mistakes. There is only bad follow-through’” (22 June 2016). He laughs. Michael still adheres to Rachel’s principles, “not just onstage, not just in performance, but in terms of thinking as well, and when I’m writing.” When he questions himself in his practice, Michael’s inquiry is deeply connected to process and

integrity, producing work with well investigated wholeness. As a person and artist, he credits this aspect of his practice to Rachel, his mentor. He smiles when he tells me about catching himself in his questioning mode: “It’s like Rachel is saying: ‘There are no mistakes, there is only bad follow-through!’ Like it rings in my head. . . .So she’s still teaching me, you know?” (22 June 2016).

Melinda Ring and Paul McCarthy

When I ask Melinda if she had any mentors when she was developing her professional practice, she tells me, “One of the things that is kind of a big role model for me was that I worked with the artist Paul McCarthy in a few of his films. He started as a performance artist and became very interested in the process of documenting work” (19 May 2016). What captivated Melinda was the interconnectedness of McCarthy’s materials, process, and progression of creation. She tells it this way: “He started to then make video projects that were basically set up as a performative situation and then shoot that. And then that would become an installation; the video would become an installation piece.” The influence, for Melinda, of the idea of the history of the making of a work becoming the work itself, shows in her remarkably integrated live performance and installation project called *Forgetful Snow*, premiered in 2014. As a participant in McCarthy’s films, Melinda notes his research interest in the messiness of everyday activities, and how those activities might then become shaped as art. This aesthetic resonates with Melinda, as well as what she names as a “lack of [conventional] boundaries about when you were ‘working’ and when you weren’t ‘working,’ and what that freedom of that work might mean” (19 May 2016).

McCarthy's large and imaginative scope as an artist is appealing and inspiring to Melinda, affecting the way she works as an artist. She tells me, "Paul is a really BIG thinker, and a kind of thinker, and he's really influenced me, being around him has really influenced me." Knowing McCarthy has also opened doors to situations and locations in which Melinda can show her work. She gives an example: "Knowing him, has allowed me to enter, like my work, *Forgetful Snow*, was shown at the Box Gallery, which is a commercial gallery, and so it's also allowing me to think about the possibility . . . for sustaining [one's work] outside of the system that everybody is trying to operate within." As Melinda's listener, I can sense the resonance of her connection to avant-gardist McCarthy. I observe her to be genuinely unconventional and free in her conception of what dance and performance can be. I follow her logic in naming McCarthy as the model for "being the artist you wish to be, you should be, you should wish to be" (19 May 2016).

Melanie Ríos Glaser and Paul Bowles

In talking with me about her freelance dance years after graduating from The Juilliard School and before taking the job as the artistic director at The Wooden Floor, Melanie tells me about meeting writer Paul Bowles, the author of *The Sheltering Sky*, in north Africa. She met Bowles through her partner at that time, Guatemalan writer Rodrigo Rey Rosa, who is "the heir" to Bowles as a writer. Melanie describes: "So Paul Bowles was often called the father of the Beat Generation. And I think he's faded in the past, his legacy was faded, but he was kind of a cult figure for a lot of writers" (31 August 2016). During regular trips to Morocco, Melanie and Rey Rosa often visited

Bowles: “I spent many afternoons with him during my months in Tangier over tea with my partner. He often got mail from Gore Vidal or Leonard Bernstein; he had worked with Merce Cunningham, Salvador Dalí. He was like a gateway into modernism.” Instilled in Melanie was an admiration for Bowles’s ability to be in the present moment. She says it like this: “What was amazing about him was that he was always current. He had never seen a washing machine, but he was always current! And he always had this curiosity and open-mindedness about what was happening in the world of the arts. And that was very inspiring” (31 August 2016). Melanie carries this model of a commitment to staying current within her own values as an artist, and in her choice to make improvisation — creation in the timeless, always present moment — the center of her practice.

A Finding: The Unpredictable Practitioner

Using examples of less obvious mentors coming from practices outside of dance who influence Michael, Melinda, and Melanie, I invite the reader to question with me: Are the participants in this dissertation broad thinkers by nature, thus making eclecticism a natural choice and their interest in mentors from other disciplines an understandable attraction? Or does having a mentor with an eclectic practice in a different discipline encourage the dance artist to develop breadth, scope, and expertise outside of dance? Or, are both situations at work together within the artists’ practices?

Here, I point to the unpredictable practitioner, the artist who moves from internal impulses beyond known parameters and sheds a more common need for mentoring from the field for the sake of experiencing something outside the norm, something subtle, less obvious, satisfying a different sort of inquiry. Perhaps this deviation influences a line of

breakage in an existing field. Or, perhaps the idea of a *line* is what needs to be re-imagined. In interviews with the research participants, the topic of *lineage*, as a concept, sometimes emerges, however, the topic of people and practice itself appears much more often and with great warmth.

As their listener, I begin to sense *lineage* as the warmth of figures (human and non-human), not a line. Lineage shifts and becomes a living force, with moving figures in free-form space, not a straight line, not taut, not tight. Lineage can be crooked, slack, hidden, intermittent, broken, non-existent. Lineage can be illusive. Lineage could be dominant, overpowering, stifling. But when the line is transformed into figures, like old things from nested storage, unfolding limbs and taking form when touched, there is an interaction, alchemy, transformation, and innovation within a discipline, brought about by the practitioner who is not predictable, who could not have been foreseen, even to herself.

From my experience as a mover, artist, and observer of people, I propose that human beings — and perhaps most life forms — are naturally eclectic, resourceful, and canny creatures who use a breadth of strategies and skills that facilitate life beyond simply surviving. Through ideation and imagination, qualitative changes in aliveness raise the register of existence. Within this grand register, certainly an awareness of existence is part of a cosmic contemplation. Living creatures continue to innovate and pass information and inspiration to each other through time. In terms of dancers and dance makers in this dissertation who came into their professional dance lives after the Judson era and who had varying degrees of contact with people and ideas from that time, perhaps the most salient features inherited from those avant-gardists is an impressive

willingness to be an experimenter, to assume complete artistic autonomy, and create artist-researcher practices. The participants in this dissertation are perfectly willing to be themselves. They have and continue to make choices that expand ideas of what it means to be a “choreographer” or a “dancer,” or even an “artist,” as they enrich a lineage of innovation. They are improvisers in a practice of life. Thus, as a feature of practice, improvisation, too, is a powerfully salient feature of practice they have “inherited” from their iconoclastic forebears. Improvisation is how they live.

Finding, at Last, the Tiny Human Being Within

Here, nearing the end, I invite the reader back to the beginning. Imagine seeing the emergence of a tiny creature filled with needs and curiosities, creeping and crawling, developing trust and doubt. The tiny self is voraciously hungry, grabbing and consuming, instinctively eclectic in the discovery of affordances, tools, and all manner of *doing*. Investigations abound; the tiny human assembles worlds, is impulsive and imaginative, destructive and creative. The young creature exists with a ruthless appetite for life, learning to navigate through layers of internal thought and external action. This little self makes a world. (Every little self makes a world.) What is it *like*? What is it like to be a self in a world of one’s making? In what follows, the reader and I are offered unique views of the interior of practice from the artist-participants, as they speak from locations around the world, sharing and describing who they are.

Claire Filmon

From her home in Paris, France, via a Skype video call, Claire tells me, “It’s very hard to be *you*. Because when you make this decision, there are many things going on, so

to be deep with *you* is difficult. So this practice asks me to go there, and there is so much that is challenging” (9 May 2016). Claire is talking about the challenges in her practice of improvisation as an immediate, real-time composition in performance. To be herself while inside her practice means she creates while an audience watches her. She needs stability and depth simultaneously. Claire shares an example of her own interior bodily measure of what is happening, and what that is like. She uses the analogy of being a musical instrument. She says it this way: “For me, you are like a skin, like an instrument of music. If there is too much wind, you come back, the practice is to come back to the core, and from that, you vibrate. That’s the practice. To be *you*” (9 May 2016).

Kathleen Fisher

Talking with Kathleen in her home on Bimini Island in the Bahamas through a Skype video call, I ask her: What is it like to be you in practice? She answers: “Ha! That’s almost — how can I answer that?” (12 September 2016). We both laugh, and she keeps going: “I don’t know! I’m me. You see the problem?” She laughs heartily. “How could I ever see that? Being as I am me!” Her laughter is wonderfully free. We both give into hilarity. She starts up again: “That’s a very difficult perspective!” I try to help stabilize the conversation by repeating the question: Well, what is it like to be you? What’s it like in there? Kathleen throws the question back to me: “What’s it like in there?” Smiling, she leans into the camera’s eye on her laptop to produce a close-up of her face. She puts her hands on her cheeks and yells at the screen: “IT’S CRAZY IN HERE!” She leans back from the computer screen and lets go of a huge laugh. We just let the laughter roll. She says, “I have no comparison! I don’t know how to talk about what

it's like to be me in my practice!" Gradually, her demeanor settles and she tells me she is actually "one of the most calm" people, "but then — it's crazy!" Ultimately (and beautifully), she states, "It's very rich to be me" (12 September 2016). She smiles, and I do too.

K.J. Holmes

In a late-night Skype video conversation with K.J. in Brooklyn, New York, I ask her what it is like to be herself in practice. She responds: "Ooo, that's hard. I don't know!" (8 September 2016). She repeats the question back to me: "What's it like to be me in my practice?" She smiles. "Um," she looks upward and pauses, then describes, "I think I'm very committed and very," she pauses again, "trusting. I think I set up environments, like as a director, I set up environments that," she pauses, "will go. We'll just do it!" She continues: "I think I have a real capacity for experimenting and I can be very intense." She smiles. "And I can also be very," she pauses for a moment, then finishes, "generous." She talks to me about setting up projects that ask a lot of the performers. "I have performers I know I can push, and they can push back. So I think I create an environment of really going somewhere." I tell her that takes confidence. She responds: "I think so. And maybe that is from having a long-time practice" (8 September 2016). Listening to her, I would agree.

Luis Lara Malvacías

Luis writes: "Being Me in my practice is being 'Me-Self': an artist interested in spending time thinking about the multiple possibilities of creating work that can challenge my own ideas, aesthetic and expectations when creating movement-based work

with a multidisciplinary approach” (1 September 2016). His writing is beautifully thoughtful, complete, and modest. He continues: “I like to believe that Me-self in my practice is an entity that takes risks and who embraces the unknown. Most of the time, unfortunately, I don’t think I succeed, but I take that as well as part of the learning and creation process.” It appears to me that Luis’s studio time is a refuge, and perhaps he is most himself when there, inside practice. He writes: “When I am in the studio, I play with both the consciousness and sub-unconsciousness, especially when creating movement materials and making aesthetic choices.” Later in his writing he says, simply: “For me, just the act of being in the studio is a pleasure at any given time” (1 September 2016). I can read the truth of that pleasure in his words.

Kara Jhalak Miller

In her home in Honolulu, Hawaii, Kara smiles, then looks away in the distance. She repeats my question softly back to me, audible through our Skype video call. She says, “What is it like to be me in practice?” (16 May 2016). She pauses, then responds: “Well, I would say, what is it like to be you?” I burst out laughing and Kara laughs too. She starts to speak again, “Umm . . .” Her gaze is soft and distant. She pauses for a few moments, then says, “I think there is no separation from me with you. You are everything that’s around me.” Kara closes her eyes and tips her head downward. From that position she speaks again: “Everything that’s inside of me. You are constantly, constantly breathing, constantly alive.” She opens her eyes and tilts her head upward with her gaze in the distance, then brings her head to a level position. “What I experience,” she touches her heart, “for me, is that, just,” she lets her hand fall away from her heart. “What is it

like to be me? I feel very joyful.” She says this very softly with her eyes closed: “I really experience a lot of supreme joy and I’m so grateful to have the practice of dance in my life. I’m so, so grateful for that. Time and time again, it returns me to fullness” (16 May 2016).

Melinda Ring

Conversing in person in an office space at the University of California, World Arts and Culture Department in Los Angeles, I ask Melinda: “What is it like to be *you* in practice?” (19 May 2016). Melinda laughs. She turns her head to the left and touches the back of her head with her right hand. “Hmm.” She is still not answering. “Um. Oh.” She throws her head back and laughs, then says, “So many negative things are actually coming to mind!” She rests her forehead in her right hand and continues to laugh, then straightens her posture. “My friends would tease me or be frustrated at me for being so controlling and dictatorial.” She laughs more. “I’m kind of torn in my practice because I can be like, very specific in what I want, but yet I really want other people to be bringing me things too, to enter into the work. So I feel very torn, like alternately, be kind of generous and kind of not generous.” We both laugh at this description. She looks away and exhales. Starts to speak again and admits: “It feels GOOD!” We laugh more. She continues, “I feel happy right now. I feel very happy right now. Because, at this moment — I don’t know if this is in my practice or not in my practice — but I feel in a good place” (19 May 2016). She pauses for a few moments, then describes more: “If I want something, I feel that I can ask for it. If I don’t understand something I feel like I know how to get myself there. If I’m in a corner I know how to get out of that corner. I feel like

I have a lot of tools. And that I'm using a lot. I'm using all those tools and they're coming into play in a very full way. And I feel very excited." She exhales, then continues: "I can open my brain, and be open to something. Now I can consider more. I don't have to say yes, but I don't immediately have to say no. It feels more expansive" (19 May 2016). We don't laugh at this. We just sit together and let the silence expand. I notice I feel happy for Melinda.

Melanie Ríos Glaser

Sitting together at her dining room table in Southern California, Melanie softly repeats my question: "What's it like to be me? Um. I'm mischievous" (31 August 2016). I believe her, and I laugh. "I'm defiant." I laugh again and believe her more. She surprises me with: "Sometimes I nurse resentments." She adds: "I'm calm." Later in our conversation, I return to the topic, and she tells me there is "a hole in my heart," from missing her native Guatemala. Sensing there is more to learn and hear, I ask Melanie what practice gives her, as a way to hear more about what it is like to be her. There is a change in the strength of her participation in the conversation when she begins to speak about her practice instead of herself. She is passionate: "The depth in practice — it's not a superficial undertaking. It's not an intellectual, necessarily, undertaking. It is a real coming together of body, mind, and soul. You create intimacy with others that does not come through words." She explains that improvisation with others as a practice "is a special kind of relationship born of a connection with, or being in, communion with others through movement," that for her, "unleashes the belief that it knows what to do." I ponder what "it" refers to and think maybe "it" is the either the relationship with another

mover, or her own body, both of which could take on a quality of knowing what to do. I can feel Melanie's values as she talks about practice. She pauses for a long time, then audibly inhales and speaks again: "In fact, I strongly believe that the world is much poorer for the lack of artistic practice in almost everybody else's life. I think there should be some form of artistic manifestation that is rooted in mankind. She amends her statement by saying: "Womankind" (31 August 2016). I sit quietly in agreement.

Michael Sakamoto

I ask Michael if he can describe aspects of his interiority within his practice as we converse via a Skype video connection between Los Angeles and Chiang Mai, Thailand. I ask him what it is like to be himself inside his practice and if there *is* an "inside." He is very humorous and talks about an internal register of sound in his practice. As his listener, I interpret the feature of sound or chatter in his practice as an expression of his high energy and appetite for doing many things at once. I observe him to have a busy nature. Using a different strategy to learn a bit more about his interior sense of self, I ask him what his practice gives him. He responds, "Humm." He looks away and upward. He rests his right hand across his chin and the side of his mouth. Then he inhales and shifts his body position a bit forward and releases his hand from his face. He exhales and says, "It gives me a reason to live" (22 June 2016). He centers his gaze, then looks up. "It's the best way that I know how to be a part of the world." I think it is a beautiful statement, simple and powerful. I listen more as he continues: "When I say that, what I mean is it's the healthiest, most embodied, activated, engaged, and empowered way for me to have a healthy and productive and generative, and, I guess — I hope — in the best moments,

benevolent give and take relationship with all the people around me.” He adds, “and the non-people things, the entities, the planet around me.” Michael pauses, then adds more: “It’s my way of thinking through to something else, a way for me to constantly and more deeply”— here, he laughs softly, then continues — “realize, not only is it not about me, but it’s not even about me and the people around me. It’s not even about all of us. It just *is*” (22 June 2016).

Roxanne Steinberg

When I ask Roxanne what it is like to be her in her practice, she laughs and says, “That’s a hard question!” (29 May 2016). We are sitting together in her home in Venice, Los Angeles. She takes time to think about her answer. When she speaks, her voice is gentle: “Yeah, it’s funny, because you don’t want to feel too much of *you* — or I don’t want to feel too much of me. You know, the imposition of being,” she pauses, then continues, “I’m trying to say, a girl, a woman, with a long braid. I’m feeling ambivalence, sometimes wanting to move, sometimes not wanting to move, sometimes being light, sometimes not being able to pick myself up. You know, the physical body.” She tells me about recently finding herself in a bodily position in the studio that reminded her of a dance she learned as repertory years ago. “And I loved doing it. I was really connected deeply to that. So, I was thinking, ‘This is why I dance. Because I love articulating this body. It’s me.’” She smiles, then continues: “And there is a joy in that. There is a joy in sharing that as a performer and as a teacher. It’s what propels me from one movement to the next.” Roxanne smiles and adds more: “I was thinking what a

tremendous gift it is to be able to have a body that I enjoy moving in” (29 May 2016).

Roxanne is quiet. The humble truth of what she says rests between us.

Before Concluding, What Else Is Needed?

In the finishing stage of this dissertation, I wake one morning with the thought: What else is needed? I remember artist-participant Melinda Ring using the phrase as something she learned in her early adult years about choreographic process from West Coast modern dancer and choreographer, Bella Lewitzky. I look back through our interview transcript and find it. Melinda says: “I just was talking to this student, explaining that thing that I said about Bella, and I was explaining some other thing that I always say to myself, that she actually said. This thing that I always say is: ‘What else is needed?’ when I am looking at the work. I ask myself: ‘What else is needed?’” (19 May 2016).

Thinking about the question of what else is needed, I notice I feel happy in some inexplicable way, even though I do not know what else is needed in this dissertation. I decide the happiness comes from connections with artists about whom I care — in this case, Melinda and Bella — and truths that appear and delight the recipient, even though the truths themselves, as well as the people, are inevitably and ultimately impermanent. For me as a choreographer, another way of asking “What else is needed?” is to consider: “Is there wholeness in what has been crafted?” My answer is yes — and — wholeness can still have holes. Concluding must happen in order to complete a form, and conclusions will, no doubt, have holes and flaws that keep the form open for further contemplation. It is a “truth” that makes me laugh and reminds me of the purposeful

flaws that Japanese clay artists embed in raku bowls. The bowls are constructed by hand, modest in style, intended for humble everyday use, and contain flaws that add to the beauty.

Here, in my non-linear dancing toward a conclusion of sorts, my thoughts move to the ideas of holes in the universe, acceptance of flaws and imperfections in life, and letting go of what is not needed. The shadow topic appears to be *the unknown*, which, as the writer, I am smart enough to understand is an inner directive to end the endeavor and fall freely into a space of not knowing what is next. My thoughts turn to my interview conversation with artist-participant K.J. Holmes, in which she tells me about a long-term choreography and performance project she calls HC SVANT DRACONES. The title is Latin for “here, be dragons,” referring to the monsters drawn in the corners of early maps as a signal from the cartographer that the edge of the flat ocean is there, and to continue would be to fall into a deadly unknown. K.J. refers to “terra incognita” — the unknown land — and states her preference for “dropping into uncertainty” as well as looking into parts of one’s self that may appear to be a dragon but turn out to be something quite different (8 September 2016). The unknown provides unexpected gifts, like an abalone shell thrown onto the shore by a wave or a deer skull left in a patch of green moss in the forest. Here, my thoughts move to something artist-participant Roxanne Steinberg said that seems to best conclude, or, at least, provide a parting gift that is indelible for the reader, the writer, and the participants. Roxanne uses both hands to brush her hair away from her face, then gracefully continues the gesture downward until both hands rest at her heart. She tells me, “I think what I bring to practice is being able to connect as a dancer,

being able to connect to the place in one that dances, and to take something from movement — just movement — and appreciate it as dance” (29 May 2016).

I appreciate Roxanne’s thoughts, just as I do with the thoughts shared by Claire, Kathleen, K.J., Luis, Kara, Melinda, Melanie, and Michael. I receive their stories and insights as gifts that illuminate and enrich the pages of this text. I ponder: Where is *the place in one that dances*? I propose that it is inside, it is outside, it is in a place without boundaries.

Thinking of endings and what is yet to come, I recall an essay authored by artist and writer Allan Kaprow, an originator of Happenings in the 1960s, a founding faculty member of CalArts in the 1970s, and an essayist about experimental art and the everyday, before, during, and after the Judson era. In the final page of his essay, Kaprow offers a prediction of sorts for avant-gardists of the future. Although Kaprow was offering his prediction to the emergent artists of the 1960s, I think it has value for the eclectic experimental artists of today. What follows is simply an excerpt, offered as a possible truth: “Young artists of today need no longer say, ‘I am a painter’ or ‘a poet’ or ‘a dancer.’ They are simply artists. All of life will be open to them” (Kaprow 9).

I invite the reader into the notion that life is open to the artist-participants who grace this dissertation because they are brave and trusting enough, curious, too, in their investment in manifesting creative lives through an unwavering commitment to one’s practice in the everyday, creature-filled world, in motion.

Finding a Goodbye: The Reader and the Writer

Dear reader, if you have made it this far in this dissertation, I am smiling. Thank you for accepting my invitations. Thank you for allowing me the privilege of exercising a process of questioning and engaging imagination and artistic instincts as methods for sorting through the inquiry. The notion may seem paradoxical that imagination might lend a hand in research, but as an artist I know imagination as a direct route for accessing a body-mind measure of plausibility in forming responses to deep questions. When I ask: What is it *like*? What does it *feel* like? Where is the *inclination*? Where is the gravitational *pull*? What does it *sound* like? What are the *qualities*? my body and imagination work together to offer possible routes to answers. What about the reader's body? My aim is to write imaginatively enough that I might engage the reader's body in the narratives. I trust that the reader and I combine as a force for contemplating ideas and sharing a measure of aliveness within a text, each from a unique stance.

Here, in this very moment, the reader and the writer have another chance to play, to touch imagination, to experience the vast ground of interiority as we read and think. I propose that readers and writers cannot live without play and imagination as parts of the practice of engaging with a text. Play is focused, play has ease. The combination of focus and ease supports a stance of alert readiness. An improviser, a performer, a martial artist, a meditator, a researcher, a listener, a writer, a reader could adopt this stance as foundational. From the ground of focus and ease, a practitioner could let go of what is being held, loosen what is rigid, dissolve what is assumed. Imagine it: Letting go! Let go of everything! Researcher: Let go of knowing! Reader: Let go of understanding! Listener:

Let go of hearing! Writer: Let go of words! Dancer: Let go of the body! Moon: Let go of the sky! Horse: Let go of the rider! Ocean: Let go of the shell! Forest: Let go of the deer! (Letting go is a fulltime practice.) In letting go, the body-mind is unleashed and can become perfectly itself. Then it lets go of that too. All of the above relies, in part, on imagination and curiosity about what is not known — the *what if* in life, art, and research.

Soon the reader and I will let go of our work together. In just a page or two more, we can complete our contract of communication. Perhaps, as the reader and writer, we could be sad to leave our roles. But the materials we encounter in this endeavor, the great collective existential matter of stories, truths, fabrications, questions, and answers are free to go into the vast interiors of living beings who encounter the information, serving to fuel the animated aliveness we might call *movement*, perhaps *dance*, maybe *stories*, and probably *life*.

Being Found

The fictitious character, the Nine Plus One Voice, came to me of her own accord and befriended me throughout the writing of this dissertation. Sometimes she embodies my younger self in episodes that really happened (the horse, the deer skull, the abalone shell, the handsprings in the weeds at twilight, the pyramid, to name a few), while sometimes she moves through invented scenes, a little show-off trying to express a particular feeling or movement in the body. At all times she has been my writing assistant, taking over when my mind feels weak. She amuses me — what an enormous attribute! She cajoles and cheers me to the finish line. Gratitude, with every breath, is

what I feel toward the Nine Plus One Voice. I admire her pluck, her prancing spirit, her vigor, her youth, and her ability to be perfectly herself. I am glad I met her.

The Last Time: The Nine Plus One Voice

She is old now. She moves slowly, transferring her weight carefully through hip sockets that are fragile and knees that make noises when she bends. She can no longer run or jump. Her companions have transitioned and disappeared; the mother out of whose body she emerged like a little otter has died. But her joy in being embodied and experiencing life on the little planet is undiminished. To be in the world, to know the presence of other creatures and share an animated continuity in kind, to feel free at the edge of wildness, to have fullness, and to dance — all this is to enact, wholeheartedly, the pleasure of practicing life. It is enough. And now she is gone.

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APPENDIX A

Photographs of the Artist-Participants

CLAIRE FILMON

Claire performing
her own choreography,
Ombres, in Kocise,
Slovakia.



Claire performing with
Simone Forti at MOCA,
Los Angeles,
January 23, 2011.
Photo by Mark
Woodworth.

Claire performing
*Sleep Walkers/Zoo
Mantras* by Simone
Forti. Photo by
Masiar Pasquali, at
The Milano Museo
Del Novecento,
Milano, Italy,
September 2017.



Photos used with permission.

KATHLEEN FISHER



Kathleen with Trisha Brown, in Brown's *Set and ReSet*.
Photo by Chris Callis/Trisha Brown Company.



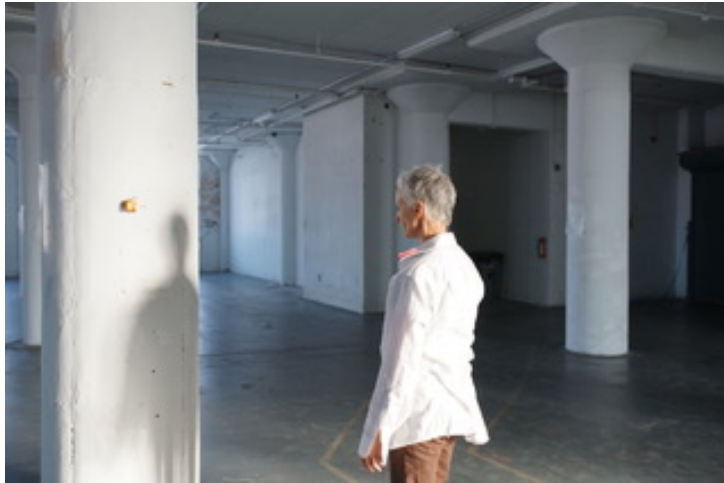
Kathleen airborne in
choreography by Bebe
Miller, *Landing Place*.
Photo by Lois Greenfield.



Kathleen improvising with wild
dolphins in ocean waters off the
Bahamas. Photo by Benjamin
Harley, *Dolphin Dance Project*.

Photos used with permission.

K.J. HOLMES



K.J. in performance.
Photo by Ian Douglas.



K.J. on the beach
in Nova Scotia,
summer 2019.
Self-portrait.



K.J. in performance. Photo
by William Glasspiegel.

Photos used with permission.

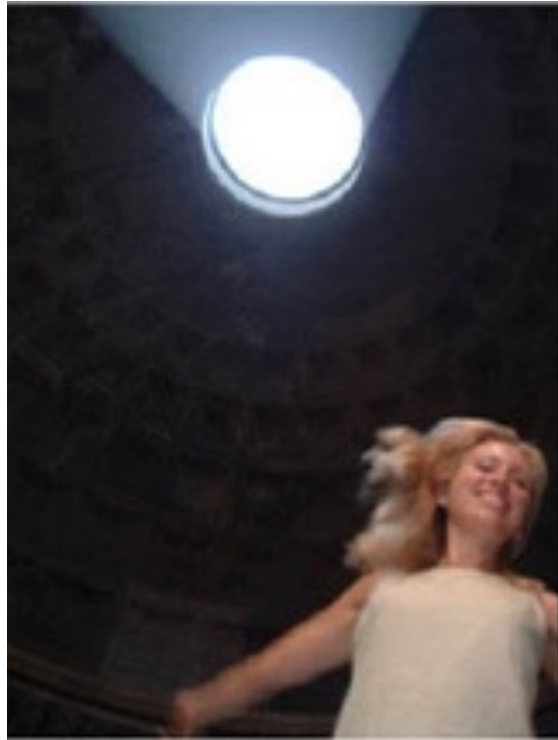
LUIS LARA MALVACÍAS

Luis in performance. Photos by Theo Cote.



Photos used with permission.

KARA JHALAK MILLER



Kara in Rome at the Pantheon.
Photo by Larry Asakawa.



Kara at work in
Tijuana, Mexico.
Photo by Minerva
Tapia.

Photos used with permission.

MELINDA RING

Melinda, Whitney Biennial artist, for *Mouse Auditions*, a video, (2010), Whitney Museum of American Art. Photo by Paula Court



Photo by John Bellucci, *The Box, for the birds* (2009).



Portrait of Melinda by Howard Silver.

Photos used with permission.

MELANIE RÍOS GLASER



Portrait of Melanie by Johnny Hernandez.

Melanie in motion. Photo by Omar Galvez.



Melanie in performance at the REDCAT, downtown Los Angeles.
Photo by Stephen Gunther

Photos used with permission.

MICHAEL SAKAMOTO



Michael.
Photo by
Cedric Arnold.

Michael.
Self-portrait.



Photos used with permission.

ROXANNE STEINBERG



Roxanne in
Performance.
Photo by
Sally Stein.



Roxanne in
performance.
Photo by
Moses
Hacmon.

Photos used with permission.

APPENDIX B

TWU Institutional Review Board Letters



Institutional Review Board

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619 940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu <http://www.twu.edu/irb.html>

DATE: October 21, 2015

TO: Loretta Livingston Dance

FROM: Institutional Review Board (IRB) - Denton

Re: Approval for The Pleasure of Enactment: Eclectic Artist Practices of Dancers and Dance Makers following the Judson Era (Protocol #: 18464)

The above referenced study has been reviewed and approved by the Denton IRB (operating under FWA00000178) on 10/21/2015 using an expedited review procedure. This approval is valid for one year and expires on 10/20/2016.

It is your responsibility to request an extension for the study if it is not yet complete, to close the protocol file when the study is complete, and to make certain that the study is not conducted beyond the expiration date.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp is enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. A copy of the signed consent forms must be submitted with the request to close the study file at the completion of the study.

Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any adverse events or unanticipated problems. All forms are located on the IRB website. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

cc. Dr. Mary Williford-Shade, Dance Dr. Linda Caldwell, Dance Graduate School



Institutional Review Board

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619 940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu <http://www.twu.edu/irb.html>

DATE: October 6, 2016

TO: Loretta Livingston Dance

FROM: Institutional Review Board (IRB) - Denton

Re: Extension for The Pleasure of Enactment: Eclectic Artist Practices of Dancers and Dance Makers following the Judson Era (Protocol #: 18464)

The request for an extension of your IRB approval for the above referenced study has been reviewed by the TWU IRB (operating under FWA00000178) and appears to meet our requirements for the protection of individuals' rights.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. If subject recruitment is on-going, a copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp is enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. A copy of the signed consent forms must be submitted with the request to close the study file at the completion of the study.

This extension is valid one year from October 21, 2016. Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any unanticipated incidents. All forms are located on the IRB website. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

cc. Dr. Mary Williford-Shade, Dance Dr. Linda Caldwell, Dance Graduate School



Institutional Review Board

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619 940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu <http://www.twu.edu/irb.html>

DATE: October 10, 2017

TO: Loretta Livingston Dance

FROM: Institutional Review Board (IRB) - Denton

Re: Extension for The Pleasure of Enactment: Eclectic Artist Practices of Dancers and Dance Makers following the Judson Era (Protocol #: 18464)

The request for an extension of your IRB approval for the above referenced study has been reviewed by the TWU IRB (operating under FWA00000178) and appears to meet our requirements for the protection of individuals' rights.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. If subject recruitment is on-going, a copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp is enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. A copy of the signed consent forms must be submitted with the request to close the study file at the completion of the study.

This extension is valid one year from October 21, 2017. Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any unanticipated incidents. All forms are located on the IRB website. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

cc. Dr. Mary Williford-Shade, Dance Dr. Linda Caldwell, Dance Graduate School



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu
<https://www.twu.edu/institutional-review-board-irb/>

DATE: June 29, 2018

TO: Loretta Livingston
Dance

FROM: Institutional Review Board - Denton

Re: Notification of Approval for Modification for The Pleasure of Enactment: Eclectic Artist Practices of Dancers and Dance Makers following the Judson Era (Protocol #: 18464)

The following modification(s) have been approved by the IRB:

Dr. Rosemary Candelario will take over as the faculty advisor on this study.

cc. Dr. Rosemary Candelario, Dance



Institutional Review Board

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619 940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu <https://www.twu.edu/institutional-review-board-irb/>

DATE: November 1, 2018

TO: Loretta Livingston Dance

FROM: Institutional Review Board (IRB) - Denton

Re: Extension for The Pleasure of Enactment: Eclectic Artist Practices of Dancers and Dance Makers following the Judson Era (Protocol #: 18464)

The request for an extension of your IRB approval for the above referenced study has been reviewed by the TWU IRB (operating under FWA00000178) and appears to meet our requirements for the protection of individuals' rights.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. If subject recruitment is on-going, a copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp is enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. A copy of the signed consent forms must be submitted with the request to close the study file at the completion of the study.

This extension is valid one year from October 21, 2018. Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any unanticipated incidents. All forms are located on the IRB website. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

cc. Dr. Mary Williford-Shade, Dance Dr. Rosemary Candelario, Dance Graduate School



Institutional Review Board

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619

940-898-3378

email: IRB@twu.edu

<https://www.twu.edu/institutional-review-board-irb/>

DATE: October 8, 2019

TO: Loretta Livingston Dance

FROM: Institutional Review Board - Denton

Re: File Closed for The Pleasure of Enactment: Eclectic Artist Practices of Dancers and Dance Makers following the Judson Era (Protocol #: 18464)

The TWU Institutional Review Board (IRB) has received the materials necessary to complete the file for the above referenced study. As applicable, agency approval letter(s), the final report, and signatures of the participants have been placed on file. As of this date, the protocol file has been closed.

IRB records will be stored for three (3) years from this file closed date.

cc. Dr. Mary Williford-Shade, Dance Dr. Rosemary Candelario, Dance

APPENDIX C

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

CITI Certificates



Completion Date 02-Jul-2015
Expiration Date 01-Jul-2018
Record ID 16408220

This is to certify that:

Loretta Livingston

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Curriculum Group)
Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Texas Woman's University



Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w9b1e4a48-dc63-4fd3-8ddb-2f26cd3617d8-16408220



Completion Date 29-Jun-2018
Expiration Date 28-Jun-2021
Record ID 26670596

This is to certify that:

Loretta Livingston

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Curriculum Group)
Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Course Learner Group)
2 - Refresher Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Texas Woman's University



Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w9d070d17-19d2-4266-b82a-fc489afe4592-26670596