





A photograph of two women sitting back-to-back on a large, white, rectangular box. The woman on the left is wearing a light grey long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers, looking down. The woman on the right is wearing a light grey off-the-shoulder top and dark trousers, looking to the right. The box is placed on a crumpled white fabric surface. The background is dark.

Three ways to hold
10 August - 10 September 2010

SASA
GALLERY

To have and to hold.

By Solon Ulbrich

'Three ways to hold' is a cross-disciplinary dance/visual art work, joining Bridget Currie and Alison Currie as collaborators. Both Alison and Bridget have a long history of making works on the edges of their expected domains. Looking for the spaces in between, the unnoticed and the frictions between forms. This heightened attentiveness to the world around us exposes a multitude of small delights and 'things unnoticed',¹ a prevailing interest of both artists. In observing this, as a viewer, one must ask 'what is it we are *not* noticing?'

'Three ways to hold' is an accumulation of many forces arriving at the present moment. It demands attentiveness and an engagement with the time and space you are in. This work asks us to surrender preconceived ways of seeing and assumed understanding. It requires a rigour and patience from both maker and viewer/participant. But as noted by Peter Mckay, 'I like to think patience is not too great a demand to make of an audience.'² In fact this patience and diligence is essential for a growing engagement with the full potentiality of three-dimensional space as Henry Moore observes:

Appreciation of sculpture depends on the ability to respond to form in three dimensions. That is perhaps why sculpture has been described as the most difficult of all arts; certainly it is more difficult than the arts which involve appreciation of flat forms, shape in only two dimensions. Many more people are 'form blind' than colour-blind. The child learning to see, first distinguishes only two-dimensional shape; it cannot judge distances, depths. Later, (for its personal safety and practical needs, it has to develop partly by means of touch) the ability to judge roughly three dimensional distances. But having satisfied the requirements of practical necessity, most people go no farther. Though they may attain considerable accuracy in the perception of flat form, they do not make the further intellectual and emotional effort needed to comprehend form in its full spatial existence.

This is what the sculptor must do. He must strive continually to think of, and use, form in its full spatial completeness ...³

This awareness of three-dimensionality has immediate currency in the world of the dance, an active manifestation of three-dimensional form. Refined dance artists, such as Alison Currie, are investigating the profound ability of the human body - a subjective platform, which provides a delightfully engaging and complex site for potentiality. The human *being*, actively engaged in perception and concentrated awareness of time and space at a cellular level.

'Dance' does not require us to fall into the ballet, the routine or a choreography of simplistic pleasure. In fact many dance artists are challenging the assumption of the 'human' story we write over the body, asking us to look deeper and engage with the form of the space. As noted by Antony Hamilton, a choreographer with an ongoing alignment to visual arts practice:

Signal deals predominantly with experimental visual manipulation of space, bodies and objects, and is geared towards an interest in extreme contrast, depth of field distortions and spatial disorientation I try to address whether there is the necessity for a 'human' or even 'animal' element to be present in the work, pushing against the notion that we are only human. In my work I am often trying to escape this notion, in the attempt to view the body as the ultimate biological architectural, sculptural object, with the incredible capacity to behave as other materials cannot. In a sense I try to guide the audience away from viewing the performers at all. They are encouraged to see the space and its contents as a singular event where value, culture, and understanding cease to be relevant, and sensation dominates.⁴

'Three ways to hold' is certainly not the first experience of 'performance' elements in Bridget Currie's work. Her 2007 contribution to the SASA Gallery *Years Without Magic* exhibition was rendered by performative structures, with co-opted attendees wearing and discarding an array of her customized garments during the evening to ultimately create

a sculpture within the space. Other works demonstrate an engagement with active elemental forces and pressures, such as her *Regulators* exhibition resulting from her 2007/08 residency at the CCA Kitakyushu, which demonstrated elements of propping and balance.

Alison Currie likewise has shown a sustained interest in wielding sculptural intelligence in her stage and performance settings. She has sited her work in all manner of settings and public domain's, her work is derived from these locales. Her more substantial installation/ performance touring works (such as *42a* - an installation performance originally developed at Downtown artspace and presented at EAF and set to tour Australia this year) engage with the space at infinitesimal detail including microscopic moss gardens lurking in crevices, Lego scale garden settings and macroscopic bags of peas, multimedia and larger sculptural concerns. This is more than a 'set' for dancers and performers. It is the work as an equal and vital element. This is a divine gift for an attentive artist, to work in a world where the perception of every cell has value, without hierarchy or value judgment. To reach this enlightened state of vision is a considerable goal. It allows viewing with a freedom resulting in surprising delights. As Georg Feuerstein notes;

*'Everything stands revealed as the great Reality, and nothing excites us as being more valuable than anything else. We regard a piece of gold and a clump of clay or a beautiful person and an unattractive individual with the same even-temperedness.'*⁵

Is this performance? I hope performance or dance can strive to attain this state of being, just as I would hope all artists wish any form can. In this place, in this work, that is evidently the goal. The details or labels become obsolete or irrelevant and value judgments can fall away. The performative/ sculptural divide has long been lost with these two wonderful artists. Bridget and Alison are working in animate and inanimate form, sculpting, moving, and rendering fleeting passages. Bringing the forms innately

together in an act of absolute defiance that any separation exists, except as a perceptive choice upon which to draw valuable reflection. They have foregrounded the mutable nature of space, material and action within the closed system of this exhibition. The materials employed, the *same* elements, recombined, compressed, spread out, raised and gathered. Preoccupations with load bearing, weight and the vertical to horizontal oscillation at play within the score of this work constantly highlight the 'making' - the movement as the making of objects, the objects as the making of movement. Are these elements separate, exclusive or discernible? The Currie sisters themselves present a heightened state of 'noticing'. Being completely present to themselves and their surroundings. They are as intrinsically part of the work as any other material present in the space, including us as observers.

Witness the detail, the obsession with small scale, and the constant invitations to tune the eye. The judgments, or meaning if you like, are only present through the position you bring to the space. All the information is internal. It is already manifested and physicalised in the body, in the space. Exhibiting an intelligence that can be at once both profound and humorous.

Take this invitation to notice. To be patient. To be present to the work as it relates intrinsically to you - hold on to this state, an ongoing engagement with the now.

1. Lisa Kelly, *Years Without Magic*, Adelaide: SASA Gallery: 2007.

2. Peter McKay, *Whatever This Is That We Are In, We Are In It Together*; or, *Evolution and Responsibility*, 'Years Without Magic' Adelaide: SASA Gallery: 2007.

3. Henry Moore, *Henry Moore: On being a sculptor*, London: Tate Publishing, 2010, p. 24

4. Antony Hamilton, Email Invitation to Campbelltown Arts Centre showing of work-in-progress by choreographer Antony Hamilton in collaboration with Luke Smiles and Marnie Palomares. Campbelltown Arts Centre 2010 Contemporary Dance Program.

5. Georg Feuerstein, *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga*, Shambala Publications, 2003, p. 7.

Acknowledgements

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PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

<i>FOLD</i>	6pm Wednesday 11 August
<i>LIFT</i>	6pm Wednesday 18 August
<i>PROP</i>	11am - 6pm Wednesday 25 August
<i>COLLECT</i>	6pm Friday 3 September

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