

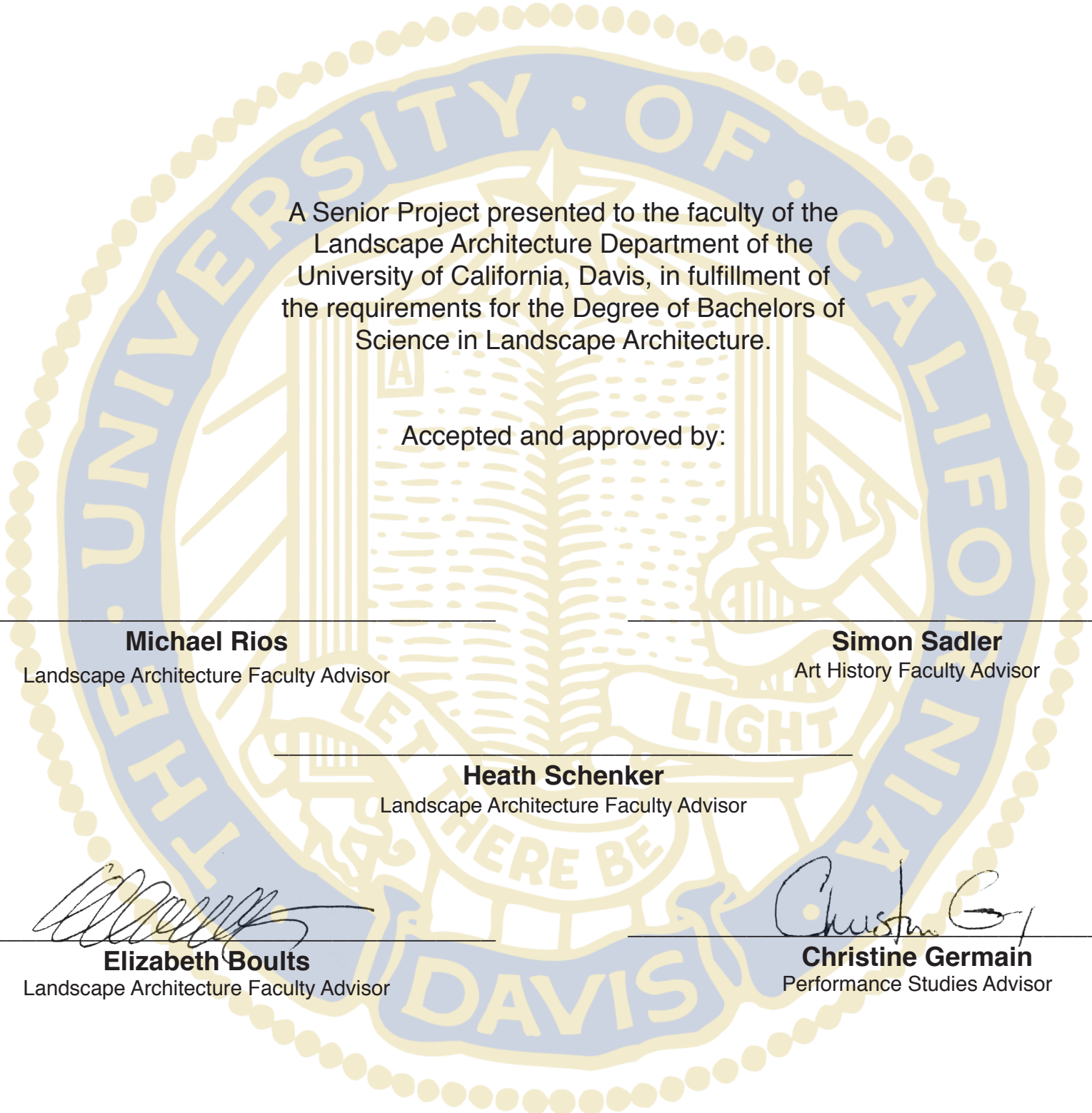


# SITE-SPECIFIC DANCE INTERVENTIONS

EXPERIENTIAL RESEARCH AND  
CONNECTION TO PLACE

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A Senior Project presented to the faculty of the  
Landscape Architecture Department of the  
University of California, Davis, in fulfillment of  
the requirements for the Degree of Bachelors of  
Science in Landscape Architecture.

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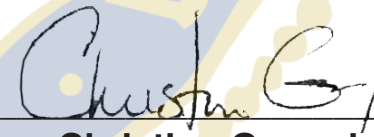
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# ABSTRACT DANCE IN THE LANDSCAPE

Contemporary lifestyles have created an American culture of disconnection from each other, our own bodies, and the places in which we live. Investigating the important elements of a connection to place through physicality and group process is crucial to addressing this modern isolation. This project uses site-specific dance interventions in various landscapes to test the effective elements of fostering a satisfying connection to place. The results of the project point to agency, physicality, accomplishment, and the type of place as the main influencing factors on a satisfying experience in the landscape. Three out of these four elements cannot be controlled by a landscape designer; they must be initiated by the user or participant in the landscape. Landscape designs can facilitate these interactions, but ultimately it is social experimentation and inquiry that will create a physically engaged and curious user culture. Creating this culture would allow more people to overcome a disconnected context and create their own experiences of connection.

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# PREFACE

When I began to search for topics for my senior project, I wanted to distill down the essential elements of landscape architecture, which became an investigation into human experience. Our surroundings influence us and can be more clearly defined; but what are the essential elements of how we experience them? How can we design a place that is fulfilling for many people when each individual has such a unique way of interacting with the world? These questions led me, as a landscape designer and dancer, to use site-specific dance interventions as a research tool for this investigation. As a designer I enjoy bringing a critical eye to creating a beautiful place; as a dancer I love being fully present in my body and experiencing place directly, without reflexive thought. Both of these tools were used as part of a holistic inquiry into the heart of satisfying experience in place, and resulted in this project.





# INTRODUCTION

At the heart of landscape design, beyond catchphrases like “place-making”, “community-building”, and “vibrant urban centers”, there exists a deep concern with the quality of human experience. Landscape architecture facilitates full human vitality through many avenues – scenic views, social neighborhoods, and beautiful gardens – that all contribute to a feeling of engagement and joy in that place. Other avenues, such as wildlife restoration and urban farming, aim to create an experience of belonging and purpose by locating humans in their relationship to other living systems. Whether overwhelmed by a breath-taking view or nestled in a sense of quotidian comfort in one’s surroundings, the ideal practice of landscape design moves to foster an experience of connection with each other and with place.

Questioning the elements that constitute a human experience is thus incredibly important. Experiential data is both more useful and appropriate than quantitative data in this investigation, and is data “that we can collect and interpret with measured confidence because we are human ourselves” (Tuan, 1977) The elements of experience and their impact on human life are both complex and subjective, and so are

beyond the confines of traditional research, which seeks to be objective. The compilation of subjective experiences aims to address a common human experience, one that differs slightly from person to person but ultimately addresses the same desires. A deeper understanding of the human experience of place is indispensable to successful future landscape designs.

The endeavor to access direct primary experience is the subject of phenomenology, a philosophy first developed in the beginning of the 20th century by Edmund Husserl. Phenomenology aims to capture experience before it is reflected upon, suspending analysis and attempting to perceive happenings as though for the first time. This effort attempts to arrive at the true essence of experience, acknowledging that experience is always mediated by the one who experiences and is never objective. At the same time, “It is propelled by a universalizing impulse, since it hopes to arrive at shared meaning, recognizing...that our being-in-the-world is conditioned by the existence of others” (Frleight, 1991) Phenomenology perfectly describes the intent of this project: to use experience, which is inherently subjective, to build an understanding of the common thread in human connection to place.

## PLACE = SPACE + MEANING

Why is the experience of connection to place important?

When one is displaced, we call this “lost”. This is a distressing feeling, bringing associations of isolation and confusion. An experience of place implies intimacy and knowledge; you know where you are, and your role in the place. Humans define themselves within the context of place, where they can locate themselves in relation to things and other beings. Places are the touchstones that anchor us in our experience of the world.

The terminology of human experience can be ambiguous, as the subject at hand is not one that is easily compartmentalized. Space and place are two words that are often used interchangeably. Yi Fu Tuan, noted human geographer, contrasts space and place, saying, “What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value” (Tuan, 1977). Space is both the physical medium in which we exist from the moment we are born, and the social context created by humans.

Doreen Massey, social scientist and geographer, explains space through three principles: one, that space is the product of relations between beings. Two, that space is the product of multiplicity, or multiple paths. Three, that space is never closed or fully defined because it is constantly being created (Massey, 2005). Humans are constantly creating and existing in spaces, the rules of which are created by previous relations. Space is not only a physical container in which humans live; it is also the web

of interactions, expectations, and ties that shape space. There is no way to exist outside of space, and so by default all humans are active creators of their spaces, whether the creation is an intentional effort or not.

If space is created through joint interactions, all of the time, and is never finished, then space is elastic. Humans can change spaces that they perceive to be static, because they are the mode by which it is made. For example, when the design firm Rebar first unrolled a miniature park in a metered parking spot, they created a new way of perceiving space. Instead of solely car storage, the space was re-imagined as user-designed public space. Once we have begun to think critically about the space that we create, through following laws or socially normative actions, we can begin to question our experience of these spaces. Are these spaces that surround us daily conducive to our experience of full vitality as humans? If not, how can we change the space through our actions to align with our desires?

## PHYSICAL PERCEPTION

How do we experience space and place? Our bodies are the mode of our experience as living beings. Emotional responses and mental connections are formed after or simultaneously as physical sensation is felt. Being open and aware of these sensations is essential to fully know a space and then to attach the meaning that creates a place. Deane Juhan, bodywork

practitioner and theorist, says “skin acts as an interface, a permeable membrane, between our bodies and the world, our thoughts and our physical existence. By rubbing up against the world, we define ourselves to ourselves” (Read, 2000).

The capacity of human senses to know the world is most often numbed, resulting in a less rich experience of life. The urban conditions under which a majority of the American population lives are not conducive to physical sensitivity. If not composed of irritating noises, uncomfortable surfaces, bright lights, and poisonous fumes, then they are scent-less, taste-less, and manicured within an inch of their lives. If over stimulated, humans naturally deaden their physical awareness to cope with the stress of being constantly barraged with information. If under stimulated, the awareness of a sense will fade, as it is devoid of input. Physicality may be ignored or used as a vehicle in pursuit of other goals in a world where pure intellect is generally more valued than physical presence.

Connection – to place, to others, to “the body”- is a subjective experience. However, it can be better defined by contrasting it with opposites. Connection is not isolation, removal, disengagement or separateness. Connection in landscape is usually described as being taken out of oneself, or being connected to oneself. Being taken out of oneself is an experience that is caused by intense physical sensation. For example,

someone hiking an incredible mountain, watching a soaring bird and hearing the wind may say that they “forgot themselves” or were part of something larger. What they really mean is that they forgot the internal dialogues and distance from direct experience that they think is the self. Being physically aware can both connect to present personal experience (connection to self) and be so intense that it moves from the realm of ordinary experience to intense sensation (taken out of oneself). Moments of connection make humans aware of their larger capacities to experience and live more fully than they had thought possible.

To investigate the human experience of place requires a level of physical engagement and presence that is out of the ordinary. How can this heightened physical readiness to experience be facilitated?

## DANCE AS FULL PHYSICAL PRESENCE

Dance is an intensive form of physical existence. Dance bridges the fields of art and athleticism, combining high-performing physicality with artistic expression that can charge it with meaning. Dance is subjective, as it is a process and product of an individual dancer; dance is objective, as it speaks to a shared bodily existence. Dance connects; “Dance [...] is in essence (or by definition) a human activity that seeks a bodily lived communion with others” (Fraleigh, 1991) Dancing requires presence, more so than in other daily activities. Any person who has a level of bodily

awareness, dancer or not, has possibilities of movement opened up to them. They are freed to imagine innovative movement and then to be able to execute their creation. When engaged in dancing, the dancer must attend to their physical being with more presence, resulting in intense experiences.

Using the term “dance” to describe the interventions intentionally elevated the movement explorations to an art form. At the beginning of each intervention, dance was defined as whatever movement the participants felt inspired to create in the space; the effect of calling it dance was intended to engage their creativity. Rather than becoming interested in a simple movement and ending there, they were invited, through the label of “dance”, to explore and play with this movement and expand it further. Dancing in the site also led to the communal effort of creating group choreography, which was useful in studying group dynamics through joint effort.

“The problems of modern dance impelled much of modern dance in the beginning, and still do. Urban dehumanization, modern alienation, and the senseless numbing of vital life...” (Fraleigh, x) Both modern and postmodern dance styles have contributed to the expansion of the definition of dance. Modern dance was created when dancers broke away from traditional techniques of ballet and began to experiment with other movement. Postmodern dance moved even further away from

traditional ideas about dance, expanding the definition of “dancer” to include untrained people. Postmodern dance, notably Anna Halprin, legitimized dance as a way to address real issues, rather than solely an aesthetic experience.

## SITE-SPECIFIC DANCE INTERVENTIONS

Site-specific dance interventions were designed to investigate the creation of place and the process of connecting to place. These ephemeral interventions in the landscape used dance as a method of elevating participant awareness of their physical sensations, and studying the effect on their experience of connection. The impact of the participant’s experiences and reflections on the project changed their lives in an unquantifiable way. Following direct action with intellectual analysis considers these experiences from both angles to attempt to understand their essence. The analysis consists of discussion of effective methods of connection to place, and the potential applications to landscape design.

The interventions were performed in places that were not yet connected to the participants, in order to study how these connections are created from the beginning. Many places become places through years of familiarity and use, gaining meaning as intimate moments are had spread out through time. The compressed duration of interventions creates an intensified effort of exploring and creating space. In order to remove the variable

of previous connection to a place, neither of the sites chosen for this project where places with which any of the participants had intimate familiarity. As one participant, Nicole, said, “I don’t think we would have been able to develop the same connection if we were just somewhere where we had already been, because we were creating our experience of the new place together”.

Delineating a period of time for the interventions, as separate from everyday living, allowed the suspension of societal constraints. Removing, to the extent possible, the box of ordinary interaction with place freed the participants to interact and create in original ways. The ephemeral nature of the interventions demanded focused attention from the participants, as it was a limited-time offer. Focused awareness coupled with a freedom to improvise was central to eliciting authentic reactions and relations during the interventions.

The trends and preferences that are found in this project can be applied to other attempts to design experience and create a culture of vital curiosity. While the variability of expression in interviewing can make it difficult to categorize answers, that very complexity is what creates a rich experience of a place. “Within a human group, experiences have sufficient overlap so that an individual’s attachments do not seem egregious and incomprehensible to his peers” (Tuan, 1977). The elements of connection that participants identify in this project are applicable to

design approaches for similar groups.

## THE RESEARCH

Experiential data is not easily reduced into simple answers. However, in order to address complex questions like the fulfilment of human experience and potential, and the relationship of humans to place, simple answers are not appropriate. The process of reflecting on the experience during the interviews also contributed to the meaning of the experience: “Thought creates distance and destroys immediacy of direct experience, yet it is by thoughtful reflection that the elusive moments of the past draw near to us in present reality and gain a measure of permanence” (Tuan, 1977) Each person who participated was interviewed, whether they participated in both projects or not; those who participated in both the Death Star and the farms interventions have the advantage of being able to compare both sites. Selected quotes from the interviews are shown in each section, and the entire transcript is included in the appendix. The selected quotes are intended to bring attention to interesting moments or thoughts, but the results and discussion at the end of Section 3 are drawn from the full-text interviews.

The interventions at the Death Star and at the farms differed greatly in terms of time. After the intervention at the Death Star, it was clear that four hours was a very small amount of time to experience a site, and so the farms intervention lasted

24 hours. The design of the interventions was being altered throughout the process, which introduced some variability to the methods but also continued to refine them. Ideally, in future interventions, the duration would be increased even more to provide more freedom to explore and time for the participants to form a cohesive group mentality.

Personal reactions to space and elements of connection to place are obviously influenced by attributes of self, including race, gender, and culture. However, these complex influences can neither be totally explained nor taken out of these interventions. In terms of research, they are essentially ignored in the design, as they cannot be affected. Further investigation in the analysis would require more interviews and understanding of each participant's background.

1. In order to intensify physical awareness, participants were led in a series of exercises that drew their attention to each of their different senses. These included distinguishing and locating sounds in relation to self; focusing sight at different distances from self; moving all parts of the body; attending to sensations occurring at the skin, such as wind, sun, and temperature; and warming up the voice and insides of the body. These exercises focused the group on their physical experience and the different ways in which they are experiencing these inputs.

2. Next, each individual investigated the space alone, following

his or her impulses and curiosity in the site. Everyone created an individual movement phrase based on or relating to his or her experience of the site. The choreography did not necessarily have to be set; instead of defining specific movements, participants could set a structure. For example, Lauren chose to be in the tree playing with different ways of arranging herself, but did not define the exact movements in sequence.

3. Participants assembled and taught their individual choreography to the others.

4. The group as a whole combined the individual choreographies into a cohesive piece, choosing the order and editing out parts that could not be performed as a group.

5. All of the participants performed the finished choreography together.

A heightened physicality, sharing an experience with a group, creation of choreography, and performance were hypothesized to be important aspects of connecting to place. A performance was included at the end of each intervention to provide a formal conclusion to the project. These hypotheses were evaluated through interviews with the participants. Although translating direct experiences into words may be an imperfect method, we can begin to see what was important about these explorations for different people, and how they reacted. Was there a universal thread, something that everyone responded to?

# PROJECT PRECEDENTS

## Influences and Inspiration

A wide range of work has influenced the Exposures project, spanning the disciplines of performance, landscape architecture, and human geography, drawing particularly upon site-specific dance and temporary urban intervention. While vastly different modes of study and interaction, they all seek to enhance human experience of place through action. Both site dance and urban interventions are based on a tradition of innovation; site dance takes performance out of theater and into public life, and urban interventions take built design out of the hands of designers and into the control of urban residents.

One reason that both site dance and urban interventions have broken away from the conventional methods of their respective disciplines is a desire to work collaboratively and to create work that is accessible, both financially and in terms of experience. Whether creating work based on an open-source DIY handbook like PARK(ing) Day, or performing for free in open spaces around the country like Eiko and Koma, both disciplines aim to move from isolated realms into the interactive group experience.

The element of time in both disciplines mirrors the

temporality of human experience; although we can try to record moments of our lives that are important to us, ephemerality facilitates heightened awareness. An event, something with a beginning and an end, demands a heightened awareness through the fact of its temporary nature. Constants can be ignored in the present because they will be there tomorrow or the next day. This focused intentionality is a key element to questioning the use of space and connection to place in daily life.

Precedents listed here are examples of particularly influential pieces; however, the cultures of both dance performance and landscape architecture are moving towards total experiences. Rather than interactive experiences, which imply “audience participation”, both fields are moving towards total experiences that involve the audience or user from creation to completion.



# Experiments in Environment

## Anna Halprin

Anna Halprin pioneered the discipline of post-modern dance when she rebelled against the concept of dance as a purely aesthetic experience based on the personalities of the choreographers. Instead, she worked with primitive urges that arose in the individual dancers themselves as they worked through the process of creating material. Along with her husband, Lawrence Halprin, she held a workshop called “Experiments in Environment”. This 26-day long exploration was described by Lawrence as a process “in which, as in life, outcome itself emerges as a result of interactions with the environment and with group members; flexible, intense and life affirming”(http://www.annahalprin.org/) It combined dancers and architects to investigate the environments of San Francisco and the Sea Ranch, a development that Lawrence worked to design.

Halprin also used dance to do real work; that is, she used it to work with real issues that arose in communities. In the piece “Celebration of Us”, she worked for a year with black dancers in Watts and white dancers in San Francisco, and came together to create a piece that worked through the real racial tensions

that arose from interactions between the two groups.

In 1972, Anna Halprin discovered through an imagery visualisation exercise that she had cancer. She used dance to work through this process and fully recovered, newly committed to dance as a method for real change. She founded the Tamalpa Institute, a dance therapy center, with her daughter Daria. At the age of 91, she continues to teach dance, arguing that she is not teaching a style, but teaching people how their bodies work.

She is interested in authentic performance, which she defines as the externalization of what is true within. She does not define art as “beautiful”, but rather as what is real in the moment, with the other dancers, in the time and place they are in (Halprin, 1974). Her work precedes these interventions through redefining dance and legitimizing it as a process with which to discover the true essentials of a situation.



*Fig. 0.1 Anna Halprin's dancers in an experiment in the environment*



*Fig. 0.2 Anna Halprin working with dancers at her home studio*

# Site Dance

## Eiko & Koma

Eiko and Koma have been performing site-adaptive dances for over 40 years. They call their work site-adaptive as opposed to site-specific because they take a basic theme, and perform it in many similar places. Their piece *River* has the same basic elements, but is adapted to each different river in which they perform. Each piece is ultimately specific to the place when performed but was not designed only for that spot. They began performing outside of theaters when they were young, and enjoyed it so much that they have continued to make site work for decades.

Eiko and Koma feel that they are “cultural activists”, due to the political and environmental discussions assemble around their performances. Many places that have asked for them to perform have been places that are interested in preservation or environmental aspects of a site, and want to approach a sense of place through audience experience.

“Dance is only the window to view the river...I think it is a good part of our artwork, to give the audience a sense of place and of time. The place itself carries beauty of its own; it is not only a place to be used for function or for fun”

In Eiko and Koma’s work, the main product is the performance and the audience reaction. There is still a clear difference between performers and audience, but a lasting effect of their work is a shift in the mindset of the viewers about the place. The experience that they had there, watching a place be used in a way that they are not used to, has stuck with many audience members and changed the way they thought about the site.

“What we particularly like about site work is that we can contribute to the ways that people relate to place. We like people to see place as more of a landscape with its own memories, rather



*Fig. 0.3 Eiko and Koma performing River*

than the usability of the place” (Kloetzel, 2009)

Eiko and Koma set the precedent for site-specific dance that addresses community connection to place through dance. Their dances take the audience out of the context of the everyday and into a new light.

## Olive Bieringa & Otto Ramstad

Bieringa and Ramstad have created over 125 site-specific performances with their joint endeavor, the Body Cartography Project. The Body Cartography Project “investigate[s] the physicality of space in urban, domestic, wild and social landscapes through dance, performance, video and installation work”. Their work is site-specific in that is not only designed to be performed only in a certain place, but also is derived or generated from that place. Much of their cast and support team are also site-specific; they are locals from the site. For a piece called Wharepapa in New Zealand, dancers were performed “sensorial tour of the landscape, the dancers are at once animal and everyday people” (bodycartography.org)

Their performances have an important impact on their viewers. “Either they want to get involved, or they want to start dancing, or both. They also realize that the space is beautiful or inspiring, and they want to start moving through the world seeing

beauty like that every day. There is a level of playfulness and physicality , as well as the revealing of the site, that I think excites people. It is about being in the world in a different way” (Kloetzel, 2009)

Their work also questions the use and value of daily spaces. In GO, Olive explored a city, improvising her dance based on the experiences she had with people and situations along her way. Provoking critique about public space and the rules that bind it, their work continues to investigate the relationship between self and environment. The Body Cartography precedes these interventions in taking purely physical reactions to the environment and improvising.



*Fig. 0.4 Dancers in the piece Wharepapa, performed in the wilderness of Kahurangi National Park, New Zealand*

# Urban Intervention **PARK(ing) Day**



*Fig. 0.5 A parking spot reimagined as a planted public park*

PARK(ing) Day, started by the San Francisco firm Rebar in 2005, is one of many temporary urban interventions that have become popular in recent years.

“PARK(ing) Day has effectively re-valued the metered parking space as an important part of the commons – a site for generosity, expression, socializing and play. And although temporary, PARK(ing) Day has inspired direct participation in

the civic processes that permanently alter the urban landscape” (rebargroup.org)

Part of the success of reimagining public space stems from the agency reclaimed in designing space. Parking spaces are everywhere in the daily lives of urban participants, and the opportunity to recreate one’s world according to what is satisfying to oneself has expanded participation in PARK(ing) Day to 35 countries (parkingday.org)

The precedents of temporary urban installations is relevant to this project because it addresses connection to place through participant improvisation and creation.

## 72 Hour Urban Action

72 Hour Urban action is a three-day architectural competition to create a project responding to the needs of a public space, or in other words, to design what would be most satisfying to inhabitants.

“Through the power of temporality and experimentation, it encourages participation and a lasting change of perception... Urban Action sets the imagination free to allow for new possibilities and players in public space” (72hoururbanaction.com)

The built designs are one product of the Urban Action, but as the website states, the greater product of these interventions is the lasting change of perception. Shifting the mentality of users to imagine themselves as the agents of change fosters greater ownership of and connection to place. The experience of creating a new use of space physically allows the participants to create themselves anew, and as someone who shapes their environment intentionally. 72 Hour Urban Action has influenced this project in thinking about short-term, temporary investigations of new ways to use space.

## SF Emotion Map

During a five-week residency program about mapping public space, Christian Nold had participants walk the neighborhood with arousal sensors attached, and created an emotional map of the Mission District in San Francisco. The different levels of emotions are shown with colored dots, and annotated with participant explanations. The goal of the project was “a collective attempt at creating an emotional portrait of a neighborhood and envisions new tools that allow people to share and interpret their own bio data”. Biomapping influenced this project in suggesting collective and aware exploration of a places using the bodily reactions of the participants. Instead of a graphic representation, the interventions take a research approach to the participant reactions.



Fig. 0.6 A team re-creates urban space in Israel in 72 hours <http://www.dexigner.com/news/22794>



Fig. 0.7 A portion of an emotion map of the Mission District, SF



# GILA HOT SPRINGS

## Intervention 1

The first intervention was performed in New Mexico, in the Gila National Forest. A group of eight dancers and non-dancers crossed two rivers and arrived at a natural hot spring coming out of the ground. I chose to perform the intervention there because of the diversity of landforms – there was a hill and a cave, and many different areas to interact with. I was concerned about the sun setting and not being able to see, so I led a brief warm-up and we began. First I led a sensory awareness warm up, involving noticing different sensory stimulus, and then directed the group to explore the space, and follow their natural curiosity wherever it led them. Laying in hollows in the ground, throwing rocks from the hill, and watching the sun filter through fingers were some of the movements that resulted. Each person, after a short exploration of different sensations, chose one and refined the movement that resulted from it. Then each person found a partner and showed them, without speaking, their choreographies from the space. Each pair performed both choreographies. We then explored spatial relations, moving apart and together until we were touching. We ended on the sandy floor underneath the



*Fig. 1.1 Left to right: Jordan, Devin, Laura, Ari*



*Fig. 1.2 Left to right: Mona, Jesse, Sam, Kathleen*



cave overhang, entangled with each other.

The performance in New Mexico was a great example of preliminary research. I had never led an experimental dance research group before, and had never been to this site previously. Elements of this intervention that were taken to the next ones were actions that contributed to group unity, such as eating together and spending the night in a place.

The New Mexico dance prompted me to think about the fact that it was generally easier to connect to a place in natural settings, most likely due to the abundance of pleasant physical stimulation found there as opposed to urban settings. However, the ease of this project left a sense of discomfort, as these are not the settings that affect people in daily life. It would be more effective to provoke new action in places that are closer to home and the experiences that occupy most of our time. The New Mexico project led me to perform the next two projects within Davis, getting closer to a local exploration and reimagining of place.



*Fig. 1.3 The group walking to the hot springs*

# THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**□ Before dancing at the site, what was your familiarity with the site?**

**□ What was your impression of this place before participating in this project?**

Did the participants have any kind of connection, negative or positive, to the site prior to the project?

**□ How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the landscape?**

Heightening the awareness of physical sensation was intended to enable a richer experience of embodiment, and then to study the effect of embodiment on place.

**□ How did the site affect your body awareness?**

**□ Compare your experience creating choreographing to your experience performing...**

Personal creation was compared to group expression to contrast the effectiveness of these two methods in fostering connection to place.

**□ What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?**

The intent of multiple participants in this project was to test the value of group experience of a place – does sharing an experience with others dilute it or form a bond to a place more strongly?

**□ What was the most challenging moment of the**

**project?**

Challenging moments indicate methods that may not have been working as desired, or obstacles that need to be overcome when pursuing a deeper level of experience.

**□ When did you feel most satisfied?**

Asking about the most satisfying parts of the project determines what parts of their overall experience the participants found most enjoyable or meaningful. The term “satisfied” seeks to discover moments of personal fulfillment.

**□ Describe how your relationship to the site now that you have experienced it through dance...**

The intent of this question was to discover if the participants experienced a shift in relationship to place through the project.

**□(For dancers) How did you relate to your body in this place as opposed to other dance venues?**

**□ How would you describe what we did in the site?**

In asking for a description of what they did, the aim is to gain a summary of what the exploration was to participants, looking back.

**□ Has participating in this project affected you in your daily life? If so, how?**

Did this experience create a lasting effect? Was there a difference in sense of place or ways of thinking about space in general?

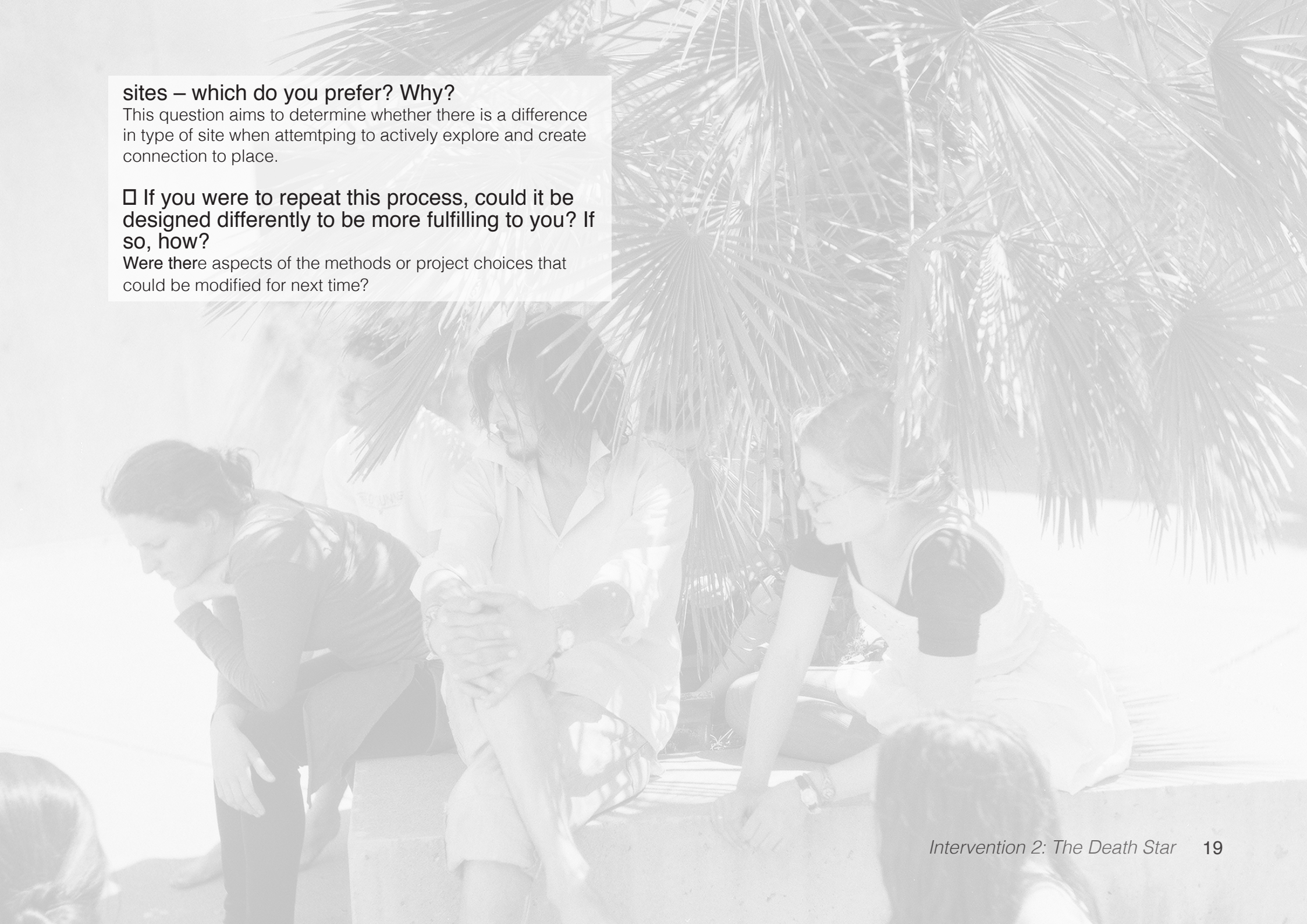
**□ Compare the experience of dancing at the two**

**sites – which do you prefer? Why?**

This question aims to determine whether there is a difference in type of site when attempting to actively explore and create connection to place.

**□ If you were to repeat this process, could it be designed differently to be more fulfilling to you? If so, how?**

Were there aspects of the methods or project choices that could be modified for next time?



# DEATH STAR

## Intervention 2

The second intervention was performed in the Social Sciences and Humanities building, commonly known as the Death Star. The common usage of the nickname “Death Star” will be used in this project, because that is what the participants call it. This architecturally dramatic building on the UC Davis campus was chosen for three reasons: one, because the stark simplicity of the context creates clear sensory input. Secondly, the kind of interactions provoked by the Death Star landscape could be extrapolated to study the effect of dense urban environments on people, due to the expanses of concrete and disorienting layout. Thirdly, the Death Star is a landmark in Davis, yet one that people do not like to enter, because it is famous for being confusing to navigate. This building is a site commonly passed by all participants, but never explored.

Participants were interviewed after their participation in the project; although post-occupancy interviews cannot exactly capture the experience in its entirety, the answers are useful in assembling an idea of the effect of this intervention.

Prior to participating in this project, the majority of dancers

had only a passing familiarity with the site. Initial impressions of the site included “easy to get lost in”, “confusion”, “not very forgiving or warm”, “stark”, “oppressive”, and “more like a place that I want to put a bomb in than a place that I wanted to dance and connect”. Two participants had gone there for the aesthetic value of the architecture, and had described it as “visually stunning or captivating” and “very unique”. One person said that they “respected it for having this architecture that was obviously very creative and thoughtful”. Generally the Death Star was thought to be visually impressive from a distance but disorienting to enter.

### Summary of events

On Saturday, April 14th at 9am, a group of ten participants gathered on the west side steps of the Death Star. First a group warm-up was led which involved stretching and focusing on different senses one by one. Each person then explored the space and created an individual choreography based on a particular physical sensation. The group then learned these solo choreographies, and assembled them into a palette of movement options available to them in the performance. The performance was an improvised group travel through the Death Star, beginning at the west side tower and ending at the steps where the project began. A modern dance tool called “flocking”

was used; this consists of the group staying in a tight group and following a constantly shifting leader. The dance ended with most people cradling each other on the steps but Shirelle alone on the ground.

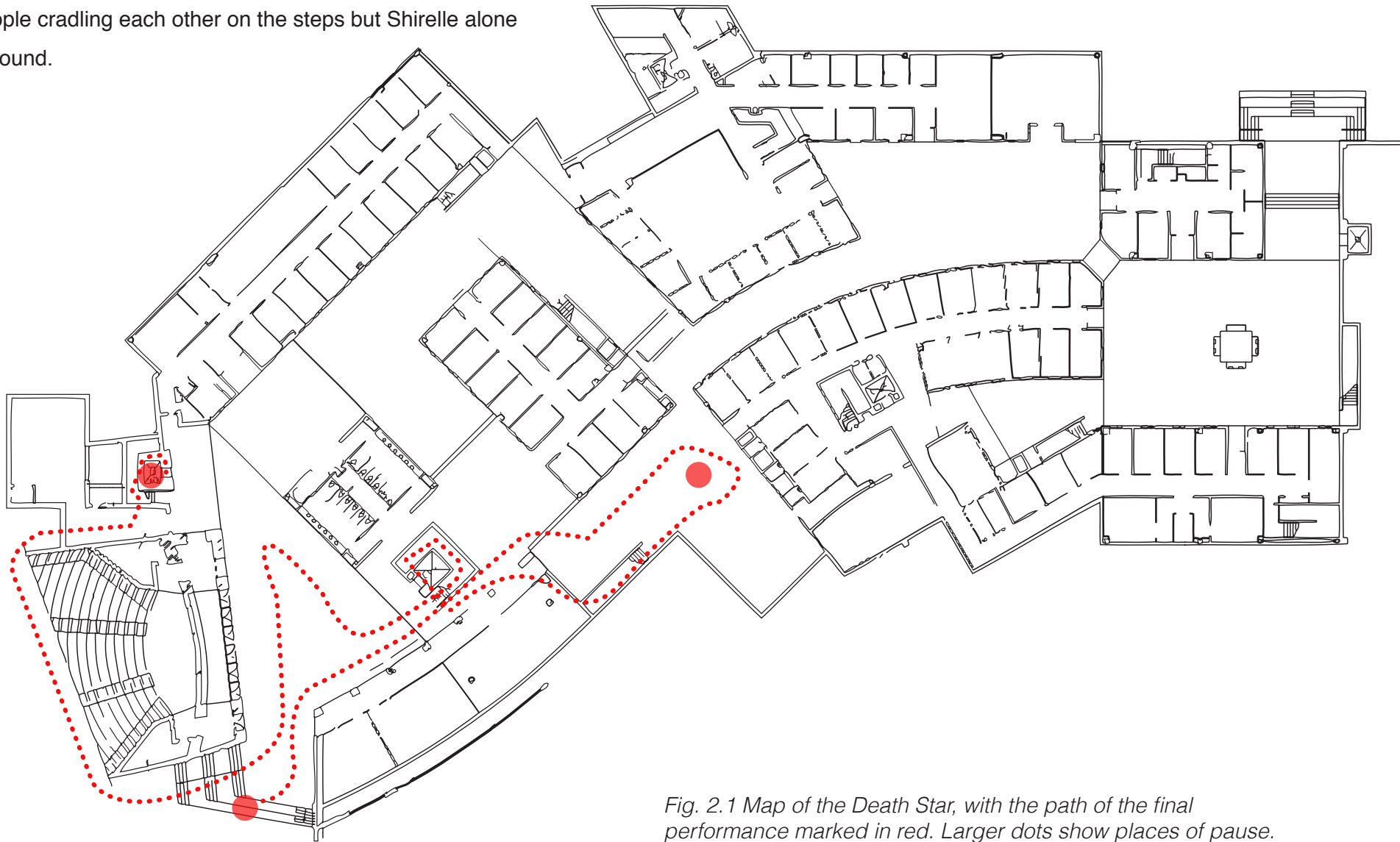


Fig. 2.1 Map of the Death Star, with the path of the final performance marked in red. Larger dots show places of pause.

## How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the site?

Lauren: it made me feel like my soft fleshy body doesn't really fit in very well with hard, scratchy, angular cement. / it makes you move differently and feel differently, sort of confined and restricted

Gabi: being immersed in it for a really long time forced me to recognize things in it that were pleasurable / the way you have to touch it a certain way or else it hurts you, and the way it's cold, and the way that it does scrape you

Nico: oh maybe I misjudged you the first time I saw you but now we're getting to know each other better

Kristen: before I thought of it as a very static environment.... When I was able to take time... I found all the little creatures that lived within it

Shirelle: ultimately the space dictated my movements...not just my movements but my personality ... even being physically connected felt bizarre, because the space didn't invoke that naturally

Krystie: acutely aware of all the boundaries of the place and of myself in the place

Sam: it echoed in the building, I felt a bit anxious there at first and when I was moving I felt a bit sporadic / I was just imitating it, just moving through it in accord to its structure, just becoming a part of it

## How did the site affect your body awareness?

Shirelle: I felt weirdly alone there / the surrounding was so harsh and so cold and almost sterile, that I was getting exhausted because my form of movement is very much organic and rounded / the landscape was not so receptive to my body. I really struggled

Krystie: There were certain things that I would want to do, but I couldn't because it is concrete and I could hurt myself

Kristen: I felt like my body was very active and very much alive and full of energy in that place

Nico: I felt really lonely and isolated and almost like, enclosed in a cocoon because of that over-massive dominant building

Lauren: Made me more aware of space around my body... there were steps or corners or things that you had to avoid or form to /also aware of my skin, because things were touching my skin

Gabi: I was able to feel my bones inside my body... you couldn't be very hard, you had to be very elastic, otherwise you would have probably gotten a lot more bruises dancing... it was a very heavy place with a very solid landscape and I felt very light, or I had to be able to resist gravity to balance that



*Fig. 2.2 "I felt really lonely and isolated"*  
- Nico

## Compare your experience creating choreography to your experience performing.

Sam: the Death Star is this homogenous place ... that invokes this repetitious feeling, so in my choreography I felt sporadic but in this very repetitious way

Krystie: investigating the space and taking choreography from it .. was obviously more personal and made me think about the space in a different way / when performing with everyone I still felt that I was being inspired, but I was having to move through the space as opposed to taking my movement from the space

Shirelle : doing my own movement was a lot more of an awakening experience whereas performing I just started to feel really heavy and out of control and claustrophobic / I didn't feel like I was actually connecting with these people, I was just connecting with this movement that didn't mean much to me

Kristen: creating choreography was very meditative in a sense ... it was very much just about me and that place... and peaceful / performing it, because you are interacting with all the other people...I didn't feel as connected to the landscape

Nico: that wasn't different to me ... the effect of creating it was just an expression of my interaction

Lauren: creating it was really nice ... I could have built little fairy house structures for a while / performing everyone's choreographies together, because not everyone had the same desires in the space, wasn't quite as satisfying

## What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?

Shirelle: They made me aware of parts of the architecture that I wouldn't have noticed / it was really refreshing to have other people there, just as a human element and as something more alive

Krystie: It let me experience to the extent possible how everyone else was interacting with the space / by observing other dancers and their movements I was able to broaden my range of motion and the types of movements that I was doing

Kristen: Other dancers provided that comfort of another breathing being / in that setting it was really refreshing to feel the warmth of another human being / because the environment felt so dead in a sense that being with everyone else was a nice comforting thing

Nico: Creating and sharing art together ... having the same present and being in communion

Lauren: To have other bodies that are soft and squishy to touch was a relief in comparison to all the hard surfaces/ interesting to see how different people react to different spaces differently

Gabi: Deep intimacy / being able to concentrate on where their bodies were going as a means for their expression





*Top: Fig. 2.3 Soo and all performing Nico's choreography*

*Left: Fig. 2.4 "Creating choreography I'm trying to watch myself from an inside perspective / performing I was seeing myself from the outside" - Gabi*



*Fig. 2.5 "When I was able to take time and stare at the wall...I found all the little creatures that lived within it and how it was its own ecosystem in itself" - Kristen*

## What was the most challenging moment of the project?

Sam: I was torn between doing [choreography] and doing whatever else it was that I actually wanted to do

Krystie: when we were running I wouldn't really be able to take in everything... interact with every single part of the space

Shirelle: when we were in the elevator! ... that elevator is totally symbolic of the space, it's just on a smaller scale ... I was in panic. I imagine that if I had spent more time in the bigger space, that same feeling would have eventually come over me

Kristen: at the beginning it took me a while to get settled into the place...trying to find whatever I could possibly find in a little space, and a space that I didn't like

Nico: just like make the step in doing it [to agree to be in the project]

Lauren: towards the end...I was hot and thirsty and scratchy and tired of doing other people's movement

Gabi: anticipating that we were going to do this ... because I was trying not to make expectations about what it was

## When did you feel most satisfied?

Sam: watching everyone else perform my choreography

Krystie: to be able to feel a part of such a captivating place, and fell like... we were almost in this symbiotic relationship along with all of the dancers / being able to create something within the space and from the space / especially getting to dance with everyone else

Nico: the relationship created with the place

Kristen: when we were running down the stairs and screaming ... it was really relieving of whatever we had just explored and any stress that we had built up by being in that place

Lauren: the very last thing that we did, I think Shirelle and you and I and Kristen...we were all running to the circle and doing this hand-standy thing in unison...it felt like we were connecting through the shared movement

Shirelle: at the end ... there was that moment when I ran up to the wall ... and pushed off, and other people came...to see other people join in and seem to be enjoying it as much as I was

Gabi: every breath that I heard was really wonderful- it filled me up. Towards the end we were breathing pretty hard... people had really let go at that point...really giving out their energy



*Fig. 2.6 Left to right: Improvised partner on the steps, Gabi and Soo doing the cradle choreography, Nico and Michael*



*Fig. 2.7 Left to right: Beginning on the steps, performing in the tower, flocking in the courtyard*



*Fig. 2.8 "The landscape was not receptive to my body"- Shirelle*

## Describe your relationship to the Death Star now that you've experienced it through dance...

Gabi: just feeling like I can improvise in that space because we broke that shell completely, like disintegrated it, and now I know the possibilities that are in that space, and that I can do them again at will, it's a freeing feeling

Lauren: I know the intricacies of how it feels and the shapes of it more, and the possibilities / I still feel like this is a really angular, ugly building, but then there can be these beautiful, organic, live bodies dancing in it, which is a really cool contrast / it's like...when there's always kids that you don't really like in school...but then sometime you actually have a real conversation with them and understand why they are the way they are – you kind of have a little more of a soft spot for them

Nico: I feel this building is there, and I'm sad for him to be there ... I understand him a little bit better, and it is a hopeless host, but it's not his fault you know

Kristen: now I think of it more as those steps and how hot they got from the sun, and I think of all the little tiny bugs crawling up...I definitely have better feelings towards it

Shirelle: I don't think I really have a relationship with it ..i won't want to move in that space because I know it's not conducive to my body, or to my senses

Krystie: I have a deeper relationship with it in some way ... I

think about it with more intimacy

Sam: I definitely have my own story of the death star and I have these memories of the death star / now when I think of the Death Star I think of this ... group of buildings that seem dominant and a bit uncomfortable, kind of hot, but also in a way paradoxically comforting, because you sink into this very dominating place, you kind of submit to it

## How would you describe what we did in the site?

Gabi: we addressed the death star as a sentient being instead of a space to occupy

Lauren: we explored the way the space made us feel through movement

Nico: we were just present, I think

Kristen: it was sort of like a tribute to the place

Shirelle: you strip down to the bare elements, and you combine them and see how they work with one another...it can ultimately show us a lot about what we don't realize. The way these buildings, how that affects us, because we kind of have become desensitized and immune to it

Krystie: it's so easy to walk down the steps and go to class and not really give it a second thought ... it's a lot different to be inspired by it and to move with and from the space

Sam: the movement allowed a new experience/there was this new vocabulary for how to move through the place and how to see the place, through the experiences of the other dancers

# THE FARMS

## Intervention 3

Intervention 3 was held at two Davis farms, about 8 miles outside of the city. These farms utilize the rich agricultural land that supports Davis and all of the towns in the Central Valley. Farms are the invisible backbone that supports our lives in Davis, yet many people living here have never been out to the country. These sites were also chosen as a contrast to the sensations available at the Death Star, to question whether the type of site affects the experience of the place regardless of the method of experience used. The hypothesis was that a more natural setting - one still cultivated by humans with familiar markers of human life around- would enable a deeper connection to place. The abundance of physical sensations, such as the wind, sun, other life forms, smells of the soil and crops, touches of the grass and trees, were posited to elicit a deeper or easier connection to place than the intensity of the few sensations at the Death Star. The amount of time spent in the place was also extended to include a full day cycle, from sunrise to sunrise. Spending more time was designed in order to free the participants from planning or worrying about what would come after the few hours they spent in the project,

and allow them to fully experience and dance the range of possibilities at the farms. The basic methods would stay the same, but allow more time for free improvisation and focus on creating a set choreography as a final product.

### Summary of events

The participants departed from Davis at sunrise on April 28th and biked to the first farm, Heavy Dirt. They then did a few hours of sensational awareness exercises and free improvising in a dry drainage field, which was the area designated by the owners for the project. The group then walked from Heavy Dirt to the second farm, a walnut orchard. Each person created individual choreography, combined it with one or two others, and then taught the combined piece to the group. These were all then performed as a group in the walnut orchard at sunset. The participants then camped back at the first farm, and woke at sunrise to modify and perform the piece created the day before in the orchard. Rotating partner lifts were added and the tree-specific choreography was taken out. The group then returned to Davis.





*Fig. 3.1 “every square inch of your foot was touching something new every time you stepped” -Shirelle*



*Fig. 3.2 All together in the field beginning the project*

## How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the site?

Lauren: you get to know it in a different way, because usually I think we rely on our eyes and how things look a lot to inform us about a place/when you're dancing...you get to know the textures of the different plants and the texture of the ground on your feet and the way the air feels. You try and engage all of your senses

Sam: at Heavy Dirt I felt very unguarded, I felt very raw and spontaneous / I felt kind of reactive there, kind of impulsive, but in a really fun way actually because of the physical sensations of all these slight annoyances .. I was constantly bouncing off of them

Shirelle: your body couldn't get desensitized, your feet, because every square inch of your foot was touching something new every time you stepped / I watched a spider... it took you outside of your own body and how big you are ...to go from that to just running in the field, then you feel small ... to feel such a scope, a panorama of your own body

Nico: I felt free and way more connected .. to the place, to the wideness, to the fields

Gabi: that was a serious meditation in withdrawing sense of itchiness, because if I paid attention too much it was so distracting from my experience / I felt really immersed in all of the elements around me

Nicole: when we were doing the exercise where you listen really far and close, and you look really close and far ...

everything became more 3D and in focus. Definitely I felt way more connected with the landscape

Danny: I felt more comfortable and a part of it rather than wandering through it sort of lost. I felt like our bodies were moving with the space rather than sort of occupying it

Katelyn: initially it made me more timid, just because I've never been a particularly outdoorsy person ... as time went on, it went down a level into more mind/body kind of sensing

Kristen: I found things that I really liked touching...but then all of the scratchy things...I felt like I was not supposed to be there and they didn't want people there – the plants



Top: Fig. 3.3 Counting scars on the tree Bottom: Fig. 3.4 Danny creating choreography in the orchard



*Fig. 3.5 Sensation immersion into the field at Heavy Dirt*



*Fig. 3.6 The walnut orchard*

## How did the site affect your body awareness?

Nicole: it's more exciting to be somewhere new...it engages your curiosity more

Gabi: At Heavy Dirt, I felt almost too aware of my body...there was so much micro life around me, I was focusing on that, I was seeing tiny little flowers / I felt a lot more fluid dancing [at the walnut orchard]...mostly because of the trees. And the soil was different, it was really dry in the field and really bouncy in the orchard

Lauren: whenever I dance on a tree it makes me more aware of my limbs, my arms and my legs and counterbalancing... then I found this really nice patch of really padded grass...I was just noticing my body really likes soft, supportive things. It was hard to leave

Katelyn: I started to make contact with the ground and the trees, and the air to a certain extent, with my full body...it became more of a jungle gym sort of thing, there was a lot more potential for certain kinds of movement

Danny: there were no fears that limited my ability to do the wrong move ... we were in an open space and we were all doing the conducting of our own performance

Nico: it kind of diminished my focus on my own body. My attention were less concentrated to my body, but more into the union of everything

Shirelle: Getting to eat from the land and dancing in it, I felt like

we took everything that it had to offer and gave back to it, with the dance that we produced in it

Kristen: When we were at [Heavy Dirt] ... we were in all of this brush and weed. And it was beautiful on it's own but as soon as we entered it, I felt like it was a very humbling experience.

## Compare your experience creating choreography to your experience performing...

Lauren: when I performed that, because you're being watched it takes you away a little bit from the experience of it because you know you're having to share it with other people...it's a little bit less for yourself / there's something about doing other people's choreography that's sort of freeing

Sam: this time...the performance was very central / choreographing was a very intimate experience for me at the orchard, and performing it at the field – I felt like there was something that was lost, actually / [at the sunrise performance] it felt like we were really sharing these individual experiences with one another by performing it, and by performing it we were respecting that experience

Shirelle: I also felt that it was so genuine and sincere / the creating was amazing for me because it felt so raw and real / after having learned your choreography, I could then imagine how you had done that...so it made it a lot more real...I'm not just now copying, I have experienced it and I understand where the choreography is coming from and I can relate to it / how much more sense and how much more natural it was to try and form some kind of unifying bond with something that is living and breathing



*Fig. 3.7 Nico and Nicole create their chasing choreography*



*Fig. 3.8 Kathleen and Kristen choreography in the orchard*



*Fig. 3.9 Lauren exploring in a walnut tree*

Gabi: I felt way more comfortable performing than I did choreographing ... I was just feeling was felt right in that space because I had something to do

Nicole: I felt very aware and connected with everybody as we were performing

Katelyn: in the morning, that felt very collaborative...it was less different people bringing in disparate elements and more sort of a group-think exercise / I don't really like the word child-like, because I feel like children are not always child-like, but did sort of feel like that ... this is goofy and I'm not analyzing it, it feels very free and exciting

Kristen: when I was choreographing I could stop at any moment and work with the landscape...but when you're performing it's very much like you have to just go on and you have to make it look good / it's not enough to perform it ...it doesn't really do justice your experience, just performing it or just filming it or teaching it to someone else, because I couldn't really explain in words or show in movement what I'm actually feeling

Nico: when you put a partner with me... [it was] a trio relationship between Nicole and I and the environment / [the performance was] an accomplishment of everything and everything, more like an open conversation because everyone expressed their idea on it, and even the environment, implicitly through all of us

## What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?

Kristen: in this place I didn't feel as connected to the people as the Death Star, probably because that contrast in the Death Star gives you the relief of having people, and here I felt like ... I should pay attention and give all my energy to the landscape

Katelyn: I felt a lot of, honestly, discomfort with the other dancers initially ... by the end of the orchard time I felt pretty well integrated/ then in the morning it was really lovely...everyone was being very supportive, literally and figuratively

Danny: all of our goals were self-expression goals, but we found support with each other / we all see a tree and we all go to different spots in the tree, but at the end of the movement we're all hanging from it and we're all connected together

Nicole: I don't think we would have been able to develop the same connection if we were just somewhere where we had already been, because we were creating our experience of the place together

Nico: when we had the interaction with the other dancers that was not anymore about me...it was more about me being with the environment

Shirelle: having other people and knowing/we're all doing this thing together and there was no judgement, just zero judgement / it was a unifying experience altogether

Sam: the role of the other dancers...didn't have as much of a substantial impact on me as it did in the Death Star... we weren't as contained within this rigid space / [teaching



*Fig. 3.10 Group performance of choreography generated from sound of airplanes*



*Fig. 3.11 "It felt like a cultivated place...I felt like I wanted to cultivate something there...that's why I chose to create in my individual choreography a kind of ritual" -Sam*



Fig. 3.12 Lauren performing uncomfortable sensations



Fig. 3.13 Group performance of Shirelle's choreography - "I pushed my hand to clear the grass...the reverberation of the stalks was really cool to try and simulate that in my movement"

choreography] felt like a very intimate experience ... sincerely trying to teach what we had learned from the place

Lauren: I feel like there was more connection with them than in the Death Star / just seeing the way that other people relate to a space...makes me more curious about a space

Gabi: [at the sunrise dance] we were very interactive because it was so still and so quiet and there was hardly any terrestrial life, the sun was just coming up so all we had were ourselves and the only interaction we had was the one lift, and watching each other. It was cool because we were far away from each other, trying to communicate two groups across a field, and touching briefly, and zooming back. It was like stars crashing and then flying away

## What was the most challenging moment of the project?

Kristen: it was so long, and I just wanted to speed it up

Katelyn: getting past my own physical and emotional discomfort with being there / but I think I had to embrace my discomfort at the beginning, and embrace my grumpiness in the morning to be able to get the most out of the experience

Danny: Walking from the different sites ...the weather was a challenge / just taking 24 hours out of your busy schedule to participate in one really crucial, really thought-provoking, thought-consuming exercise, I think that the whole project was a challenge

Gabi: laying really really still and watching all of these mosquitoes descend...I am not my body, I am just still here.



And I could dissociate from the itchiness, and the sweatiness, and the stinging ... the mosquitoes took me by surprise

Nico: at the end of the dance, feeling the people around me disconnect themselves and going back to their own, and having to deal with that

Shirelle: it was really hot and exhausting...some running in the orchard was incredibly painful at some moments / when we took the choreography out of the walnut orchard and brought it into the field ... taking it out of that space felt a little bit forced and unnatural

Sam: feeling like doing something else besides what we were directed to do

Lauren: feeling like I didn't have control over what I was going to do in the space ... I like being in a space just because I'm choosing to be there...knowing that I can leave whenever I want

## When did you feel most satisfied?

Kristen: on the walk over to the walnut orchard...because we weren't waiting around, we were doing something

Katelyn: [at the sunrise performance] every time Nicole picked me up ... it was such a physical connection with someone else, and such a trust thing ... being open to the sun and very chest open to the space, which is a really rich movement / seeing everyone else run and come to meet each other was really gorgeous / the act of running into each other and knowing that the other person is there and going to do what you need them to do. I think that was a very real connection

Danny: waking up really early knowing ... we've been together and we know the plot, and the choreography...to see everyone spread out and walk literally around the project we had created for ourselves and then come into it

Nicole: waking up in the morning and being there with everyone...I also really liked when we did our performance in the field with everyone

Gabi: the last time we performed the kneeling dance [at the sunrise], and just feeling really accomplished...to feel us all finish and to feel done was really satisfying. It was very communal, and fluid, and it's a really beautiful dance to finish on

Nico: choreography with Nicole, it was just like true expression of our interaction and without talking with words

Shirelle: at the end, the running and being caught. It's just so liberating / [at the sunrise performance] that was the exact instance where the choreography met the true emotions and met the space...everything, all points connected at the movement to me / this kind of acculmination, that we've all had and shared experiences in this place

Sam: when I was doing my individual choreography, and I was in front of this tree, one tree in a long row. I just felt very content...at home and at peace

Lauren: Both of the group dances...it was a collaboration, and so there was a little part of everyone in it

*Next page: Fig. 3.14 Clockwise from left: Danny & Nico spinning at sunrise. Danny, Kristen, & Sam running to their partners. Sam lifting Kathleen at sunrise. All doing spinning lifts.*



## Describe your relationship to the site now that you've experienced it through dance...

Kristen: I don't have any interest in going back. I'll respect it for what it is and leave it and I don't want to ...have anything to do with it really

Katelyn: I think it was really interesting for me to think of the place as the input for dance / I haven't been to any farms since, so who knows if it carries over to other places, but now those places are a viable stage for dance...that's an option there, should I go back

Danny: we created a really welcoming space that we can come back to

Nicole: I feel like I know little things about those places. I feel very connected to them, which is funny because I was only there for not even 24 hours

Gabi: I feel like I'm a part of it now / just a certain kinship I guess. You don't really feel it very often with a lot of places except maybe your home or the place you occupy most often

Nico: enforce my beliefs and dreams about what I want to be my connection with nature

Shirelle: to be able to dance there, it was so awesome... I'll always remember it, or always think of it in a very fond way

Lauren: If I see it again...I'll feel connected and maybe nostalgic for that time

Sam: the place in almost a very physical sense has grown for me... the way that we moved through it seems to have expanded the boundary of the place...the possibilities have opened

## Has participating in this project affected you in your daily life?

Kristen: having a new respect for these places

Shirelle: it has affected me because I always want to be dancing, anytime I'm on the grass now ... whereas before it was like the only place a dancer is to be is on a stage, or on a wood floor

Nico: I'm really thankful of that because it's something who has so much importance to develop and maintain the equilibrium in the self, but...it's not common to do that in our society... now I am way more playful with each of my movements in the space...what you did increase and develop my instant present connection with the environment

Danny: I feel like it affected my body... I understand my body now and I can be grounded. It also made me look at different places on campus...it makes me think "is this a place for expression?"

Sam: I've thought about ways of relating to a place and ways of relating to myself as being a crucial part of a place

Katelyn: I think it really adjusted my ideas of when is the time to dance...it's sort of like whenever the time and place call for it ...it's okay to dance at midnight, it's great to dance at four

am, just whenever you feel like moving

Krystie: it's fun to look at things in terms of what could I do here? How could I interact with these things, how am I moving through space, even if I'm not necessarily dancing

Lauren: I guess it has, because I think that all of your experiences kind of affect you and shape you in ways...just you trying to get us to connect to the space more just maybe kind of subtly opens up that possibility in other aspects of life too

Gabi: I see the spirit in plants a lot more...just recognizing all

plants for the beauty that's in them

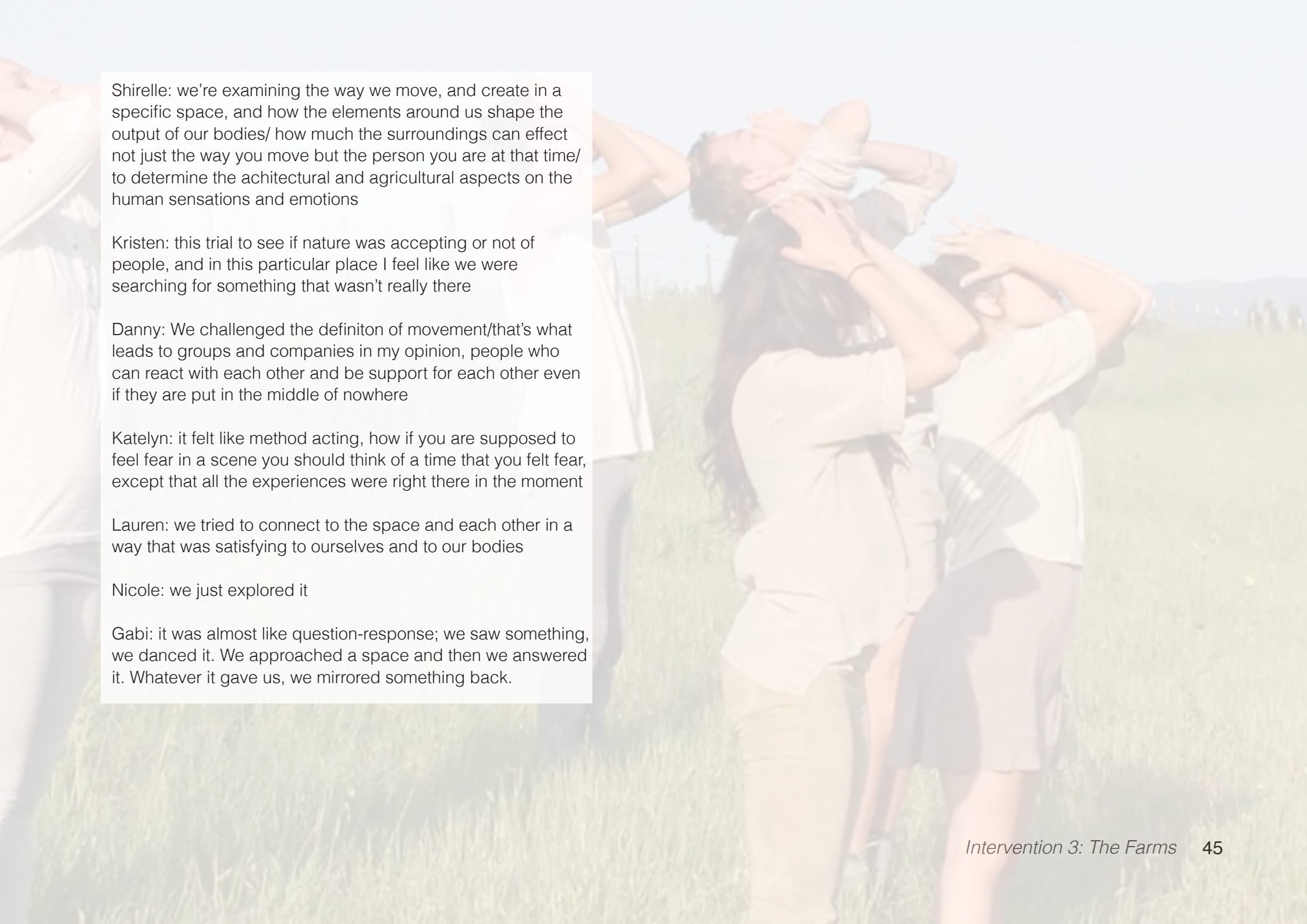
Nicole: I wish that I was able to explore more of the places that I see all the time like this...I think that it's important to connect to your environment, and ... I feel like it really did connect me

## How would you describe what we did in the site?

Nico: we came with respect and interact humbly with the place/ at the farm...I didn't have to force myself, that was just a true expression of dancing and interacting with everything



Fig. 3.15 Danny and Nico practicing lifts, Shirelle watching

A photograph of a group of people in a grassy field. They are all looking upwards with their hands on their heads, suggesting a moment of reflection or a performance. The scene is outdoors with a clear sky and some distant structures visible.

Shirelle: we're examining the way we move, and create in a specific space, and how the elements around us shape the output of our bodies/ how much the surroundings can effect not just the way you move but the person you are at that time/ to determine the achitectural and agricultural aspects on the human sensations and emotions

Kristen: this trial to see if nature was accepting or not of people, and in this particular place I feel like we were searching for something that wasn't really there

Danny: We challenged the definiton of movement/that's what leads to groups and companies in my opinion, people who can react with each other and be support for each other even if they are put in the middle of nowhere

Katelyn: it felt like method acting, how if you are supposed to feel fear in a scene you should think of a time that you felt fear, except that all the experiences were right there in the moment

Lauren: we tried to connect to the space and each other in a way that was satisfying to ourselves and to our bodies

Nicole: we just explored it

Gabi: it was almost like question-response; we saw something, we danced it. We approached a space and then we answered it. Whatever it gave us, we mirrored something back.

# DISCUSSION

## Results

The results of this experiential data are by no means conclusive; they do not define, without a shadow of doubt, the only key elements to experiencing a connection of place. However, they have proved useful in investigating the elements of satisfying human experience in place and identifying trends. The elements that most contributed to satisfying experiences were: the type of site, physical engagement, accomplishment, and agency.

### TYPE OF PLACE

Different kinds of places exert different influences on users. The choreographies created reflect the possibilities and constraints of that site. Each place enables a different kind of movement, and so a different experience was possible through the ways that the participants could interact physically with the site and with each other.

### THE DEATH STAR

At the Death Star, movement possibilities were shaped by the constraints of hard, rough surfaces. This prevented movements such as sliding and dragging, or anything that pulled skin across surfaces. The potential for injury made the participants

careful in their physicality, and then explosive when they felt they could run or express themselves in an uninhibited way – their energy was pent up until it could be intensely expressed. After attempting to roll and contact the cement in different ways so many times, the group ran through the building yelling chaotically to release their frustrations and exult in freedom of movement.

Opportunities included changing vertical levels, ledges and lookouts, and consistent ground. In personal choreographies, the site influenced the creation of movements like pushing against walls (Nico), searching for life in crevices (Kristen), building “fairy houses” out of scraps of natural elements (Lauren), and cradling another person (Kathleen). Lauren and Shirelle both mentioned the same most satisfying moment: a run into a step and a jumping push off, rebounding from the Death Star and then running back to try again.

The effect of increased bodily presence and interaction with the space helped the participants to articulate the experiential effects of the physical surroundings. Sam’s feeling was that “you just sink into this very dominating place, you kind of submit to it”, and Shirelle’s explorations led her to conclude “I won’t want to move in that space because I know it’s not conducive to my body, or to my senses”. Nico’s feeling towards the site was one of pity: “I understand him a little bit better, and

it is a hopeless host, but it's not his fault you know".

While the intervention helped the participants to define and understand their relationship to the place based on their experiences, comprehension was not enough to create connection. Kristen said "I felt like I have a new appreciation for the place but I don't want to spend any more time there", and Lauren compared the site to "kids that you don't really like in school", but after getting to know them "you kind of have a little more of a soft spot for them". Gabi felt freed by the new possibilities for moving creatively that she felt opened up in the space, and Krystie remembers it fondly when she walks by. However, none of the participants have been back to the space independently, even though it is very accessible to campus. Once it was a place to them, they still lacked the personal affinity with the place that would inspire more contact.

#### THE FARMS

At the farms, constraints included uneven and hard-to-see ground, allergy attacks, and exhaustion from the elements. Lauren noticed that the site constrained the movements she likes to do, because when "rolling and jumping...things have to be kind of flat or predictable because you can't jump in the air and not know where you're going to land". One participant, Oceana, was forced to leave without finishing the project due to an intense allergy attack. Participants had welts from allergic

reactions to rolling in the grass, and were sunburned from the long exposure outside. The amount of time spent working during the day was exhausting to all, and when the group went back to camp around 8:30pm, everyone was ready to sleep.

Opportunities at the farms included wide-open spaces, complex living environments, and organic forms to climb. These enabled movement like climbing in trees, imitating the movement of plants in the wind, and sinking into the grasses. In the field, during the solo explorations, everyone drifted together to a pile of grasses and played, rolling and balancing on each other. Choreographies inspired in the orchard included chasing and hiding (Nico & Nicole), blowing in the wind (Shirelle), and counting tree scars (Gabi).

Generally, an experience of connection was established more frequently at the farms than at the Death Star. Shirelle remarked on "how much more sense, and how much more natural it was to try and form some kind of unifying bond with something that is living and breathing. Of course it's going to feel better [than the Death Star]". Connection implies a link between two separate entities, so it follows that a site with other living things – plants, animals, and insects – would be easier to connect with than a concrete landscape. For Gabi, the focused working time spent there created a connection that she described as "kinship". However, an experience of connection

did not exist for everyone; Kristen did not feel a connection with the site, saying “I feel like we were searching for something that wasn’t really there, I felt like we kept trying to find that point when you could be really comfortable with it and you felt united with this space...and I feel like it was just not happening”.

Participants identified some moments of connection, but neither site evoked a complete union between participants and place. The fact of *trying* to connect may have negatively influenced the connection to place. Lauren touched on this when explaining that she would have liked to choose the site to be explored; “I would have just been really invested in that space and wanting to be there, and not just like, ‘oh I have to connect to this space so I’m going to figure something out’ but it would have just came naturally”.

Sam’s view of the two sites articulates clearly the effect that the type of place had on the experience. He says, “The Death Star...after this experience it almost felt like an isolated place, sort of like an island in the city” while “at the farms I feel more inspired to return...I feel like the actual space has expanded, just because I see the possibilities”. While both sites are clearly defined places with meaning now, the meanings that they have acquired are very different. The idea of physical expansion or contraction of a place is born out of intimate knowledge; at the Death Star what is known is enough, and

there is no curiosity to explore further. At the farms, the intimate knowledge gained through the project has provoked a greater curiosity about what else might be possible in this place for most participants.

### ACCOMPLISHMENT

Accomplishment was a significant contributor to establishing and connecting to place in this project. Defined as “an act or instance of carrying into effect; fulfillment”, accomplishment was a significant aspect of the most satisfying experiences. Accomplishment also implies a desired goal that was pursued and achieved, which speaks to the importance of personal agency as a prerequisite for accomplishment. Participants generally felt a sense of accomplishment at the end of the farms intervention, which was magnified by the presence of a group and the duration of the project.

The duration of the project created a sense of accomplishment through the amassing of time spent working towards a goal and overcoming difficulties. “There was something about this kind of accumulation, that we’ve all had and shared experiences in this place, and we are acknowledging that it’s coming to an end” (Shirelle). Working through the difficult moments, when it was hot, itchy, tiring, and boring, made the ultimate completion sweeter; “even though it sucks to go through frustrations...if you are able to



push through and find new opportunities, that feels good. Or to connect to something more deeply when you didn't think you could, it's really nice, because it's surprising" (Lauren). The climax of the final performance was described as "communal", "fluid", and "all points connected".

Group dynamics also contributed to an increased feeling of accomplishment; together, the group created and completed something that they could not have done individually. Creating work, like the spinning lifts or the chasing choreography that physically required another person to complete, necessitated trust and connection to the other dancers; "I think that was part of the feeling of group spirit, was just the act of running into each other and knowing that the other person is there and going to do what you need them to do" (Katelyn).

The multiplicity of dancers also allowed work to have a greater impact than it may have had alone, and magnified the experience in terms of memory. Instead of a personal memory of accomplishment and place, this memory is shared within the group that was bound together during the project. Creating a miniature subculture through shared experience allows the participants to reinforce their experiences through the way they relate to each other.

## PHYSICAL ENGAGEMENT

Through the responses of the participants, it is clear that physical engagement is a gradient. There are multiple ways of being physically present; some sensations are ignored although significant, and some are savored even when faint. Being physically engaged did not mean that participants felt completely united as a single self the entire time; on the contrary, they reported, "I am not my body" (Gabi), and remembered "the idea that your body is a tool and your body is a burden" (Katelyn). The concept of a dualistic mind/body existence is prevalent in contemporary culture, and so it is difficult to determine if this dualism is simply the way that people are used to communicating about experience or if it is an authentic reporting.

Strong reactions indicate strong involvement, and whether pleasant or unpleasant, the participants were involved in a direct way with their environments. If they had instead observed the sites from a distance, they might have spoken to different qualities of emotion evoked by the feel or look of the place. They would not have known the frustration of trying to fit warm, malleable bodies onto cold concrete edges. They would not have been familiar with the itchiness, the roughness, and the annoyance of multiple sensations available there. Knowing these things intimately, both the comforting and the irritating

parts of any space, changed the level of familiarity with it from a space to a place.

The direct experience of moving in the site and “being able to feel the sun and wind and the natural world was affecting my body” (Nicole), located the dancers in the place in a way that they would otherwise not have known. Gabi expressed a new appreciation of concrete in the Death Star, and Kristen found life in a place she thought was desolate. Many of them spoke to the sense of inclusion that they felt. “I felt more comfortable and a part of it rather than wandering through it, sort of lost. I felt like our bodies were moving with the space rather than occupying it” (Danny) “I stood there and bent my body in half and let my hair flow in the wind, and then I caught a glimpse of all the other things that were moving in the same direction...it really felt like this unified, pure existence” (Shirelle)

#### AGENCY

“Sense of self, whether individual or collective, grows out of the exercise of power” (Tuan, 1977) Agency, or the ability to make personal choices, was either distressing when lacking or very satisfying when present. Being in control of one’s interactions within the environment, including choosing when to leave, was crucial to the quality of the interventions. When participants felt constrained because they felt that they did

not have the choice to do what they wanted, their experience ceased to be one of connection and changed to an experience of resistance. This resistance was either to doing as directed or towards self, resisting the impulse to stop or change activities. In either case, resistance impeded the participant’s sense of connection.

When agency was present, participants were able to exist in a space of freedom, and to create in that space. Creating choreography was incredibly satisfying for the participants. Contrary to expectations, the solo and group choreographies, while both acts of creation, had very different meanings. While they both involved creative choice, participants described creating their personal choreographies as “meditative”, “calm”, “at peace”, and “intimate”. We can speculate that the peace experienced when creating personal choreography is caused by the absolute agency involved. From choosing how to interact with the place, to choosing what to represent, to choosing the movements, is a complete experience under the participant’s control. While the site itself may present constraints, these are part of the landscape that is being expressed through the participant, and is not compromising their ability to choose.

Once other participants were involved in choreographing, the focus of the interviews shifted from

the site to interactions with the other dancers. Combining individual pieces necessitated some compromises of the solo choreographies, and also changed the space from one of silent physical expression to one of verbal expression. Communicating verbally with other members of the group reintroduced all of the social niceties of speech, and the expectations of another human. These group experiences still contributed to a feeling of place, but were not directly focused on a one-to-one interaction between participant and place. As other participants are not specific to that place, they are not seen as simply a constraint of the place, and are seen as a compromising element.

### DESIGN APPLICATIONS

Traditional landscape architecture works only with one of the key elements determined in this project. The others - agency, physical engagement, and accomplishment – are elusive.

Unprogrammed space was a crucial element of all of the sites as it allowed agency in activity. The openness of their design, or the fact that we were using them for an unintended purpose, meant that they were blank canvases for our project. There was no area with a dance floor installed, which would have limited the dancing to that area, or even just to the ground

plane rather than in the trees. There were no designated “scent gardens” or other specifically designed sensory experiences. For this reason, they were incredibly effective, because it is the combination of all of these inputs that can combine to evoke a feeling of intimacy with place. If there had even been a path, it would have been directing participants not only to walk in a certain trajectory, but informing them that walking was the correct mode of moving through this space. The design cues that influence behavior can be very useful when designing specific types of landscapes for narrow purposes; however, designing a space in which agency is a priority requires a minimum of these cues.

Physical engagement was brought out in these interventions through proximate interactions with unassuming elements of the landscape. Landscapes that are over-designed and laden with signs directing users to have particular experiences – “Touch the water! How does it feel?” – will not create the same intimate knowledge of the place, because the experience was directed and is assumed to be the same for all users. Rather the subtlety of concrete texture, or the sensations of rough bark, is more than enough to bring user’s awareness to their sensations. Experienced as an undivided whole, these sensations bring direct physical interaction with space into sharp focus.

Attempting to include accomplishment in designs could be easily interpreted to mean that more community meetings and discussions are called for when designing a site. However, the bureaucratic process of compromising on everyone's real wishes is quite different than accomplishing a physical goal in a place. Community builds are closer to the mark; but ultimately accomplishment will mean different things for many people. Leaving elements of a site unbuilt for groups to complete may be an option in larger parks or natural spaces, but not possibly aesthetically in smaller sites. Accomplishment is a goal better addressed through programming and stewardship programs where possible, but even these seem to be lacking the joy and vitality felt in this project. Accomplishment is potentially the element that cannot be fostered by design, and must be created purely by the user.

Ultimately, even the attempt to connect to place points to a cultural problem. The interventions designed here to familiarize participants with their physical sensations and the places that surround them would not be necessary if bodily awareness and connection to one's environment were established. The elements of connected experience to place included the influence of the type of place, which landscape architects can strive to create. A landscape designed with multiple choices to make and invitations for unconventional

movements could foster the kind of curious and vital interaction that was sought in this project. However, in order for these physical cues to even elicit a reaction, the user must be ready to respond. As the old adage goes, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink". Designers can attempt to facilitate interactions and experiences from afar, but it is the user that will make these choices, or continue on oblivious.

One direct way of combating a culture of isolation and physical disconnection is the product of the interventions performed in this project. While other avenues exist, the questioning of space and direct physical action is one way to enable agency, accomplishment, and physical engagement. Creating a culture of interactive and physically engaged users will actively begin to shift experience for a large number of people. This is difficult to do, because engaging with people's psychology on a group scale brings many different issues into play. No easy or definitive answers are possible when searching for the key to sublimated physicality and numbed experience; the shift necessitates accumulated direct action.

# REFLECTIONS

On a personal level, the exploration of functional versus performative evaluation of place has revealed the larger issues that I care deeply about -creating a culture of connection, celebrating physicality, and through these gaining an intensified experience of life. Rather than observing what people do in a place, creatively questioning what they could do reveals the possibilities inherent in place. Performative exploration of place makes impulses and reactions to space more visible, and allows a cyclical evolution of experience. Creating dance allows the participants to become aware of their reactions, choose how to perform them, and then question if this is how they would like to interact with and inhabit spaces. Developing an awareness of how space and place influence our culture and interactions is essential for choosing the experiences we want to have. My explorations of the attachments and reactions we experience have refined my view of relations with place and heightened my physical awareness as I move through daily life. This project has changed my design priorities to cater to the physicality of human beings more than an objective aesthetic ideal. My view of flow through spaces is now geared towards both choreographing a physical experience, and allowing the users the freedom to create their own intimate places.



*Fig. 4.1 Continuing to explore place through dance in Christine Germain's library piece - a dance generated by observing physicality within the space and creating a piece with these gestures*

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# Additional Resources

## Full Interviews

### Samuel Hilgartner

#### DEATH STAR RECORDING

##### **Before dancing at the site, what was your familiarity with the site?**

I had been to the death star only in passing, I had been in davis for a week or so and had only heard about the death star. I had seen it, hadnt really formed any relationship to it.

##### **(0:49) What was your impression of this place before participating in the project?**

I had heard that it was possibly made with the intention of it seeming confusing or difficult to navigate. I didn't know if that was true or not, I still don't. I'd seen it, seemed like a large maybe intimidating concrete structure, it was very angular, kind of stark, maybe even a bit oppressive.

##### **(1:30) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the site?**

It was very flat and geometrical. There was a lot of space that was very horizontal, I felt like I moved through it being parallel to the surface of the ground. I feel like I was very attentive to the feeling of the concrete against my skin, to some of the sounds, there was some sort of distant hums of the town. I feel like it echoed in the building, I felt very a bit anxious there at first and when I was moving I felt a bit sporadic. I wasn't reall sure how to explore the space and towards the end I felt a little bit more complacent to the space. Like I was just imitating it, just kind of moving through it in accord to its structure, just kind of becoming a part of it.

##### **(3:37) Compare your experience choreographing to your experience performing at the Death Star...**

I feel like the death star is already sort of this homogenous place, you

wouldn't necessarily have to know where its geographical location is, and I feel like that kind of invokes this repetitious feeling, so in my choreography I felt very a bit sporadic but in this very repetitious way. So I think I was moving through the space in sort of a curious manner but also in a frantic manner, and I feel like that created the meaning that I wanted to portray. The choreography was very repetitious. The performance, I didn't do, because I filmed.

##### **(5:45) What was the most challenging moment of the project?**

The most challenging moment would be sort of during the time of when we were creating our piece, we were choreographing, I remember feeling like I was supposed to do something, I was supposed to create something in a certain way, and I was kind of torn between doing that and doing whatever else that it was that I actually wanted to do, and I think that came across in my choreography, I'm glad that it did. I think that was kind of a very natural process, and yeah, I think that was difficult.

##### **(7:22) When did you feel the most satisfied?**

I actually think to some degree I felt satisfied and rewarded sort of in this-I felt pretty satisfied and rewarded watching everyone else perform my choreography. I felt rewarded seeing that be a part of the kind of – having that be a part of the array of dances that the dancers had to choose from, and had to combine with the other choreographed pieces.

##### **(8:46) Describe your relationship to the Death Star now that you've experienced it through dance...**

I think now that I've experienced the Death Star through dance, I definitely have a sort of kind of my own story of the death star and I have these memories of the death star, and I think memories that are very kind of accentuated just through that experience. When I think

about the death star I immediately relate it to that project, and I think about the way that I observed the dancers move through the place and I think of it in relation to how I move through the place, how I filmed the dancers, I sort of have a series of images in my head that stick with me now, seeing the dancers on these steps watching each other sometimes in this passive way, sort of watching the dancers sort of seeming a bit confronted by the architecture, seeming a bit torn within themselves of how to move through the space. I feel like a lot of people were just kind of recalling ideas of dance that they had already had, and the less experienced dancers I think were performing their emotional state a bit more that they had kind of in response to the architecture. Now when I think of the death star I think of this kind of massive building or group of buildings that seem kind of dominant and a bit uncomfortable, kind of hot, but also in a way almost paradoxically comforting, because you just kind of sink into this very dominating place, you kind of submit to it. I also still just think of it as being just a big school building. So kind of a strange combination of all of those things.

**(12:10) How would you describe what we did in the site?**

I think we moved through a place in a way that wasn't kind of the norm or the expected way of experiencing a place. The movement kind of allowed a new experience. We were creating experiences that were very dependent on the place, and I think that was very obvious to all of the dancers. No one was moving through the space as if they were moving through the woods, or any other building, or on the street – and I think we were also creating a series of movements that reflected the space, and then we kind of created this broader performance that was a conglomeration of these individual pieces that the dancers had created. So closer to the end of the project there was this new vocabulary for how to move through the place and how to see the place, through the experiences of the other dancers.

## FARMS RECORDING

**Before dancing in the site, what was your familiarity with it?**

I had visited the site once, when it was just a prospect. Didn't really have any familiarity I remember we were driving down the road and

saw the orchard and thought it seemed like a really incredible place to be. The farm, heavy dirt, we had just visited, we had seen the field and thought it was – there was a kind of mood there for sure, it was very open and expansive, it was kind of contained within these walls, so yeah, it seemed exciting

**(1:16) What was your impression of this place before participating in this project?**

The impression I had of the field at heavy dirt seemed actually like a very – it didn't seem like a very playful place. It seemed like the kind of place where maybe rituals are performed, or work is performed in the more traditional sense, it was this very man-made place, I think it used to be – I think it floods out when it rains or it was a lake or something, but its kind of rectangular, yeah it seemed very contained, and I felt like moving through the place there's this obvious container of the place just within these four sides even though it had some expanse to it. And it was very open, it was nothing but grass, so a lot is possible. And the orchard- I was more excited about, it felt very playful, although still it's a very domestic place, its agricultural, its this grid of walnut trees, I think they were all about fifty years old they were very climbable, it was a very mysterious place also, felt very adventurous there. Seemed like a lot was possible for a group of dancers, just because of the uniformity of the place I felt like if there was some choreography it would be good to use that landscape because of the grid. It was also very repetitious there obviously I felt like the dancing would reflect that. That was my impression.

**(4:18) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the site?**

At the field, at Heavy Dirt, I felt very unguarded, I felt very raw and spontaneous. The physical sensations were mostly of the –the ground seemed to be flat but actually it was very lumpy. There were some rocks and there was like, some cow poop here and there, and there were lots of little brambles, it was a very itchy place.. there were some little bugs flying around. I felt very- I felt kind of reactive there, I felt kind of impulsive, but in a really fun way actually, because of the physical sensations of all these slight annoyances, and these very minor obstacles that kind of littered the environment, and I was



constantly bouncing off of them. And at the orchard it was kind of similar actually, but then it was very shady and at the field the sun was somewhat oppressive; and here it was very shady and cool, I felt very relaxed. We had just finished walking there which took a little while and it was very exhausting for some people I think so .. I felt relaxed but maybe even just kind of tired when I got there. So when it was time for our individual choreography I felt just very calm and I was mostly responding to this one walnut tree in particular. I can remember the breeze that day, there was a slight breeze that came through the orchard. I remember feeling the tree, and its bark, and its grooves and notches, the scars on the tree, the leaves, the old walnut shells on the ground. It felt like a very cultivated place, and I think because it seemed so cultivated, I felt like I wanted to cultivate something there. And again in sort of a way that could be repeated, so I think that's why I chose to create in my individual choreography a kind of ritual, it felt like something that could be performed again and again.

**(8:22) Compare your experience making choreography to your experience performing.**

This time, compared to the Death Star for me, the performance was very central. It was a bit more organized, I think we spent a decent amount of time practicing, rehearsing. Also it was very interesting because we choreographed the piece at the orchard, which had such a different – it just gave off, it kind of invoked a very different kind of set of experiences, and moods, and tones, emotional qualities, and our choreography was in response to that place. But then we performed it at the field at Heavy Dirt, which is this very open kind of stage, sort of a platform. It was very interesting I think to take the choreographed piece out of its place, out of that context, and perform it in a place that seemed maybe even more place-less. It was a bit more ambiguous there. Choreographing I think was a very intimate experience for me at the orchard, and performing it at the field- I felt like there was something that was lost actually, to some degree, it felt actually a bit de-spiritualized, although as a kind of collective group we had kind of honed the action of our piece to the best that we could have within a few hours in that afternoon. Performance

was also in the morning which made it different, we had some time for the past day to settle into us and for the place to settle into us a bit more. I think we felt very refreshed, we knew that we were going to be leaving that morning so performing was a lot of fun. I felt like the group of dancers all had this shared experience between these two places that were somewhat different, and then we kind of – it felt like we were really sharing these individual experiences with one another by performing it, and by performing it we were respecting that experience.

**(12:19) What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?**

This time the role of the other dancers- it was a bit less- it wasn't as much of a – I guess it didn't have as much of a substantial impact on me as it did at the Death Star, because as we were dancing, performing, choreographing, we were much more spread out. The space wasn't as focused, we weren't as contained within this rigid space, so a lot of times I didn't have much of an awareness of the group. When it came time to teach our choreography to the group, it felt like a very intimate experience. Again, it really felt like we were sharing something, but we kind of sincerely trying to teach what we had learned from the place. In the interactions that occurred it felt more intimate, and then towards the end it felt more collective, there was this kind of collective spirit. On the last morning I think it felt very together, but I think we could have been more together even. I think everyone in the group felt very comfortable with each other. If we had a bit more time I think there definitely would have been more possibilities, and I think the experience could have been a bit deeper, with a bit more time.

**What was the most challenging moment of the project?**

The most challenging moment of the project was, like the Death Star, feeling like doing something else besides what we were directed to do. At certain times feeling very low energy, at certain times feeling like I wanted some solitude, and it being the time for our group performance, or it might have been the time to teach the choreography when we might not be ready yet, that sort of thing was the most difficult, I think.

**(0:59) When did you feel most satisfied?**

I felt most satisfied when I was doing my individual choreography and I was in front of this tree – one tree in a long row. I just felt very content, I felt like I could have sat in front of this tree for hours, just looking at it and making small movements in response to it. Yeah I just felt kind of at home and at peace. Yeah I felt very satisfied, I didn't really want any more in that moment.

**(2:05) Describe your relationship to the site now that you've experienced it through dance.**

This site- I feel like the place has expanded. I feel like the kind of – the place almost in a very physical sense has grown for me, just through the way that we experienced it, the way that we moved through it seems to have expanded the boundary of the place. And that's how it's changed the most for me, in the most obvious way, and because of that feeling I want to explore the place more. I think the possibilities have opened.

**(3:16) Has participating in this project affected you in your daily life?**

I mean I'm sure that participating in the project has affected me in my daily life. I've thought about ways of relating to a place and ways of relating to myself as being a crucial part of a place. In terms of creating new habits for myself, I feel like I haven't at all gotten to that point, and I would like to. So I feel like in terms of my daily life I haven't been that affected. But I feel very encouraged to continue exploring these sorts of ways of being in a place.

**(4:32) Compare the experience of dancing at the two sites – which do you prefer?**

I'm not sure if I prefer one over another. Although they seem very different, they are both very domestic places. The hand of man is imprinted on both of them in a very obvious way, they are not very wild, they are both very domestic places, one is more urbanized, another is rural. The Death Star, I feel like after the project, after this experience it almost felt like an isolated place, sort of like an island in the city. I feel like the space of the Death Star maybe could have even decreased in a certain way. I don't feel very inspired to go back there and move through the place. I feel like I have a series of images

that are more ingrained in my memory from the Death Star, and at the farms I feel more inspired to return and move through that place or similar places and I feel like that the actual space has expanded, just because I see more possibilities, so... I think there are many differences. The architecture of the Death Star has a very significant impact on me, as to how I was moving. I feel like I was imitating that place rather than responding to it. I don't really feel like there was much of a response. At the farms I felt more responsive, I felt more a part of those places. I didn't feel as alienated from those places. I would be interested to see what a project like this would be in a place that included numerous buildings on the same block or the same neighborhood, and I'm also interested to see how someone would be able to move through a place like a national forest with these techniques or these ways of being – kind of a more wild place.

**(8:16) If you were to repeat this process, could it be designed differently to be more fulfilling to you?**

I don't think it could. I feel like this process was very unique to itself, and necessary. I think it could be interesting to have a kind of more drastic comparison between opposing places, like a very urban city versus a very old growth national forest. I kind of like these two places because they weren't so dramatic, they were a bit more subtle, and I think they were important as experiences in themselves. I think if we could just repeat the process completely, the time and the place couldn't have been better, maybe the organization, the structure or the format of the performance, of the activity, could have been maybe a bit more clear or intentional, but I feel like it was a very important stage and I realize that it is the beginning of an exploration, I suppose, so ... yeah I mean there can always be things that could have went better but yeah I think it was great.

# Danny Friedman

## FARMS RECORDING

### **Before dancing at the site, what was your familiarity with it?**

I'd never been to that farm, the only farms that I have been to, have not been in the country so it was a new place for me. Well actually I went to a farm up in Sebastopol, but I had never been to a farm in Davis which was really interesting because we had a completely different experience than working on a farm, but I mean we were working in our own way.

### **(0:37) What was your impression of the place before participating in the project?**

Nature. I thought that we would be immersed in nature. I didn't really – what was the first name of the farm?

#### **Heavy Dirt.**

I sort of expected both farms to be like the second farm with a bunch of trees and sort of like a harvest farm, but I thought it was really pleasantly surprising that it was actually just like an open field, so you don't really put the two in together, that there are really spaces for expression in all these farms – there's so many farms in Davis. It was really nice to know that we could exit the farm scene and then make our way back to one even though it was a trek, and I think that transition really helped me. To understand, to sort of, my expectations were wrong, I guess.

#### **The transition from Heavy Dirt to the second farm?**

Yeah, it was a good transition. I think it worked best that way.

### **(2:06) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the site?**

It opened up the space for me, like if we, if I sort of went into it just as being – regular activity in that space, I felt like I would have felt really small and sort of constricted, but the fact that we were in touch with our bodies and in touch with how big the space was it really allowed for bigger expressions to happen – and small ones too, laying in the grass ... It definitely opened up the space for me and I felt more comfortable and a part of it rather than wandering through it, sort of lost. I felt like our bodies were moving with the space rather than sort

of occupying it.

### **(3:15) How did the site affect your body awareness?**

I don't know, I was like – I didn't have to be, you know – in dance there's this huge emphasis of finding your center, being in control of your body and your movements, and in that space I felt like I could just not be in control and fall over and do all of these sort of childish moves where this space could sort of harness something like that. That was really cool, and with the second space – it was really cool because I feel like it was harder for me to find control there with my body but it was a challenge, like climbing into a tree and seeing how your body doesn't really fit in that sort of orchard where everything is – the alignment of the trees looks symmetrical but then it's so hard to move around the space because its not just like walking through grassland, its like tumbling through weeds and all this stuff and I felt like that was a good challenge for me to get in control of my body and be able to kneel on the ground and be in that space in that moment of time and then get up and you know be in control of every move I was doing. It was empowering. I liked it.

### **(5:01) Compare your experience creating choreography to your experience performing?**

When Gabi and I were creating the choreography for our little thing, we had like one that was site-specific to that part of the walnut orchard. When we were a part of the choreography rather than creating it, I felt like I could use my choreography into different places and make it my own in different spots, so basically the choreography changed completely and I think that's important because when you move five feet to your left or five feet to your right, it changes and so that's what happens when you're not on a wooden dance floor or that sort of landscape. I think the landscape provided obstacles for choreography but it proved to be more of a learning exercise than anything.

### **(6:30) What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?**

The first thing that comes to my mind is support for the group, like everyone was there for each other, but the next thing that comes to my mind is everyone was trying to find themselves in the moment,

so all of our different goals were self-expression goals, but in that we found support with each other, so yeah, support. It was really hard to be with the same group of people for like a day, because I'm used to, you know, my own community back where I'm from, where I live three-quarters out of the year, and then being with this new group where we're not only in a completely different space but we're all trying to express ourselves differently. We all see a tree and we all go to different spots in the tree, but at the end of the movement we're all hanging from it and we're all connected together. So I found a huge opportunity to support others and to be supported in that climate. I liked it.

**(8:06) What was the most challenging moment of the project?**

Walking. Walking from the different sites, I think that was the most challenging but the most rewarding. Even though there were trials and tribulations or whatever, it was a really hot day, the weather was a challenge. Once we got to the new place we could just like breathe and be in the moment and then everything changed, the energy changed and we could just focus on what we needed to do. The challenge sort of lingered on until it was sunset and we were like “we need to finish this for ourselves, not for anyone else” so the challenge was- I don't know, in any situation time is a challenge, and taking the time, like just taking 24 hours out of your busy schedule to participate in one really crucial, really thought-provoking, thought-consuming exercise, I think that the whole project was a challenge. But it was needed, to move on it, to become the dancers that we are, I guess. I consider myself a dancer, so yeah.

**(9:37) When did you feel most satisfied?**

At the end, waking up in the morning, waking up really early knowing that we're gonna get up and we're gonna – we've been together and we know the plot, and the choreography, and the most satisfying moment was when we did our final run and we were walking and we were basically – the first time we got into the space [the field] we were really central- we were all in the middle and we were all together in this really tight knit... we were all touching each other too, and it was really rewarding to see everyone spread out and

walk literally around the project we had created for ourselves, and then come into it and be there. And that was rewarding.

**(10:40) Describe your relationship to the site now that you have experienced it through dance.**

I feel like if I went back I would tap into the energy that we created there, and I find comfort in the site. In both of them, actually. I think we created a really welcoming space that we can come back to and reflect on. Even if we are doing other things, like working there or whatever.

**(11:14) How did you relate to your body in this place as opposed to other dance venues?**

I was like free, yeah, there were no fears that limited my ability to do the wrong move or not be in time with everyone, or not extending myself to the confines of the dance room or dance studio where the energy is usually really concentrated and led by someone instead of you know- we were in an open space and we were all doing the conducting of our own performance. It was really awesome to be in a different space and not worry about – when I was jumping, or when someone was catching me, not worrying that I'm not gonna point my foot or not gonna mess up because it worked out because of how free the space was.

**(12:21) How would you describe what we did in the site?**

We challenged the definition of movement I think, definitely. I think we went in there with a clear sort of like “this is not conventional movement and this is not a conventional space and this is not what dancers in san francisco are doing or LA”, and we went in there as not performers. We went in there as people reacting together, and reacting from each other and really that's what leads to groups and companies in my opinion, people who can react with each other and be support for each other even if they are put in the middle of nowhere, or anything. You don't have to have years of training to be in that space, you just have to give yourself to it.

**(13:32) Has participating in this project affected you in your daily life?**

Yeah, I don't know, I feel like it affected my body a lot. I went back to dance class and I understand my body now and I can be grounded.

It also made me look at different places on campus and even where I live, and when I'm traveling, it makes me sort of think "Is this a place for expression?" you know, and I left those two farms with tools to ask those questions, which is important, especially when looking at intentional spaces or intentional buildings or you know anything really that has infrastructure.

**(14:43) If you were to repeat this process, could it be designed differently to be more fulfilling to you?**

No, I don't know, it was so intentional, because we knew where we were going and we had no idea what we were doing. I feel like that's a good way to start off a project like that, I feel like we could have gone to another farm, you know it would have been a different experience. I liked where we were. I don't think I would change it, I think it was well thought out.

## Gabi LeBlanc

### DEATH STAR RECORDING

**Before dancing at the Death Star, what was your familiarity with the site?**

Only one time when we played sardines, or hide-and-go-seek, I can't remember. But that was my only real memory of that place.

**(0:22) What was your impression of the place before participating in the project?**

That it was easy to get lost in, and it all looked the same, and there were no clues as to where I was when I was inside the building, or structure. It's not even – is it a building or an area? I had no thoughts about it before, because it turned off all those wonderings when it was, oh cement.

**(1:03) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the site?**

It made me really appreciate concrete in a way that I had never experienced before. Seeing it from up close and far away and all around me and just being immersed in it for a really long time forced me to recognize things in it that were pleasurable, things that

I might have thought when I was really young and on playgrounds or something but never really internalized, because I ended up appreciating dirt and open landscape more, because I was less exposed to it. It was a treat.

**What specifically were things that you appreciated?**

The way you have to touch it a certain way or else it hurts you, and the way it's cold, and the way that it does scrape you – very exfoliating. I appreciated that sensation, except for when I really scratched my back, that was neutral. It wasn't even displeasurable, it was pretty neutral.

**(2:32) How did the site affect your body awareness?**

I was able to feel my bones inside my body because when you touch something or hit a wall it first touches your tissue and then your bones, because it was so rigid, and your body kind of rebounded against it, so you had to either bounce around or – you couldn't be very hard, you had to be very elastic, otherwise you would have probably gotten a lot more bruises dancing. Just feeling gravity as well, it was a very heavy place with a very solid landscape, and I felt very light, or I had to be able to resist gravity to balance that.

**(3:25) Can you compare your experience creating choreography to your experience performing?**

I guess from creating choreography I'm trying to watch myself from an inside perspective, just seeing what feels right because we were interacting with the space on a very personal basal level. Then performing I was seeing myself from the outside, and trying to see what it looked like from someone else's perspective. Does that make sense?

**Yeah. Did you prefer one over the other?**

I guess they were stimulating in different ways. I think I liked creating the choreography better, because it felt more intuitive, and when I was performing I'm really in that space, so it was kind of different and maybe not as natural for me to do.

**(4:37) What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?**

Since I knew we were all dancing I wasn't really paying attention to emotive facial expressions or anything like that, I was just seeing

bodies. Seeing everybody as a body and feeling their bodies move against your body, interacting that way, it was really interesting, it took – I don't know, there was a deep intimacy because I knew a lot of the people beforehand, but just being able to concentrate on where their bodies were going as a means for their expression, and communication. It was just a really nice shift from the norm of just using speech and body language. This I guess was only body language to rely on, I liked it.

**(5:41) What was the most challenging moment of the project?**

I think it was before the actual dancing started, just anticipating that we were going to do this, and I guess looking ahead to it, because I was trying to not make expectations about what it was; at the same time I was told what it was going to be, so I had to try to maintain a balance of not expecting anything and being open-minded to the experience, and then wondering what it was going to be like, and just thinking how is this going to work out? And just not knowing was – there was a long time planning, and I was just like, well it'll happen one day. But even thinking about it a little bit, I had to change my train of thought otherwise I would get wrapped into the mystery of the event. And then once we were there, it was so, just one thing turned consequentially to another to another to another, and all of a sudden three hours had passed, or a whole day had passed, but the most challenging part was looking forward to it, for me.

**(6:55) What about the most satisfying part?**

I think every breath that I heard was really wonderful – it filled me up. Towards the end we were breathing pretty hard and we had been dancing for a long time, so it was really – people had really let go at that point, and just “Haaaaaa”, like really giving out their energy. There was so much to go off of then that you couldn't even get distracted from anything that was outside of the dancing.

**(7:36) Describe your relationship to the Death Star now that you've experienced it through dance...**

I don't think I can walk normally through it anymore. I haven't tried. I probably won't go down the stairs normally. I guess the way I normally go down stairs very regularly, but just feeling like I can

improvise in that space because we broke that shell completely, like disintegrated it. And now I know the possibilities that are in that space, and that I can do them again at will, it's a freeing feeling.

**And you feel like you'd like to do that?**

Mhmm, yeah. I feel like I wouldn't be able to help it, if I was in that space again.

**(8:29) How would you describe what we did in the site?**

We addressed the Death Star as almost a sentient being, instead of a space to occupy or just a place to go through in passing, or a place of displeasure, because it's got all of these connotations with the Dean's office, and boring lecture halls, and unhappy students ... Can you read the question one more time?

**How would you describe what we did in the site?**

It's hard to describe. I think we just said hello to the Death Star with our bodies.

**(9:46) Has participating in this project affected you in your daily life?**

Yeah. Less afraid of going places or seeing things or being exposed to things that I initially – I don't know, I grew up with an overexposure of a lot of things associated with urban living, and a modern lifestyle, I guess, and so I have reacted to that, because I was so choked with it and just decided that all of those things were bad and couldn't be enjoyed, at least for me. But now I know that I can enjoy anything, so I'm not really afraid of going any place. I used to kind of avoid certain situations or certain places because I would just assume that I would get that same choked feeling, but if you just change your mindset and approach it in a different way it's totally possible to just enjoy wherever you are.

**FARMS RECORDING**

**What was your familiarity with the site before participating in this project?**

I've been to Full Circle, now Heavy Dirt, and it was very homey feeling, and – were you on that house trip with the pizza oven? We stayed in the yurt?

**Oh no, I wasn't.**

It was just a really comfortable atmosphere that night and it definitely carried over to my perception of it the second time I had been there. Oh, a third time in between the two times, I biked there one day randomly and just walked around once, and then left. So I know where it is and it's always been on the map in my head, and I knew the space pretty well, but I hardly ever spent time there. Farms change so much and yet so little at the same time. Same thing with Wolfskill, I had been by there so many times, and just seen through the fence, and so I was really familiar with where it was, how it looked, maybe not the entire space, but having not even gone into the fence I felt like I knew the place already.

**(1:24) What was your impression of the place before participating in the project?**

Very utilitarian and functional and at the same time pretty messy with the cycles of life, just – not the most efficient of spaces, but that's not really how a food place should be in my head so it was a very good farm atmosphere, landscape.

**(1:57) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the landscape?**

I was so itchy. That was a serious meditation in withdrawing senses of itchiness, because if I paid attention too much it was so distracting from my experience of the trees and the people and the air, even, it was very humid that day too, and sweat stinging, itching, thistles. I really liked the mud at Wolfskill, how it was kind of squishy. The feeling of heat and sun versus shade and water and cool. Getting moss in my eyes and feeling bark, and drinking so much water that we were constantly peeing, so much interaction on the surface of the skin and below, and eating walnuts and ... it was cool. I felt really immersed in all of the elements around me. It felt like we got shards of plants in our skin and we probably shed a lot of us there.

**(3:33) How did the site affect your body awareness?**

Heavy Dirt, I felt almost too aware of my body, and I didn't dance very much, and I was trying to figure out why, it just happened that way and at the end I was like, hm, oh, what do you know? It could have been that there was so much micro life around me, I was focusing on that, I was seeing tiny little flowers, so many of them,

and being really distracted from what I was intending to do, which was interact, I was just interacting by observing. There was also no break to the landscape, it was all just a field, and so I got really distracted by the differences in the flowers and the little plants ... but then in Wolfskill I was trying to interact with the trees more, and that was really easy to do because they're so dynamic in shape and size, and they're so much more three-dimensional. I felt a lot more fluid dancing in Wolfskill, it could have been because I was also in shade, which was nice, but I think it was mostly because of the trees. And the soil was different too, it was really dry in the field and really bouncy in the orchard.

**(5:32) Can you compare your experience creating choreography to your experience performing?**

For this one, I felt way more comfortable performing than I did choreographing. I was trying to tell a story when I was choreographing, and I just wanted to apologize for all the people that prune trees and hurt the trees, and I was just seeing all of these wounds on the tree and scuffs through the bark, and wanting to account, it felt like this immense debt. And then performing I wasn't really paying attention to that, I was actually just moving as planned but also a lot of that was improvised, even so the amount of time we took doing things. So I was just feeling what felt right in that space because I had something to do. But when I was choreographing I was asking myself about these trees, and feeling really sorry for all the hurts that orchard trees have to go through. At the same time, it's hurting because you're taking care of the tree, and it made me wonder about how people take care of each other, and what parts of you just get cruelly cut off and it's painful at first, but then it will heal up and you'll be lighter and stronger the next day. I'm not sure if I answered the question.

**(7:09) What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of this site?**

The wavy thistle part was the most interactive for me. That was a really cool just like, okay we're going to be still in a plane and move together, and it was all very expectable, but it had the element of improvisation because you were going with the gust of the

wind, and we were mimicking a natural control on plants but it was all choreographed. And that was really cool to choreograph an uncontrolled force in nature, and it mimicked it pretty well, it was cool that we could imitate that. Feeling another person's breath in that one move, it was really intimate and sensitive. And I really liked the sunrise dance too, I felt like we were very interactive because it was so still and so quiet and there was hardly any terrestrial life, the sun was just coming up, so all we had were ourselves, and the only interaction we had was the one lift, and watching each other. It was cool because we were far away from each other, trying to communicate two groups across a field, and touching briefly, and then zooming back. It was like stars crashing and then flying away.

**(9:01) What was the most challenging moment of the project?**

Laying really really still and watching all of these mosquitoes descend, and being like, I am not my body, I am just still here. And I could dissociate from the itchiness, and the sweatiness, and the stinging and from getting cuts and from mud in my eyes, and thistles in my ears ... everything, but at the last moment when we lay down in the grassy field, the mosquitoes took me by surprise and I resisted the urge to move really really hard. And I think I succeeded, I'm not sure if I did or not. But that was the most guttural response that I had, that I really thought was an interesting challenge.

**(10:26) When did you feel most satisfied in the project?**

The last time we performed the kneeling dance, and just feeling really accomplished, because it was the culmination of everything we put into it, because all the dancers had been dancing for the last however long, and then we all woke up early and did this dance, and to see us all finish, and to feel us all finish, and to feel done was really satisfying. It was very communal, and fluid and it's a really beautiful dance to finish on.

**That was in the morning?**

That was the morning after.

**(11:15) Describe your relationship to the farms now that you've experienced them through dance...**

Instead of feeling like a visitor, I feel like I'm part of it now, just

because there was such a deep interaction. Just having spent that much focused time there doing work, and the work was just being a part of the place, so doing that work in a concentrated period of time kind of made me just –voomp— and now I feel like I have a little brother there, just a certain kinship I guess. You don't really feel it very often with a lot of places except maybe your home or the place you occupy most often.

**(12:28) How would you describe what we did at the site?**

It was almost like question-response; we saw something, we danced it. We approached a space and then we answered it. Whatever it gave us, we mirrored something back.

**(12:59) Has participating in this project affected you in your daily life?**

Yeah, I see the spirit in plants a lot more. I used to be pretty species-ist, like I would see weeds and just be "meh, a weed". But now it's like "there's a curly leaf on that weed, you're a special weed you", just recognizing all plants for the beauty that's in them, regardless of what culture thinks about them.

**(13:47) Comparing the two sites, which do you prefer?**

I would have to say I prefer the orchard. We spent more time there and went through a lot more challenges, I didn't really face that many challenges in the field. But in the orchard there were so many different things and it was so dynamic. And there were so many parts to the whole, and – yeah, orchard.

**(14:37) If you were to repeat this process, could it be designed differently to be more fulfilling to you?**

I'm trying to think of a way, but everything happened the way it happened and it was really beautiful, and I don't think it could have been improved upon because everything reacted from the last thing, and it just all fell into place really beautifully.

## Katelyn Hempstead

### FARMS RECORDING

**What was your familiarity with the site before participating in this project?**

Zero. Maybe I had driven through that intersection on Rd. 198 or



whatever that was... I had no idea what I was getting into.

**(0:22) What was your impression of the site before participating in the project?**

They were all beautiful. I drove up and the first thing I saw was a few people walking by the olive trees past a field, and they were all sort of wrapped up with their shirts around their heads looking like nomads and trekking along this hot windy road, so it was like very elegant and weird ... all wearing white, so it was a really great thing to just come upon because I was trying to figure out where I was going, what was going on, and stressed trying to get from place to place and then I saw these people just walking the road silently – it was very cool.

**(1:10) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the landscape?**

You know, I think initially it made me more timid, just because I've never been a particularly outdoorsy person. When I first got there, I wasn't sort of warmed up yet, and I was like "Ow, the sticks are hurting my feet and I keep scraping myself on the tree", and it wasn't so much like deep body sensations as like, ooh that's uncomfortable, or this leaf feels nice, and then I think as time went on, it went down a level into more mind/body kind of sensing in terms of like, this is what it feels like as the sun is setting, and this is what it feels like to be upside-down in a tree as opposed to rightside-up in a tree. So I think that was a hurdle to get past, and then it became a huge perk of the dance, being in \_\_\_\_\_(recording lost)

**(2:18) How did the site affect your body awareness?**

Well a similar kind of thing, at first I was very aware of my hands and feet, and sort of where they were coming into contact with things, and then as I started to make contact with the ground and the trees, and the air to a certain extent, with my full body, with more commitment, it became more of like a jungle gym sort of thing, there was a lot more potential for certain kinds of movement, it was exciting.

**(3:26) Describe your experience performing ... (did not participate in creating choreography)**

It was fun picking up other people's choreography, for the orchard part, it was really really nice because I was a little bit newer to the place, and because I come from a dance background that's really

choreography-heavy, as we've talked about. So I think that really helped me ease into it and be like oh okay, I can see why you would want to splash your face, and I can see why you would want to run to the tree, so that was a really nice way into the experience for me. Then in the morning, doing the choreography, that felt very collaborative and even though I don't think I spoke up a lot about I what I thought we should do, I felt like we were all very much on the same page, and it was less different people bringing in disparate elements and more sort of a group-think experience, which was really nice. The choreography was great. I think I said this at the time, but I thought I was not gonna be down for the running around, because I was just already very tired, and then I ended up having such a blast. I was with Danny and Gabi, and they were just the perfect people to be running and hiding with when we were doing the hide-and-seek part of the choreography and that was just a blast, because we were giggling, and running full out, and I – I don't really like the word child-like, because I feel like children are not always child-like, but it did sort of feel like that, it was sort of like, this is goofy and I'm not analyzing it, and it feels very free and exciting. So that was a part of the choreography I particularly liked. It was fun.

**(5:26) What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?**

Initially it was kind of uncomfortable, just because I think I missed a lot of the – well I wasn't there for the Death Star dance, and then I wasn't there for the beginning of this thing, so I felt like there was already a sort of community feeling that I wasn't a part of initially, and I was very much not in the vibe yet, and I think that people had already established an energy level and a kind of interaction that was going to happen throughout the weekend that was hard for me to catch up to and pick up on, so I felt a lot of, honestly, discomfort with the other dancers initially. It was a lot easier for me to be off on my own, but I think probably by the end of the orchard time I felt pretty well integrated and then in the morning it was really lovely, I felt like we were all being very – something about sleeping outdoors really brings you together – but I feel like everyone was being very supportive, literally and figuratively, and everyone was very willing to

pick each other up, and grab each other, and roll with any suggestion, so I think the other dancers went from a negative to a positive over time. Not that they were doing anything wrong, I was just very out of place at first, and then I felt very in place.

**(6:47) What was the most challenging moment of the project?**

Probably the first half hour. Getting past my own sort of physical and emotional discomfort with being there, because I think I told you I was coming from a research conference, where I was presenting my research, so I guess I went from this very upright and kind of non-interactive place, and then I stopped by a friend's barbeque where we were all just sitting around and talking, not really doing anything physical, into this place where I was grabbing trees and with people I didn't know well, expected to immediately connect with them, so it was just very startling. It was tricky. I would say that was challenging. And in the morning with the allergies. I think part of me was tempted to be like "Ah, I'm grumpy and I don't wanna do this, and I feel sick, and this is crazy and it's so early", and then I think in moving got past that, and I think by sort of saying "You're here, it's okay to be grumpy, but you chose to do this", and then it became awesome. But I think I had to embrace my discomfort at the beginning, and embrace my grumpiness in the morning, to be able to get the most out of the experience.

**(8:36) When did you feel most satisfied?**

I think every time Nicole picked me up, it was a really great feeling – it was really great, because it was such a physical connection with someone else, and such a trust thing, and just that move was –I can't remember who said it – being open to the sun and very chest open to the space, which is a really rich movement, and so that was incredibly satisfying, and seeing everyone else run and come to meet each other was really gorgeous, and I think that was part of the feeling of group spirit, was the just the act of running into each other and knowing that the other person is there and going to do what you need them to do. I think that was a very real connection.

**And when you say connection do you mean to the other people, or to the whole exploration, or ...**

Both, definitely both. And I think part of that was the choreography, and part of it was just the fact that we were in a field when the sun was rising, I mean it's hard not to feel connected in that kind of situation, it's just so overwhelmingly – I keep wanting to say factual, which doesn't make sense- but it felt very much like, yes you are here, this is a farm, and you are on someone's land, and the sun is rising and your friends are here ... it was a very very embodied. So that was really gratifying, it felt great. And dinner. Dinner was so satisfying. The quinoa was terrific.

**(10:25) Describe your relationship to the site now that you've experienced it through dance.**

Particularly with the olive orchard, I feel like I have always had this experience of driving past farms in particular and being like, man I want to be there, I want to be in those trees, I want to be in that field, I want to be under those fig trees ... and so it was such a rewarding experience just to be there. It was sort of like a kid who always wanted to go to Disneyland, but you always drove right past because you were on your way to San Diego, so it was really wonderful to feel like I had permission to be there. Both legal permission, it wasn't trespassing on someone's land, and to have a reason to be there and a purpose to be on that land and doing what we're doing. In terms of dance, in particular, I think it was really interesting for me to think of the place as the input for the dance, as opposed to something like music, or certain moves that you feel like you want to do, to say like, okay I'm building a dance from a place, and now this is the dance place. So I think that if I went back to the farms I would feel very tempted to move in a dancey kind of way again. I think I wouldn't be content to just sort of – if I went to visit a friend I wouldn't be content to just be sitting around, I think I would need to move. So I think now those places for me – and I haven't been to any farms since, so who knows if it carries over to other places – but now those places are a viable stage for dance, and now I'm always going to know that that's an option there, should I go back.

**(12:27) How did you relate to your body in this place as opposed to other dance venues?**

I think in some ways I thought of my body as an obstacle, initially,

when I was still settling in, and then again in the morning and trying to fall asleep as well, I thought of it as an issue, as a sort of a, ah, my body has all these pain reactions that are very inconvenient, and allergy reactions... how obnoxious is it that pollen makes me feel sick and makes me sneeze and makes me not able to sleep, like stupid body, why can't you handle more? And frustration with not being able to really climb trees very well, frustration with feeling fear when I didn't want to and climbing trees and running over the ground and feeling like that was something I had to overcome. And normally with dance I tend to think of my body more as a tool, and so it took a while to ease into that and to stop being frustrated with what I couldn't do and excited about what I could do. And I think a lot of the change happened when we did the unexpected falling down in the grasses, in the weed or whatever it was in the very end of the dance when we were filming, and I kind of settled down in the grass and was like, I know that looked cool. That felt cool, that felt really wonderful, and isn't it great that I can fold this way and move this way. So I think it was always a little bit of tension between those things, between like, yeah I have this tool that has all these wonderful capabilities, but it's also something that brings me unpleasant sensations, and that's something I have to get over, or accept, and get past. So I think it made me more aware of that tension, but I think it's always there when you dance, there's always some kind of pain or discomfort, but this really brought it into sharp focus – the idea that your body is a tool and your body is a burden.

**(14:41) How would you describe what we did in the site?**

I think it was different in the evening and in the morning. I think in the evening we – I assume you guys were in the space for a while, and you picked up vibes and decided what you thought were movements that you felt moved to do in the space, and then put them together in some sort of choreography. Then when I got there we found ways to learn each other's choreography and share the feelings behind the movement, as well as the movement itself – it kind of felt like method acting, how if you are supposed to feel fear in a scene you should think of a time that you felt fear, except that all the experiences were right there in the moment, so when you're doing the choreography

it was like, really smell this leaf, really lay down on the ground, that I thought was a really great way to dance. Then we put the choreography together, and we all did it as a group a few times, and filmed it, and felt it, and then it got dark and mosquito-y and so we split. And then in the morning we took some of the things that we had been doing before and adapted them for the new place and for the new type of dance that we were doing. It had a lot of very different requirements, I think, the space did and the circumstances. Then we did that dance, practiced it a few times and did it, as the sun was rising, and it was great.

**(16:25) Has participating in this project affected you in your daily life?**

I think about it. Yeah, I do. My room faces east, so a lot of times the sun will rise and wake me up, and a few mornings ago the sun woke me up and I was like man, I should just go out in the backyard and dance. Then I was like, fuck that, I'm going back to sleep. But I think it has – even more than space-wise, because I've done a little bit of site-specific dancing before, so that's been an option to me before, but time-wise I think it really adjusted my ideas of when is the time to dance. And it's not just when you have a room, in the afternoon, and people who want to dance with you, its sort of like whenever the time and the place call for it, or whenever you feel like it. So it's okay to dance at midnight, it's great to dance at four am, just whenever you feel like moving.

**(17:35) If you were to repeat this process, could it be designed to be more fulfilling to you?**

Again, my experience was different because I got there about a third of the way through, so I personally would get there on time if I could do it again. But also I suppose if there could be ways for people to come in at different times or to come from very different places in their lives, because I do feel like there was a lot of range for people who – whatever kind of experience with dance you had, that was great experience, but I wish that we had known more about the backgrounds of the other dancers, and had seen them exhibit that. So, maybe even more individual watching each other dance, and more time to focus on improvising dance as opposed to working towards

a choreography, which I loved, and really helped me be in the space, and I would definitely always want to do eventually, but maybe a little more time to just watch each other and get used to the idea of other people in the space as well, and more time to just be on your own.

**In watching each other, what would you gain from that?**

Because in the end, the group identity became really important to me, and I think that the group identity came from all of the individual people that were in the project. And so I think that it would help me to better process what we were as a group in the space, if I knew what everyone was as a person in the space. Less than “Have you done jazz for six years?” and more like “How do you react to a tree?”, and how do we react to a tree, the two of us? And I think there was more of that before I got there, but I would have loved to have done even more.

## Nicole Casado

### FARMS RECORDING

**Before dancing at the site, what was your familiarity with it?**

Before we danced – like when we just got there?

**Like before going there for this project – had you ever been there before?**

No, I hadn’t been there before. I’d biked sort of around that area a little, like once, and driven by there, like once. Really I wasn’t very familiar with it.

**(0:37) What was your impression of the place before participating in this project?**

It seemed cool, it was neat to see some of the people milling around there. It seemed nice.

**(1:05) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the site?**

I remember when we first went into the field and we were doing the exercise where you listen really far and close, and you look really close and far, that was really cool, I felt like everything became

more 3D and in focus. Definitely I felt way more connected with the landscape.

**(1:49) How did the site affect your body awareness?**

It was just interesting to be in a new place, and to . . . I’m not really sure. I think it helped me to be more aware. I think it was just nice to be in a new place, and dancing, I think it’s more exciting to be somewhere new and there’s more things that you’re not used to seeing all the time, so it engages your curiosity more.

**(3:19) Can you compare your experience creating choreographing to your experience performing?**

It was really fun to teach the choreography to someone else. I thought that was really fun. Performing it, it was still really fun, I just felt like I had to commit more and make sure that I was not going to break out of it. They were both really good. I really like performing-I felt a lot more into it when we were in the walnut orchard and we performed the unison at the end in the grass, that was really cool to me. I felt very aware and connected with everybody as we were performing. Being really aware of what was around us, and feeling the wind and the grass, and just feeling like we developed this bond with these people.

**(5:33) What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?**

It definitely would not have been the same without all the other dancers. That was part of what made it so exciting for me to do, because I got to bond with all of these other people, that some of them I sort of knew but not really. Even when we weren’t performing, just having conversation with them, and when we were relaxing. It was neat to be exploring that new landscape with them. I don’t think we would have been able to develop the same connection if we were just somewhere where we had already been. Because we were creating our experience of the new place together.

**(6:56) What was the most challenging moment of the project for you?**

<< Didn’t answer, forgot to come back to it >>

**(7:48) When did you feel most satisfied?**

A few times. I really liked when we first did that warm up in the field,

with the listening and the seeing. ... I felt like that gave me a good awareness for the whole time that we were there. I liked that we slept there and waking up in the morning and being there with everyone, I just really liked that. I also really liked when we did our performance in the field that morning. I also thought it was really satisfying that we created some choreography so quickly. I thought that was really cool that we were able to do that. There were a lot of parts that were really good.

**(9:33) Can you describe your relationship to the site now that you've experienced it through dance?**

I feel connected to both of those places, definitely, more than I would than if I hadn't danced there definitely by a lot. I feel like I know little things about those places. I feel very connected to them, which is kind of funny because I was only there for not even 24 hours.

**(10:22) How did you relate to your body in this place as opposed to other dance venues?**

Much more creatively I feel like because its not just flat marley or wood floor. You can experience the natural elements because you are outside. You can feel the wind and the sun ... that was a big part of it for me, being able to feel the sun and wind and the natural world was affecting my body as I was in this environment.

**(11:16) How would you describe what we did in the site?**

Like a ritual (laughs). I feel like we just explored it.

**(11:42) Has participating in this project affected you in your daily life?**

I think it has, a little bit. I definitely know that I want to do more things like this. Thinking about it right now, I wish that I was able to explore more of the places that I see all the time like this. Because like right now if I'm looking at the grass ... I don't know. Even though I've walked through the arboretum so much, I don't actually feel like as connected to it as I could, or if I did something like that here. I think that it's important to connect with your environment, and I'd like to do more things like that because I feel like it really did connect me to the environment.

**(12:58) If you were to repeat this process, could it be designed differently to be more fulfilling to you?**

I don't think so, I think it went really well. I really liked how we all biked there. Ideally maybe people would be on time... so we could actually leave when we were supposed to. I think that was like the perfect organization. Good job.

## Krystie Guy

### THE DEATH STAR RECORDING

**Before dancing at the site, what was your familiarity with it?**

I had passed by it, had some classes at -what is that called? The big lecture hall – Social Science. So I had passed by it, I even a couple years ago took pictures of it because it's a really interesting space, and really visually stunning, or captivating. Just kind of like familiar in that I was aware of it and passed by it frequently.

**(0:57) What was your impression of the place before participating in the project?**

It's very severe, in that all of the lines, the steps, the fact that it's concrete – it's not very forgiving or warm. That would be my impression.

**(1:20) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the site?**

I hadn't interacted with the site in that way before dancing ... I guess I had to think about being in the site in a different way, or I was acutely aware of all of the boundaries of the place and of myself in the place, if that makes sense.

**(2:07) How did being in the site affect your body awareness?**

I guess I kind of answered that in the last one, but I guess just being aware of the limitations of my body, and being able to move in a space like that. There were certain things that I would want to do, but I couldn't because it is concrete, and I could hurt myself, and so it was interesting to try and figure out how to still have that quality of movement without doing exactly what I wanted to do, or doing something that could potentially hurt me.

**(2:50) Compare your experience creating choreography to**

### **your experience performing...**

Going and investigating the space and taking choreography from it, or coming up with a gesture that went with or was based on my perception of the space was obviously more personal, and made me think about the space in a different way. I was being inspired by the place, and even when performing with everyone I still felt that I was being inspired, but I was having to move through the space as opposed to taking my movement from the space. Or determining my movement because of the impression that I got.

### **(4:02) What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?**

Well I really liked the exercise that we did, or the fact that we imitated the types of movements that other people came up with, because it let me experience to the extent possible how everyone else was interacting with the space. And I think that without the other dancers, I wouldn't have gotten everything possible from the space because my perception is limited intrinsically. I can only see what I see, but by observing other dancers and their movements I was able to broaden my range of motion and the types of movements that I was doing.

### **(5:11) What was the most challenging moment of the project?**

I think putting everything together cohesively, kind of – flocking was hard because when we were running I wouldn't really be able to take in everything and really get everything that I wanted, interact with every single part of the space. It was hard to focus, I guess, because we were moving so quickly through the space, but I would say that was probably the most challenging part.

### **(5:54) What about the most satisfying part?**

It was really satisfying to be able to feel a part of such a captivating place, and to feel like I had – like we were almost in this symbiotic relationship along with all of the dancers. Being able to create something within the space and from the space was really satisfying, and especially getting to dance with everyone else, I think it was really interesting to see how different people move.

### **(6:51) Describe your relationship to the Death Star now that you've experienced it through dance...**

It's funny passing by it and kind of like, oh yeah, I did a dance there and that was really cool. I think I see it in more of a – I have a deeper relationship with it in some way. I think about it with more intimacy, and in this way that I have – because even just while doing it, and the fact that it is in a public space, and having everyone see you, and that might have affected how they see it also, and just being aware that you've done that in that space. Yeah, I do see it differently but it's hard to quantify or explain how exactly.

### **Is it by virtue of just having had a more intimate experience with it?**

Yeah, that's what I would say.

### **(8:22) How did you relate to your body in this space as opposed to other dance venues?**

I would just go back to what I said earlier about the fact that it was concrete and so unforgiving. I kept wanting to – I would rub my hands and my feet over the surface and by the end of the dance they were really raw, and I hurt a little bit because you're trying to move – at one point I was trying to move down the steps laying on my back and it's just not a very natural way of moving, so ... As opposed to other dance venues, you could just fall to the ground, or like Sam's movement you could only do it so many times before you just, ow, you know. So definitely in that it was very harsh and cold, but in some ways it was really interesting to see the juxtaposition of when we would move, like do contact improv, and the warmth and the softness of human bodies as opposed to this really hard concrete surface. So that was interesting, because maybe I wouldn't have been able to appreciate that difference so much if we were in a more forgiving atmosphere.

### **(10:09) How would you describe what we did in the site?**

Exploration, definitely, exploring the space, and interacting with it- I feel like I'm using a lot of the same vocabulary, but – just, it's so easy to walk down the steps and go to class and not really give it a second thought. Or maybe, you know, oh this a cool space, but it's a lot different to be inspired by it and to move with and from the space, and within it as well. I think exploration would definitely be the word I would use.

**(11:04) Has participating in this project affected you in your daily life?**

Yes. I mean, I now – I hadn't done site-specific dancing before that, and now it's just kind of fun to look at things in terms of what could I do here? How could I interact with these things, how am I moving through space, even if I'm not necessarily dancing. I'm a lot more aware of my own movements and how other people move through space, and it's a really special awareness to have, and something that I think a lot of people probably take for granted, and that I've gotten out of this project especially.

**(12:02) If you were to repeat this process, could it be designed differently to be more fulfilling to you?**

Yeah, I mean, I would have liked to have been able to explore the space a little bit more on my own. I really liked the collaboration aspect of it but to have been able to investigate a little bit more personally and then come together would have been nice, but it was really nice.

## Lauren Godla

### THE DEATH STAR RECORDING

**Before dancing at the site, what was your familiarity with the site?**

I had had some bio classes in the main lecture hall, and kind of walked passed it a few times. I walked through it once to do some sort of psychology interview, and that was about it.

**(0:29) What was your impression of the place before participating in the project?**

I think it's ugly. I feel like "Why would you spend so much money on building something so ugly?" I don't know- it doesn't look very collegiate to me.

**(0:53) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the landscape?**

Well, it was very scratchy at times. It made me kind of feel like my soft fleshy body doesn't really fit in very well with hard, scratchy,

angular cement. It was interesting to try and move in that way, it definitely makes you move differently and feel differently, sort of confined and restricted. I didn't feel comfortable, and I just kind of wanted to create something that I did feel comfortable with, within that landscape.

**(1:54) How did the site affect your body awareness?**

I think it made me more aware of space around my body, because it wasn't totally open you know, there were steps and corners or things that you had to avoid or form to, and kind of made me more aware of the space and the shapes that my body could make.. and also more aware of my skin, because things were touching my skin.

**(2:44) Compare your experience creating choreography with your experience performing.**

At first, you know, when I was creating it, it was like "Oh, you know, I should do something cool because Kathleen needs to use this to make something", and just thinking about what would be cool in this space. But then it was like, that's not really fun, I want to do something that I like doing. And that's something that I struggle with creating choreography anytime, like remaining true to what you want to do and also balancing that with well, there's people watching and what are they going to like? But at first I was just trying to think of what was cool, and then I was like I can't do this, I'm too uncomfortable, I'm just going to do what I like. Creating it was really nice, after I got over that, I could have built little fairy house structures for a while. And then, performing everyone's choreographies together-because not everyone had the same desires in the space, wasn't quite as satisfying, because I was doing what other people liked doing in the space, it wasn't necessarily what I liked doing.

**(4:32) What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?**

It was really nice – I mean I would have felt pretty awkward if I was the only person doing that, so I guess having that shared experience was nice. But also to have other bodies that are soft and squishy to touch was a relief in comparison to all the hard surfaces. It was interesting to see how different people react to different spaces

differently.

**(5:14) What was the most challenging moment of the project?**

It was probably towards the end, when I was getting more tired, when we were all performing together, I was just ready to not be in that space anymore, and I was hot and thirsty and scratchy and tired of doing other people's movement. Probably the last little performance thing that we did.

**(5:53) When were you most satisfied?**

It was really nice actually at the end too, after I was really irritated, the very last thing that we did – I think Shirelle and you and I, and Kristen maybe, we were all running to the circle and doing this hand-standy thing in unison, and coming down and up and down. That was really nice, and then – yeah, that was nice.

**What specifically did you like about that?**

It felt like we were connecting through the shared movement. It felt like it was well-suited to the space. It felt like a good ending-maybe I knew the end was near, so that was nice.

**(7:06) Describe your relationship to the site now that you've experienced it through dance.**

Well I think I still have some of the same feelings that I had before I danced there, but maybe they're just more clear and reaffirmed, or maybe some of them are not there ... I feel like I still think this is like an ugly building, and why the heck would you spend so much money building something so ugly. But I know the intricacies of how it feels and the shapes of it more, and the possibilities also. It is visually and spatially, there's a lot of cool things that can happen because it's so angular. Which usually I would not – it's not something I would usually explore on my own because I don't like putting myself in spaces that I don't like. I think I still feel like this is a really angular, ugly building. But then there can be these beautiful, organic, live bodies dancing in it, which is a really cool contrast I guess. When I see it, when I walk by it, it's not just like some building, I have a more intimate understanding of it. Maybe I like it a little tiny bit more.

**You don't have to like it.**

Well I think I probably do, just because it's like – you know when there's always kids that you don't really like in school, and you're like "Oh, that kid again". But then sometime, you actually have a real conversation with them and understand why they are the way they are – you kind of have a little more of a soft spot for them. Maybe it's like that.

**(9:38) How did you relate to your body in the space as opposed to other dance venues?**

I was just a lot more aware of how soft and sensitive my skin is, I think, and ... yeah.

**(10:06) How would you describe what we did in the site?**

We explored the way the space made us feel through movement.

**FARMS RECORDING**

**Before dancing at the site, what was your familiarity with it?**

I had never been to either of them, so nothing.

**(0:21) What was your impression of the place before participating in the project?**

Well I didn't know about it, so I didn't have an impression.

**(0:31) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the site?**

I think you get to know it in a different way, because usually I think we rely on our eyes and how things look a lot to inform us about a place. We're just kind of walking through, or around- you probably still notice some things, like how hot it is or if you brush by a plant you notice how it feels, but when you're dancing and rolling around in it, you get to know the textures of the different plants and just the texture of the ground on your feet, and the way the air feels.

You try and engage all of your senses.

**(1:58) How did the site affect your body awareness?**

I noticed that for me to do a lot of the movements that I like to do – just like rolling and jumping and hanging upside down – things have to be kind of flat or predictable because you can't jump in the air and not know where you're gonna land. So that was cool, obstacles, and trying to work with them. And yeah I danced on a tree at one



point, and that makes you – I don't know, whenever I dance on a tree it makes me more aware of my limbs, my arms and my legs and counterbalancing, and that was cool. And then at one point I was rolling around in the grass, and it was really itchy, but then I found this really nice patch of really padded grass. It felt like there was so much of it when it folded over it was lifting you up a little bit, and that felt so good. I was just noticing my body really likes soft, supportive things. It was hard to leave.

**(3:44) Compare your experience creating choreography to your experience performing.**

I guess again, creating it, there's always this aspect of thinking about what it's going to look like, which kinda sucks because then it prevents you from being totally engaged in what it feels like. But at some point, and to varying degrees, I usually get over that a little bit, because otherwise it's too painful to choreograph. I mean it's still there, but .. creating choreography there – I guess I created something on the tree, and I just love dancing on trees, so that was really fun. I didn't totally set everything, I was just kind of exploring. Then when I performed that, because you're being watched it takes you away a little bit from the experience of it because you know you're having to share it with other people so it's like you give up a little bit of your awareness to your own body and your own space and share it with other people. So it's a little bit less for yourself. But then performing other people's stuff, once we all performed the group thing, that was really cool. Parts of it, you know, I didn't really like, but it was fine, I just did them. But then other parts I did really like. And there's something about doing other people's choreography that's sort of freeing, because it's like "Well I don't really have any control over how this goes so I'm just going to do it, and do it in a way that feels best for me, as much as I can".

**(6:08) What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?**

In this site, I feel like there was more connection with them than in the Death Star. Or I wanted to connect to people more, at least. What was their role... What do you mean exactly?

**How the experience of having the group there ...**

**what role they played in your experience as opposed to being there alone.**

Oh okay. Well I think they kept me motivated, or you did, because if I was there alone I probably would have just stayed in the soft grass all day and hung out on the tree all day. You know I would have just done what I liked doing, I wouldn't have necessarily tried doing other things. So that was a big thing. And also just seeing the way that other people relate to a space opens up – makes me more curious about a space. Like "Oh I missed that" or I wouldn't have – you know in all the things you could do to relate to a space – I wouldn't have chosen that. It just makes you more aware of the details and the diversity of a space.

**(7:55) What was the most challenging moment of the project?**

I don't know if it was a moment, I think it was just overall, feeling like I didn't have control over what I was going to do in the space. I didn't like that. I mean I understood why, and so I was fine with it, but still part of me is like "I just want to do what I want to do". Feeling like you have to be there for 24 hours, like if you want to go, it won't really be okay. It's like no, you committed to this. I think I don't like the feeling of being stuck somewhere, even though it's like well no, you can leave if you want to, but I like being in a space just because I'm choosing to be there. I'm choosing to be there and knowing that I can leave whenever I want to leave. So I think that was probably the most challenging.

**(9:11) When did you feel most satisfied?**

It was really satisfying to do everyone's choreography at the end, the first time. The second and third time we did it, it was like eh – we already did it! But the first time we did it –

**In the orchard?**

Mmhm – was really, it was just nice. I felt like I had a little part of everyone had been addressed and acknowledged in that dance, so that made me feel connected to the space and connected to the people. Oh! Also the dance we did in the morning before we left, that was really satisfying the first time we did it. Both of the group dances, because it felt like there was a little part of – like it was a

collaboration, and so there was a little part of everyone in it. So both of the group dances were really satisfying.

**(9:54) Describe your relationship to the site now that you've experienced it through dance.**

To the farm, the first one, I guess I just feel connected to that grassy field. If I see it again I'll think of you, and the other people there, and what we did, and I'll feel you know connected and maybe nostalgic for that time. And then the orchard, probably similar. I'll just feel like – even though we were only there for not that long, you know there's places at home that I've spent years visiting but not so intensely trying to consciously connect... some of the places I do, but because our purpose was to connect to the space and stuff, there's somewhat of a bond.

**(12:00) How did you relate to your body in this place as opposed to other dance venues?**

I just utilized what was available, like the grass- there's usually not grass in other venues, so you don't usually feel it and you can't really lay on it and have it be all squishy and supportive and snuggly, and there's not usually trees to hang on. So I just utilized what was there. And then there's extra opportunities in that space, so you try and take those, but then there's also limitations, so it's interesting.

**(13:44) How would you describe what we did in the site?**

We tried to connect to the space and each other in a way that was satisfying to ourselves and to our bodies. Tried to like push through those initial frustrations with a place that can make you overlook a lot of the possibilities that are there, because we were there for an entire day. It feels really good, even though it sucks to go through frustrations, it feels really good to – if you are able to push through and find new opportunities, that feels good. Or to connect to something more deeply when you didn't think you could, it's really nice, because it's kind of surprising.

**(15:02) Has participating in this project affected you in your daily life?**

I didn't really think about it, but I guess it has, because I think that all of your experiences kind of affect you and shape you in ways. Maybe, maybe it has slightly, because I've always had a desire to connect

to spaces – not necessarily any space, I have a desire to connect to nature and outdoor spaces. Maybe that's helped me figure out ways that I can do that more, or just opened me up to the possibility of doing that more.

Like this weekend when Nicole and I went to Yosemite it was really nice. We were floating down the Merced River, and we stopped, and it was really sunny on the side of the beach. And we just put rocks on each other's bodies in really feminine, nice patterns, and it was the day of the solar eclipse. We just layed there and put rocks on each others foreheads and chests and stomach and legs, and it felt so good to do that for someone else and also to have it done to you. Like this ritual of – it made you feel really a part of the earth, and like your body was being acknowledged, and the space too, and connected to it ...

I don't know if that – I feel like our experience – just you trying to get us to connect to the space more just maybe kind of subtly opens up that possibility in other aspects of life too. I haven't been like “oh I'm doing this because of this project” but I'm sure it has affected me.

**(17:52) Comparing the experience of dancing in these two sites, which do you prefer?**

I definitely prefer the farms. Still, neither of those places is where I would choose to go, which is interesting though, because it still – yeah, I'm just a forest person, and I like being in totally natural environments. But the farm was definitely more natural, so that's where I definitely preferred being. It's interesting though to make the best of a place that you wouldn't necessarily choose.

**(18:42) If you were to repeat this process, could it be designed differently to be more fulfilling to you?**

Yeah.

**What would you change?**

I'd probably change letting people choose more what space they want to connect to – well, I don't know what's up for changing. I would probably have chosen different spaces and that would have made it a lot more fulfilling to me because I would have just been really really invested in that space and wanting to be there, and not just like “Oh I have to connect to this space so I'm gonna figure something out” but

# Shirelle Sharf

## THE DEATH STAR RECORDING

### **Before dancing at the site, what was your familiarity with it?**

I mean I had never spent much time there, but I – it's funny, it was the kind of place that I always looked at. I mean I never had a class there, but always examined, and every time somebody came to Davis I would make sure that I talked about it. And prior- I mean you and I had gone on it that one time- the time, you know, just to scope it out- and I felt having climbed up the stairs and looking down, it was like really cool getting to see the campus from a different perspective. So I had a very positive connection to it, and prior to the site specific dance thing there, I was really excited about the space, and I knew that it would be kind of harsh, because its all concrete, but I had a very good feeling towards it.

### **(1:05) What was your impression of the site before the project?**

Confusion. Trying to get around it was very- very modern, very futuristic. Cold, for sure, like the concrete and the cement. Very unique though, in terms of a building in Davis, and just any other building that I've seen.

### **(1:38) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the site?**

It was really evident that the landscape was dictating everyone's movement. For me, it was interesting, because having a dance background – wait sorry, can you repeat the question because I feel like I might be going off of it.

#### **How did focusing on ...**

Definitely I felt like I was physically in pain at some points. It was very rough, the cement, and doing repeated motions that you would not normally do, and using your hands – your hands are quite sensitive, compared to your feet, which is really the only contact that I would get in that space. So it was very harsh. Laying on the ground was also super interesting, because I tried to make it graceful, but physically it was almost – very difficult. Nothing was organic,

so laying down, or trying to formulate the shapes, or become almost one with the architecture or the building was such a struggle that you really had to kind of give up on it. And then ultimately the space dictated my movements and the way – and not just my movements but my personality, and my approach to the dancing and to the dancing. Part of me – as soon as people would come near me, to try to do this united – even being physically connected felt bizarre, because the space didn't invoke that naturally.

### **(4:05) How did the site affect your body awareness?**

Kind of what I said, but I sensed that – I felt very weirdly alone there. Like I knew that I was doing this thing with other people and we were collaborating on the choreography, but I guess that eventually my body – doing movements that other people were feeling started to feel very uncomfortable, and so ... Normally I'm okay with doing other people's choreography and tapping into other people's movements based on a space, but the surrounding was so harsh and so cold and almost sterile, that I was getting exhausted because my form of movement is very much organic and rounded and more free and laying. So I struggled not being able to move the way I wanted, so I became very aware of the way I like to move, and I found that being there was frustrating for me because the landscape was so not receptive to my body. I really struggled. I guess it just made me realize that my form of movement – just that it was really limiting my body, and kind of frustrating it, in having to move in such geometric and – there was no flow to my movement really, it felt very chopped up and disengaged.

### **(6:33) Compare your experience creating choreography to your experience performing.**

I found that creating- creating was interesting. Because, like I said, it was so different from how I naturally move, it was also in some ways exciting. Even though my movements were kind of being dictated by the space – because it was something that I created, I felt like ... Performing, doing other people's stuff, in the beginning felt cool and interesting. Being able to make the connection, and see how they got to their choreography and their movement was really interesting as well, but I think because I wasn't moving in my own way, towards the

end when we were like repeating those movements, I really wanted to just leave at some points and just stop and just sit, or even just take myself out of the space, even though I knew I couldn't. So for me, doing my own movement was a lot more of an awakening experience, whereas performing I just started to feel really heavy and out of control and claustrophobic. Because I couldn't – I didn't feel like I was actually connecting with these people, I was just connecting with this movement that didn't mean much to me.

**(8:38) What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?**

Definitely they made me aware of parts of the architecture that I wouldn't have noticed right away. When Gabi did that little part in the crevices, or Lauren was blowing on the little particles and the leaves and things like that, I wouldn't have noticed those things had they not done that. It was cool too because the other dancers – even though I didn't feel very connected to them, it was still really refreshing to have other people there, just as a human element and as something more alive. It was nice to have the other dancers more on like a refreshing level, both in terms of how I see the space and how the place makes me feel, it was like a safety thing almost, just having other people there.

**(9:58) What was the most challenging moment of the project?**

I definitely would say one was when we were in that elevator! But I actually wanted to make a point about that, because I was feeling so uncomfortable in there, and claustrophobic, but then I thought about it and I was like, you know what Shirelle, that elevator is totally like symbolic of the space, it's just on a smaller scale. We were just all in there, but in this metal, somewhat concrete, geometric space, just on a smaller level, with more bodies, more mass inside. And it was like, the panic, I was like in panic. I imagine that if I had spent more time in the bigger space, that the same feeling would have eventually come over me, it just would have required more time. So I'm glad that happened, it made me evaluate the space- and granted you have the sky above you. But even- it's funny, when something is surrounding you from all fours, like all four directions, looking up kind of

becomes this mirage. It didn't look like it was really the sky, it almost became this – you know in Las Vegas, when you go and they have that fake sky? You could easily get lost in the space, and so that was rough. And then the end, like I said before, I just wanted to just break away from the movement that everyone else was doing, not because it wasn't beautiful and it didn't have its artistic merit, I was just really tired and the effects of the place had definitely taken their toll on me.

**(11:52) When did you feel most satisfied?**

Oh! I felt pretty satisfied at the end when we – there was that one moment where I ran up to the wall, like ran up to the stair and pushed off, and other people came and together and it was like, weirdly liberating, because I think I also knew it was coming to an end, and that movement felt really natural to me, and then to see other people join in and seem to be enjoying it as much as I was, was really pleasant. I also did like the flocking, I think weirdly when people do flocking, and there's a position that you're at where you can see everyone moving together, you get this bizarre – it's this rare collective willingness to unify. It doesn't happen that often, so we were all in this zone and listening to each other. I really during the flocking did not feel like I was in that space, I lost sight of the cold sterility of the – of our background. Yeah, so that felt really nice.

**(13:18) Describe your relationship to the site now that you've experienced it through dance.**

Well, it's funny, I have not been back yet. I don't think I really have a relationship with it. It just didn't mean anything to me. The dance was an interesting- more of a realization of my body, and less so much of the space itself. I won't want to move in that space because I know it's not conducive to my body, or to my senses. If anything it's become less of an appeal, because I've established this almost alter-connection, like a negative – I don't know what you would call that – but if anything it's deterred any exceptional feeling about it. It's now just more so of a concrete building, without any sensational resonance, it's just this space.

**(14:41) How did you relate to your body in this space as opposed to other dance venues?**

In terms of other dance venues, there's the issue of performance. We

did do our performance at the end, but most of the dancing I've ever done in a space, it's usually a stage or a performance. So, I liked the honesty of it. To me it was just straight up what my body does based on my surroundings, and the frustration that I feel. On a stage and in a performance, you can feel the frustration but you cannot show it, that doesn't happen. It's not allowed to happen, whereas it was the complete opposite for this, like I could just freely show how those spaces made me feel, for the most part – toward the end I didn't feel like that was being transmitted. And then- we've danced outside, just you and I and Lauren [...] The only organic thing about that space were my feelings, like they were natural. My movements – even that wasn't really free, it was just dictated by the space. But free I guess in the sense that I could present emotions a lot more clearly, or at all.

**(16:42) How would you describe what we did in the site?**

I would say – to someone who just wanted to know what we were doing? I'd say that we as humans and dancers and movers, we went over to the space, and we wanted to determine how the surroundings took a toll on the way we move, and what we create based on what we are given in the space that we're in. And I think that specifically in this space there was such a strong juxtaposition of organic, live, breathing, thinking, feeling things with something that is just so cold, and sterile, and inorganic. It was also just to see that connection, because in reality we are not that – we are surrounded by these things all the time, but we are not aware of our connection and how close we are to them, and so it was almost like our own microcosm- we created this microcosm of magnified microscopic scope, just stripped down the trees and the external – I also felt like I wasn't even hearing things very much once we got into the dancing, it was just the space and us. So you strip down to the bare elements, and you combine them and see how they work with one another. It's funny, because to me, it can ultimately show a lot about what we don't realize. The way these buildings, how that affects us, because we kind of have become desensitized and immune to it. Just for me it was an experiment in combining such opposite life forms – well that's not a life form, but you know what I mean. So that's what it was for me.

## FARMS RECORDING STARTS

### **Before dancing at the site, what was your familiarity with the site?**

Zero familiarity, none whatsoever.

(0:25) What was your impression of the place before participating in the project?

I really loved it. I got there and it was super refreshing, just on a different level in that I hadn't really been out of Davis – granted that was still in the Davis realm- but just beyond campus for a while, and just being somewhere that – and the bike ride there was so wonderful, and we got there, and immediately after you bike for a while and then you reach your destination, and you see that it's such a green, lush, free – and the weather was so nice – just I was very pleased and excited to be there.

(1:14) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the site?

I'd say when we did that walking in the field, there was a super hyper-sensitivity to like – because one, we don't walk barefoot that often, but it wasn't the most comfortable of ground. Every time you stepped you could never- your body couldn't get desensitized, your feet, because every square inch of your foot was touching something new every time you stepped, and so it felt very bizarre. Then playing with the different speeds was really nice too. Wait can you repeat the question one more time, sorry...

How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the site?

The breeze was so nice. I stood there and bent my body in half and let my hair flow in the wind, and then I caught a glimpse of all the other things that were moving in the same direction, it was so nice. It really felt like this unified, pure existence. The way that the little area was set was almost so that you couldn't really see beyond it, because it was almost like a valley, a grassland valley. So you really just felt like you were one in this thing, you couldn't see the street. The wind was really nice, and to see that we moved in the same way. I absolutely loved when we did that zoom in on the smallest of things, it was really special for me because I watched a spider, and that was

just really cool because it kind of took you outside of your own body and how big you are, to notice the most minute miniscule details was really cool. Then, to go from that to just running in the field, then you feel small. So it was like really nice to experience those things, to feel such a scope, a panorama of your own body.

**(3:56) How did the site affect your body awareness?**

Pretty much you can revert back to my last answer in the grassy area, feeling big and small, and in the walnut ... can you repeat the question?

How did the site affect your body awareness?

In the walnut orchard, I think just having all the trees there, the big trees, and the tall grasses, and the edible things, it was like you kind of felt like you were in a different realm. It felt very – almost I felt like a weird little nymph running around, and when we swung in the trees, and when we just all sat together in the grass. The space made me a lot less physically aware in that – and by physically aware I mean aware of my – the visual. Just being there I kind of lost sight, like we were all back to this natural – time had passe too and so we were feeling very tired, but also connected by that point and so being in the orchard felt really nice. Getting to eat from the land and dancing in it, I felt like we took everything that it had to offer and gave back to it, with the dance that we produced in it. I don't know, I'm still not even really sure, I don't know how exactly to ... I think I need to think about that one a little bit.

**(6:53) Compare your experience creating choreography to your experience performing.**

The creating was really fun, I also felt that it was so genuine and sincere. Sometimes when you create choreography, knowing that it might ultimately be for other people, kind of like when you know you're on camera, it loses a little bit of genuineness. I didn't even really have to think very much, because I was just walking through the grass and I pushed my hand to clear the grass and it just moved so nicely and I did that with my body and it felt so nice. And then watching it, after you, the reverberation of the stalks was really cool to try and simulate that in my movement. So that was really fun. I loved- and then being in the tree. The creating was amazing for me

because it felt so raw and real. But learning, in this instances, at least compared to the other one, I liked learning the choreography so much more. It just felt like – one that everyone's connection and everyone's choreography felt very from a natural place. And so learning it, it was like suddenly, doing the movements I was so aware and I could then – after having learned your choreography, I could then imagine how you had done that. And then I could see it, just even when we picked up the thing and felt it and smelled it – I now had that experience. So it made it a lot more real, being able to – I'm not just now copying – I have experienced it and I understand where the choreography is coming from and I can relate to it. So doing other people's choreography was a lot better. It also made you more aware of things that you hadn't been aware of...like I'm not one to climb in trees, like I will if I want to reach a fruit or something, but I'm not one to super swing in them, and working with Lauren was a whole new thing for me and really really exciting seeing the way that my body would contort to the shape of the tree, and how much more sense and how much more natural it was to try and form some kind of unifying bond with something that is living and breathing. Of course it's going to feel better.

**(10:35) What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?**

They definitely made me aware of the other natural aspects around me, like the trees, and the smells, and the tastes and things. Also, just having other people and knowing, I was tired at some points and seeing that other people were tired was comforting that we're all doing this thing together and there was no judgement, just zero judgement. It was nice to have all these people around me who were excited about this project, but then once we also – having Morgan there with the camera was a little – there were moments where I'd see him and it would catch me a little bit and I would kind of alter the way I moved, but – ultimately, we all became very comfortable to where that element was lost. The camera I forgot about completely towards the end. What else about working with the people? It was just a unifying experience altogether. It's something that doesn't happen very often, and also to see that all these people come from very

different – it seemed like everyone was very different in terms of their relation to the space, and the way they perceived the space, and their relation to dance and movement and choreography. It was really nice having these different perspectives around me.

**(12:39) What was the most challenging moment of the project?**

I'd say, the most challenging was – one, having to see some people suffering from the allergens in the space itself, that was rough, and then I guess when we walked from there, it was really hot and exhausting, that was quite challenging. I think too, some running in the orchard barefoot was incredibly painful at some moments. That was quite challenging. I don't know if you'd say this was challenging, but – it wasn't challenging per se I guess, but at the end there was still a sense – once we did choreography, when we took the choreography out of the walnut orchard and brought it into the field, to me it was very beautiful and exciting to be doing that with everybody and facing each other, and visually was so stunning, but I felt like it wasn't as natural as it was in the other space. I think that I also became really aware of my performance again, whereas the sun was shining and it was so beautiful, but I don't think – the only moment where I really felt like that was being expressed, my real feelings towards the end, was when we were running and being caught, just sprawled out in the sun – that was when I felt really true to myself and true to how – that was the exact instance where the choreography met the true emotions and met the space, it was this – everything, all points connected at that movement to me. The running and the catching and the separation was perfect. That's not to say that there weren't things, that other things felt great. Doing those movements in the walnut place was wonderful for me, but taking it out of that space felt a little bit forced and unnatural.

**(15:21) When did you feel most satisfied?**

I definitely felt most satisfied at the end, the running and being caught. It's just so liberating and exactly what my body wanted to be doing in that moment. Too, the idea of working together was really nice, even at the end when we were swaying and leaning on each other – there was also something about this kind of culmination,

that we've all had and shared experiences in this place, and we are acknowledging that it's coming to an end, physically coming to an end. We will hold onto those memories and things, so there was this sensation. The sun was rising, everything just came into place at that end scene I guess. I loved it.

**(16:29) Describe your relationship to the site now that you've experienced it through dance.**

Good things, good good things. I want to go back. I think about it, actually. One I loved the dirt farm, I thought it was so cute and special, and just laying and napping there was so perfect. The walnut orchard – sometimes I just get super fascinated by natural food around me – I know it sounds funny, but just the walnuts and the sweet peas that mid-our dancing we could just chomp on. It was like an escape in a sense and unlike anything – Davis has some elements like that, but it was like this little mini-world that we were in for 24 hours. And to be able to dance there, it was so awesome. To me, dance had this connotation for so many years that it was a stage, just an act and so to create movement from something that's so not premeditated, your surroundings dictated exactly how you move, and the result is so beautiful, so yeah I'll always remember it, or always think of it in a very fond way.

**(18:24) How did you relate to your body in this place as opposed to other dance venues?**

Just in terms of dance venues, being out in the open with trees and grass in the sun, is beyond refreshing. It's so so so good to be not in a closed space. I think too, for the longest time I thought dance and movement was not something that you could take with you, it was only in certain spaces, like a theater or a studio. The way that we were dancing in the field, and with one another, just out in the open, my perception of dance has altered. Not specifically – this has been a great stepping stone in that, but like – I just feel like I am now so much more aware of dance as a natural expression based on natural things, and organic movement that comes from real ... it just feels a lot more natural to dance in a space like that than it does to dance in a closed off and just as a performer rather than a human being, I guess, and doing what you want.

**(20:38) How would you describe what we did in the space?**

Kind of to the same effect in that we're examining the way we move, and create in a specific space, and how the elements around us shape the output of our bodies. Just to see what –how much the surroundings can effect not just the way move but the person you are at that time, its beyond the way your body moves, because if you take into consideration the way I felt at the other space compared to here – it was such a longer process but I did not ever feel the frustration or the angst that I was feeling at the other space. So it's definitely also to determine the architectural and agricultural aspects on the human sensations and emotions and feelings.

**(22:11) Has participating in this project affected you in your daily life?**

I don't know if I'd say daily. I think that the first few days afterwards you think about it and it's a recurring – one, because sometimes you play it in your head and you think wow, I was in this place for 24 hours and I danced and I created and I lived with these people and had this experience. But I think just like most things, you have these wonderful experiences and you look fondly, but they'll come up and they correspond with other things that are happening in your life. So it's not necessarily this daily thing that I think about. I think that it will be something that I'll hold on to later, I feel like I will probably reference and think about this and it will alter the way that I think about choreography. Maybe in some way it has affected me because I always want to be dancing, anytime I'm on the grass now, even at ORMF [an outdoor music event], I was like where am I dancing? I just want to be doing things on the grass. Whereas before- and I did end up dancing like that, I really was a more creative dancer, less of just the step-and-snap kind of dances that most people do at a concert, but I was really rolling on the ground ... whereas before it was like the only place a dancer is to be is on a stage, or on a wood floor. I don't know if I can attribute it all to these projects but it definitely has had some effect on the way I percieve movement and dance and choreography, for sure, because getting inspired by natural elements is the second step to my – I feel like lately I've been having these awakening – one was dancing with dancers that have not been

technically trained has been super altered the way I move and the way I think about movement. And then the second thing would be dancing in a space that's not typically for – what most people would consider a dancing area. It's not in my daily thoughts, but it has affected me to the extent that it will pop up throughout my life, I'm sure.

**(25:18) Comparing your experience dancing at the two sites, which do you prefer?**

I would one hundred percent say the grassy, natural, the dirt farm and the orchard. But, it doesn't discount the process and the learning that I got from the first one. If anything, had we not done the work that we did at the Death Star, I don't think I would have valued the orchard and the field as much as I did. So, I definitely would prefer that, but I think that it was all necessary for me to come to that understanding.

(26:13) If you could repeat this process, could it be designed differently to be more fulfilling to you?

Yeah, I would say if I had been told for the Death Star, if the directions had been more conducive to my emotional state – like if I didn't want to do something – not that, there was never a feeling that I was being forced to do something, but with the mentality that I have as a dancer, I won't stop. Unless I am told to, or when something's done. If I had maybe been told that I had the freedom, to cut something off or not do a movement or just be very very receptive to my emotions and what my body wanted to do in that space, then I think that would have resulted in a much more honest – or more visible representation of the spaces effects on me. I thought the other one was fabulous – oh. I'd say too when it came to the choreography, I don't think it was anything that necessarily could have been – I just thought that there was this sense of being really serious towards the end, and we had talked about that. With the choreography – and it's natural, that you start to really focus on choreography and less on how the space is making you feel. So I don't know how exactly you'd alter that, because the choreography is essential, but ... I guess it'd be nice if along with the choreography ... I don't know. It's hard to say, because I just wish that I had let the sunshine and the happy feelings that I was feeling, I was so happy being there, I just think that maybe because I had seen some of the footage – I don't think that was



apparent, the way I was feeling internally. But that's the great thing about this interview, that I can mention that I really was feeling very free and happy there. I think you did a great job with not pushing, you know, when we were tired we slept, and when we were hungry we ate, and if someone wanted to wear shoes they could, so the only real thing would have been the first part with the Death Star.

## Nicolas Parrain

### THE DEATH STAR RECORDING

**Before dancing at the site, what was your familiarity with it?**

I knew – I heard about the building, and people tell me that it was a crazy building. Aesthetically talking, it wasn't a pretty building to me in comparison of the Victorian house in Paris or the \_\_\_ in France. For sure it's not a pretty building. It's kind of weirdly concrete all over the place and some things that I hate, that I'm trying to abolish, so it wasn't really a good place. It was more like a place that I want to put bomb in it than place that I wanted to dance and connect like that.

**(1:01) What was your impression of the place?**

I didn't feel comfortable in it.

**(1:36) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the landscape?**

It make me think about that. Make me take conscious – it pushes me to actually feel what is my connection with that place, feel it and ... it pushes me in that, and I took it as a new interaction, you know like, Oh I maybe misjudged you the first time I saw you but now we're getting to know each other better.

**(2:54) How did the site affect your body awareness?**

I felt really lonely and really isolated and almost like, enclosed in a cocoon because of that over-massive dominant building. And all the contact was really hard, and so it makes even more pressure on the cocoon to stay ... really in my body and express – get in touch with – kind of disocciate me a little bit. But without forgetting the huge dominant connection with this building, so like isolate myself from the rest, but with feeling the oppression of the building.

### **Isolated from the rest of the people?**

From the rest of the universe. Kind of way. But different after. After a bit when the connection was established, it become more like playful and I wasn't fearing the building, or fearing the space. And so I'm noticing it, some little things that no one can see.

**(5:20) Compare your experience creating choreography to your experience performing...**

**When you were making your choreography, your motion that was this, when you were creating that to show other people, how was that different than performing all together?**

That wasn't different to me, too much. The effect of creating it was just an expression of my interaction, but after playing it with everyone and playing everything, was just the result of everyone's interaction, so that was just an evolution, I guess.

**(6:30) What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of the site?**

We are like brothers, comrades, friends, partners- they were just like dance partners for the time of this one... Creating and sharing art together and living at the same moment, and having the same present, and being in communion. The honesty between all of us, and the humility of it, and so ... that was more like even not really a reason – I didn't put any reason into my communication with the other dancers, and \_\_\_ put reason into the building, or even in my choreography – choreography was more feeling than reason, but I didn't put any reason – just I didn't put my mind into it. Like "I have to deal with these people now", its not like oh they are here with me they are in this present right now, we are sharing the same space, we are like one, and connected – it's like partner in dance, you are nothing without the other one, and it's you two creating the one, you know like you don't disocciate people.

**(9:19) What was the most challenging moment of the project?**

I guess just be, you know. Just be in that project was the most challenging part. Just like make the step in doing in.

**To say that you would do it?**

Yeah, not even – I guess when I said that I would do it, I was mostly

just like “Okay I’m here” – that was the most challenging I guess.

**(11:10) What about the most satisfying moment of that project?**

The relationship created with the place.

**(11:38) Describe your relationship to the site now that you’ve experienced it through dance...**

I feel a little bit sad, because I still – it’s not that I don’t like the building anymore, but I feel this building is there, and I’m sad for him to be there. And I understand him a little bit better, and it is a hopeless host, but it’s not his fault you know. It’s not the fault of the building of being there, but the relation- it’s just like being in front of- being the host of a slave kind of in a way.

**(13:40) How would you describe what we did in the site?**

We were just present, I think, and presently aware.

## FARMS RECORDING STARTS

**What was your familiarity with the site before participating in the project?**

I didn’t really know the place before, but I knew the people who were living there. This is like potential future of association of people, who have the desire for sustaining themselves, so I was feeling interested and curious about what would be my feeling.

**Had you ever been there before?**

No.

**(1:00) What was your impression of the place?**

I find it beautiful, beautiful.

**(1:25) How did focusing on your physical sensations affect your experience of the site?**

I felt free and way more connected. Way more connected ...

**Connected to what?**

To the place, to the wideness, to the fields, to anything. Each plant I interact with and bodies and I feel way more, way freer in a certain way, and not oppressed in comparison of the other place.

**(3:06) How did the site affect your body awareness?**

Let me think during a second. I felt so in that connection that I had, it kind of diminished my focus in my own body. My attention were

less concentrated to my body, but more into the union of everything.

**(5:15) Compare your experience creating choreography to your experience performing...**

Creating choreography at that time was a little bit harder because it was a different type of choreography that you asked me, and at the beginning in the first side, that was about myself, and after you asked me that at the farm, but after you put a partner with me... and there wasn’t any me, even if there was some input of mine, but that was way more like a trio kind of stuff. A trio relationship between Nicole and I and the environment. So the choreography became interesting, way more exciting than just myself, and so my intention weren’t placed at the same spot, I would say. And after the way of playing it with everyone was just (french translation issue)... like an accomplishment. An accomplishment of everyone and everything, more like an open conversation because everyone expressed their idea on it, and even the environment, implicitly through all of us. That was I think way more shared, way more sharing with everything, than when we were in the building or when we were alone, and so that felt like saying I love you, you know, at the end you’re like aaaaaah, like I said it.

**(9:30) What was the role of the other dancers in your experience of this site?**

At the beginning they were, when I was alone, they were just part of the environment, on an equal plane with everything. And then, when we had interaction with the other dancers around that was not anymore about me viewing myself, but it was more about me being with the environment.

**(12:48) What was the most challenging moment of this project?**

It’s interesting, what challenge means, and you can interpret in so much different ways. I think the most challenging was the outside of the project. The outside of the project, yeah. Having to deal with kind of fake – I don’t know how to say that. Having to deal with the person and not actually – like, at the end of each dance, feeling the people around me disconnect themselves and going back to their own, and having to deal with that was the most challenging part I guess.

**(14:37) What about the most satisfying moment?**

The true and pure expression of choreography with Nicole, it was just like true expression of our interaction and without talking with words, and it was really satisfying, to just see that happening without \_\_\_\_ (lost).

**(16:00) Describe your relationship to the site now that you've experienced it through dance...**

Enforce the interaction that I had with this site, enforce my beliefs and dreams about what do I want to be my connection with nature.

**Even though the site was not exactly nature, it was farms?**

Yeah that was farm but farm is just dancing with nature, alone you're a dancer but when there's more people another type of dance will appear and with music and with the environment. It's just beautiful.

**(17:50) How would you describe what we did in the site?**

We came with respect and interact humbly with the place, dance with it, and just still be. I think that the big theme was just be. You know like that sensation that I had with the other site of feeling a little bit scared at the building, and after had to create and force my communication with the site? There, at the farm, that was more like, I didn't have to force myself, that was just a true expression of dancing and interacting with everything and everyone and dancing in trees with fairies – that's what I say sometimes.

**(20:09) Has participating in these projects affected you in your daily life?**

Yeah, for sure. I'm really thankful of that because it's something who has so much importance to develop and maintain the equilibrium in the self, but it's not something that – it's kind of not common to do that in our society, so I want to – now I am way more playful with each of my movements in the space, and I'm really thankful for developing and increasing that. Because what you did increase and develop my instant present connection with the environment, and each times that I'm moving, having to relate to what is present and how do you interact with it.

**(22:07) Comparing the two sites, which do you prefer?**

I don't like preference questions. No, both interaction were amazing,

different and amazing. And life is always good and bad in the same time and of everything, and I love as much as I hate.

**(23:07) If you were to repeat this process, could it be designed differently to be more fulfilling to you?**

No, I know that if that would happen that would be different, just because it will be another time and another space, and it's impossible to recreate the exact moment, so I have nothing, I really want to change nothing. Just, it will be different for sure.



