Participant Spectator Meeting Places

Lucinda Coleman



Visual representation of Remnant Dance artists and work product, Myanmar, 2014. Photographer: A. Humphries, 2014. Reproduced with permission.

Terminology

Interconnection (n): to be joined or connected with someone in a complex or meaningful way. In my practice with Remnant Dance artists, interconnection refers to physical connections on the "fronts" and "backs" of the dancing bodies as well as "fronts" and "backs" as primary and secondary sites of communication respectively.



Remnant Dance Artists, front and back, 2013. Photographer: A Humphries, 2013. Reproduced with permission.

Myanmar (n): a nation in Southeast Asia, also known as Burma. I have elected to use the name Myanmar as it was the expressed preference of the children and adults at the Children's Centre in Yangon. Myanmar was the name adopted by the military junta of 1989. The name Burma was associated with British colonial rule and is still the internationally recognized name used by the international media and various nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Burma/Burmese is the English version of the Burmese name for the country and people of Bama, though in formal speech and writing, "Myanma" is preferred to "Bama." "Myanmar" is a misspelling of the official Burmese name but is acceptable due to common usage. The word is used as a noun or adjective in Myanmar, and although scholars such as Jay Koh (2016) have altered the noun to Myanmarese for use as an adjective, I consistently use "Myanmar" to refer to the nation and its

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people, as does the community in Yangon. I use "Burmese" only when referring to one of the languages spoken by the people of Myanmar.

Thanaka (သနပ်ခါး): a yellowish-white paste made from finely ground bark of the Thanaka tree in Myanmar and used as sunscreen or cosmetic cream on faces (and sometimes bodies) of female, and occasionally male, people of Myanmar. Thanaka can be bought in a ready-made paste or the tree branch itself can be bought on the streets, with the paste then made at home.



Thanaka being sold on a Yangon Street, Myanmar, November, 2013. Photograph: Lucinda Coleman, 2013.

Introduction

The Australian performing arts collective, Remnant Dance, has generated a body of interdisciplinary artwork (2010–2018), devised through cross-cultural collaborations, that is distinctive for its engagement with social and cultural concerns. During 2013–2014, a cultural arts exchange between the Australian artists and youth from a Children's Centre[1] in Yangon, Myanmar, resulted in the co-creation of a body of visual and performance art work. The artwork included the film, *Meeting Places*, made on location at the Centre and the famed Nagar Glass Factory, in collaboration with the children. Danced movements between Australian and Myanmar individuals enabled space for dialogue, and in being responsive to each other in the dance, allowed for connectivity and exchanges of corporeal knowledge (Coleman 2015).

As project researcher, affiliated with Edith Cowan University, Australia, and dance-maker with the performing arts collective, I was initially interested in investigating what might be communicated through ventral (front) and dorsal (back) planes of action as zones of communication. By this, I mean communication through front-facing engagement with other dancers and audiences, as well as through back-facing explorations between dancers during composition, rehearsal and in performance. Could spectators and collaborators be invited to experience participation in creative work in such a way as to disrupt the (perceived) fronts and backs of the dance, and of the dancers? Is the "front" simply the face of the dancer, or is it the frontline that separates performer from spectator? In Myanmar, notions of the front and the back were equally developed, and in turn, disrupted. Through creative disruptions, shared experiences through non-verbal modes of communication ruptured many (often unspoken) expectations and generated space for mutually equitable encounters.

In the context of the cross-cultural collective work, the curious dynamic of collaborative activity raised unexpected ontological questions about the act of dance-making and questioned borderlines of spectatorship and participation in artistic endeavours. Such participatory art practices invited (re)consideration of who is, and who becomes, the performer, maker, and/or spectator in acts of art-making and performance.



Myanmar and Australian dancers engaged in improvised dance as part of the performance/installation of *Meeting Places*, Children's Centre, Yangon, April 19, 2014. Photographer: A. Humphries, 2014. Reproduced with permission.

Throughout the research project, I found the experiences of participatory dance-making with others continued to provoke deeper questions about artistic practice as an act of human engagement of individuals, one to the other. As revealed in the following Remnant Dance blog, published on the Remnant Dance website, I wrestled extensively with my responsibility to the Other throughout the Myanmar Project.

Reflexive Wrestling

Elizabeth Grosz has observed "Knowledge is an activity; it is a *practice* and not a contemplative reflection. It *does things*" (Meskimmon 2003, 151). I confess I have been *doing things*. Painting in the void, I have been leaving things unsaid, whilst madly scribbling on the body of my own self, and of others. A repository of ideas and of the *doing of things*, the body has become an archive of memory and of the story of doing things that effect change.

I have wrestled with this mark-making on self and others. My own critically reflective practice has plunged me into reflexive approaches: a portal to analysis and review. I find I have few words to fully describe the creative act-in-action effectively. Words strangle the lightness; the feathered lightness of insight and of being. I think of Maggi's written observation:

> Thinkers and artists grapple with this unregulated realm of yet-to-be-knowledge, straining to delineate incipient patterns in the flux through whatever means of articulation might be at their disposal (Phillips 2014, 285).

I hold the thought that reflexive approaches invite an experience of the unknowable *other* through the creative act and the art work itself. I insert myself into the narratives of others, knowing that "reflexivity is always part of a necessary uncertainty . . . 'remainder' between the visible and the invisible, the present and absent" (Stronach et.al. 2013, 288). I am alert. I miss Maggi. I recall remnant acts of making in which the creative risk forged connections sometimes elusive, sometimes clear. Each has been infinitely precious and absolutely terrifying.

In the past years of Remnant Dance practice, I have been exploring borderlines and surfaces, both physically and metaphorically. My intention has been to look through glass fronts: to shatter them if possible, in order to encounter the perspectives of others. I have been shocked at how often my own reflection is all I have seen.

In Myanmar, I looked away. But there were glass fronts in every direction. When I closed my eyes, small fingers nudged their way into my large hands hanging limply by my own form, inert and stuck. Surprised by touch, I could look in another direction and found myself within large smiling eyes, framed by white Thanaka on brown cheeks and wordless connection through the movement of one small body towards that of my own. As my fingers closed gently around the brave, bold hand, I responded to the tug and turn of this quiet body, and was led in a different direction in the world I thought I had entered.

As a reflective practitioner I am responsive, reflexive and uncomfortable; present in this moment. I continue to wrestle with knowledge, both spoken and unspoken. There is an ache for what has been, yet traces remain. We are connected, you and I. Marked by colour, framed by text, we are telling the story of our wrestling together.



Image: Remnant Dancers in rehearsal, Australia, 2015
Photographer: Lucinda Coleman, 2015, photograph used with permission.

Coleman's *lucid* blog 1: Reflexive Wrestling, October 2015.
http://www.remnantdance.com.au/index.php/connect/lucis-bloga-lucid-look-at-life/289-reflexive-wrestling.html.

Myanmar Meeting Places

The contemporary dance film *Meeting Places* evolved as an artistic response to interconnection through collaborative dance-making in a community grappling with needs beyond my comprehension. Myanmar's history of political oppression and a history of isolation from the outside world, in addition to political persecution, economic disparity, and sectarian and non-sectarian violence, has had a devastating impact on basic human rights (Aung San 2010; Long 2016) and the development of the arts in Myanmar (Carlens 2015; Chan 2014; Diamond 2009; Xuan Mai Ardia 2015).



Street in Yangon, Myanmar, November 2013. Photograph: Lucinda Coleman, 2013.

In planning to work artistically in Yangon, I was aware I was entering a nation of incredible complexity. There are approximately 120 different ethnolinguistic groups in Myanmar, the majority grouped as follows: 69% Bamar/Burman, 8.5% Shan, 6.2% Karen, 4.5% Rakhine, 2.4% Mon, 2.2% Chin, 1.4% Kachin, 0.4% Karenni. I was confronted with a context that was not only complex but also potentially difficult for participants. Koh reflects on his experience of staging his interactive street performance, *Public Acts*, in Yangon (1998), saying that "as a performance, it could be seen as intervening and subversive of the oppressive political conditions in Myanmar that restricted interaction between foreigners and locals" (2016, 9) despite his intention to simply establish a dialogic exchange with others. While my intention was not political activism, the artistic act was (arguably) political in this context. So, I began quietly: a gesture of moving towards, or in the words of Emmanuel Lévinas, to pursue proximity with my neighbour, so that "maternity, vulnerability, responsibility, proximity, contact–sensibility can slip toward touching, palpation, openness . . . informing itself about the palpable quiddity of things" (2013, 76).

I began by visiting the Children's Centre located in Yangon, Myanmar, in 2013. My intention was to meet with members of the community to prepare for Remnant Dance artists' facilitation of creative workshops in early 2014. The proposed workshops would allow for material for the dance film to emerge organically in response to what ideas and stories the children wished to share with the Australian visitors. The Centre was lively and filled with voices, movement, and busy activities.

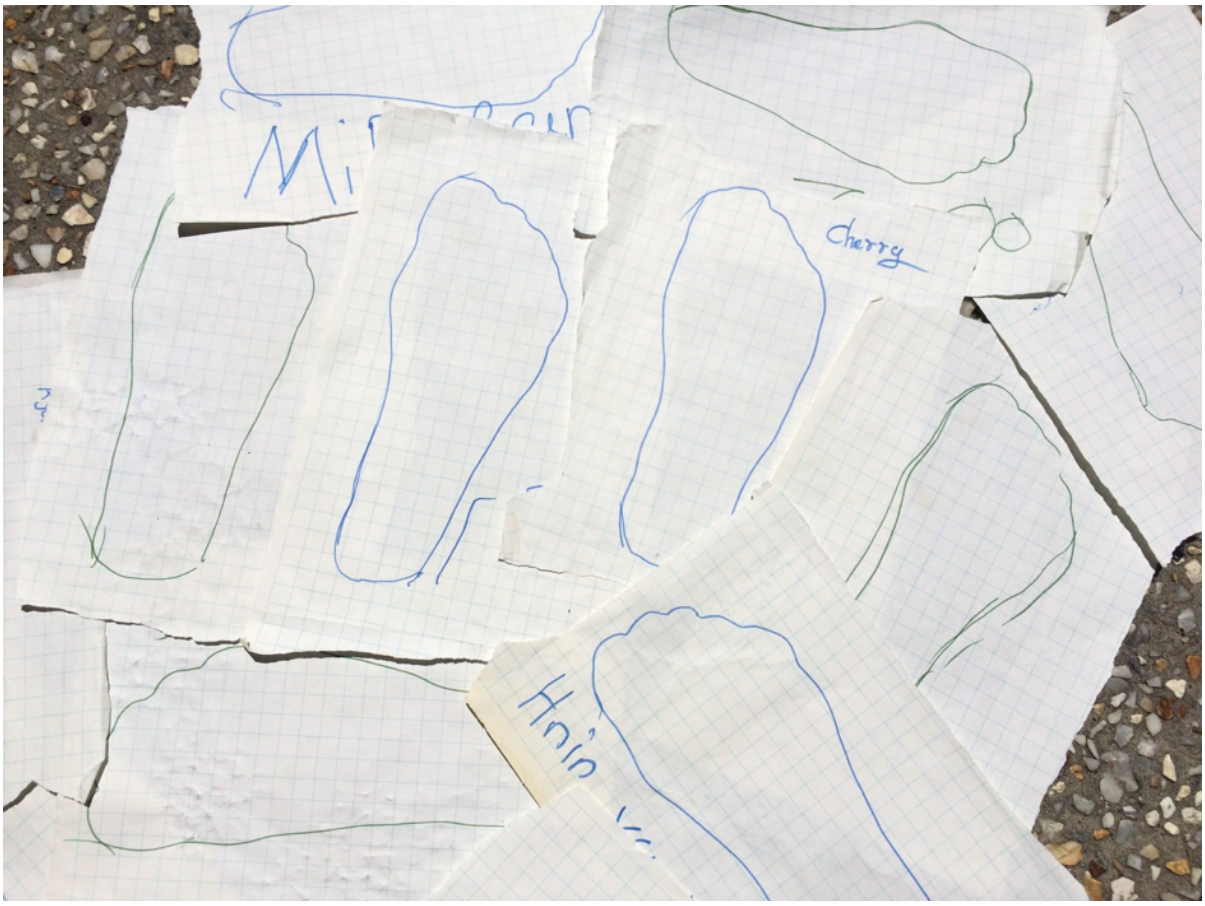
In contrast, the Nagar Glass Factory was quiet: poignant with history. As I had expressed an interest in the Myanmar historical document the *Glass Palace Chronicle* (Tin and Luce 1960), it was suggested the Nagar Glass Factory might be an inspired choice as a second site for filming, both for its abundance of glass objects and because the site was well-renowned in Myanmar. A family-owned business for nearly seventy years, the factory was closed after the destruction of the site by Cyclone

Nargis, which devastated Myanmar in 2008. The following 56-second video clip shows a pathway I walked on my first visit to the site. It offers a glimpse of my first encounter with the multitude of abandoned glass objects, which spoke to me of untold stories in Myanmar's history. The embedded video below shows the Nagar Glass Factory site.



Pathway at the Nagar Glass Factory, Yangon, Myanmar, November, 2013. Videographer: Lucinda Coleman, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F24Ex3igqYA.

During artistic workshops, as well as filming for the contemporary dance film, each Australian artist contributed to the final creative work, as did each Myanmar child. In the act of meeting and collaborating, we encountered "the other in the same" (Lévinas 2013, 111) and recognized that there "is always something simple in an ethical act" (Žižek 2002, 113). Sometimes these ethical acts of "meeting" with the Other came in incredibly pragmatic forms. For example, before we could begin filming at the Nagar Glass Factory, it was necessary to buy shoes for the children but impractical to take them shopping. With a few sheets of paper and a pen, we were able to trace the small feet on to paper and take the drawings to a local shopping centre.



Drawings tracing the Myanmar children's feet, Myanmar 2014. Photograph: Lucinda Coleman, 2016.

However, this pragmatism also extended to something else entirely. As the Remnant Dancers tried matching paper shapes with actual shoes, each Australian began considering what colour, brand, shape (including what colour shoelaces), each child might like best. I observed that the shift came not because it was a safety issue (although it was), but because we had met, encountered and were beginning to know the likes and dislikes of the children. There was something simple yet beautiful about this moment: in Lévinas's words, this was the ethics of "I am another for the others" (2013, 158).

Whether the dance film, which resulted following these encounters within artistic workshops, is a documentation artifact of the collaborative process or a product of collaboration is at times difficult to evaluate. I argue it was both, simultaneously: an Act of an act, because "an Act is always a specific intervention within a socio-symbolic context" (Žižek 2002, 152). I trust that the film as an artifact generated small disruptive traces: expressions of something "real" in genuine and important moments between people of vastly, differently lived experiences.





Rehearsal at the Nagar Glass Factory in Yangon, Myanmar, March 2014. Photographer: A. Humphries, 2014. Reproduced with permission.

Creative Workshops

Creative workshops at the Children's Centre invited willing individuals to participate in art-making activities, which led to and included performance outcomes. In listening and responding to each other, participants became performers at times and spectators at times: a hybrid space generated for the doer/watcher to encounter the Other, as new connections were made through the language of artistic practice.

Connections

On our first day at the Children's Centre in Yangon, Myanmar, Remnant Dance artists invited children to sign up for one of five creative workshops: dance, music, visual arts, photography and costume design. Along with 23 other boys and girls, a tall 13-year-old boy turned up to dance. Throughout the following week, his attendance fluctuated for group activities, but he always turned up to dance. This quiet young man was lost in a sea of bodies most of time we were there. I tried to seek him out to speak to him in my halting Burmese. He always ducked away, grinning sheepishly at this foolish Australian woman attempting to have a conversation in a foreign language. I laughed; he laughed: we accepted we could not communicate. Except that he could dance.

During movement exercises designed to facilitate sensory awareness of another person, this young boy suddenly had a lot to say. At first, like all the children in the dance workshops, he grinned self-consciously when beginning to move with others. He avoided eye contact, ducked his chin and observed what was happening before participating. Gradually, with many friends cheering him on, he would launch himself into a form of break-dancing; almost as a way to clear his throat. In small groups and partnering work, he responded intuitively to gesture and when my turn came to mirror his movements, he was gentle but sure in his movement choices. As we danced together, he began to tell me how he felt. With the slow arc of a curved arm he invited me to listen. With the contraction of his torso, and the tilting of his head, he challenged me to stretch beyond my own limited reach.

He looked me straight in the eye, hands splayed and parallel to the floor, a pulsing rhythm daring me to look beyond our differences. I followed. I didn't avert my gaze. His face opened; mine softened. He played with spatial dynamics, telling me what this day was like for him. He let go and flung backwards. I nearly broke my back following as he stretched for the sky, trusting to hope. In reaching beyond the physical space we both shared, we discovered there was much to say through our language in common. Even stranger than that, this exchange allowed for one of the clearest and deepest conversations I have had during our time in Myanmar.



Image: Warm-up movement activities, Yangon, Myanmar, 2014
Photographer: Ellen Avery, 2014, photograph used with permission.

Coleman's *lucid* blog 2: *Connections*, March 2014. http://www.remnantdance.com.au/index.php/connect/lucis-bloga-lucid-look-at-life/239-dance-without-dancing.html.

In addition to creative workshops in dance, costuming, and film, children could elect to participate in sessions on photography. The photos taken by the children and Australian artists offer a visual record of engagement, creation, and performances. These images tell a story of what interests the children (and adults) and are part of artistic research as "the articulation of the unreflective, non-conceptual content enclosed in aesthetic experiences, enacted in creative practices and embodied in artistic products" (Borgdorff 2010, 47). The images invite engagement with a reality that is best represented through a visual medium, and in this case, of subject material that interests the children at the Centre, as illustrated in the photograph below.



Photograph taken by a child during photography workshops, Myanmar 2014. Photographer: Myanmar child, 2014. Reproduced with permission.

The Myanmar children together with Australian artists improvised to create new images, new music, new dance, and new artworks, and also uncovered new insight into the characters of co-creators. The act of making, listening and responding together invited the creation of new sounds in the spaces between, deepened knowledge of another person, and delighted each individual in the creative act. For example, music workshops were directed by the child-participants who created music and lyrics with collaborating support from a Remnant Dance artist.

I find that the sound of the in-between spaces of art-making develops its own rhythm and restores meaning to disembodied words. In listening and responding to sound, story can be restored through voice, and the rhythm of a moving body to conjoin meaning back with word. The following twenty-second audio sound, made by children during improvisational activities in a music workshop, invites listening for meaning through clapped rhythm and voice. The photograph is of the children's words, which they brainstormed before creating sounds to accompany what would later become lyrics for the song used in the dance film, *Meeting Places*.



Myanmar children making music with hands and voice, Yangon, March 2014. Image: Words for Myanmar song, Yangon, March 2014. Sound recorder: Charity Ng, 2014. Reproduced with permission.

Children interested in visual arts explored the theme of identity using paper from the Centre and glass objects retrieved from the Nagar Glass Factory. The children began to explore surfaces, telling their stories in written and visual mediums on uneven objects and forms. They explored notions of home by making maps and tracing the form of each other on sheets of paper, as well as writing and/or drawing their stories on smaller pieces of paper. Later the smaller paper stories were rolled up and tucked into glass objects to create art pieces for installation.

I had initially seen the glass from the Nagar Factory as a metaphor for frontlines of communication, something that had a tangible front and back. Instead, these remnant glass pieces were often curved, coloured fragments with rough or smooth edges. Cradled by the child-artist, they became vessels to hold their stories: both the hidden and official transcripts of their lives as Myanmar youth. These fronts arced with curling secrets, lit from within and protected on the outer. The glass objects were fragile and when suspended from trees were in danger of falling, but they didn't. The following collection of photographs reveals the diversity and beauty of the children's glass art objects. Along with the painted glass pieces, these photographic images were printed on transparent paper and rolled into tubular "lanterns" to be looped in tree branches alongside the original glass artworks made by the children.

Throughout the creative workshop activities, the boundaries between performer and spectator dissolved in the act of dancing, singing, filming, and creating together. The experiences of Australian artists and Myanmar children dancing together evolved so that we simultaneously became creators within and listeners of another culture. Hybrid spaces generated in/through acts of art-making,

exhibiting, screening and performing disrupted culturally syncretic tendencies, allowing us to see each other as human: each a living being momentarily engaged one to the other in dialogic exchange.



Collection of glass objects with hand-written stories made by children, installed as art objects, Yangon, April 2014. Photographer: A. Humphries, 2014. Reproduced with permission.

မိတ်ဆွေပေါင်းသင်းများဆုံရာ နေရာ

The eighteen-minute contemporary dance film မိတ်ဆွေပေါင်းသင်းများဆုံရာ နေရာ [*Meeting Places*] profiled the encounters in Myanmar and had its international premiere as part of the performance and visual arts exhibition tour ဖန်မြေ မှန်မြေ [*Land of Glass, Land of Mirrors*], pronounced *Hpan Myay, Hman Myay,* in Yangon, April 18–30, 2014. The dance film emerged as a representation of the everyday experiences of the children and, simultaneously, an other-world of hope, possibility and mystery, as individuals encountered the Other in dance and movement. Participants' experiences as spectators and as performers were enhanced by inhabiting the space between making the film and watching the film. Embodied connections generated a place of understanding and curiously were endlessly evolving, never quite finished but in a state of ongoing performance. The interplay of *being* and *time* through art-making highlighted the interconnectedness of body, space, and place. Within the dance film genre, embodied knowledges were communicated through movement language oriented towards connectivity, which was shaped through contemporary technologies. Our danced exchanges moved beyond a point of empathic insight and rapport to a place of respect in which we revealed something of ourselves beyond the reflective dance, through affective engagement.

Lévinas speaks of finding oneself by losing oneself in the Other (2013). In dance-making, gestures towards the Other act as sites for interconnection between dancers, between audience and performer(s), and between choreographer and dancer and audience, as well as within the performer's internal dialogue. As we collaborated through conversational gestures that spiralled through ever-increasing levels of technical complexity, the language of our dance became distinctive as a language of listening and responding to each other in the dance, and to ourselves on film. In this experience of dance-making for film, philosophical questions were raised concerning the very nature of spectatorship.

The subsequent performances on tour in Myanmar invited audience participation, at times physically and other times as an open invitation to engage with concepts presented in the dance. Umberto Eco explains, "the author offers the interpreter, the performer, the addressee, a work to be *completed*" (Bishop 2006, 36). I understand this sense of completion as a kind of openness, and within that a locating of what Lévinas might refer to as the infinite within human form, which arguably ensures each one of us accountable for what we have encountered through the artwork. There are unlimited possible responses to a piece of art, but at the heart of kinaesthetic empathy is the implication of obligation to "complete" the work. Performance events at the Children's Centre on April 19, 2014, offered an informal context for the second screening of *Meeting Places* as part of the art installation and live danced work. This environment held most closely to my developing philosophy of dance, which was at once an artistic experience and a community event, combining attendees in roles as both spectators and participants.

On reflection, the screening of *Meeting Places* was a communal performance experience for the audience that highlighted how dance-making that invites conversation through collaborative practices also invites audience engagement with social issues. I argue that the premise of engagement through multi-art forms created a place for the movement towards a language in common for dialogic exchange. The premiere screening of *Meeting Places* in Yangon, with the children as special guests, was a powerful part of the dialogue of meeting which formed the core of this project. The children's art installation framed the performances of the everyday experience of

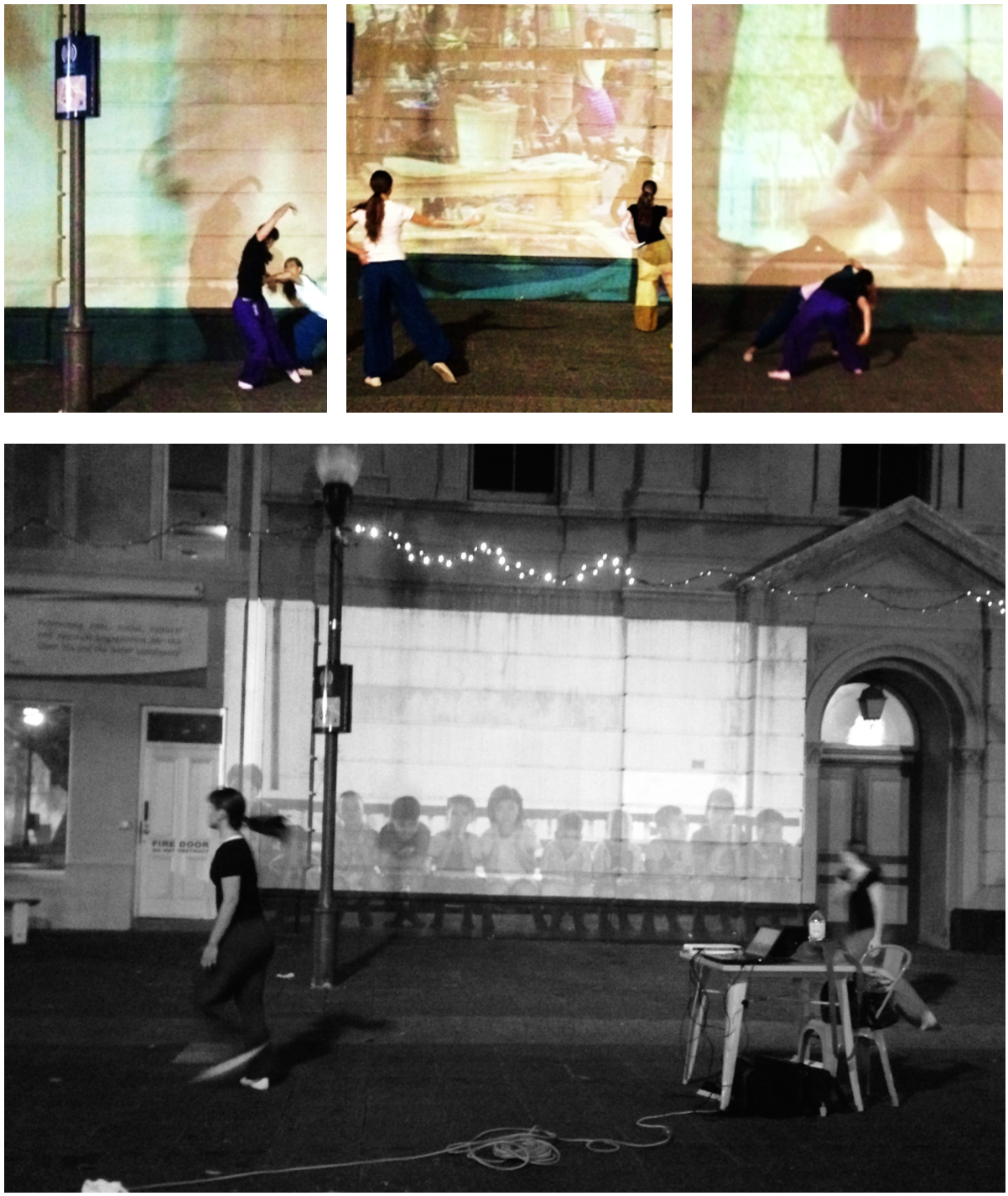
the children while the dialogic encounter moved across a screen in the dance. The screening now functions as part of an archived discourse on an exchange of story.



Audience members at inaugural screening of *Meeting Places*, Yangon, April 18, 2014. Photographer: A. Humphries, 2014. Reproduced with permission.

Participant/Spectator

The complete artistic body of work which emerged during the making of the film became a flexible multi-disciplinary performance exhibition, ready for touring. The full body of work, also entitled *Meeting Places*, was presented in two contexts later in Australia (November 2014). With funding from the Fremantle Festival in Western Australia (WA), the dance film was projected on walls of buildings and in cafés in the town of Fremantle. During the public screenings, Remnant Dance performers cut shadows through the projection and invited audience members to engage in dance-making through moving together: with both Australian and Myanmar (on film) participants. The dance/film installations on the streets of Fremantle invited new audiences into temporary performance spaces. The images below were captured during the film projection on an external wall of the Fremantle City Council building, WA, November 1, 2014.



Remnant Dancers performing with dance film projected on building, Australia. Photographer: A. Humphries, 2014. Reproduced with permission.

In the first screening of the dance film, *Meeting Places,* in Australia, the film was projected on the wall inside a popular hotel in the heart of the town, along the cappuccino strip. Individuals hung off the bar, and small groups of men and women were clustered around circular tables, drinking, laughing, and talking. When the house music was unexpectedly cut, a small ripple of silence alerted patrons that something unusual was about to happen. As the projected film drew the audience's attention, three Remnant Dancers moved through the space and began a combination of choreographed

movement and guided improvisation. Quite suddenly, the unsuspecting audience, compelled by curiosity, began watching the film and even more curiously, responded to mirroring gestures with movement. Spectators were physically encouraged to move with the dancers, generating shadows across the Myanmar dancers projected within the Aussie pub. I was captivated watching the bent forms of grey-haired men willingly respond to the approach of dancers and surprised when a man's hand unfurled from a beer glass, splayed fingers following the pattern of a dancer's hand as it carved through space in the room. There was no evidence of discomfort or embarrassment. There was only a sense of what I understand to be a wonderfully naïve curiosity coupled with a shared humanity and significantly, because of the Myanmar images, of our shared humanity with a world beyond our own cultural borders. Beyond the individual body is the body of a community which, in my experience, can be responsive to the invitation to connect with others.

The pop-up dance film installations occurred over three nights in three sites in Fremantle. The Remnant Dancers engaged with pedestrians through dance, inviting audience responses in and through movement, as illustrated in the photograph below. The interaction was not gimmicky; rather, integrated into the choreography, there were sections of dance where the performers made improvised choices.



Remnant Dancer (L) engaging with audience member during performance on Fremantle Street and (R) film projection on external restaurant wall. Photographer: A. Humphries, 2014. Reproduced with permission.

Interestingly, a common feature of public film screenings in both Myanmar and Australia was the eliciting of delightful chuckles and smiling from audiences. Marsha Meskimmon has commented that "strategic use of humour brings spectators into an unfamiliar territory and enables them to communicate across cultural differences" (2003, 47) and this certainly resonated with me at the inaugural film screening in Yangon and later on the streets of Fremantle. In Myanmar, there were peels of laughter from the Myanmar children as they watched the film for the first time. Initially, I was confused as to what the children found humorous, but through a translator, I discovered that the children had in fact been performing for the camera and knowingly utilized movement that would make their peers laugh when watching the film. There is nothing quite like being surprised by the ironic cheekiness of a young child.

There was also a delightful sense of the mundane made special through framing the everyday as dancing. For example, the making of Thanaka, as utilized in the film, was considered unusual. What we, as outsiders, had thought was a special and unique ritual was actually considered a mundane domestic task, comparable to watching someone clean their teeth or wash dishes in a sink in an Australian context. In the words of an audience member interviewed after the premiere, "I think this is the special dance that included everything like you know, we never think that making Thanaka it would become a music, or like dancing . . . pushing, or using all the roads or playing on the streets, that's becoming dancing to us. We could do that" (personal communication, April 18, 2014).

In Australia, during the film screenings on the streets of Fremantle, I noticed a similar use of culturally specific modes of communication that drew humour, though this time it was the dancers moving amongst audiences, startling them or drawing them to engage in physical action that led to self-conscious yet delighted laughter. Meskimmon notes that

> the involvement of the audience is as significant as the performance of the masquerades; the community is constituted anew each time the dances are enacted between these constituencies. This kind of participant engagement is crucial to conceiving histories and cultures in process and acknowledging that subjects are both mapped by social structures and rules which precede them, yet capable of negotiating these maps through their own creative agency. (2003, 44)

Dance is participatory, inviting intercorporeal exchanges between viewers and works.

The following short video clip offers a glimpse of some of the locations, and the interactions between people during the three installed performances of *Meeting Places on the Streets*, 2014.



Edited clip of *Meeting Places on the Streets*, Fremantle, November 2014. Filmed and edited by Stephen Ng, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeXYJAc1vUI. Reproduced with permission.

The final installation performances of the complete artistic work were held in a gallery in Fremantle, November 6–9, 2014. New Australian audiences were invited to reflect on artwork and contemporary dance pieces, as contextualized with the screening of the film. The projection of the dance film amidst an exhibition of visual art pieces, along with contemporary dance work in gallery spaces, beckoned individuals to transcend cultural boundaries to consider the perspectives of others. Each of the five performance experiences, over the four days, was designed to invite audiences to experience connectivity with others, and as one dance critic observed, "the collaborative nature of the work was evident even before we negotiated the stairs leading to the performance space" (Flavell 2014, para. 2). Performing arts students from a secondary school involved in donating soccer boots for the Myanmar children hosted each performance event. The students also took photographs of the experiences as they wished, as evidenced in the images taken by a school student below.



Remnant Dancer interacting with artwork, *Meeting Places*, Australia, November 2014. Photographer: Tallulah Southby Osborne, 2014. Reproduced with permission.

The Remnant Dancers were themselves installed as living artworks in the gallery, integrating Perspex sheets in held positions as the audience arrived at the performance venue. As the audience moved through the pathways of the gallery, the dancers also moved to interact with individuals, the visual artwork, and each other. The visual art pieces were curated in order to encourage audiences to move through the labyrinthine spaces of the gallery. The photographs to follow express the integration of bodies and artworks.



Remnant Dancers performing *Meeting Places*, WA, November 2014. Photographer: Tallulah Southby Osborne, 2014. Reproduced with permission.

Original music accompanied the audience movement as dancers also began to move, interacting with the audience, seemingly melting natural reserve and inviting the spectator to experience interconnection through collaborative dance-making. As can be glimpsed in the short video to follow, audience members were invited to engage directly with bodies and artwork, and along with the performing artists, to reflect on what meaning was conveyed through the performance and exhibition of the work of *Meeting Places* in Australia.



Edited clip of *Meeting Places*, Fremantle, November 2014. Filmed and edited by Stephen Ng, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_vJbpKMuis. Reproduced with permission.

Conclusion

Movement has the capacity to evoke corporeal knowledge and wisdom and physically engage individual audience members in danced movement reminiscent of spoken dialogue. Through movement languages that can be both resistant and gentle, spectators have the opportunity to encounter (in a participatory manner) fresh perspectives on interconnection through creative practice and experience viscerally the power of artistic practice to invite social engagement. The corporeal language of dance invites intimacy and "facilitates interpersonal and social relations as it shapes bodies" (Hamera 2007, 5). The artistic work of *Meeting Places* and subsequent touring in both Myanmar and Australia invited individual human beings to consider the meaning of artworks that invite spectatorship-as-participation, complicating the roles of audience member/artist, spectator/participant, observer/dancer. The invitation to join the dance invokes delightful engagement of one individual responding to the person of another individual as an artist, wholly human.

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Note

1. The term "Children's Centre" is preferred by the residents to the earlier term "Orphanage" to describe the facility. I have omitted the specific name of this particular Children's Centre to respect the children's anonymity.

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