

PERFORMING LANDSCAPE: AN ANALYSIS OF
PERFORMANCE PRACTICE IN
NON-TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

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The author hereby declares that, the work is entirely her own except where appropriately acknowledged and has not been submitted for any degree in any college or university.

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ABSTRACT

The research for this thesis is motivated by a detection of an alternative space for live art performance in the environment of the landscape, as it is not traditionally used in live art performance. The aim of this research is to investigate the intimate dialogue between artist and landscape and how this dialogue enhances the work of the artist. Through the medium of performance art, this project will examine the transaction that manifests itself throughout the process of the artist interacting with the landscape and analyze the visual and emotional impact of a given space, which although to most observers seems arbitrarily placed as a backdrop to the art piece, in fact constitutes an essential element of the performance. The selected landscape is tested by theory, definition and performative practice as research.

The research project concentrates on critical thinking supported by systematic experimentation, which the researcher can utilize to establish a new work practice and adding systematic observations of nature to create a metaphysical bridge between nature and the artist, which becomes a resource to decipher the communicative non-verbal language between artist and the environment.

The research, having considered significant sources, is left with the question, what is the relevance of my performance practice in non-traditional live art environments? The response to this question provided by the research findings is that the landscape is a performer. The artist cannot deduce that the landscape is a mere space in live art practice, but has to personalise this alternative environment and interpret it as a partner in art performance. This affirms the conviction that the characteristics of the landscape as a performer aids in building a metaphoric dialogue giving access to the landscape as a partner in performance art.

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Introduction

This research project aims to investigate the intimate dialogue between artist and landscape and how this dialogue enhances the work of the artist.

“Ecologist Aldo Leopold writes of the need for humans to think like a mountain, to escape the short-sightedness that threatens the larger habitats of which humans are part. Anthropologist Gregory Bateson says that humans must learn to speak the language in terms of which living things are organized” (DeLue and Elkins, 2010 p.60).

These words inform us that we need to rethink our conceptual relationship with the landscape and listen to the dialogue offered by the environment in terms of how it is organised and shapes our lives to adopt this in artistic practice.

Through performance art this project will examine the transaction that manifests itself throughout the performance and analyse the physical impact of a given space which is a vital component of the performance (Goldberg, 1979). Space creates interaction/reaction depending on its place, location and ambience (Miczka, 2008) and this project will investigate non-traditional environments to examine how the landscape integrates with the artist. According to performance artist Marina Abramovic, who began her career in early 1970s:

“Many things are happening and the space becomes different when it is charged with a lot of energy, and the public is confronted with it when they come in” (cited in, Nigianni, 2014).

This indicates how the spatial elements form a vital connection between artist and space by offering a different experience through performance art.

In answering the research question: How can the environment inform my work? How can my work interact with particular landscape? I need to investigate the landscape through the prism of medium and space as the main core in performance construction in my art practice. Through research investigation, I interacted with my environment and opened a dialogue with the landscape. This process was a key element informing my art practice and helped to uncover the answer of my main research question.

Chapter one of the thesis establishes the theoretical frame which presents the landscape through history of art including aesthetics of landscape which assists in understanding the meaning of the non-traditional environment. In order to explore the dynamics of performance, the first chapter introduces performance artists whose work impacted on the research investigation. The project will consider the artistic processes of these artists and how their work uses performative methods to engage with the various elements of the landscape. The analysis of these artists’ techniques assists in forming a more comprehensive understanding of how to develop a better approach to inter-relations between the artist and environment through art theory.

In the second chapter of this written work, the researcher reveals the reason for leaving the gallery space as a performance venue and describes the meticulous method of searching the new space as a locale for the performance. Presentation of the thesis is built on an independent and critical thinking strategy, supported by systematic

experimentation to develop the theoretical concept. The experimental research work is described in chapter two where the researcher redefines aspects of the new outdoor space through theory and practice.

The methodical approach presents the new non-traditional environment through the different artistic entities, like a medium or space/place to find a proper identity which could adjust to the researcher's landscape. Through research exploration, to support the concept of the project, the researcher had to incorporate into the performance the element of an art object, i.e., a long white dress, which represented genetic repetition.

Chapter three analyses the importance of aspects of the landscape to the live art performance. This section addresses the importance of sound that of the dress and the incidental ambient sounds of nature. These sounds which played a major role in this project supported the artistic frame which was presented in a gallery space, serving to prolong the essence of the performance in the memory of the audience. The audience in live art are an important technical attribute. Different types of performances introduce varied dynamics which play out between artist and spectators. Those differences are presented in chapter three in order to explore the role of onlookers in a non-traditional environment.

An essential function in this research practice project was played by a systematic survey of a specific area within the landscape (Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011). Through this investigation, the researcher could redefine the character of the landscape in performance art. This knowledge would act as an indispensable resource which indicated the importance of non-traditional environment settings as a stage for performance art. In analysing findings of the research conducted within the time frame of a three month period in the landscape setting, the researcher created her own theory describing the new place of performance and adopted that theory to the new art concept.

Condensing all the research information, supported by theoretical aspects of art and the landscape, the researcher created a personal dialogue with the non-traditional environment which in turn, informed the art performance. The metaphysical bridge between nature and the performer created a relationship which contained the respectful and trusting aspects necessary to understand the mighty and sublimity of nature and

assimilated these attributes into the live art project.

The conclusion of the research, presented in chapter four, culminates in the gained knowledge which explores the research question: What is the relevance of my performance practice in non-traditional environments? In addressing and answering this question the researcher created a valuable argument, justifying the landscape as a performer which can be compared to a partnership where the artist uses the nonverbal dialogue to create a communication between the artist and the landscape. This could also be applied to any artistic interrelation outside the gallery space, contributing to future performance art practice in alternative spaces.

Chapter 1

Landscape as a New Stage in Performance Art

Chapter one will present a brief history of Performance Art. The discussion will introduce the landscape through definition, and art theory from the era of the Dutch painters through to contemporary art. In the last paragraph of this chapter, the discussion will focus on the work of a number of performance artists whose art practice involves interaction with the landscape.

The landscape through art history

Social perception of the natural world has influenced the artistic representation of the landscape for centuries. On the one hand, visual culture influences society's views of the environment and at the same time visual artists react to and reflect current social attitudes to the environment. Traditionally, art has been viewed as reflecting or mirroring nature but it must also be recognised that nature can be appreciated aesthetically in terms of art (Greenmuseum.org, 2010).

The Landscape has always engaged in dialogue with humanity. Since our beginnings as a species, even before we had developed a language to communicate, we have moved, hunted, taken shelter and lived in the landscape. We have engaged directly with our natural surroundings, shaping and utilizing it, obtaining our sustenance from it, learning how to cultivate it. The landscape has in turn engaged with us using its own form of dialogue (DeLue and Elkins, 2010).

Dawn and dusk informed our daily waking and sleeping routines. Sun, clouds and wind taught us how to read the weather patterns and prepare ourselves accordingly. Changing seasons informed us of new growth, abundance of food, of times to gather and harvest, and of times to seek shelter and keep warm. Animals and birds warned us of large predators. In primitive times we used the flat surfaces of the landscape to draw maps of animal feeding grounds or show locations of waterholes to other community members, leaving a record to carry meaning for future generations. The landscape also informs us of our cultural history, connecting us with our ancestors and leaving a language written on hillsides, in forests, deserts and across the broad plains of continents (Matuszewski, 2013). This dialogue of the landscape still speaks to us today and inspires how and where we live. We copy the patterns of nature to construct bridges, large buildings, houses and sport arenas (Faczynski, 1945). These patterns have existed within the landscape and can be seen and read like a book therefore; the landscape provides continuous dialogue with us.

“Landscape associates people and place. Danish *landskab*, German *landschaft*, and Old English *landscipe* combine two roots. "Land" means both a place and the people living there. "Skabe" and "schaffen" mean "to shape"; suffixes "-skab" and "-schaft," as in the English "-ship," also mean association, partnership” (Johnson and Hill, 2002 p. 59).

Although in everyday use in German and Scandinavian languages, these unique

meanings have all but vanished from the English language. Webster's Dictionary defines landscape as,

"a picture representing a section of natural, inland scenery, as of prairie, woodland, mountains . . . an expanse of natural scenery seen by the eye in one view"; (Lorzing, 2001 p.36)

This statement informs us that humanity is an inseparable part of the landscape. The dialog between all elements in the environment enhances and strengthens the symbiotic relationship between man and nature.

"Landscape is more than a visible plane, a stationary composition, or passive backcloth to human theatre. A coherence in vernacular landscapes emerges from dialogues between builders and place, fine-tuned over time. They tell of an agreement between stone of cottage and rock of earth, snowfall and roof pitch, between seasonal sun angles and roof overhang, wind direction and alignment of hedgerows, cultivation practices and dimensions of fields, family structure and patterns of settlement" (DeLue and Elkins, 2010 p. 54-55).

This statement also affirms how humanity is in continuous negotiation with elements of the landscape in shaping and living as an integral part of the environment. To understand this connection between humanity and the landscape is valuable to present the environment through art history where artists endeavoured to find the bond between mankind and nature.

It was during the Renaissance that the first seeds of the genre of landscape painting were laid down and became established in the sixteenth century in the Netherlands, France and England. It was not until the eighteenth century that landscape became the 'proper' function and feature of painting and fully evolved as a principle subject matter for art in Europe. Landscape painting developed as a prevailing genre in the nineteenth century as the Impressionist artists left the comfort of the studio setting and went out into the natural beauty of the countryside to paint 'en plein air' (DeLue and Elkins, 2010). Tyrrel (2010) proposed in the early twentieth century however, with the decline of Impressionism, the landscape as a subject became almost archaic. However, it is hard to divide the history of depiction from the history of perceiving the landscape. One word which describes the reciprocal relationship between the depiction and perception of the landscape is "picturesque", which was first formulated by the middle of the sixteenth century (DeLue and Elkins, 2010). This term was more extensively used in the eighteenth century in the writings of William Gilpin. The term "Picturesque" was used to describe particularly appealing landscape views which were suited to painting. The origins of landscape painting cannot be understood without the constant awareness of

this truth (DeLue and Elkins, 2010).

With this idyllic observation of the landscape as picturesque, natural vistas were viewed from a painterly perspective and the many ideas relating to natural beauty and ideal landscape that still implicitly govern the evaluation and "seeing" of nature today emerged (Lothian, 1999).

Of course this implies that man made changes to the landscape, made in more modern industrial times would fit into that same concept of 'picturesque'. With the invention of commercially available photography in the mid eighteenth century, landscape scenes were made easily affordable to the masses and by the beginning of the twentieth century, photographers and artists alike had found new and exciting subject matter in bleak topographies, arid deserts and farmlands, national parks, polluted lakes and rivers, abandoned shacks and vehicles. This new style of subject matter, which still incorporated the landscape as a vital element in the composition of photographic images, was part of the abstraction of the landscape in twentieth century art.

The aesthetic visual appreciation of the landscape evolved with the changing industrialized landscape (Sontag, 2009). It can be argued that the rise of photography at this juncture in the history of art, coincided with a marked decline in landscape painting as the eighteenth and nineteenth century picturesque views of the natural beauty of the environment gave way to the often abstract but modernist aesthetic within the contemporary landscape.

"The interesting aspect is that after modernism, around the mid twentieth century, "reality", life as well as vegetation, became the focus of artists through conceptual as well as time-based, body, and environmental art. It was materiality that the artists were working with and often in the form of abstraction. These works were dominated by indexicality.....are mere traces of the landscape and the artists' movements in the landscape" (DeLue and Elkins, 2010 p.227).

Considering this statement it can be noticed that although concepts of landscape have changed for artists through recent centuries, the fundamental place of landscape as a base to build concepts remains paramount.

"Landscape....is an exemplary encounter with subjectivity. It is understood as a kind of unity--'framed' or otherwise 'composed,' and always 'seen'--which reflects, or articulates the sense of self" (DeLue and Elkins, 2010 p.272).

In this quote from *Landscape Theory* the author refers to the awareness of self in the

landscape and how a unity exists between mankind and nature.

Performance art

Performance Art could be best described as a non-traditional art form often with political or topical themes that generally features a live presentation to an audience or onlookers as a staged artistic event. According to art historian Lilianna Bieszczad (2007 p.29):

“Avant-garde performance art dates back to the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century and evolved through Dadaism, Surrealism and Symbolism”.

Therefore, performance has evolved as an art practice and is documented in art history. In performance art, the artist’s medium is the body and the live actions he or she performs are the work of art (O’Reilly, 2009). The term, used loosely at first, arose in the early 1960s as American practitioners sought a way to refer to and describe the many live events taking place at that time. Performance art usually consists of four elements: time, space, the performer’s body, and a relationship between audience and performer. The work is often interdisciplinary, employing some other kind of visual art, video, sound, or props. Although performance art takes the form of live action, it has reached a large public audience through documentation of the performance (Goldberg, 2011).

The term performance art has become a catch-all for live performance of all kinds, from interactive installations in museums to imaginatively conceived fashion shows and DJ music events in clubs. In academic circles, scholars have produced a vocabulary for critical analysis as well as theoretical debate with the term ‘performative’ used to describe the unmediated engagement of viewer and performer in art. In the first decade of the twenty-first century performance art is at last being folded into the history of art proper and moving from the margins to the very centre of broader intellectual discourse (Schechner, 2006).

The history of Performance Art is one of challenge to audiences, art traditions, cultural, political and social values. With elements of performance now part of the practice of many of today's best-known artists, the boundaries between visual art, theatre and performance have become more and more blurred. This is evidenced in the work of

Marina Abramovic, who has been performing since the early 1970's, and who has become accepted as part of mainstream gallery presentations (Krawczak, 2009). The term live art often refers to interdisciplinary contemporary performance forms.

It was in the 1970's that Performance art became accepted as a medium of artistic expression in its own right. At that time, conceptual art, which was at its peak as an art form, was an art of ideas over product and an art that could not be bought and sold (Phelan, 2012). As early examples of performance found influences in theatrical and music performance, art, poetry, burlesque and other popular forms of entertainment, the concept of performance in theatre also underwent change, informed by the developments in visual arts practices and influencing performance art (Schechner, 2006). For instance, Schechner's *Dionysus in 69*, is an example of the theories of theatre spilling over and influencing Performance Art; the utilization of space and the audience in non-traditional space and artistic work in order to challenge notions of the orthodox theatre, a development which involved spectators in an active and sensory artistic experience became part of Performance Art practice. Performance and theatre were also influenced by Peter Brook (Schechner, 2006). Brook's goal was to reinvigorate the theatre through a theatrical vocabulary not tied to language. Brook used all aspects of theatre to stage this: lighting, set, props, costumes, and most importantly, action. All served to present the audience with a real, raw, and emotional experience (Grotowski, 2007).

Schechner and Brook's work demonstrates that in performance, space is essentially a relationship between performer, spectator, and the space in which both come together (Grotowski, 2007). The performance space examines the way buildings function to frame the performance event, the organization of audience and practitioner spaces within the building, the nature of the performance area and the modes of representation it facilitates, and the relationship between the real space of the gallery and the fictional spaces that are evoked within that performance (Auslander, 1997).

As part of her training in performance, the researcher has collaborated with Amanda Coogan, an Irish artist renowned for her 'live performance' art. Coogan (2012) says that: "Performance art is a very particular experience, both for the artist and the audience. There is immediacy to the work that must be experienced first-hand; the audience embodies the experience and breathes the same air as the performer" (Coogan, 2012).

Coogan continues to describe the particular experience of performance work: “There is an intimacy for the audience with performance art that does not come with looking at two dimensional works”. Research has shown (Nigianni, 2014) how a different space creates its own unique environment, manifesting a particular reaction or participation from the audience and the performance artist. The dialogue created by the performance in the space evolves into a particular type of energy. Initially, the artist is the focal point of attention for the public but gradually the energy changes and as the performance, influenced by the landscape progresses, the audience become part of the 'whole energy'. This energy created did not exist before the performance started and remains within the tension of the performance, but the performance itself is ephemeral and only exists in memory, artefacts and documentation.

Therefore, performance, whether it takes place on a stage, on the street, in a concert hall or in a particular landscape or space, is ephemeral. In discussion with renowned American performance artist Marilyn Arsem in 2013, the researcher observed the importance of the ephemeral experience in Arsem’s work. Arsem also acknowledges the importance of time and place in live performance work:

“Performance art is ephemeral. It is an action created by an artist for a specific time and place. Witnesses are privy to a unique experience that will never happen again. Performance art reveals the vulnerability of living. Performance art reminds us that life is fleeting. We are only here now” (Infractionvenice.org., 2013).

Performance artists whose work impacted on the research.

My research direction led me to examine and explore the work of performance artists Ana Mendieta, Aine Philips, Janine Antoni, Roi Vaara and Aideen Barry. The work of these artists is well known in the performance world but the character of their work is very different other artists.

Born in Cuba, but exiled from there with her family in her youth, Ana Mendieta is noted for her earth-sculpture performances. In this performance work, Mendieta creates a dialogue between her body and the surrounding landscape, which speaks of her Cuban heritage and identity. The terrain where Mendieta performs becomes a transitional

passage connecting her body to her natural surroundings, the landscape. This sometimes translates into Mendieta almost disappearing into the earth in a form of camouflage to bond with or connect her body with nature in an attempt to resolve her issues with separation and loss and come to terms with the metaphysical aspects of her performance art. This dialogue between artist and the landscape can be more closely observed in Mendieta's *Silueta* projects from 1973 to 1980. In these performance works Mendieta uses a combination of influences from her Catholic upbringing and Cuban rituals. She uses wooden effigies, silhouettes cut into the bare earth, and her own body, half-buried in the soil, to achieve a merging with the landscape (Gaiger and Wood, 2003). She also etched a primal figure of a woman into the bare earth, in an action to suggest "going back to the roots," in a gesture to reclaim the Ecofeminist Goddess image (Fig.1) (Ornestein,G).



Fig. 1 Mendieta (1980) *Untitled*

Art historians agree that Ecofeminism was created as an independent entity in the 1960s and 1970s in combination with the Women's Movement, and it is considered to be an important part of what was termed second-wave feminists. Ecofeminism was concerned with the human interaction with the environment and the consequences of that interaction and the destructive dominance over nature for economic gain over a long

period of time. Moreover, because the creation of new images of living with the Earth is viewed as an essential element of the process of transformation, creative artists are an integral part of this new constellation (Minickiello, 2009). Mendieta's art informs the viewer of the female connection with nature and often used found organic objects as the medium in which to make her art. Her work shows that the connection with nature is the foundation on which artist could build a strong dialogue with the landscape (Buchloh et al., 2004).

Aine Phillips is another artist whose work I researched for this project. Phillips is a performance and visual artist living in the West of Ireland and has been exhibiting multi-media installations and performance works internationally since the late 1980s. In her performance work Phillips uses costume as a core element in developing the concept of each project. The costume becomes the bridge of communication between the artist and the audience. An example of this can be seen in her performance *The Redress*. In this work Phillips attempts to put on a dress which is much too small and misshapen for her body. This performance is a social comment that pertains to the frustrations of a group of institutional abuse victims who were forced to sign a 'gagging clause' by the Redress Board in Ireland (Phillips, 2013).

Another performance by Phillips, is *Red Weight* (Fig.2) in which she dressed up in a robe with a long train made from six hundred pieces of red clothing. The red colour represented life and passion and Phillips pulled the gown with its long and heavy length of material through public areas in an urban setting. This proved to be a difficult task as the material sometimes knotted up and caught in various objects and Phillips had to continuously deal with the heavy weight of the train. The long and heavy robe was a metaphor for the memories and possessions we carry through life. During the performance Phillips engaged with onlookers and some spontaneously helped her in her struggle to carry the cumbersome robe, just as we are sometimes helped by others to carry the weighty things in our own lives (Burren College of Art, 2014).



Fig. 2 Phillips (2013) *Red Weight*

Another artist who used the dress as an element of performance is an Irish visual artist Aileen Barry. Barry was born in Cork and is known for her performance, film, sculpture, drawing, and installation work. In her performance 'Flight Folly' included historical notions of fairs or world expositions and how experiments in flight were commonplace at those venues. In this performance Barry wore a white dress with many toy helicopters attached to a round hoop at the end of that dress. She operated and steered all the helicopters using a remote control, enabling her to lift the dress up and down. This project illustrated how important the technical creation of a dress is, while considering the concept of using different types of fabric to best facilitate movement (VernissageTV, 2015).

The work of Janine Antoni a New York based artist is very much dependent on the landscape as a resource and a core component of her art practice (Warr and Jones, 2000). This relationship between artist and landscape can be observed in Antoni's video installation 'Touch' in 2002 (Fig.3). In this performance, Antoni walks on a tightrope which is set against the backdrop of a far away beach horizon. The tightrope is positioned in the foreground so as to appear to mimic the horizon line and when Antoni walks across the rope it gives the illusion of the artist walking across the horizon and

explores the transitions between the artist and landscape. In this performance Antoni transports the natural beach environment into the studio space. This is a beautiful example how the artist adopts the landscape in an artistic frame and transfers these images to the gallery space. The horizon had been an intrinsic part of her life while growing up on a Caribbean island and the horizon appeared to her as a distant destination. Antoni explains:

“as if I was walking all the time on the horizon, I thought it would have much more tension if I could walk along the rope and—as it dipped—that, just for a moment, I would touch the horizon”(Art21, 2001).

Her performance illustrated the connection of the surrounding landscape and artist, the inseparable bond between performer and natural environment in the white cube space (Art21, 2001).



Fig.3 Antoni (2002) *Touch*

Performer artist Roi Vaara in his project ‘Artistic Dilemma’ used the vast surrounding landscape to highlight his artistic concept. Roi Vaara is one of the most internationally recognized performance artists in Scandinavia. His critical point of view is not to attract public sensation but to challenge the way we are looking at things. In ‘Artistic Dilemma’ Vaara utilizes the infinity of the landscape to highlight the difficulty in making choices between ‘life’ and the ‘art’ (ELAA, 2015).

Chapter 2

Redefining Landscape Through My Live Art Practice

In chapter two I put forward my reasons for leaving the gallery space to find a new space for my performance in a non-traditional environment. This chapter also considers varieties of landscapes settings as a potential new space to perform live art project. Through systematic research I examine the different characteristics and potentialities of nature with a view to performance art.

The landscape as a new stage in art practice

The main element of my previous performative work was a sizable length of fabric, which I used as a primary medium in my conceptual art project. Initially, the fabric was hung vertically on a large wooden construction. My performance was based around the ability of the material to follow or trace the contours of my body beneath and present to the audience an image provoking emotional response to the movement underneath the drape. Because I felt that this performance did not achieve my goal in communicating the struggle, my struggle beneath, I decided that as I felt an affinity with the materials in use, I needed to find a more expressive way to use this material as a language in communicating more poignantly to the audience. I became aware that in this previous performance, the vertical line was the dominant element in the visual structure of the

performance. This observation led me to consider the possibilities of investigating the horizontal as a possible element to utilize.

Using the concept of 'Tracing' I experimented with ideas in which I could use fabric to produce traces which represents a human journey or duration of life in repetition. To visualize this idea I needed to create a path which could produce or leave a trace which was perceptual after the fabric was no longer visible. This experimentation took place in the ACRO Studio, Waterford which is a small space consisting of a number of doorways and corridors. In the ACRO Studio setting, I was performing using two different rooms. The room where the performance started was only used as an entry and exit point of the performance. The performance consisted of entering the space through a curtain and dragging the fabric behind me. The fabric was gradually brought to a certain point, a spiral construction was made and I added black liquid which was absorbed by the fabric and as the fabric was unravelled and brought back through the curtain, what remained on the floor was only a visual black trace of the fabric (Fig.4). This experience showed how important the use of space was to clarify my message in the performance. The learning outcome from this performance was that an appropriate space is an important element in setting up my projects. That was another example to me of the confines of the gallery space and the need to investigate an exterior space for live art performance.



Fig.4 *Tracing* at ACRO Studio

As part of my ongoing performance development I was working on a project entitled 'Balance'. This art work involved investigating the role that balance plays in human mentality when trying to fit into society. To illustrate this concept in a visual way I used fruit, i.e. apples and oranges. Those fruits are very similar in shape outside but different in colour, texture and structure on the inside. The fruit represented the same person but with separate mentality traits. In the first phase of the evolution of this project I attempted to split those two different fruits using only the physical power of my hands and subsequently I proceeded to stick together, halves from the different fruits, to create a stronger unit, symbolic of the stronger mentality achieved in this new entity. As a result of this performance, I was left with a puddle of fruit juice, the sacrifice of the fruit, with supporting visual forms (i.e. half orange and half apple), and the visual symbolism of a dual personality.

In the first phase, this project was exhibited in Garter Lane Gallery, Waterford. I picked

a small corner in the gallery space and automatically this engendered a particular aura (Fig. 5). I observed that the character of the performance reflected the intimacy of the condensed space. The confined performance did not articulate the meaning of the art piece. The performance, in the restricted space, limited the impact of the message. A modest area in the corner of the gallery could not support a performance and it only created a false comprehension of the piece of art, whereby I did not have a reflective reaction from the audience and the audience looked more at me the performer, as a piece of sculpture rather than a conduit for the message.



Fig.5 *Balance* at Garter Lane Gallery

The same performance 'Balance' was also staged in SOMA Contemporary Gallery in Waterford, this time positioned in the middle of the gallery space (Fig. 6). I used the centre of the room to perform the piece. This meant that the audience was all around me and in the corners of the gallery space. The performance space was supported with artificial lighting which focused the onlooker's attention on the artist. The learning outcome of this same project performed in a different scenario, was that a different space projected another characteristic. This message was much stronger and clearer in transmission. The details in the performance became more articulated by the audience because as the performance occupied a central space in the gallery, the spectator gave

more attention to the art work. They could observe the effects of splitting the fruits, also, the complexity of joining the different fruits together using skewers and visibly noted the resultant loss of juices from the fruits.



Fig. 6 *Balance* Soma Contemporary Gallery

A few months after the last performance I was invited to perform in the Avenue Festival in Waterford. On the last day of preparations for the festival, circumstances occurred which forced me to change the venue for my performance. I was obliged to perform outside of the gallery space (Fig.7). That was my first experiment in using an urban context as an element in my performance. Due to time constraints, I did not have an opportunity to investigate that new environment but instinctively I was conscious that my awareness of the different elements of the landscape, including changeable weather, natural light, the openness of the space, would have an influence on the performance.



Fig.7 *Balance* Soma Contemporary Gallery (back garden)

The same project exposed a natural scenario in the urban context, using just available light acquired a new message. This experience pushed me to explore and exploit the power or weakness of the elements of the landscape through performance art. As a consequence I began to investigate and examine the subject of landscape as the most unpredictable element in live art performance. In the gallery, the space is waiting for the artist and is prepared to a certain standard, while in contrast, a space in the landscape which has no exhibition standards, has a different impact on the artist, who must respond to the surrounding elements and devise a way to perform in a manner best suited to that environment, in addition it also has a different impact on the audience.

These are two examples of my artistic practice, conveying how I found it necessary to transfer my live art project to a place outside of the gallery space. The gallery space had been comfortable for me to work in. The last few years of practice in the gallery had developed for me an understanding and a feeling of comfort with the given space, but I realized that the possibilities of using the landscape as my stage, presented new and different challenges to me and my art practice.

Researching the parameters of the landscape as a key element in performance.

One aspect of this new challenge was to use the relationship between the vertical line in the landscape and the horizontal line of the fabric. From the performance in ACRO Studio, the element of water was of significance. This led me to considering the

seascape as a possible venue for a performance, but after a half day on the beach I eliminated the possibilities of using this environment because this landscape only offered horizontal lines. As I was using fabric which was to be drawn across the landscape there was a lack of contrast between the line of the sea environment and the line of the fabric, both of which were horizontal.

Another landscape investigated was the car-park spaces around Waterford City. I picked these spaces because car-parks show indications of direction on the ground with the use of painted lines and arrows. I surveyed three different car-parks over the course of two weeks, recording the differing attributes of each one at different times of the day. The survey was conducted in car-parks at Ardkeen Shopping Centre, Odeon Cinema and W.I.T. College car-park. This survey included the intensity of the footfall in the locations, the type of people entering the car-parks i.e. age group, students, business people or shoppers.

The learning outcome from this survey was that car-parks are not suitable venues for my type of performance art as they are occupied mainly by people in transit who are not necessarily focused on or have appreciation for the opportunity to engage in a live art performance.

Another performance space considered was a derelict swimming pool as it contained some water which was an element of the ACRO Studio performance. The location of this space in a rural setting was too isolated and therefore not easily accessible to the public. In investigating all the possibilities related to this space, using visual observation, video recording and photography, I determined, after studying the photographs that there was important visual information in the branches and trees reflected in the water. These images prompted me to consider trees and woodlands as a possible variation of space to be included in the performance environment. Following further investigation I found a woodland area in Tramore beside a lake. This woodlands consisted of pine trees and narrow rocky pathways. Initially, the area seemed to have good potential as a performance area but further research, taking into account the light and observing its interaction with the fabric, I decided that this area would not be suitable because of the combination of dense trees and low and dull conditions.

The positive aspects of investigating this area lead me to look for another woodland nearby with broad-leaf trees. My idea in this was to find a wooded region with more possibilities of finding appropriate light to use as a backdrop to my new artistic stage for my performance. The woodland at Grace Dieu Manor provided the right type of trees and terrain to begin a deeper and more thorough research of the landscape, allowing me to experiment with diverse materials in different weather conditions over a period of five months.

The research pattern of investigating non-traditional environments for performative activity is transferred to a natural scenario, creating an intimate dialogue between the artist and the landscape. To strengthen the connection between the artist and place the written work will investigate different theories associated with landscape art. To explore landscape through art theory it is valuable to use the support pillars of the work of environmental aesthetician Rolston. Rolston states that:

“Nature is the entire system of things, with the aggregation of all their powers, properties, processes, and products - whatever follows natural law and whatever happens spontaneously. Landscape is the scope of nature, modified by culture, from some locus, and in that sense landscape is local, located... Humans have both natural and cultural environments; landscapes are typically hybrid. An environment does not exist without some organism environed by the world in which it copes... An environment is the current field of significance for a living being” (Carlson, 2000 p.198).

This aesthetic theory is necessary to understand the nature of the landscape, enhancing communication between artist and place.

“British geographer Jay Appleton has called landscape 'a kind of backcloth to the whole stage of human activity', allowing the artist's imagination to look at the landscape as an artistic stage without foreground nor background, centre nor periphery” (Appletton, 1975 p.127).

This places the landscape as a medium which can be utilized by the artist as an integral part of an art performance. Research into landscape aesthetics brings me to the agreement with the conclusion which is presented in the *Landscape Theory* by James Elkins and Rachael Ziady DeLue (2010). Elkins states that

“Landscape theory and landscape representation are like sugar: They are sweet leftovers of the romantic tradition. In small doses they are energizing, but in larger quantities they are overwhelming... so that some scholars begin to drift when they write about landscape, and they fall, slightly, into a reverie, something like bemusement or sleep. I take that phenomenon as another sign that when it comes to theorizing about landscape, something is at work on our conceptual acuity: we do not own the subject, it owns us” (DeLue and Elkins, 2010 p. 47).

My findings, gathered from controlled observations of performance in the landscape,

observing the relevance of my performance practice in non-traditional environments, will be deciphered through critical theory and reflective writing and will be presented using an aesthetical description.

As a consequence of repeated visits to the Grace Dieu Manor woodlands area between December and the following May, I was able to experience the changes in the environment brought on by altering weather conditions and light. Gradually, the landscape became more intimate to me and I was aware that I would be using this area for my performance in the summer season. I began to document the area through photography and video.

Following the rationale of environmental aesthetician Rolson, "Nature is the entire system of things, with the aggregation of all their powers, properties, processes, and products" (Light and Rolston III, 2003), I recorded through photography and video, different natural elements in diverse weather scenarios. The surveying process of the landscape began in the winter and as I was aware that my performance would take place in the summer, this gave me the opportunity to become intimately acquainted with the given landscape. For example, the December snow completely transformed the landscape but this emphasized the vertical lines produced by the bare trees in the woodlands. It could be said in a poetic way that the winter landscape was asleep. The light in winter is dull. Gradually, as spring arrived I witnessed the change in the landscape through light, which transformed the aura of the landscape. Since the end of March, the woodlands were blossoming and it became evident that the landscape had a new energy. Every single path and corner reflected a new image through a new palette of colour. Throughout this process I kept a digital sketchbook of the changes in the environment which helped me to capture an overall picture of how the landscape responded through time.

For poet-painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti it is not memory, or the acts of imaginative transformation that recollection enables, that is crucial to landscape but what he calls the artist's ability to imaginatively occupy an "inner standing point" (DeLue and Elkins, 2010).

The Phenomenon of Nature.

The landscape consists of what is immediately visible but it is influenced and changed by the regular intervention of the elements i.e., changing light compared to the time of day, the sounds produced by nature, weather (wind, rain, snow etc.). To understand my partner the landscape and present art as a multi sensory experience appearing as a seamless natural unit, I decided to examine the different aspects of nature which influence or change the landscape.

I proceeded to record how the light affected different areas of the landscape at different times of the day. It was important to have this knowledge as an aid in choosing the most appropriate area within any given time-frame to perform my art under the best light conditions.

The research was conducted within the proposed performance area in Grace Dieu. This landscape area offered diverse pathways going in different directions and a topography offering a variety of levels on which to perform. Each level and path direction were affected in unique ways by the fall of the light at any given time. Depending on the time of day and the angle of the sun to the horizon, the shadow presented a very different visual impact on the pathways.

The most dramatic observation of the light being cast was the resulting imagery of nature i.e. branches and leaves, being projected onto the ground and path ways creating artistic expression for natural patterns. This information with regard to time and light was documented and recorded through research tools i.e., photography, video and notes, to enable me to be prepared to choose a performance space suited the to light conditions at a given time.

The effects of diverse weather conditions, early morning mist, rain and wind had also to be taken into account and researched. A series of performances were set up involving the conceptual element- the fabric, under these different conditions over a period of weeks between March and May. I observed how during a windy period, the fabric became uncontrollable and difficult to work with and how in the rain, the conditions were not very comfortable.

A positive aspect of working in wet conditions was that although the fabric became

heavy and more difficult to drag along, the train left a more obvious trace of the performance in its wake. Another learning outcome of this research was that I became aware of the best and most suitable areas for performance within the Grace Dieu landscape under the different conditions. I was able to determine that one particular path was suitable for performing in a prevailing Westerly wind as I could walk from an Easterly direction, thereby avoiding a crosswind which would interfere with the flow of the fabric. I discovered another area in the Grace Due Woodlands which was most suitable in the early morning because of the unrestricted available light, and a separate area of the woods in which the late afternoon was the optimal time for a performance. The result of this research also enabled me to respond to the diver's environmental conditions.

The landscape as a medium, as a space, as an artistic partner

Weather was also an element to be considered in regard to the landscape i.e., the affect of rain, wind and the sun. This shows me how powerful the landscape is and that my interaction with it depends on the state of the landscape at a given time accept and conform to what the landscape is offering to me as an artist and work with that whatever follows natural law and whatever happens spontaneously (Light and Rolston III, 2003).

As struggle is the conceptual core of my performance, I experimented with ways of integrating the fabric with the elements of the surrounding landscape to document the tension between the material and the environment. I observed how the wind as an element of nature in interaction with the fabric changed shape of the material and subsequently changed the visual character of the landscape and the conceptual aspect of the artistic project.

Another step in my investigation was to find a struggle reaction between the fabric and the woodlands objects like branches, trees etc. For the first few weeks I was walking through the trees and wrapping the trunks in fabric, involving the landscape in my project. This was findings through practice where one element is introduced to another and the reaction is noted and documented.

When walking through the trees, trailing the fabric behind me, the tension caused by the fabric getting caught in the dead tree trunks caused some withered branches to fall off

thereby changing the overview of the landscape. I found it necessary to experiment with altering the landscape by moving debris and rocks from the pathways to make it easier for me to traverse the terrain. Through this process I examined the performance impact on the landscape.

During the time when bluebells were prolific in the woodlands, the drawing of the fabric across the pathways caused some of the flowers to be crushed, which in turn stained the fabric and left the mark of the landscape on the material. This was the evidence which nature left as a result of struggle activity, which I as a performer involved in the art practice but I could not characterize this activity as a medium. In the new non-traditional environment was very noticeable that the strong light between leaves projected images on the ground. The composition of the shadows created variation of shapes illuminating paths and undergrowth which I could not adopt to my project. Every time span produced different effects of shadow images due to the changeable light.

The learning outcome of this area of research informed me that, I could not consider the landscape as a medium in my performance project. I could not adapt the landscape to my work as an object because of the unpredictable power of nature which I have no control over.

The Landscape as a new space in performance art

Following the theory of performance art where space is one of the most important element, I tried to investigate this theory of using the landscape as a new stage in my performance. In the beginning I picked three different areas in woodlands to check their impact on my art. The first area consisted of a pathway leading down a hill, of man-made steps and I descended the steps with the fabric being pulled behind me. As I continued down, the rhythm of having to find the steps with my feet became a distraction and diverted my mind and thinking away from my closeness to the landscape leaving me with the idea that the landscape had somehow become artificial because of this man made structure interfering with the natural environment.

Another area to catch my attention was a natural incline in the landscape which was without a pathway. This area provided the opportunity to develop my relationship with

'struggle' within the performance piece as the steep incline proved difficult to steadily negotiate while at the same time also dragging the fabric. This area, although it had some good attributes was only a small area within the landscape and I felt that my work would be too confined within that particular space.

I found in the landscape an interesting combination within a certain pathway which offered many possibilities because of the terrain, the directional changes of the path and the positioning of small and large trees along the route.

More areas were investigated and many favorable possibilities were found with the potential to be used as a stage for my performance. The realization that there were many areas to choose from, each showing different and unique attributes of the landscape led me to consider the complexities involved in deciding on a definitive area to use as my performance stage. While recording, through photography, my engagement with the landscape, I realized that I needed to return to my basic thoughts and investigate other artists who may have used the landscape at the core of their work and study how they approached this subject. One important artist in this field was Ana Mandieta and her art is a very good example of the invisible dialogue between art and nature. Landscape and nature helped her investigate the ontological aspects of land performance work. In 1973 Mandieta began a series of land-based works entitled *Siluetas*. This work used wooden effigies, silhouettes cut into the earth and often her body, half buried in the soil to forge a unity between herself and the land (Gaiger, and Wood, 2003). This ritual is part of how the Ecofeminists interact with the landscape and actively engage with Mother Earth. In *Reweaving the World*, Gloria Feman Orenstein suggests that what we call ecofeminist art is a function ceremonially to connect us with the two powerful worlds from which the Enlightenment severed us – nature and the spirit world (Lebowitz, 2014).

Ecofeminism is another wave of feminism but their philosophy does not influence my art practice. This movement wants to honor the power of nature and not allow mankind to exploit the resources of the natural environment (Sturgeon, 1997). This philosophical system does not interfere in my conceptual belief but the activity of the ritual appeals to the aims of my art practice, in engaging with the nontraditional environment.

Mandieta and her family had been exiled from Cuba to the United States in 1961 and her work addressed her feelings of loss and exile. Mandieta tried to redefine her identity through land art which supports the argument of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre describing identity of self as always being located in space.

“Nostalgia, homesickness, patriotism, nationalism—are an example of the role landscapes play in the psychic investment in identity” (DeLue and Elkins, 2010 p.192).

The work of Mandieta showed me the importance of engagement with the landscape and how this interaction between artist and the landscape created an art piece. Her work with its complete engagement with the essence of the land opened up possibilities for me to find a unique way, a more intimate connection, using all my senses, sight, touch, taste and smell to raise the level of my own art practice.

The landscape partnership

For a whole day I immersed myself in ways of engaging with the landscape. First I observed the landscape from different vantage points and recorded my finding through research documentation. This process inspired me to find an area where I could engage directly with the substance of the landscape and become part of that landscape, monitoring this process using photography as a main part of my investigation. The results of these experiments were transferred to the studio and using my visual art skills (Prince, 2012).

Using multimedia (Photoshop and Premier Pro) image and video editing I searched for ways to use the landscape as a medium (Rose, 2012), a space, a canvas for the expression of my feelings. I also brought samples of the earth with stones, leaves and roots in small bags to the studio to experience the feel and smell of the earth within the landscape. I observed how, through the prism of ecofeminism practice the landscape was named as a Goddess. This laboratory investigation prompted me to personalize the environment. The culmination of this study of the landscape and what it had to offer to my art practice was the realization that landscape was not a medium, not a space but that my art actually depended on the landscape as a partner. This artistic assumption is supported by definition of landscape: Land means both the physical features of a place and its population. Skabe and Schaffen mean:

"To shape," and the suffixes -skab and -schaft, as in the English -ship, also mean association, partnership. There is a notion, embedded in the original word, of a mutual shaping of people and place: people shape the land, and the land shapes people” (DeLue and Elkins, 2010 pp. 159-160).

The landscape becomes a partner which I have to understand, accept and trust, and therefore becomes a conduit for expression in its own terms, terms which I immerse myself and my art in, in a sense of unification with nature.

Chapter 3

The Response of Artistic Elements to the Landscape

Chapter three concentrates on the artistic aspects of the research investigation and accumulates in the staging of a performance in the gallery space. In this section I focus on the conceptual aspect of the role of the audience as a core element in the performance structure.

Material element as the primary component to support the concept of the performance in Landscape

At a certain point in my quest for a better understanding of my social and spiritual needs I became aware of a necessity to rebuild my identity. In my pursuit of this identity, I reverted back to memories of my earlier family life situations. This led me to focus on the dynamics which existed in my family with regard to the behaviour of all the female members of my home, including my mother, grandmother and cousins.

At one stage of that research I discovered that there were stories and traditions handed down from generation to generation within my family. One of these stories, told to me by my friend was of a woman who, when cooking meat for dinner, always diced the meat in even cubes. One day she questioned herself as to why she needed to dice the meat in this way. She was dicing the meat just as she had seen her mother always do but until now had never asked why. She then went to her mother to ask her why she had always also diced the meat. Her mother looked a bit puzzled but said that she had learned to dice the meat in this way from her mother also and suggested that both of them go to the grandmother to ask her why this tradition had been handed down through the family. When asked, the grandmother smiled and said, "I don't know about you ladies but I only diced the meat to fit into my small pan".

This story stayed with me and provoked within me a desire to focus on this sense of repetition which seems to exist within our lives as part of our genetic inheritance. Adding to this awareness of the existence of a pattern of repetition, which also affects my own life, I became aware that this repetitive behaviour was a kind of ballast being carried forward and its influence was a factor in shaping my character in some way.

To manifest my life observations it was essential for me to bring this concept of a trace of repetition into my art practice in such a way that it would become an element of my performance. To highlight the concept of repetition within my live art performance, I utilised two components. One was the visual characteristic of the material used and the other was the sound created by the repetitive movement of the fabric.

In my previous artistic practice I was engaged with fabric but only on a superficial level, using it as a raw component but not a core element in my work. That gave me the realization that gaps were left in my knowledge which needs to be filled through research as part of my M.A. work.

At the beginning of my Masters course, I created a performance called 'Life Traces' in which I used fabric as my medium. This fabric was made of silk and was six metres long. I had decided to use this type of material as it reflected the lighting of the studio, creating interesting patterns of shadow and light construction. I presented this live performance in ACRO Studio. This studio space was small and very confined and this caused me to consider a larger and more appropriate space outside the formal gallery environment as a mentioned in Chapter Two of this written work.

Through this examination I found new stage for my performance which was woodlands.

The first step in my investigation was to find a connection between the fabric as an artistic tool and my new chosen performance space. I experimented in different ways to find a key work to develop this medium in my project (Howell, 1999). The first experiment was combined with the phenomenon of nature (rain, wind etc) as I dragged a length of the silk fabric through the landscape to check collaboration with nature. All this process I described in the second section of the thesis which focused on the interaction between nature and the performer. Through this experiment I noticed how fabric reacted to the elements in the environment by changing shape and form in the wind, how heavy it became in rain. In a subsequent experiment, I attached the fabric to two tree trunks and left it as part of the environment for two days and returned to record how it responded to the elements of wind and rain and see if it changed in any visible way compared to a longer time frame. This gave me the opportunity to consider how these effects of nature could be incorporated into my art practice.

Another test in non traditional environment was to drag the fabric through a curved

pathway and observe how the fabric behaved when it negotiated corners marked by tree trunks and how it responded to this movement. It was very noticeable how there was lack of friction on the ground because of the material smooth surface. The fabric was also partly buried in loose clay at the base of a fallen tree and was documented through photography the contrast between the colours of the landscape and the visual attributes of the fabric.

As part of my performance activity I buried the end of the fabric in the earth and observed the impact of stretch on the fabric as I gradually pulled this piece from the ground. Through this action the material element ripped. This activity was developed through time where I sought to define the struggle as a main character in my art concept. An important finding from this process is the fact that a studio space is predictable and controllable space, whereas the space outside remains unpredictable and uncontrollable.

These experiences brought to my attention the importance of the type of fabric to be considered for use in each environment. This practice research informed me that it was necessary to find a suitable fabric which would give me better control as an artist in the pursuit of collaboration between material and the landscape.

My next step in the project was to systematically test varieties of fabric in combination with performance activity. One type of fabric that I experimented with was Lycra. Lycra has elasticity and crystal like construction which reflects light in sparkling, magnificent way. This fabric, when brought to the environment of the landscape, and tested through my activity was seen to be problematic because of its physical structure, and was inclined to catch in the surrounding objects i.e., rocks, branches, and therefore stretch in length. The result of this research emphasised to me the need to seek out another type of fabric which would be more suitable to the task. I decided that I needed a heavier, non stretch fabric which kept its shape, these attributes would help me to control the movement of the conceptual element.

Compared to my previous perception, the fabric needed to retain its shape, integrate with the landscape and present itself as being in harmony with the environment. Cotton fulfilled the conditions of these demands. I researched this idea further by working with

a two meter length of cotton. Observing the interplay between the cotton and the landscape and comparing the results against collected data about the interaction of other types of fabric in the same landscape environment.

When observing with the aid of photography and video, the attributes of the surrounding landscape, I noticed how the vastness of the landscape presented itself in a variety of long and linear ways. This suggested to me that in order to integrate my art with this environment more fully, I also needed my performance piece to become part of the landscape and reflect in some way my relationship with the landscape as an equal partner. For this reason I decided to increase the length of the fabric piece. The idea to add more pieces of material also supported my conceptual frame of work to visualize a pattern of repetition. Every single new piece of fabric represented the ballast of family tradition and give extra weight which increased the struggle.

For the next few weeks, I experimented with a longer piece of cotton of approximately ten meters in length (5 pieces) and recorded my efforts on video with a view to examining and critiquing my performance. I discovered that the performance activity to pull it along the pathway emphasised the separation of me from the fabric. The concept of my performance aims to illustrate struggle or the tension created by genetic repetition.

To refine the visual message of my performance project I came to the realization that I needed to become merged with the fabric. To support this idea, I researched a number of live art performers who also used fabric at the essence of their work. An artist who I researched was Aine Phillips who performed a live art piece entitled *'Red Weight'* throughout Europe in different environmental settings (Obieg, 2013). In this performance Phillips walked in a red dress with a long train consisting of 600 pieces of clothing tied together with heavy knots. When she was walking with this dress, she was presenting the enormous difficulty of the task and the dignified attempt to succeed. This performance evoked a helpful response from the onlookers as her struggle with the weight of the dress was very evident. Her idea of using a dress was an inspiration for my project and I was able to adapt this element and apply it into my project, by creating a dress. My project also deals with tension and struggle but does not rely on a visual manifestation of that struggle. Instead, my performance investigates how the landscape

could support the concept of tension within my art practice.

Reflecting on my previous performance in ACRO Studio and how I had interacted with and worked the length of fabric within my art piece, I considered how I could become merged with the fabric within a landscape setting. This idea of merging with the fabric resulted in me returning to the woods with the material to consider the best way to approach this. My first attempt to achieve this state of merging with the fabric was to make a hole in one end of the material and place the fabric over my shoulders and allow it to hang behind me in the form of a long cape.

I proceeded to walk through the woods with the fabric trailing behind me. This process presented the fact of how the fabric was difficult to pull along and actually produced a very strong resistance, causing strain on my neck and shoulders. This meant a loss of control for me over the fabric and resulted in a struggle between me and the material which became a distraction.

To remedy this situation, I returned to my studio and made a dress. I decided to design the dress so as the train would become a natural extension of the material which included extra pieces of fabric and not just appear to be attached to the bottom of the dress. This was achieved by cutting out a triangle from the bottom of the dress, extending approximately one quarter way up the back and sewing the train to the edges of the fabric.

This new construction when tested in the landscape gave me the freedom to move and control the fabric in a way that allowed me to concentrate on my being in the landscape without having to emphasise the struggle with the material. When testing the suitability of this new dress, I had walked with it through the pathways and recorded this on video from a few different angles and vantage points. On reviewing the video, I noticed how the train of the dress appeared to coast along within the frame of the pathways and produced an image which seemed to blend with the landscape as part of a natural flow.

Another outcome of this research experimentation was the realization that although I felt the idea of merging with the landscape what was obvious, but the length of fabric used did not produce the desired visual outcome. It became apparent that when walking

with a train of ten metres, the actions of the fabric within the performance would only be observed at a given point for a very limited and short time as I walked along the pathway. This meant that an onlooker could only be immersed in the performance for a short time and not have the opportunity to contemplate the art piece for a prolonged period.

To overcome this issue, I added more pieces of fabric to the length of the dress to prolong the moment of contemplation and in the same time show visual repetition as the main aspect in the concept in my project. The train was made from bed sheets which measured 1.8 metres each in length and I sewed an extra twelve sheets to the end of the dress (total 14 bed sheets), giving me a total train of thirty two metres. On the end I added a piece of lycra to emphasise the light. The time taken to pass a given point had increased considerably, and I felt this allowed ample opportunity for the viewer to experience and appreciate the connection that I the artist had made with the surrounding landscape and at the same time visualize the concept of bland genetic repetition.

Audience

One of the biggest components in performance construction is the connection between the artist and the audience (Auslander, 2003). In my project the meditative character of the woodlands space was the main aspect utilized to build a metaphysical bridge between the onlooker and the art itself.

In the first phase of my research the woodlands provided a mirror image of nature as a contemplative space, proffering the magic aura of the surroundings, changing human thoughts and reflections on present moments and providing a metaphysical climate to contemplate the characteristics of the landscape. This woodland while surrendering to the changes of the seasons reinforced the concept of genetic repetition. The vastness of nature cooperated with the artist through the performance to bring the onlooker into a state of mental trance, where landscape and performer mingled as one.

Another important factor of the connection with the onlooker was the white dress with a long train. The slow walking movement of the performer invited the onlookers to contemplate the motion and sounds generated by the movement of the dress and absorb the stimuli offered by the environment. The whiteness of the dress standing out from the

surrounding greenery generated the feeling of respect. The process of creating this project provoked obvious questions; should the onlooker be in front and facing me during the performance? Does my face convey an emotion which is significant in this project?

The knowledge gained through research was very helpful at this level of exploration and drew attention to the relationship between the landscape and the artist. This relationship of interdependence between the artist and the landscape means that the position of the viewing audience is irrelevant. From whatever angle the onlooker sees the performance they will be able to contemplate the symbiosis between the art and the landscape. The emotion on the face of performer has to be realistic, has to show the emotional aspect of dialogue with the environment. The artist, during the performance is grounded in the conceptual world which helps to assimilate on the face, feelings of communication with the landscape. This practice places the onlooker as witness to this live art project based on the artist's relationship with nature and deals with the conceptual message of art.

Connection with audience in gallery space was based on white cube definition.

Within the gallery space, an artificial environment is evident. There is an obvious contrast between the outside world and the intimacy of the white cube space. In the gallery all the elements of the natural world are banished.

Walls are painted white or in neutral colours, light is either excluded or set to create a specific ambiance or need. All distractions from without, including sounds, the rain and wind are eliminated to allow for an intimate visual dialogue between the onlooker and the art piece. The onlooker brings their own expectations when arriving into a gallery space. This gallery space has a familiarity, a safe zone for the observer. It may also possess boundaries, sometimes invisible, sometimes visible in the form of cordoned off areas to prevent physical contact with the art piece on view. The public in the gallery observe silence as a form of respect for other onlookers. This results in a set of limitations being placed on the onlooker, concentrating and focusing their attention on the art displayed (O'Doherty, 1986).

My performance work demands that I find within myself a state of tranquility. I revert to a place within my subconscious where I can feel a sense of renunciation, of the giving

of my whole being to the environment, disregarding my thoughts and feelings and allowing the moment of influence to empower and direct me. It is up to the audience to find their own level of engagement. I do not set out to create a tension between the audience and me; there are no rules for observation, no demands or boundaries placed on the onlooker. The onlooker arrives carrying the shackles of life's changes and chances. My performance is an invitation to stop, contemplate, observe and allow the flow of symbiotic energy created between the landscape and my performance to permeate the veils which form a barrier to the subconscious world of the observer, inviting him or her to be part of a greater conceptual journey, a catharsis.

My performance experience within the gallery proved to be very different from my experience in the natural surroundings of the open landscape. In the gallery setting, the audience retains some of the currency of exchange with the performer. The performer has to overcome the preconceptions and/or expectations of the audience and deliver the performance within confined parameters, allowing the spectator to see only a series of visible impulses (Kuppers, 2007).

“We attempt to eliminate the [performer's] organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses” (Auslander, 1997 p.35).

"The performance is not an illusionist copy of reality, its imitation; nor is it a set of conventions, accepted as a kind of deliberate game, playing at a separate theatrical reality... The actor does not play, does not imitate, or pretend. He is himself” (Osinski, 1986 p.25).

This statement by Grotowski supports my decision regarding the character of my performance activity, where I am myself contemplating and merging with the landscape. Generally the public would feel uncomfortable reacting to art with the nontraditional environment. Compared to a gallery space, where art is a backcloth and automatically acceptable as a given, the landscape provides a reverent aura for reflection on the art. To overcome this onlooker's reaction and adopt a concept of artistic partnership with the landscape I assume a posture of not playing, not imitating not pretending. This created character of the performer allows for more contemplative interaction between the spectators and art in the nontraditional environment.

Presenting Landscape In The Gallery Space

The main challenge in my performance work was to bring the intensity of the live performance in woodlands, into the gallery space. To transfer that intimate connection between me and the landscape into the studio, I had to cultivate an awareness of the boundaries of the framed landscape, include the necessary elements and compositions within that landscape and be confident that my choices would become understandable to the studio audience.

Within the process of research using photography, I had investigated many different areas of the woodland terrain through the camera viewfinder to establish the most aesthetically suitable areas with regard to composition, visual content, presence of light and the most importantly, feeling of collaboration between the vast landscape and my piece of art. Having previously recorded a large stock of photographs and video footage of the landscape, I returned to my studio to search through this archive for those areas of the landscape which produced the most real reflection of the woodland environment within the frame and captured the strongest visual connection between me the artist and my partner the landscape.

This I observed as though through the eyes of the audience to help me visualize how the performance would be viewed within the studio environment. I had monitored three separate areas of the woodlands. Firstly, I had decided to test out my performance in an area on a high ridge.

This terrain was flat and provided a long and winding path through a grove of young trees. To record this performance I opted to have the video camera follow my movements. When the camera was following me I was aware that the intimacy between me and the landscape was being compromised by the presence of a second person (the camera operator). I became aware that if this was reproduced in the studio that the audience would get the feeling that I was being pursued.

On reflection on the dynamics of this situation, I decided that a stationary camera recording the performance would eliminate this break in intimacy between artist and landscape. I proceeded to video record my performance from a fixed point. On the

subsequent review of this performance, I realized that although the fixed vantage point achieved a better visual connection between me and the landscape, there were problematic instances when due to the limitation of the camera lens, I moved in and out of the visible frame. This I felt interrupted the intimate connection between me and the landscape.

I then considered what would happen if I moved away from recording the vastness of the landscape, to instead, recording a smaller more concentrated element of the landscape, allowing me to focus on a more minimal connection between art and environment. To overcome this, I considered the possibility of using a high vantage point to record the performance. In order to achieve this, I mounted the camera on a tall stepladder. This new camera position enabled me to capture minimal images of the performance as the camera was focused on a more condensed area of the terrain. This experiment with a minimalist idea failed to show the connection felt between me and the landscape, which is the fundamental core of my project.

I proceeded to search the woodlands for a new setting which would better suit my requirements of connecting with the landscape. Previous experience had shown me the advantage of a fixed camera at a high vantage point and I found a steep hill within the woods which had all the elements I needed to fulfil my requirements with regard to the learning outcomes of my preceding work. I felt that this new area of the landscape contained within its frame, all the components of nature and the ability to portray a complete sense of my activity as a performer in partnership with the landscape.

For a number of days I observed this space and recorded the influence of nature, the elements and light on this area and how the changes in these diverse conditions in relation to my artistic activity, impacted on the landscape. The video which I would like to present in the gallery is an evidence of artistic collaboration with the landscape. To support this fact I had to pay special attention to the main attributes of nature. One result of this research was that I had observed how at a certain time of day, the shadows of the trees impacted strongly on my dress as I performed in this area. This was a confirmation, that this chosen area would be best suited to my needs in my endeavour to manifest the landscape in the studio setting. I proceeded to document the effect and strength of the light at given times from early morning until late in the afternoon, to

ascertain the best time frame for performing in that area of the landscape. Firstly, I observed how the light coming from an Easterly direction in the early morning influenced the colours of the undergrowth and because of the topography of the terrain, no shadows of branches or leaves were cast on the ground. At midday, there were some shadows but light in general was too stark and without appeal. The time that produced the best quality of light with lush deep shadows was between 4pm and 5pm in the afternoon, with the sun in a South-Westerly position.

In reviewing the video footage of my performances in this new space, I noticed a coherent relationship between the sounds of the natural environment and the sound of the pieces of fabric being drawn behind me. There was a definite repeat pattern in the sounds of the leaves rustling, the rise and fall of the wind, the repeated calls of the birds and a faint but intriguing sound was audible of the 'swoosh' of the material as it moved along the ground in time with my footsteps. I decided the sound of the movement of the dress needed more prominence in the overall sound-scape of the performance and to remedy this I set up a microphone to record the sounds of the dress separately. This was achieved by placing a high quality recording device on a mini tripod on the ground at the side of the pathway where the dress train passed.

This audio from this recording was later mixed into the original audio of the performance allowing for a more focused attention to the repetitive sound created by the pieces of fabric. I made a conscious decision to prolong the audio in the video after the fadeout of the visual image for period of thirty seconds. The intention was to leave a trace of the performance image in the mind of the onlooker. Audio is a critical component and part of the evidence of the landscape being brought into gallery space.

Through dealing with private challenges with regard to the strong impact of the landscape I captured the right frame of the environment demonstrating my performance activity. This video piece provides strong evidence of my art project, which was prepared to introduce in the gallery space to the viewers. Through performance definition which informs, space in performance art is a component element in this discipline, this obliged me to scrutinize the gallery space, and test the best options to present my work.

My exhibiting space included two separate areas. The first room was a standard white cube space of a considerable expanse. The second space was an intimate blackened video room, perfect setting for my principal performance video. This decision was supported by my memory of the presentation of the exhibition of Janine Antoni. In her gallery work she presented simply a horizontal landscape, projected on the wall which she interacted with. Antoni installed a tight rope corresponding to the line of the beach horizon as she traversed the rope it appeared that she was walking across the horizon of the landscape (Video Presentation: Janine Antoni, 2010). Her performance settings provided an intimacy between the onlookers and art. Her context of presenting the landscape confirmed for me, the choice of the video space as an appropriate area to present my primary video evidence of live performance and construct a contemplative atmosphere within a gallery setting.

Using the gallery space, my aim was to introduce to the public the two main components of the performance in separate areas. Initially, to present the landscape proved to be perplexing because this environment context has many different elements of nature as confirmed by Rolson's definition of the landscape. On this level of research I have to return to studio and review my main video to determine the most prominent character of the landscape (Saaze, 2013). As a result of this research I decided to specify light in the form of shadow as a primary attribute of the landscape. This I captured in a separate video to be screened on adjoining walls. The reason for projecting on both walls was to simulate the vastness of the landscape.

The white dress with the accumulation of elements of the landscape (stains, lives, twigs, insects and smell of the environment) was an obvious component. This was a different challenge to present this element compared to a shadow on the wall in the frame of the gallery space. Early on in my research I had experimented with different activity connecting the fabric to the landscape. Through photography which was the main source of documentation of this level of practice I noticed the spiral shape of the fabric was the strongest way to represent repetition which was the main aspect in my performance concept.

During my research I experimented with the spiral shape of the fabric in the landscape which stood out in the surrounding environment. This form could not be accommodated

within the framework of the landscape setting because it was an evidence of human intervention which is alien to the natural scenario however the gallery space with all the parameters of a white cube definition was suitable for this form of presenting my dress. The upper part of the dress which covers the performer's body was presented on the end of the spiral construction, to highlight the evidence of a struggle which represented the ballast of genetic repetition.

The dress in the gallery was set up adjacent to the shadow projection to reinforce intimacy between the landscape and evidence of performance. Very important in the gallery set up presentation was a conceptual balance between two species, the first room introduced narrative objects but the second presented the video with artistic action in the natural scenario.

The presented art in the two gallery zones collaborated with each other. The art installation in the first room which was the shadow projection and the dress placed on the floor, introduces the landscape. When the viewers move to the second space where the live art was presented through the video the concept of the art piece in the non-traditional environment becomes clear. Then on returning to the first space after contemplating the video, the concept of relationship between the landscape and art is more visible.

Chapter 4

Reframing the Landscape in my art practice and conclusion

Chapter four clarifies the meaning of the landscape as a new non-traditional environment through the prism of my systematic art research, defining the characteristic of the landscape which I can adopt in my live art project and also in my future art practice. I am presenting a new meaning of the landscape as a performer and artistic partner which is the essence of the research investigation.

The characteristic of the landscape.

In the beginning of my research I set out to define the meaning of landscape. Through the findings of my practice supported by definitions:

“Anne Whiston Spirn: If you look at the roots of the word landscape in Nordic and Germanic languages, for example, Danish landskab, German Landschaft, or Old English landscipe, you see a combination of meanings that associate a place and the people who dwell there, past and present. Land means both the physical features of a place and its population. Skabe and schaffen mean "to shape," and the suffixes -skab and -schaft, as in the English -ship, also mean association, partnership. There is a notion, embedded in the original word, of a mutual shaping of people and place: people shape the land, and the land shapes people” (DeLue and Elkins, 2010 p.S 92).

Reflecting on this quotation prompted me to engage with nature, to classify roles of the landscape in my performance art project. I created a sub quotation which assisted in clarifying the main question of my investigation. This clarification helped me to perceive if the landscape was my medium, my performance space or my partner in the artistic project. That laboratory work which I described in chapter two informed me as an artist that I have to create an artistic bond with the environment. I have to engage with the landscape with its own terms and accept the natural rules and qualities inherent in nature, to enrich and enhance my artistic practice.

My artistic definition of the landscape, which I uncovered through practice, that the landscape is my partner in the artistic project, is a core theoretical element which I used to re-frame the connection with my new artistic space. Research theory supported me to understand forms of communication between my work and the landscape and using my life experience with regard to living in different cultures, I was aware that communication remains a fundamental aspect to arrive at a better understanding of the landscape. Observing the diverse characteristics of the environment including the phenomena of nature, light, sounds, smells and textures within the given framework, opened channels of dialogue between my artistic practice and the non traditional

environment space.

I adopted the natural rules of the landscape as a language for better communication between the environment and my art practice. This part of my research investigation was extremely important for my art and in showing me a direction in how to use and adapt different environments as a co-component in generating art.

In the initial phase of my research I endeavoured to examine different performance spaces. My artistic practice in the studio and gallery space resulted in me developing my main performance component which was 'space' in live art practice. Within the proposal I expected I would be able to examine diverse spaces as a stage for performance using linear methods of research (Brown, Gough, and Roddis, 2004). After two months of experimentation I understood that the chosen environments were too vast with all their natural structures and my intuitive skills prompted me to concentrate on one particular area. These decisions gave me more possibilities and time to refine a particular landscape setting which increased my artistic confidence and knowledge in how to use the non-traditional environment in my performance project. Initially, I planned to produce a series of performances in different landscape scenarios.

This research practice using sequential methodology was of enormous assistance in understanding the general aspect of my new performance stage. Through test performances on spaces with dissimilar attributes in my environment, I was able to pay attention to the miscellaneous elements of nature including the influence of the weather on the terrain, the light conditions and how they changed compared to the time of day and varied topography. Each day's research in the woodlands increased my understanding of my new artistic space and developed in me a greater respect for the laws of nature and an understanding of how to communicate on a fundamental level with these natural principals. This theory created a special interrelation between me and the landscape and I assimilated this form of relationship into my art practice.

Fundamental to my research work was documentation. I had examined one particular space for about two months, which had to be recorded and well documented. My system of work required quick access to my notes to be able to compare each month of research investigation and pull out new evidence to use in the next step of examination (Sullivan,

2010). The best form of documentation suited to my art practice was a virtual note book on my computer. Every different folder was like a catalogue which included a specific time of research investigation supported by video and photography and systematic work.

My final performance became the culminating moment when I could place together every piece of my practice and documentation in the single unit of my live art. This performance was like an artistic manifesto presenting a performative form of art supported by the connection between the landscape and the artist. For me as an artist that moment produced the pleasure of engaging an audience with my new relationship with the natural environment and the audience had the opportunity to experience the melody of silent dialogue between art and nature.

My project depended on sequential work supported by systematic research which was the main element to create a special language between me the artist and non traditional performance space, the landscape. In concluding, I combined my research information, evidence of my practice in the form of photography, video and I sifted through artistic criticism. This process created extra capability for my performance project and built a strong foundation for my future art practice.

All my artistic practices are based on conclusions from previous art works. This information builds my knowledge which I can apply in future potential projects. Those facts prove that the conclusion phase is the most important for me as an artist, giving me a basis for something new, extra artistic skills which I can use and develop to find a better form for presenting my art. Every element which I discover and research in my project is an important component in the next art production.

The knowledge accumulated through a number of years of combining performance theory with consistent performance practice, facilitated a smoother, more confident creative flow when brought into the gallery setting. While exhibiting art or performing in the white cube space I am using the same technical standards which I have gained in the course of continuous practice to develop my ideas. After several years of adhering to the gallery standards, I noticed that presenting art between the gallery walls creates a specific connection between the onlooker and the art on view. Traditionally, the moment

the viewer enters the gallery they expect art in any form and engage with the unspoken rules and conventions of the gallery. I considered the possibility of presenting my performance in a non traditional environment and wondered at the challenges I might encounter and how I would have to change the common artistic parameters to suit this new space. This implied that my research framework needed to broaden in order for me to come to an understanding with these new boundaries, boundaries which had new implications for both the onlooker and me the artist in the presentation of my art.

I made a conscious decision to explore the landscape as a non traditional environment with, initially, the aim of using the landscape as a stage or space in which to perform and offering the same impact as a conventional studio or exhibition space. The term landscape conjures up a very broad variety of visual settings and has numerous possibilities with regard to diverse types of terrain, for example, a beach, mountains, lakeside or forest. Analogically, the raw landscape could be compared to a lump of clay without any shape. Through my systematic research methods I had to knead that clay into a mould to build alternative vignettes of the landscape which would be best suited to the framework of my new project.

In my first phase of this aspect of my research project, my thoughts were to stimulate an intuitive and subjective form of work. I observed the landscape as an object which I could involve in my art practice, I attempted to find a physical form and use it as an instrument in my performance. During a period of approximately one month, I examined a woodland landscape as a medium for performance. As fabric was a crucial element in my studio work, I set out to explore the possibilities of how to incorporate this substance within the framework of the particular landscape setting and recorded my response to the fabric and my response to the blend of material and environment as stated in Chapter Two. I wrapped a tree with a length material and pulled fabric through some branches, searching for a reaction of struggle between me and my artistic medium-the landscape. These controlled activities did not achieve the desired result. My new artistic medium, the landscape, with its all natural phenomena was unpredictable. It was like a wild horse which I could not tame.

This situation informed me that I needed to return to the theoretical ideas, redefine my performance definition and concentrate one of the main components in this art form which is space. Through my theoretical framework I became aware of the significance

of space, a place where the performer presents his or her own concept of art. During the following two months of investigating the landscape I observed the diverse characteristics of the terrain with a view to creating a new stage for my performance art. The weather conditions, light, time of day, phenomena of nature were major attributes which had to be considered and reckoned with in any attempt to describe in a systematic way, the space that would fit my artistic project. Very basic elements of the environment could change the aura of the artistic interpretation of my concept, so it was very important to recheck every corner of the new performance stage to observe how it would react with art activity. After many performatic attempts in different locations in the woodland area, I recognised my new non traditional environment was too vast with its own horizontal character, to choose any one space as a core element in my performance art. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the landscape as my space I would need an ongoing time-frame to describe and document every element of nature, but this would not necessarily throw new light on my research investigation.

At this stage in my research I arrived at a mental barrier in trying to understand a new meaning of the non traditional environment in my art. Without any theoretical ideology I walked in the woodlands area in my white and extremely long dress absorbing the aura of the surrounding nature. This practice prompted me to finding established artists who had adopted the landscape to their artistic practice. I uncovered the work of Ana Mendieta. Mendieta, by describing her own art, emphasises her extraordinary connection with the landscape using the philosophy of ecofeminism (Buchloh et al., 2004). Her practice encouraged me to engage with the landscape in a new way, and to connect with the landscape on this new level I employed my human senses. Through this idea I engaged in a very intimate encounter with my environment which involved an ecofeminism ritual to feel my body assimilated with the natural landscape. This process I recorded through photography and video which assisted me to communicate with the landscape using a non verbal dialog. The result was that this practice confirmed for me, the inclusion of the non traditional environments in my art. Reviewing the photography documentation illustrated to me that the landscape could perform as my partner. By entering a new meaning of the landscape in my research practice, I observed the surrounding nature with a different eye and deeper emotional engagement. This new relationship with my environment provided me with a completely new understanding and attitude to the landscape and empowered me to respect, share with and to trust the

manifest qualities of nature which are the core elements in cooperating with the landscape. This was the catalyst for a more profound acceptance of the landscape as my partner.

This new definition in my research, describing the non traditional environment, allowed for an interaction between my work and the landscape. In my conclusion this process helped me decipher the language spoken by nature in communication with my art and at the same time my art could collaborate with diverse aspects of nature. Returning to one of the research questions guiding this project: What is the relevance of my performance practice in the non-traditional environment?

In the beginning of my research, at the time when I wrote my proposal, I was convinced that the vastness of the non-traditional environment could support the conceptual aspects of my project and also support and highlight in a visual way the long piece of fabric within the surrounding landscape. That was my initial aim in my research. Through my research investigation I realised that to accomplish my aims I have to find a common dialogue so that my art and the landscape inform each other. Partnership communication between my art and non traditional environment is a metaphysical bridge which leads to a positive resolution of my research aims.

How to use my artistic partnership in my future art practice

In the last few centuries civilization has developed to an extremely high level, but has lost its connection with nature. Previously, mankind was in symbiosis with Mother Nature. All behaviour was dependent on weather; seasonal changes which synchronized with the nature and biological clock of human existential life.

In contemporary times people do not contemplate the connection with nature to the same degree that their ancestors did. The fundamental trust between man and nature has been blurred because of the adaption of modern science and technology. All the different branches of science prove the importance of our co-existing with nature on different spheres, biological, social and political life. My research work proves how important the relationship is between art and the natural environment to highlight artistic visualisation.

During a year of investigation into the landscape I concluded that our environment is like an artistic partner whom we artists have to understand and respect with all its natural rules to be able to present together a more comprehensive art work. We artists have to analyse those rules in theory, definition and practice and in a tangible way recheck all the elements of the landscape to engage fully with it on its own terms. This knowledge unites the artist with the landscape which is a strong foundation for building the art practice. My conclusion supports a better evaluation of my artistic practice in future. This will help me in a more fluent way to assimilate my project into a different environment using the knowledge gained from my research into all aspects of the landscape.

I intend to engage my performance art with different types of landscapes e.g. mountain terrains, beachscape or urban area. I will adapt my research investigation to any particular given environment, to build a new relationship and prove how important the connection is between art and nature. In each different environment I will deploy my system of checks which corresponds to my previous research.

System of checks:

1. Characteristics of the season
2. Altering weather conditions
3. Light timing
4. Topography of the landscape

The acquired knowledge motivated me to get acquainted with new landscape settings and from this time I resolved to use a new environment as a new performance partner. That obliged me to evaluate the timing compared to natural light, topography, and other elements of nature like weather conditions characteristic of each season. The important aspect of research work is emotional understanding of the landscape. Through the senses, for e.g. touch, smell, vision and sometimes taste I can establish a link with my environment equally developing my artistic confidence which is a vital aspect in creating art. This will enable me to set up my concept of art in any new scenario.

Through my research I was able to determine how important are different types of fabric depending on what type of terrain they will be used in. For instance if I would like to

perform my art in an urban setting with lots of architectural obstacles to smoothen the flow of my performative activity I have to adapt to a different type of fabric. The cotton which I used in woodlands area was heavy which helped me collaborate with the terrain; the same material in an urban scenario could hinder me and restrict my movement.

My systematic research with different fabrics helped me to decide the best type of material for each environment. Through my research I came to an understanding of how to use the technical knowledge accumulated as building blocks in the structure of my performance art and use this knowledge as a connection with the landscape. Another challenge for me as an artist is to use the fabric (which was a conceptual component in my performance) as a visual art medium in a different area of art.

The landscape as a performer

Prior to this research, my view of the landscape environment was that it presented itself as a matrix for the cultivation of the earthy beauty of nature that surrounds us, creating an atmospheric place or space which humanity could survive and live in, observe, contemplate and feel content within. But, after months of research investigation I perceived the landscape from a different artistic perspective.

On studying Rolston's Theory of Landscape Aesthetics (Light and RolstonIII, 2003), I found a new direction which enabled me to redefine the environment as a space. I began to survey several aspects of the landscape separately to scrutinize all the elements of nature, including flora, fauna, the diverse weather characteristics, sounds and smells, in order to achieve a deeper appreciation of the phenomena of nature and use nature as a vital aspect in my performative project.

To understand the specifics of landscape as 'picturesque', I had to engage with the definition of the landscape through the history of art. As a starting point, I condensed the information from a conversation between thirteen specialists in the history of art, in which they define art through the prism of the landscape. This discussion took place at the Burren College of Art, Ballyvaughan in Ireland on June 17th, 2006 and was published in James Elkins book Landscape Theory. The information I gleaned from this discussion assisted me to look at the landscape from a multi perspective viewpoint and

helped me to understand this natural sphere from within a new framework, supported by my systematic research methods.

The characteristic forms within the landscape definition implied I had to examine my new non traditional environment as an object but the unpredictable and extremely powerful laws of nature did not allow me to adopt the landscape as a controllable object. Through the definition of performance art I started to examine the landscape as a space, as a new natural stage on which I could present my performative project. This research strategy was also found to be ineffective, as the landscape turned out to be too vast to draw the metaphorical lines of the potential shape of the stage for the performance art.

This new situation called for a re-evaluation of my research fields and prompted me to draw on elements of practice from within the Ecofeminist movement (Buchloh et al., 2004). Although the philosophy of that group of artists was or is not relevant to the concept of my project, all the rituals around this artistic spectrum directed me to engage with the landscape and create a communicative, non verbal language between the landscape and me. Reflecting on Elkins' theory:

“The understanding of landscape as “landscape’s a sign of another sense of landscape, our forth sence: Landscape as viewed object, a something built out of representations of space and time” (DeLue and Elkins, 2010 p.93).

Using my senses of sight, touch, smell and taste I re-engaged intimately with the landscape to understand and accept the power and the sublimity of nature. As a consequence of this engagement with the landscape and through observing natural phenomena such as the dancing trees, the contemplating grass and the swimming paths, I could personalize the landscape and regard it as my artistic partner.

But can I name the landscape the performer? Throughout my investigation it was very noticeable that nature was ‘acting’ to cooperate with time and space. The leaves started growing by the beginning of spring, producing bigger shadows, in April the blue bells were fully blooming in the direction of the sun, and only in the early morning dew could the pearling on the fresh green leaves be observed. According to the life art definition, the research investigation proved the landscape is a performer which is acting in symbiosis with the surrounding natural environment conservatively in time and place.

Renowned English theatre director, Peter Brook and author of *The Shifting Point: Forty Years of Theatrical Exploration, 1946-87* set out to reinvigorate theatre practice through a theatrical vocabulary not tied to language. This idea of a raw emotional experience was exactly what I wanted the onlooker in the landscape to become cognisant of, and at the same time, corroborated with my artistic aim to integrate with the landscape as a non traditional environment. Supported by this theory of the landscape, I could therefore carry out my work which involved collaborating with the intrinsic elements of my natural surroundings, without physically interfering with the landscape. This artistic partnership epitomizes the importance of the knowledge of the performing partner, in this case the landscape, which leads to trust, understanding and acceptance, the foundation and building blocks on which I could build my live art performance relationship with the landscape.

In trying to answer the questions; how can the environment inform my work, and how can my work interact with a particular landscape, it became evident to me that the landscape is actually, on its own terms, a performer. This conclusion indicates to me, that as an artist I have to be vigilant in my observation of the landscape as a performer. During my visual investigation of the performance space within the landscape, I could perceive that the landscape was communicating certain attributes such as atmosphere, natural gestures, charm, fantasy and evoking inspiration and imagination, all of which I subjected to the process of artistic analysis. This process assisted me to verify the most valuable facets of nature which are relevant to my art practice; lighting, characteristic of topography or weather condition and adopt them to my concept of art. Considering the landscape as a performer and a partner in my art implies that I accept the natural activity of the landscape as art without resorting to improvements. My non verbal dialog with the new non traditional environment based on understanding and trust led me to create a piece of art which creates a symbiosis between the power of nature and the aesthetic concept of art.

Responding to my research question: What is the relevance of my performance practice in non traditional environment? I concluded that artists have to personalize the landscape, look at it as a performer with whom they can build a new range of art and trust it as a partner to support a wide spectrum of picturesque and sublime artistic ideas.

The space is one of the main elements of the construction of live art which has a major impact on the characteristics of a performance. Space in the gallery is an example of that place, it is a framing space for contemporary art and everything placed within it is seen as art. In the white cube scenario it is easier to adapt the concept of an art piece than in a non traditional environment where the variations in the environment produce many different challenges. In a non-traditional space, the performance is not automatically conferred the status of art in the same way, it has to compete with a myriad of other objects and qualities and in the relationship it creates with nature find a new definition of itself as art.

My research practice observes that the landscape in live art is not fully functional as a space. However, this research concludes that through the acceptance of a dialogue with nature in a non-traditional setting for performance art, the landscape can be regarded as a partner.

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