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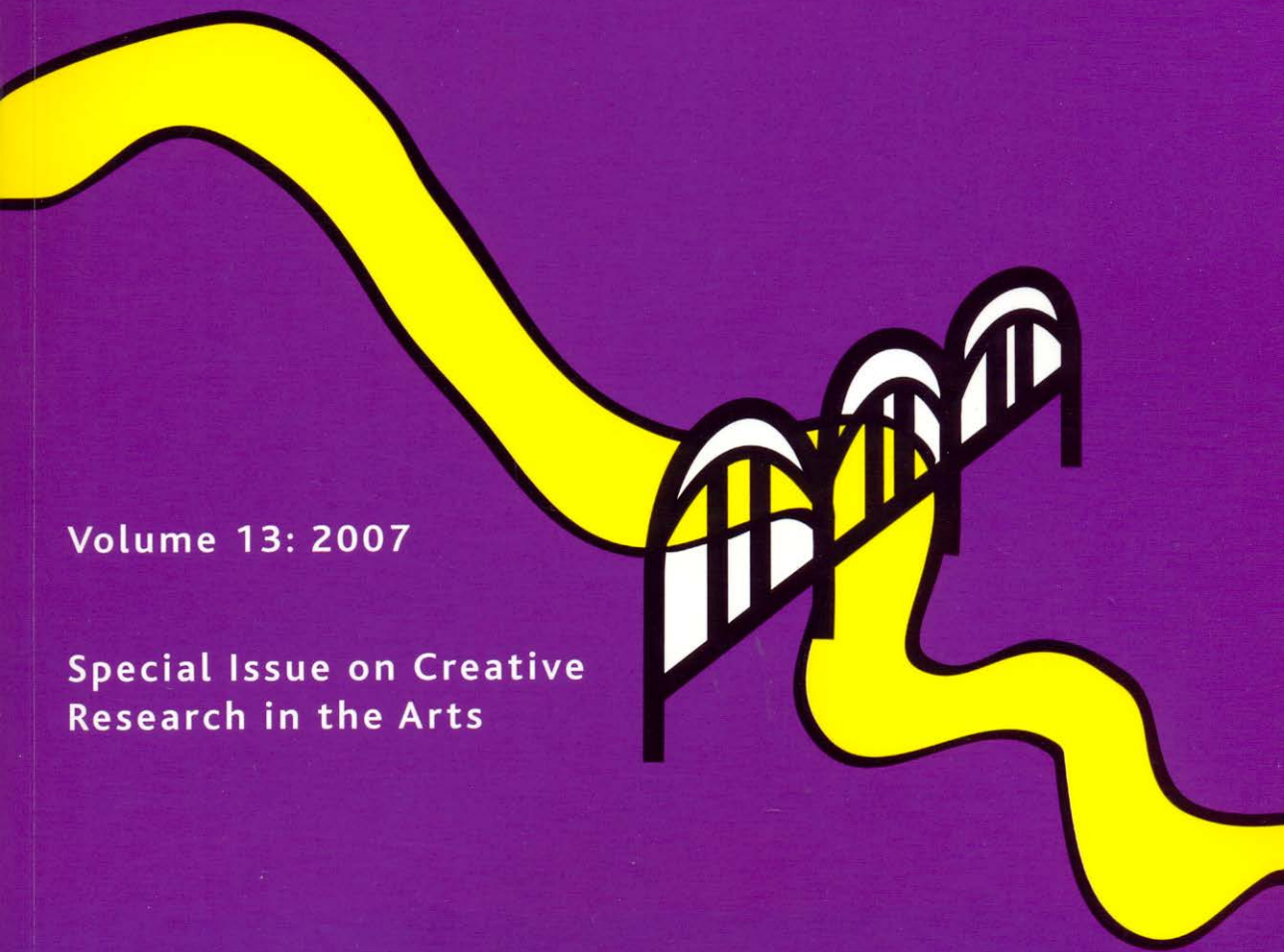
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Call for Papers

Special section 2008: *New developments in curriculum.*

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This special section focuses on new developments in curriculum, a topic of current interest in view of the introduction of the new New Zealand curriculum in 2007. The new curriculum calls for creative responses from teachers, teacher educators and others interested in the material and content of teaching. For the first time in New Zealand, pedagogy has been included in an account of the school curriculum, so the editors welcome any papers which reflect interaction between curriculum and pedagogy as well as subject-oriented or content-focused papers.

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INTERWEAVING PHILOSOPHIES OF DANCE TEACHING AND DANCE-MAKING: WHAT CAN ONE PRACTICE TEACH THE OTHER?

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ABSTRACT *In this article I will address the ways in which my practice and philosophy, as a choreographic artist, inform my teaching methodologies in the Dance Studies programme at the University of Otago. These issues formed part of an in depth auto-ethnographic research inquiry (East, 2006) that traced the threads of eco-philosophical thinking through both my artistic and educational practices. Emergent themes derived from written and video records of my dance-making (a selection of eight dances from the past twenty-five years) were matched with key features of deep ecology as identified by eco-philosophers such as Gablik (1991, 1993), Goldsmith (1992), Naess (1973, 1989), Roszak (1992), Suzuki (1997) and Trussell (1980, 1989). These include: holism; identity and diversity; inter-relationship; intuition and spontaneity; transformation; self determination; co-operation; and notions of community or place. They form the whenu (threads) that weave themselves through both my creative and educational processes and practices. For the purposes of this article I will very briefly discuss the implications of these eco-philosophical principles for my teaching, and in relation to my art making. I have termed this educational approach an eco-choreography pedagogy.*

KEYWORDS

Dance, Education, Ecology, Intuition, Identity, Relationship

PREAMBLE

“What if I were to think art was just paying attention?” (Kaprow, 1993, p. 202)

“The Wu Li Master does not teach, he dances with the student as he knows the universe dances with itself.” (Zukav, 1979, p. 8)

In broad terms, a framework for an eco-choreography pedagogy includes: 1. Teaching that acknowledges the whole being and that values intuition, tacit knowledge and diverse ways of knowing; 2. Teaching that emphasises collaborative art-making and co-operative learning; 3. Teaching that reinforces relationship with nature, culture and community (East, 2006, p. 162). There will not be time in this article to offer more than a few examples of actual course content and, since I am promoting a more intuitive approach to teaching that is grounded in the teacher’s

particular life experiences, it would seem appropriate to let readers find their own interpretation of these ideas in the classroom.

What follows is a brief explanation of the application of the key features of eco-philosophy within my teaching. A paradigm of ecological holism allows me to acknowledge all of my life experience, my art-making and the ideas of informed others as one inter-relational whole within my teaching practice. While my focus here is on the teaching of dance, it is hoped that some of the ideas put forward may be useful to all teachers of the creative arts.

HOLISTIC CONCEPTS

Key to my current practice is an interest in the deeper implications of experiential teaching and learning. According to Kolb (1984), experiential learning suggests “a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition and behaviour” (p. 21). In ecological terms, this form of learning recognises the whole creative, mental and physical being within an empathic environment of participatory consciousness (Heshusius, 1994). According to Heshusius (1994), a participatory consciousness results from the ability to “temporarily let go of all pre-occupation with self and move into a state of complete attention. [It reflects] ... a holistic epistemology ... [and] points to a merging into a larger and more complex reality” (pp. 17-18). This concept of holism accepts the processes of teaching and learning of dance (or any creative art-making) as interconnected with and identical to the processes of everyday living. Just as Brookfield (1990) states, “Teaching is about making some kind of dent in the world so that the world is different than it was before you practiced your craft” (p. 18), I wish to make a difference in students’ awareness of themselves, others and the world through dance. A holistic approach includes deep inter-relational seeing and attention paying. These skills may be practised in the choreography or art class as students learn to observe, record and respond creatively to their own sensations and thoughts as they arise, as one continuous integrated process.

IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY

The way that I teach is informed by my life experiences: my rural upbringing, my love of physical activity and the outdoors; my travels and conversations with artist and ecologist friends; my study of anatomy and physical education and my precocious early parenthood; my life as a dancer and choreographer; my general sociability and my passion for watching things grow. All of these experiences have become interwoven as relational metaphors into my teaching of choreography. Just as I acknowledge my own distinct history and draw on my experiences as an artist within my teaching, so too, like the distinct bird calls that co-exist within the sound spectrum of a mature forest (Krause, 1993), I endeavour to recognise and encourage the individual creative voices of each student in relation to one another. Within the choreography class this may translate as all stylistic expressions, languages and genres being acknowledged.

The notion of an ecological as opposed to an ego-centered self is one that acknowledges self in relation to others and to the environment – a self that is

“expanded beyond a concern for one’s own personal welfare” (Gablik, 1993, p. 307). In an ecological world view, self-identity is more a process of ‘becoming’ than a state of being. It is a constant transforming and evolving in relationship with one’s surroundings (Sewell, 1995). In the classroom this might translate as placing more emphasis on process than product, promoting a less competitive and more empathic and co-operative state of mind and in encouraging the students to make conscious links with broader world themes and issues within their art-making. It also means recognising and appreciating difference and diversity amongst learners. A variety of assessment items also supports a diversity of learning approaches and inclinations.

Notions of diversity (and inclusivity) also recognise cultural difference, differences in physical ability (Albright, 1997), different learning styles (Gardner, 1983) and different movement histories. Rather than prioritising one particular dance technique or style, these notions encourage the inclusion of other kinds of movement/‘dance’ vocabularies such as rock climbing, gymnastics or martial arts, Māori haka or various ethnic forms within dance-making.

What and how I teach is implicitly related to my identity as a dancer and choreographer and the students’ identities as choreographers. Just as, as a choreographer, I abstract and essentialise ideas into visual images within my art-making, as a teacher, I translate them into prompts and stimuli to facilitate students’ creativity. As I ground my teaching within *my* real life experience of co-operative and cross-disciplinary art-making, such as *Dance of the Origin*, (East, 1980) – a work involving the collaborative creation of dance, music and poetic narration, or *Islands* (East, 1992) – dance, live music, lights and set, I also acknowledge that each student’s (and each teacher’s) life experiences, ways of learning, creating (and teaching) will be different (Dewey, 1934; Gardner, 1983, 1994).

INTER-RELATIONSHIP

As I acknowledge our many differences and enter into this relationship with the students, I allow my ideas to be expanded and shaped by what I experience, by what I see the students do and by the interactions that I experience in the space. Madeline Grumet (1990) explains: “The classroom, the class period, provides the stage for transference of the relations within which we come to form; teachers and students, the cast of characters with whom we endlessly repeat, or perhaps transform, those relations” (p. 103). I am reminded of the way that I once described my participation in the cross-disciplinary performance improvisation, *Shared Agendas* (1998):

When I enter the performance arena I am opening myself to the possibilities of relationship: Relationship with myself, my intuition, muse, will. I am investigating my relationship with the environment or space. Most importantly, as a member of this interdisciplinary group, I am engaging in relationships with the other participants and I may also be interacting with the sound, lights or other scenographic elements within the space. I am ready to be surprised and excited by a new idea and I know that the decision to accept or reject it is mine.

I must also accept that any prior plans or decisions made as a group may change, be diverted, subverted, re-interpreted. I must be prepared to let my idea/decision go in the interest of the group event. (East, 1998, p. 9)

Grumet (1990) states, "To adopt the stance of the artist is to perform one's relation to the world for one's students" (p. 102). A similar sentiment was expressed earlier by Richards (1962), who writes, "The teacher works as an artist ... every class becomes a composition, producing its unique revelation and tone" (p. 41). In my class, one spark of an idea may fuel a whole lesson or a session might become a series of discreet, short-lived events.

As I 'perform' my teaching I become what Fraleigh (1987) describes as both the "knower and the known ... the possessor and the possessed" (p. 25). My particular form of knowing in this instance might be described as largely kinaesthetic (Gardner, 1983). According to Stinson (1995), our sensory ability as dancers "not only heightens our awareness of the other who is outside us, but also what is inside ourselves" (p. 44). During a spontaneous writing moment I wrote, while the students wrote, these words, capturing my simultaneous directing, dancing and observing:

Leave it on the page –
the pen – spiral roll to
all fours, curling to standing then –
down again. I fall, roll, slither
Lizard, no arms, no legs, no thought, no tree
to climb, no before, no now. I'm
underneath all that,
today here with you.
(Class Journal, 2004, cited in East, 2006, p. 135)

Gary Zukav (1979) observes that "the Wu Li Master does not teach, he dances with the student as he knows the universe dances with itself" (p. 8). So my dance and the students' dance become inter-related, one feeding the other as we explore and develop the images together.

SPONTANEITY AND INTUITION

When I teach, just as when I perform, I enter a mode of being where I am responding intuitively, rather than following a strict plan, to the events that I see taking place, alternately facilitating, directing or participating. Releasing Technique teacher Joan Skinner (cited in Dempster, 1994) describes a similar experience in her teaching: "When you're teaching, you're releasing as you're teaching. Not that you're going into the floor and giving yourself the work but you are in a released state as you're teaching" (p. 25).

When the body/mind is acting intuitively there is little room for self-consciousness, self doubt and other problems of ego which may interrupt the flow of expression and arrest learning. This approach to teaching and learning seeks below the ego to enter into the unconscious knowledge banks of an individual's

creativity and self expression. It has its roots in the work of somatic education practitioners such as Frederick Alexander, Moshe Feldenkrais and, later, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, Joan Skinner and Steve Paxton. The following piece of spontaneous writing reveals something of my mode of “conscious/unconsciousness” during one particular teaching moment in 2004:

Writing as though walking,
walking, seeing through
the ‘souls’ of my feet
as I write, with sand
between my toes.
Ancient bird like creatures
call and descend at my feet
make blackened marks
along this polished floor, writing –
walking my story.
(Class Notes, cited in East, 2006, p. 136)

An awareness of these connections between conscious decision-making and intuitive response expands the possibilities for teaching creative process. In the words of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (1993):

We can begin any exploration from a conceptual framework and discover its inherent origins through creative awakening. Or conversely, we can begin any exploration from the roots of our unknowing and discover the pattern as it manifests in expressed form. It is the dialogue and weave between the two that creates the full fabric of our individual, creative and cognizant self. (p. 13)

I have termed this aspect of my teaching Intuitive Movement Practice (IMP) (East, 1999) where, via an alternating mixture of different mediums (writing, drawing, visual art-making, observing, conversing and moving), students record, create and share ideas as broader life-long learning concepts are interwoven with the study of dance. These may include personal stories or environmental and socio-political concerns.

Within my teaching, acts of playful endeavour are embedded within classroom/studio practice. Play is non judgmental. It suggests free experimenting, inventing, modifying, transforming, rearranging and resolving, within evolving and changing structures. It also suggests enjoyment, cooperation and communication. The young of many living creatures interact playfully and spontaneously. In the process they evolve the skills necessary for survival. Playful exploration is fundamental to an ecological pedagogy of dance. Its memory is installed within our whole beings from childhood, and students need little encouragement to remember or, in terms of our mental and bodily integration, to ‘re-member’ this form of learning activity. In class I watch and write, acknowledging my own coming to form:

From lizard to human and what comes in between
Sound – the light – nothingness.

No fear yet ... and yet? Tracking back –
Re-member
Re-member
Re-member
You have known all this before.
(Class notes, 2002, cited in East, 2006, p. 139)

We play together and the learning happens both consciously and unconsciously. As Gardner (1994) states, “Through play the child [or student] is able to make manageable and comprehensible, the overwhelming and perplexing aspects of the world” (p. 164). Mark Tompkins, dance film-maker and teacher of improvisation, echoes these ideals when he describes the value of establishing a playful situation in the classroom where “people can feel they are moving and playing with others” (cited in Nelson, 2000, p. 30). He emphasises the importance of his own playful involvement in the process, and explains, “If I bring my center close to their [the students] center and dive into it in some way, I can figure out how to help them” (p. 30). In a class I record my improvisation, danced amongst the students during a teaching session:

Could be now
or before –
fish, lizard
two legs, four legs
the need to climb
to see beyond
the ground I’m on.
Then I’m walking
running, running leaping
running, running I run
run, run. Here, now, I run.
(Teaching Journal, 2004, cited in East, 2006, pp. 150-151)

TRANSFORMATION

Themes of transformation are present within my art-making. They were consciously explored in *Dance of the Origin* (East, 1980) and were revealed through the transfiguration of the dancers’ bodies and through the interweaving of music, movement and text. Our circling together with the music reinforced the words of the poem (East, 2006):

Time bends
in the rock
Iron transfigured
by air decays ...
for I am the dancer/figment
of dust whirling in time’s cyclonic sky ...
(an extract from *Dance of the Origin*, Trussell, 2004, p. 37)

In the same way, within my teaching I am concerned with transformative learning experiences that link ideas with broader life concepts and encourage critical reflection (Kolb, 1984). When a transformative process is evident, students are able to create meaningful links between the concepts that they experience in the classroom and their own lives. As Wilson, Shulman and Richert (1987) suggest, teachers need to develop ways of representing and transforming concepts for students that are pertinent to their experience of the world. In my case, by adopting a more participatory mode of teaching I gain access to a more diverse range of methods of communication or ways of presenting ideas. My own dancing provides a vehicle for my own and the students' transformation.

When my dance students engage in intuitive movement-making together, they often talk of an experience of being transformed. En masse, this transformation appears to contain some of the aspects of ritual (Bell, 1992) since the students often report feeling completely involved or 'taken over' by their expression, and lose track of real time. Harrison (cited in Copland & Cohen, 1983) and Schechner (1988) described performed ritual as providing a kind of psychic bridge that helps people make sense of the link between their unconscious, supernatural/creative and conscious worlds. Consistent with my choreographic purpose, my classes become a kind of metaphorical bridge between self and the world, between individual and collective creativity, and between self-involvement and group awareness. These are bridges whose purpose is to move students from an ego-centred to a more eco-centred view of the world as they become comfortable with a merging of creative experience and intuition. In the process, I wish to cultivate what Gablik (1993) calls "a new sort of person, one which includes patterns of interaction and interdependence that extend the self beyond the narrow ego into the larger whole" (p. 306).

SELF-DETERMINATION/SELF-AUTHORITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Biologists such as Maturana and Varela (1980) espouse the theory that every living organism is, to some degree, auto-poietic (self-making), determining its own structure and form. One of the ways that I hope to provide a sense of self responsibility and empowerment for students is to allow them a degree of autonomy over what and how they learn and choreograph. This means that I must be prepared for a lesson to evolve in an unexpected direction, to allow space for new conversations to arise. Ira Shor (1987) comments that "the teacher needs to come to class with an agenda, but must be ready for anything, committed to letting go when the discussion is searching for an organic form" (p. 101). Shor describes a "liberatory mode of teaching [where the teacher] accepts responsibility for a process which converts students from manipulated objects into active, critical subjects" (1987, p. 97). This, he states, results in the empowerment of students. I see this self-determining by students as akin to nature's auto-poietic processes. Shor concludes that one of the goals of liberatory learning is for the teacher to become "expendable" (1987, p. 98). However, a teacher remains indispensable as a "change agent" (Shor, 1987, p. 98). According to Shor, critically reflective teaching and learning leads students to a greater consciousness of their connection with the world

and a more integrated sense of self in relation to other. This relationship building is a fundamental concept within an eco-choreography pedagogy. Once again, the guided self-devising processes that I choose to employ in my art-making (where dancers participate in the creating of new material) informs my teaching practice. For example, I may initiate a line of self-questioning, suggesting that students track a pathway through their own anatomy, consciously and spontaneously selecting points from which to initiate patterns of movement. From here students will be free to consolidate their own movement patterns and build their own phrase of movement. These phrases may remain independent or be fused to form part of a larger collective whole. Nature also teaches us that self-authority and co-operation *can* exist side-by-side.

Through guided movement experimentation, close watching and recording of their own and each other's work, playing back (mimicking), drawing, writing and verbally reflecting, students are able to engage with the material and discover a good deal of information for themselves. The lesson becomes more about helping them learn how to see and what to look for rather than how to choreograph as such. My approach, therefore, belongs more within the schools of constructivism (Steier, 1995) and the theories of experiential learning (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 1991). Biggs provides a useful summary of a constructivist approach to teaching and learning in education when he states that "learners arrive at meaning by actively selecting and cumulatively constructing their own knowledge, through both individual and social activity" (1996, p. 348). This teaching method allows students the freedom to explore their own processes, guided and facilitated by my provocations and imagery. Employing a diverse range of active and reflective processes also allows ample opportunity for a variety of assessment practices to be employed that will cater to different learning styles.

LANGUAGES OF COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

Since I am, in the first instance, a dancer/choreographer, images and metaphors are the language through which I am used to speaking. Metaphor, according to Richardson (1994), is the backbone of social science writing. She explains that "like the spine, it bears weight, permits movement, is buried beneath the surface, and links parts together into a functional coherent whole ... The essence of metaphor is understanding one thing in terms of another" (Richardson, 1994, p. 923). The way that I choose to communicate with the students, the relationship that we establish between us and the particular metaphors, images and words that I use are essential to the way that the students engage with the concepts that are key to their understanding. This approach also resonates with constructivist pedagogy (Steffe & Gale, 1995) where students participate in the evolution of ideas. Rather than 'lectures', I describe classes as 'conversations' and normally begin the session with: 'Our conversation for today is ...' In this way an expectation is set up of interaction and dialogue. Shor (1987) asserts that "critical conscious, democracy and awareness develop through the form of dialogue" (p. 98). Our fluid and evolving classroom dialogues may be likened to the kinds of improvisational performed 'conversations'

in which I often participate, such as the *Shared Agendas* events (1998): improvised cross-disciplinary performance events held annually and involving actors, musicians, visual artists and dancers from inside and outside of the university. In these events the 'conversations' were largely non-verbal and were often between several artistic mediums requiring instant interpretation of different artistic languages such as music, dance and projected image. For example, when beginning the study of the implications of choreographic space, I might initiate a conversation about our colloquial or metaphorical uses of the term. Common expressions might include being 'spaced out' or 'in the zone', 'empty-headed' or 'lost' and alone. We might discuss cultural or mythological notions of sacred space, 'underworlds', 'ethereal' space/time or the space/time of dreams. These ideas form the starting points for creative exploration and movement building.

A conversation is, by definition, a two-way exchange of stories, ideas, flirtations, debate, humour, opinions, reflection and more. It is part of what defines us as human beings. Conversation has a particular structure and shape and requires more than one participant. It is different from a one-way proclamation. In ecological terms, where there is no call and response in nature (between males and females within a species) the species will die out. Similarly, in education, if there is no 'call' or 'response', learning will be severely compromised. Likewise, in a performance something must be communicated for performance to sustain itself and hold the audience's attention.

I have discovered that, like the aforementioned birds in the forest (Krause, 1993), the particular choice of language used as I teach, the tone, the timing of my verbal input and the opportunities provided for dialogue are also crucial factors in students' learning. Mine is a kind of metaphorical, poetic, word-picture narrative, inter-woven with procedural and motivational instructions (Lord, 1999). These procedural instructions are generally very direct. For example, I might say: 'Begin [whatever the exploration is] now' or 'change roles'. Direct instructions tend to cut cleanly through the activity without causing distraction or confusion and are acted on without the student losing concentration or losing touch with the image. The non-verbal movement event can continue unhindered.

In contrast with this direct form of instruction, the metaphorical language is extremely open, suggesting multiple meanings and an infinite number of individual interpretations. The seeds for this vocabulary are planted at the beginning of the class and developed as the class progresses both by the students and myself. I am learning that this shared narrative contributes to a positive learning environment and a sense of community. By my taking the time, early on in the class, to draw the students into this web of ideas and images, and by planting the seeds of larger concepts by various kinds of graphic illustration, the students appear fuelled and motivated to learn and create. Along with examples from my own dance-making experience, many of these illustrations and metaphors are derived from time spent studying nature as an artist and amateur biologist. It is as if these kinds of images allow students access to primal aspects of themselves that lie beneath the conditioned, or 'taught' movement patterns and responses. They reach beneath egocentricity and self-consciousness, which produce a sense of separateness, allowing access to an ecological self/other, a 'self' that is permeable and open to connection.

The search for new choreographic expression requires deep personal research and mental and physical investigation. In order that students have access to themselves in this way, all senses must be alive and responding in the moment to the evolution of a movement idea. Whether or not these ideas remain transitory and improvisational, written down or developed as set choreography, makes no difference.

I am not alone in the use of nature images within my teaching (see Dowd, 1995; Humphrey, 1959; Olsen, 2002; Skinner, Metcalf & Wheeler, 1979). For example, Olsen (2002) describes the circulatory system in terms of rivers, waterfalls and leaf veins, while Dowd (1995) describes the human body in geographical and geological terms as one would describe the natural landscape. She considers the skin and fascia “as analogous to the topography of the earth [and] the muscles [as] analogous to the earth’s geology” (Dowd, 1995, p. 79).

CO-OPERATION AND COLLABORATION

As an artist whose interests lie in collaborative art-making practices, I am concerned also with how students might be encouraged towards more co-operative engagement, what these skills of co-operation might be and what the learning outcomes and assessment of these might look like. While group activities and exercises are common-place within the choreography class, it has not been common practice to include the teaching of the skills of collaborative participation as part of course content. It has simply been assumed that students will find a way. They are often left to ‘get on with it’ in the absence of any real knowledge regarding the collective sharing of ideas. At least this has been my experience both as a student and as an observer of numerous choreographic workshops over many years.

While there can be no set rules or formulas for successful collaboration, I am convinced that students can be alerted to the pros and cons of collaborative practice as part of the choreography class. It would seem that inventing a way to work together, creating an initial group manifesto that lays out some ground rules for interaction and establishes an agreed outcome, is useful practice. As well, learning one another’s disciplinary languages (or at least learning how to invent a shared ‘working’ language) must be as much a part of the creative art-making process as learning how to shape the work. Where the focus is re-directed towards the purpose of the project itself, there will be a greater chance for successful collaboration. For Schrage (1990), “creative effectiveness depends as much on managing the collaboration as it does on individual effort” (p. 45). The lessons learned from my own cross-disciplinary performance ventures have greatly informed my teaching here. I have experienced both success and difficulty during many collaborative undertakings and have numerous examples to recount. For instance, during the making of the work *After Crazy Horse* (East, 1990) differences of opinion had to be resolved between the choreographer and composer, the dancers and the musicians, as we attempted to negotiate time and tempo in one section of the work:

... although our intention was to build from the calm systematic laying out of the canvas roadways into frantic chaos and disorder, we never quite got there before the dancers collapsed from exhaustion.

Tensions developed between the musicians and dancers when we attempted to establish the length and tempo of this section. (East, 2006, p. 126)

On the other hand, with the *Islands* (East, 1992) project, difficult negotiations of space between dancers and set designer were worked out co-operatively and, while musical tempos at times became almost impossibly fast for the dancers, the problems were able to be solved through discussion and tolerance. Composer, designer and choreographer were able to strike a balance between artistic freedom and shared accomplishment.

Collaborative practices can extend to interactive assessment. While there is much criticism levelled at shared assessment practices and group marks, students can be taught co-operative (albeit moderated) peer evaluation skills that are objective and constructive and that, in themselves, contribute to the course's learning outcomes and to students' reflexive understanding. Reporting on, reviewing and critiquing one another's work is part of the collaborative learning experience.

THE TEACHING SPACE/PLACE

When making a work, I strive to establish a climate of comfortable relations within my dance company, a fertile rehearsal/performance space that will become home for the duration of the dance-making. This space might be a hall, stage or the natural environment. In the same way, when I design a dance session I am aware that I am setting up a kind of illusory realm in which we will 'live' for the duration of the class. Within this realm we form a micro-community that evolves and establishes its own particular artistic culture. The culture of this realm is defined by the kind of *kawa* (codes of behaviour) that we set up. It is our role, as teachers of creative process, to introduce structures that will allow for new possibilities to arise. Students need to be guided by and feel secure within these structures, while having the space and freedom to let their individual ideas flow. Over-prescription of assigned tasks may stifle creativity.

As dancers we learn to create and shape familiar physical and geographical pathways, within the spatial architecture. We develop relationships with particular surfaces – the wooden floor, the vinyl tarquet, the skin of another body. We learn to feel 'at home' with the movement, the choreography, the theme and fellow artists. Moreover, memories of special places or of geological form resonate within one's artistic creations, adding depth and layering (like sedimentation) to the work. Conversations that draw out these memories of place help students to dig into their own spatial memory banks. My own previous choreographic images are useful here and I recount the influence of a major earthquake, which found its way into the dance *Touch Broken Antipodes* (East, 1987). Writing about this event later, I recalled:

A large earthquake in the central North Island, around the time of choreographing the work, informed the movement for the middle section. Here I was expressing a metaphorical relationship between the unstable geo-physical processes of the New Zealand landscape

and an unstable, dislocated human psych-pathology, another transposition of human beings and land. (East, 2006, p. 87)

Classrooms are, by their very nature, unique entities and, like ecosystems, communities, families and dance companies, they are, in Salomon's (1991) words, "complex, often nested conglomerates of interdependent variables, events, perceptions, attitudes, expectations, and behaviours or a whole dynamic ecology" (pp. 11-12). In the classroom, people and ideas must also be free to evolve or transform separately and together, nourished by images, metaphors and experience. In the choreography class in particular, normal physical boundaries and taboos may become blurred. According to Fraleigh, we move "beyond our personal limitations in union with the binding (communicable) substance of the Dance" (1987, p. 31).

Classroom spaces do not need to be contained within the four solid walls of a dance studio or lecture theatre. Just as I bring the natural world into the choreography classroom via images and metaphors or take company members out to research dances in nature, so I frequently take students out into the natural landscape. Engaging with nature through touching – physically contacting 'her' – provides new sensory information for the dancing body and a deeper sense of connection with place. For Eisner (1995), the perception of this connection and coherence is at the root of aesthetic experience. He explains that "in a sense, art does not imitate nature; nature comes to imitate art. Eventually, the forms of art, like the forms of science, become structures through which our understanding is organised" (Eisner, 1995, p. 3). Through observing nature's processes students can be encouraged to value the unplanned, to become more alert to the moment of chance or change and to learn how to pay attention to contrast or texture, shape and form – to understand, in a visual sense, the meaning of relationship.

My experience of 'image-gathering ventures' into nature with my company dancers and musicians have been translated, within my teaching, as eco-dance walks with students. Within my dance teaching, these experiences have specific learning outcomes: learning to tune in to the environment on both a micro and macro level to appreciate the possibility of perspective within art-making; to practice seeing things in relationship; to practice empathic participation with nature and each other; to experience a sense of connection with self, each other and community; and to practice a form of dance – or art-making that is conscious, spontaneous and transitory. These outcomes acknowledge ideas of the importance of understanding self in relationship with/to others as a foundation for 'connected' art-making.

In their book *Bodies of Nature*, MacNaughton and Urry (2001) suggest a sensory relationship that occurs between the human body and trees or other organisms of nature, "as one encounter[s] different surfaces and different objects relative to the human organism" (p. 169). As students embark on these journeys together to engage with nature, transcribing the shapes, patterns and textures, thoughts (seen and felt) into abstract movement images, they come to also appreciate one another's different perspectives and ways of seeing. This recognition and allowing of difference is core to a more co-operative and collaborative way of

working. Somehow these dance journeys in the natural environment, along with general co-habiting, facilitate this kind of learning.

FINAL NOTE

Among the ideas presented in this article is an approach to dance teaching that is not separate from the rest of living and with concerns of community, and that recognises co-operation and relationship within a diversity of learning styles, allowing that there are many different ways of seeing and understanding in the world. As teachers, I believe our role is to help students to see, discern and to appreciate what is there. This includes seeing the relationships and connections between all things. It means entering into a dialogue with others and letting go of authority in order to foster self-authoritative experiences. It means encouraging a deep tuning in to self, others and environment by adopting a participatory consciousness (Heshusius, 1994) in teaching and learning.

My own life's journey, histories, beliefs and experiences form the basis of my pedagogical practice. By including personal narratives, metaphors and images in my teaching I am helping to create a bridge for the students between the classroom and the real world, between science and art, and between self and other.

Just as an organism evolves towards maturity and a choreography evolves to find its inherent structure and integrity, the learning process of the dance student becomes one of gradual shifts and changes in awareness through an experience of self, others and environment. My evolution as an artist is closely linked to the development of my educational methodologies and my teaching of choreography. These methodologies embrace more co-operative, liberatory processes, and see a shift in emphasis from product to process and from separateness to 'network' (Capra, 1982). By simultaneously fostering interdependence and co-operation along with independence and individuality, students may gain 'sustainable' rather than 'disposable' skills and knowledge that are relevant to everyday life. In the final class practicum, June 2nd 2004, I write:

I watch them as they draw/write their stories,
pictures, thoughts, poems
into their own framed body outline.
Their body/knowledge maps accumulating slowly, spontaneously,
in a final chance to put it all together.
13 weeks we have been coming here.
It's like being home – or it seems that way to me.
Today we danced in a new way. A complex phrase
that taught us (in the dancing) what is needed to be a dancer.
Rhythm, organisation of our body's system, muscle memory,
momentum (its physics you know), spring mechanisms, balance.
We practice – over and over, reminding ourselves of this and that,
the useful weight of the head, gravity's helpful momentum,
where that toss and swing of arms and head begins.
Rehearsing this dance that has no ending ...
(Class Journal, cited in East, 2006, p. 152)

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