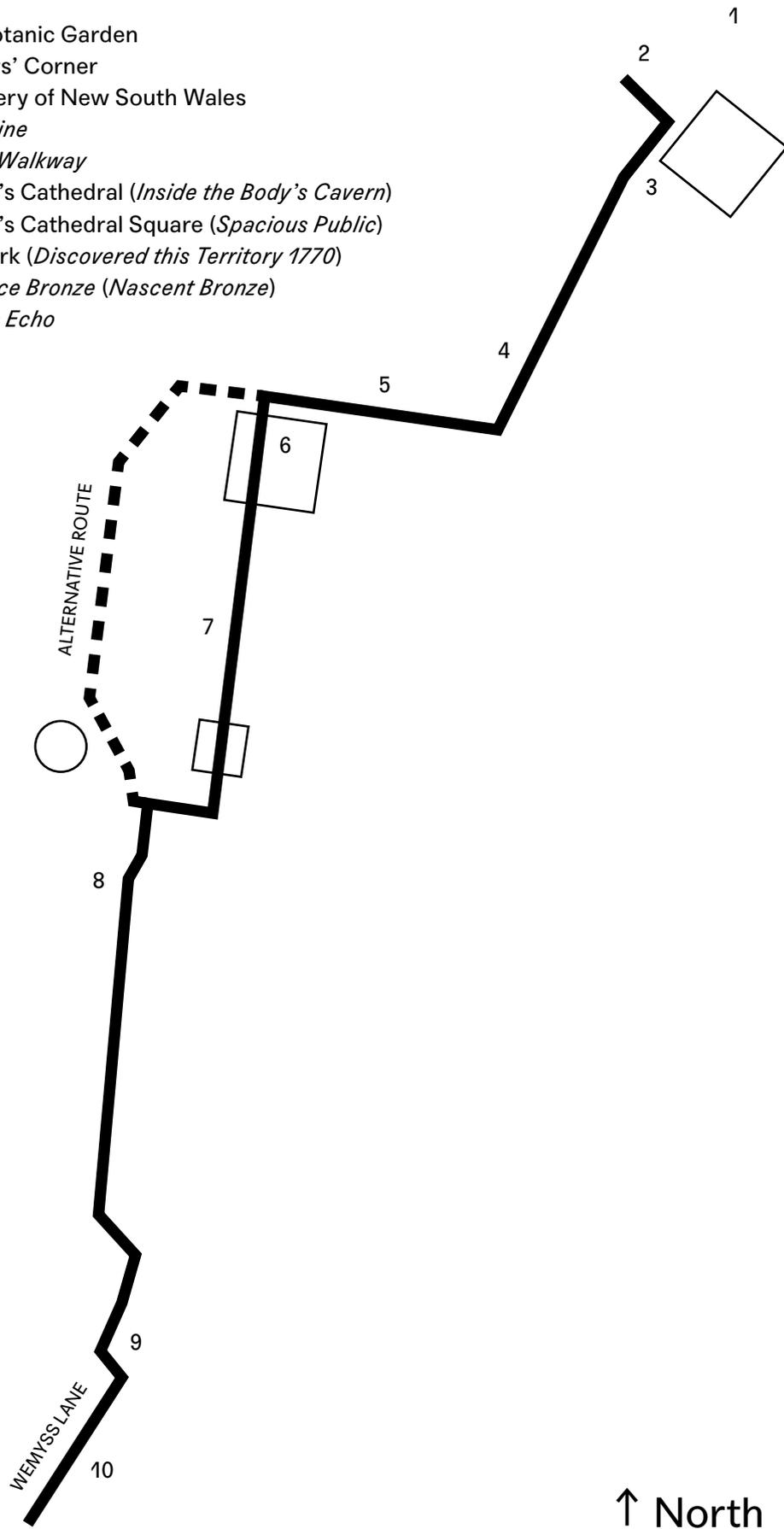


Here, an Echo
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↑ North

Laneway Phrases

A PASSING INSTANT

NOT PREDICTABLY
BUT INEVITABLY

FEINTS AND REPETITIONS

AUCTIONEER
GAVEL
CONTRACT

DIRECT
SUNLIGHT

AN UNTIMELY FOUNTAIN

DWELLING,
LYING AROUND

PLANTS AND BIRDS
AND ROCKS AND THINGS

A SINGLE STAMP

INCLUSIONS AND MISPRINTS

HER RIGHT HAND UPRAISED

PHYSICAL
DOORWAYS

BELOW THE THRESHOLD
OF AUDIBILITY

A PASSING INSTANT

Introduction

Stephanie Rosenthal

One of my key ambitions for the 20th Biennale of Sydney was to make the city, with its many varied locations, layers and histories, a place of encounter. I also wanted to investigate how we navigate, choreograph and politicise public space. This is an ongoing interest for the Australian artist Agatha Gothe-Snape, and something which she has intelligently, poetically and powerfully addressed through her work over many years now. So when I asked her to propose a work for the Legacy Project, I was hoping she would take on the challenge, to somehow try – whether literally or conceptually – to draw a path through the city, tracing connections between all nine exhibition venues.

Gothe-Snape submitted her first proposal in March 2015, and at that early stage, it was provisionally titled *I was relieved I did not receive a full view of anything*. While she eventually moved on from that tentative title, it now echoes the project's final manifestation – an expansive work with an extended duration that is difficult to comprehend at a single glance. *Here, an Echo* continued to evolve throughout the Biennale, through many different iterations, revisions and reworkings, and yet it never strayed far from its core ideas. The process involved Gothe-Snape working collaboratively with dancer and choreographer Brooke Amity Stamp before and during the exhibition period, with their research and observation focused on the drawn path, connecting Speakers' Corner in the Domain to Wemyss Lane in Surry Hills. Over time the work grew and changed, and it was not until the very end of the Biennale that *Here, an Echo* found its final multifarious form: as a score, as the memories of collaborators and the people who participated in the walks and conversations, as a publication, and as a series of 14 phrases in Wemyss Lane.

Part of my thinking for the 20th Biennale was the argument that new kinds of 'in-between' spaces have opened up in recent years – in terms of our interaction with the digital world, displacement from and occupation of spaces and land, and the interconnections and overlaps between politics and financial power structures – and each of us inhabits them in very individual ways. Many of the works in the exhibition manifested these new combinations, or new ways of folding the world 'into' the self. Wemyss Lane, where *Here, an Echo* now appears, is one of these in-between spaces: a lane that the backs of restaurants, shops and associations open up to. This is exactly the kind of place where the city simultaneously folds into, and at the same time reveals, itself. The 14 phrases that appear here serve as poetic footnotes to the process of their own making – offering an account of the encounter between the artist and the city, and providing those who chance upon these words with the means for a new encounter, here in this in-between space.

In Conversation

Stephanie Rosenthal with Agatha Gothe-Snape and Brooke Amity Stamp

This conversation about Here, an Echo took place between Agatha Gothe-Snape, Brooke Amity Stamp and Stephanie Rosenthal via Skype on 3 May 2017.

Stephanie Rosenthal: Brooke, I'd like to hear your reflections on how the process of physically moving through a city can create a kind of imprint on it, or even rewrite a certain part of its history, by adding another layer, or another context or another framework. Do you think that physically interacting with a space in this way can give you an intuitive feeling for it? Does it change you, and does it change the city?

Brooke Amity Stamp: I think that's an interesting place to start, but it makes me think about how the work – or the walk – evolved through the initial practice of walking. The work exists as a kind of physical imprint in the city, but I think it also possesses some particular time dimension – or many time dimensions – through the accumulation of the walks, as well as these kinds of physical dimensions. So, there isn't one particular way to describe that imprint or change or effect or relationship.

Agatha Gothe-Snape: Brooke and I wanted to accumulate knowledge through the act of walking, but when we presented the walk to audiences as a formal or informal event we hoped it would enter their body and memory. As it enters their body and memory, it enters the city through the interface of the users or humans in the city. This is an acknowledgement of the way history or events are recorded through the archiving or archaeological capacity of the human body and human experience. Does that make sense, Brooke?

BAS: It does, and it also made me think about – on one of those first walks, or maybe the first time I walked with you – this thing I tried to describe as seeing and noticing Sydney for the first time. Not seeing with my eyes, but feeling or sensing. Every step I took had a very expansive rhythm, or set of rhythms. My acknowledgement of those first walks was that these layers of imprints already existed, and that's what I was able to attune to immediately – my understanding of how many layers and layers of history there are. How many times this grass had been walked upon, that path, the desire line. And then there is the whole thing of embodiment between the situation, the performer walking and the audience. I also think, could the buildings have changed? Could the streetscapes have changed? Was there any change to the pathways? On a microscopic level, have we impacted in any way, or changed the physical or mental character of that space?

SR: I think it's quite powerful, this idea that you're mediating the history that exists

on the ground, and in the very moment of the walk. It wasn't entirely choreographed, and each iteration had a different character. Did you just respond to the context of that day, or were there things that you always felt were the same? Was it different for you each time?

BAS: Definitely. I think the score evolved so that it was different each time. There were the three main walks, but one that comes to mind is a walk that we had to cancel because of insane torrential weather, but that we still did with the support of a handful of friends. This was very much part of the period of accumulation of information that we then took into the next walk. A part of the score kept changing and evolving, and drawing from previous situations. I think every one would have been based on the idea of attunement. Physical attunement, psychological attunement, emotional attunement, to all of the elements that were changing not just within the series of walks, but within the minutes and seconds, or the couple of hours of that day that we were together. It was always different, but the thread was physically strong; it had a particular kind of gravity because of the understanding of the pathway itself.

AGS: The score was both the pathway, the line, and the information, which took the form of language that accumulated throughout the walks. We'd then take that language to each walk, and enact it in different ways along the line.

SR: So, it was an accumulation of the body's movement and language. In a way, it's a continuation, like episodes. It continued to ...

AGS: ... build and change.

SR: Which is reflected in the score.

When the two of you started, you didn't have an exact path in mind; you were exploring the area between Speakers' Corner and Wemyss Lane through the act of walking to define the stops you were going to take. Then it became a work that also talks about the history of Australia and colonisation, of violence, and also how the land has changed. Was that always something you were planning? Was this the most apparent line, or something that just emerged over time?

AGS: It was impossible to ignore. We were so open to any possibility, and we were trying to make this space for the pathway to communicate with us somehow, and it just became more and more evident. Also, the whole process was framed by your Biennale. We thought a lot about Archie Moore's work, *A Home Away From Home (Bennelong/Vera's Hut)*, 2016, which was situated kind of at the apex in the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney. It was hard to ignore the gravity of that work. I don't think that's what led us to begin to focus on colonial history, though; it just happened.

BAS: It was impossible to ignore, and I think there were a lot of intuitive things that emerged just through doing the work and doing the walk. It might be interesting to consider the idea that cities are designed as well – to lead you in a particular way. Two things are at play: how the city has kind of been designed to get us to move,

but there was also a resistance to following any of the laid-out pathways. There was this strange balancing going on. So, it was about listening to the terrain, not just the physical but maybe the spiritual terrain, and other things there to take notice of. I think of the Captain Cook monument, and how we kept arriving there.

There were certain things that were impossible to ignore. You had to negotiate them and face them and deal with them and confront them. Then, there were certain things that called us to confront them – in particular, that one monument. So, there's a question there about intuition or being led by these other forces – external forces – as well.

SR: Brooke said initially that she'd walk the whole path backwards. It must be a different experience for the body to explore in that way. Because you can't see where you're going, you are more attentive to certain things. You have to concentrate so much on not falling down, but at the same time you don't see what's behind you. When you walk backwards, you must feel every little bump in the earth with each foot to know that you're stable. And that's somehow an interesting thing when you think about the history of a place. You're much more attentive to every little thing, every little scar in the earth, to find your balance.

BAS: That was an interesting experiment that started quite early on in our research – this idea of walking backwards. I tested it at the desire line a couple of times, and during the three public performances I was aided by the hand of an audience member, and I walked backwards down the stairs at the cathedral and into the square, away from the public.

What it produces is a particular kind of embodied listening. You can think of listening with the surface of the skin; listening with the back surface of the body. There are different modes of embodiment and different ways to sensitise the body to the forces around you. Walking backwards was a way to find a particular kind of gravity or weight in making a connection to the earth that you're walking on, because of this new negotiation of time, and – exactly what you're talking about – these ruptures in the ground. You're so much more sensitive to those if you can't see with your eyes. It produces this kind of slower mechanism. And you're actually seeing what you're walking away from – for example, walking away from the Domain. Which was also a strong and energetic starting point.

SR: It's such an expansive work, with an extended duration and many intersecting parts and people contributing something to the whole. I would imagine now, looking back on it, *Here, an Echo* seems somewhat elusive, and yet at the same time, there's so much we can say about it.

AGS: It's really quite hard. It's quite a ginormous thing to account for. It's huge. It was a huge, huge work and it's hard to fully account for all the details and the engineering of it – all the connections and the complexity of the repetition. And then the connections across time and place, and the score. There's so much information, it's quite hard. I'm always anxious that it's not accounted for properly, and how do we account for that? I guess that part of it is that we surrender to it.

SR: You can't account for everything.

AGS: Exactly, it just creates anxiety. But then that's the anxiety of the document after performance.

SR: I remember when you first told me that Brooke had received a curious phantom text message on one of her walks. And this eventually found its way into the score. I always thought it was such an important sign for both of you.

AGS: It was a beautiful sign. There were lots of signs, though. I'm thinking about the final sculpture at the square, *Naissance Bronze*, of the generic 'Aborigine' and Captain Cook pulling apart in this dynamic, volcanic conflict. As horrific and strange and anachronistic as that sculpture is, ironically, it got to the heart of what Brooke and I discovered as we were walking through the city. We all do ignore that there's such strong evidence of the very recent colonial history when we navigate through Sydney, but that sculpture, hidden in that dark courtyard, it's screaming. It's saying, 'You really need to recognise this history.' I've just been looking at images of that sculpture and thinking, really, that was such an amazing end point to the walk. You know when you get to the end of something and realise the answer was always there, right in front of you?

BAS: But also where it is. Because it's right in front of people who use that relatively small space – a kind of non-space – on their lunchbreak, or as a shortcut to get to different businesses. It's this same kind of recycled problem of not looking, of not noticing. Maybe cities don't really foster this.

SR: Do you feel that a narrative developed between all these different walks? Did the layers build with a certain kind of intensity from the first to the last time? Perhaps you understood the walk differently, or your body knew it better. Or was it just very different each time, and not in a way that made any narrative sense?

AGS: I certainly feel like the accumulation created familiarity, but also depth. It was like the creation of the world, really; it became a whole universe that continued to reveal more detail to us through the repetitive act of the daily practice. The detail is what emerges through the practice, and that detail is where the work found intensity. The number of layers that can be revealed once you practise is infinite. Not just layers of information about the sites, but also layers of how to negotiate the space of the body or the relationship to an audience or how to tell the story, or all those performance elements as well. So, the practice grew in knowledge intensity, but also in virtuosity – our ability to perform a walk grew as we continued.

BAS: It's interesting, this idea of narrative, because I think it's something that could easily underlie an act or action when you are doing it so many times. Or when you are thinking of it. Agatha and I performed this action together multiple times, even without witnesses. So, a narrative could easily have emerged, but I think there was some – I'm not sure if 'resistance' is the right word. From my perspective as an embodied practitioner, there is a relationship to presence that was carving through – literally with the body – the potential narrative that emerged. So, on every occasion

it was completely receptive to that day. This history of information through doing the walk meant there was this cloud of narrative energy we were floating on, but the purpose was to physically and thematically negotiate with full embodied presence, every time.

Maybe it's also important to mention people like Shota Matsumura, the trumpeter we worked with. He orbited around us the entire time and helped create our relationship to the sonic atmosphere of the performance. There were times when he would play, and sometimes it wouldn't resolve as a recognisable pitch. His channelling of breath through his body, through the earth, out through the instrument and back out into the air on a fundamental level was what he was performing: the circulating of air or energy or atmosphere that's going on.

Sometimes you'd see him play into water; other times, he'd be looking at a tree. This idea of what builds, and realising it's so subtle. You've got the attention of everybody together, but then everyone is being attuned at certain times and is receptive to so many different things. For some people it will be traffic; for others it will be the colour or the light or the feeling of the air. I think that was what was most interesting, in retrospect. Were the witnesses or audience or people that joined us also enabled? Were we enabling a more sensitive relationship to themselves and their own narratives, their own narrative connections to the city, their own imaginations and how they psychologically navigated that space with us?

SR: I think what's important to consider in relation to the work is the archive of the body. You were basically adding to people's archives. Even if you don't consciously reflect on it, whenever you pass by these places again you will have the memory of being part of this walk. The intensity of the piece unravels quite slowly, but it does tell you, or communicate something, about the violence of this land. People carry this understanding around with them, even if the work wasn't in your face about it – you didn't set out to make this traumatic piece about the pain of the country.

By doing the walk more, it felt like the layers actually began to disappear. Layers were added, but at the same time you were taking them away, like the skin of an onion. And you were left with the essence of what each walk covered.

I thought it might also be good to talk quite pragmatically about the score. How you did it and how you used it.

AGS: It's never made obvious, because it's a hard thing to explain. Brooke and I have a particular way of working together, and I have to credit her because I think I absorbed a lot of her process when we worked together in 2013: this idea of using language as a way of scoring, and as a way of accumulating information, that you find through improvisation. It's the way to record the discoveries so the language comes from the body and then is deployed back into the body, and that slow accumulation creates a physical response or dance. The score for us is the receptacle for all the information we gather and that Brooke used to create works.

BAS: It's a score that is used, but it's also one that's developed by using it, by taking

into the body more information, new meanings, on each new walk.

AGS: The way we use a score is atemporal; it indicates the dance that we will make in the future, but it also documents the dance that we have done in the past. It's not a *chronos* idea of time, but a *kairos* one. Our score is both the potential future and the documented past of the work. It exists in all times at once, and now its residue exists for perpetuity in Wemyss Lane as a kind of open-ended palindromic poem. Here the invitation exists for the pedestrian, or viewer or commuter to trace their own meaning between the words – to parse, and to pass through the score residue in their own way. This act becomes a new dance – a new layer. And I guess this is how cities are made – layers and echoes of imprints and stories and trauma and communion, all held in the human body.

SR: To connect all the different dots of meaning and experience we have touched on, can you tell me how the title, *Here, an Echo*, came into being?

AGS: It relates to what you were saying about the onion and the layers and the imprint. I think an echo and an imprint are quite similar. It was about us trying to understand the echoes already imprinted on the city, while, within the performance, making new echoes that we could trace and follow. And strangely, it turned out to be the perfect title. It echoes still, and I hope that this walk and the work will continue to echo in place and time.

Observations

Georgina Criddle

9 *Naissance Bronze (Nascent Bronze)*

Naissance Bronze by Arthur Sherman, it says on a plaque: 'A SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF AUSTRALIA', a burst of energy, metamorphosis, lava, bones, flesh. Captain Cook and a nameless Aboriginal man entangled and pulling themselves apart at the top of the sculpture. Daylight fades and the sculpture is lit by spotlights that cast large shadows, twice, over the concrete retaining wall. Shota Matsumura, who is standing a metre away, blows air into his trumpet, making a resonant singular salute that echoes around the private terrace and spills into the streets. Brooke Amity Stamp starts pacing; she's barefoot and wearing a pink tracksuit. When she's ready, she takes hold of the sculpture and pulls herself up between the two wrestling figures. She feels her way around the cold bronze, moves her body with it kinaesthetically. Every now and then, as though she's found a place in it, she pauses. For a brief moment it's like she becomes part of it – part of the whole. And then she starts moving again, twisting and stretching her body with the twists of the bronze and then pausing. Like she's taking it in, embodying the struggle.

8 Hyde Park (*Discovered this Territory 1770*)

The larger-than-life effigy of Captain James Cook, unveiled in 1879, stands on top of a marble pedestal, which elevates and separates it from the rest of the surrounds. In his left hand Cook holds a telescope, while his right hand is raised, palm up, forming the colonial gesture of discovery, which brings to mind the fiction of *terra nullius*. Agatha Gothe-Snape, Shota and Lizzie Thomson soon spread themselves out over the park, ringing brass bells at things that appear fixed in place: lampposts, hedges, trees, sections of mowed grass and the monument to Cook. The sound agitates the landscape.

7 St Mary's Cathedral Square (*Spacious Public*)

Walking through the concrete square, we encounter people lying down on their backs like fallen trees. There are maybe ten of them. They don't seem to notice us as we move past them.

When we reach the end of the concrete square we see Brooke wearing a bathing suit and walking in the fountain, or rolling her body along the dark wooden footpath that runs along one side of it. Shota is playing his trumpet into the water, forming bubbles of sound that explode at the surface, too quiet to hear. At the middle of the fountain Brooke is moving, making exaggerated monumental gestures. She bends her knees, arches her back, and raises her right hand, palm facing upwards. Suddenly, great jets of water shoot up from under the wooden footpath to the left and to the right of her. She looks up at her hand and, in this pose, her arm begins to shake.

6 St Mary's Cathedral (*Inside the Body's Cavern*)

We move through the belly of the cathedral like a strong breeze and pour out the other side, before our eyes can properly adjust to the darkness.

As we exit St Mary's Cathedral, Brooke and Brian Fuata are walking down the steps, hand in hand, facing each other. Soon Brooke is moving alone, holding Brian's gaze and walking swiftly backwards through the square. There's something both frightening and admirable about this.

5 *Moving Walkway*

Instead of the feeling of walking, there's a feeling of being carried along. We are in a moving corridor, under the earth. As we are being pulled forward, other things are being pulled backwards and at a certain point everything that goes forward and everything that goes backward *meet* for a brief instant before fading off into the distance. The corridor is long and some of us choose to lie down, feeling the ridges of rubber floor and listening to the low hum of the motor. At other times we remain standing, noticing every now and then the colourful paintings on the walls, a kind of panorama, or a timeline of Sydney's colonial history.

A trio, two women and a man, are holding pieces of music and singing *A Horse with No Name*, by America. The three of them are being pulled towards us, their voices growing louder and louder until they're so close that I can reach out and touch them, but I don't, and they pass me by in the opposite direction.

4 *Desire Line*

We walk at a relaxed pace, following Brooke and Agatha along a dirt path that leads us towards the underground traveller five hundred metres from the gallery. Agatha tells us a story about Brooke, who was walking the same dirt track some weeks earlier, only it was a rainy day and she happened to slip. The impact of her fall produced a text message that was sent to Agatha's phone: 'lii I don't think think think think think think think think think about the future future future is bright side to the the same thing thing thing thing thing is m to to be the m.'

3 Art Gallery of New South Wales

We pass the zebra crossing and form a group in front of the gallery stairs where Brooke reads from a yellow paper: 'I AM NOT A GUIDE, NOT A MESSENGER. I AM NOT A LEADER OR FRONTRUNNER, TRAILBLAZER OR TEARAWAY. I AM NOT A DIRECTOR OR INSTRUCTOR OR MANAGER OR CHIEF. I AM NOT A CHAPERONE OR WARDEN OR GUARDIAN OR ESCORT. I AM NOT A CONDUCTOR OR A CONDUIT. I AM NOT A PERFORMER, I AM NOT A DANCER. I AM NOT A CHANNEL, OR A PASSAGE OR A FLOW.' We let the words wash over us.

2 Speakers' Corner

The garden is full of different sounds and the grass is mowed and green and split in the middle by a concrete path. On one side of the path, men stand on boxes sounding out opinions about the future to a small audience. On the other side of the path, a crowd begins to form around Jimmy Smith, a Wiradjuri man, who speaks to us about the

Gadigal of the Eora Nation and the land around Hyde Park before the invasion of 1770. There's a gesture in the direction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge – the mouth of colonisation. Where are we? We raise our right hands in front of us. From the other side of the path, the gesture would have read as a command. Halt. Stop. But to us it's a map of the land, with each finger representing a place: Derawun (Potts Point), Yurong (Mrs Macquaries Point), Tobegully (Bennelong Point), Coodye/Tarra (Millers and Dawes Points) and Pirrama (Ultimo/Pymont). On our hands we see where we are travelling: from the knuckle to the middle of the ring finger.

1 Royal Botanic Garden

We congregate in the Royal Botanic Garden, around a large tree near the Art Gallery of New South Wales. We know we are in the right place because there's a sign that reads: *Here, an Echo*. We gather around it, not once, not twice, but three times.

These texts by Melbourne-based artist and writer Georgina Criddle are drawn from a selection of observations she made while attending three different iterations of *Here, an Echo* on 17 April, 15 May and 26 June 2016.

Here, an Echo: A Choreography for the City Bree Richards

Art for Agatha Gothe-Snape is an ongoing process. Responsive to the unforeseen and unknown, her fluid approach possesses the potential for redistributing the landscape of the visible, what Jacques Rancière has described as 'a recomposition of the relationship between doing, making, being, seeing, and saying'.¹ In her wide-ranging practice, Gothe-Snape has often turned to improvisational performance, using language and choreography as her chosen mediums to question our relationships to one another, to art, and to the contexts and histories in which all these are situated.

Whether physically actualised or merely suggested, her works – spanning intervention, social sculpture and momentary gestures, among other things – are always carefully planned. Yet, much like experiments, outcome and effect are impossible to predict. In past works, Gothe-Snape has explored the connections between body, time, space and movement, through instructional text and improvisation. *Three Ways to Enter and Exit*, for instance, is a visual score that dancer Brooke Amity Stamp performed in 2011, which was re-presented in 2014 alongside a narrative about the relationship between performance, subjectivity, documentation and memory. Gothe-Snape also collaborated with other dancers to create a new iteration, *Other Ways to Enter and Exit*, in response both to Stamp's dance and to her own remembered account of it. Description served as another form of score, or as a script for dance, but rather than simply prescribing movement, the work offered up a class of ideas – thoughts or suggestions for many possible courses of action.

Emerging from this and other projects made with Stamp as her investigative partner, for the 20th Biennale of Sydney Gothe-Snape presented *Here, an Echo, 2015–17*, a choreography for the city comprising a score, performance and document that unfolded over three Sundays during the exhibition. This expansive, non-monumental work periodically enlivened urban spaces with site-specific happenings and discursive events. Gothe-Snape worked closely with Stamp and other collaborators over a period of three months to develop a suite of 'performative interferences' – call-and-response actions, musical improvisations, words spoken and sung – drawing a line of connection between Speakers' Corner in the Domain and Wemyss Lane in Surry Hills.

These three scored walks all began with a particular proposition: a cue for action and a response to a specific series of locations. Alongside casual encounters, daily walks, conversations with stakeholders, friends, peers, and interested members of the public, the performances that temporarily inhabited each site were translated by Gothe-Snape into textual impressions. Over time, written accounts accumulated as a series of *kōans*, or poetic interludes, emerging from the fabric of the city itself. Fragments of these sentences now exist as large-scale texts, installed at the last stop on the performance

trail, in Wemyss Lane. While their placement is final, the mode of encounter is not, with words scaling walls and traversing driveways, running vertically and horizontally across an array of surfaces. It is not possible to take in all the work at once, and in their positioning, these questions, thoughts and musings issue a call to movement: to read and to understand you must tilt your head, stoop, twist, turn, consider, reconsider, keep walking.

Creating a constantly shifting field of affect, each performance was a series of instructions, enacted and embodied for and with a group of participants, who moved together from one point on the artist's choreographed map to another. This route took in a range of locations: a desire line in the Royal Botanic Garden, an underground traveller, St Mary's Cathedral, a fountain, and a curious sculpture inhabiting a deserted post office courtyard. While acting as a chaperone, Stamp declared up front: 'I am not a performer, I am not a dancer. I am not a channel, or a passage or a flow.' The aim of these scored walks was to heighten bodily and spatial awareness for performer and viewer alike, while Stamp gathered together psychological, somatic and emotional experiences with her body, attuning herself to unseen forces at sites along the way.

Here, an Echo embraced a constellation of other interventions: Shota Matsumura's vibratory trumpet soundscape, singers harmonising America's *A Horse with No Name*, the artist's friends and peers casually lying around on an expanse of cement, and elsewhere, ringing bells, awakening objects in Hyde Park, among other memorable vignettes. While each event took place within a similar frame of reference, the work responded in real-time to the everyday and unforeseen. Temperamental Sydney weather, interactions with other pedestrians, architectural happenstance, and the changing quality of light and sound all played a role. And along the way it gathered within it other information heard, sensed and gleaned from the urban spaces through which it passed. Stamp's physical vocabulary, too, ranged widely, poised and powerful one moment, light and lyrical the next, yet always intimately concerned with the effects of gravity and with context, with the surrounding environment and its many layers of history.

Here, an Echo reflected the tone, colour and atmosphere of the day. And just as the sound and motion of performers and audience drew on the specifics of vibe, space and surface, each act is further transformed through memory. This sense of repetition and difference is heightened in the way observations are contained within the mind, and in the afterglow of accumulating actions and impressions. By observing the junctures between social conditions, sites, or even moments in time, Gothe-Snape describes how in the act of walking this path, *Here, an Echo* 'traces rhetorical and physical passages both trodden and uncharted, inviting the viewer to capture and respond to the ambiances of different physical situations in the City of Sydney'.²

The work reflects Gothe-Snape's interest in social and spatial relations, and in how these, in turn, shape and are shaped by public space. Having an ongoing life after the ephemeral moment, with *Here, an Echo* we are able to see some of what remains of the performances, conversations and observations that took place in these inner-city locations, where Stamp's body met the materiality of the city. The afterlife is reframed as textual alterations, and just as the performances were seen and felt, the painted words in

Wemyss Lane generate a distinctive feeling. Reverberating in dissonant cross-rhythms, *Here, an Echo* exists as an interruption across time, through the presence of the artist, her collaborators and her audience, through the resulting texts. In the process of listening in on the city, Gothe-Snape has added something new to it, a cumulative effect of chance operations, attuning, embodying and transforming space.

Choreographed yet open-ended, *Here, an Echo* creates a community of actions. The emphasis is on the collective, rather than on the individual, and by combining spatial practices and experimental playfulness, the work casts new light on the connections between art and the experience of everyday life. In Wemyss Lane it manifests as a trace that resonates, as a residue of past events, but also as an instruction: these texts are far from inert. Retaining the potential to be reperformed and recast as public art-work, *Here, an Echo* is ongoing, existing at a juncture between spatial and temporal registers. The viewing position is never fixed, nor is meaning. Instead, we observe and experience the work through time, as these events and their textual remains crystallise and then dissolve again in perpetual movement. *Here, an Echo* is both a trace and a reminder: if places don't remain still, then why should we?

1. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Continuum, London and New York, 2004, p. 43.
2. Agatha Gothe-Snape, conversation with the author, March 2016.

A Passing Instant

Agatha Gothe-Snape

This artwork began with an invitation from the Biennale of Sydney to produce a work for the City of Sydney. From the outset the parameters of this invitation were open and unfixed, its final form uncertain.

Without a clearly defined site, medium or any particular context in mind, I began to walk the city. I walked from the emptied terraces of Millers Point to the overpasses and undertows of the Harbour Bridge, from the barnacled Darling Harbour Wharf, along the former Hungry Mile past vacant lots sheathed with industrial mesh printed with advertising slogans: *'Your new neighbour, Barangaroo!'* I walked past bulging mirrored towers, filled with hi-vis-vested workers toiling away, floor by floor, towards the clouds.

I walked from rambunctious Circular Quay, with its techno didge and gilded living statues, past the gleaming Opera House teeming with selfie sticks and through the rolling green design of the Botanic Garden.

I marched, with the other city workers, along Sussex and Kent and Goulburn and Pitt, through arcades and laneways burgeoning with potential and newly developed labyrinthine malls, glittering with mirrors and fittings and global cuisine markets.

Most of the time, I had my newborn baby strapped to my chest. Some days I drove to the rhythm of traffic lights and ticking indicators, clearing skies and humming buses, with him squirming in the back seat. One day, as rain poured down, I chanced upon Wemyss Lane.

It was puddled and glistening, and from its apex – a private but accessible courtyard – I could look down upon its serpentine surface. It had a gentle incline, and yet could be apprehended in a single glance. Unlike much of inner-city Sydney, this place had remained relatively untouched by developers or hipsters. It appeared to be exactly what it was: a service laneway, without cafés or bars, and with no readily apparent plans for either demolition or redevelopment.

It was from this vantage point, on this day, I saw for

A PASSING INSTANT

Here, an Echo

for the first time – words falling from the sky, as if conjured, down upon the surface of this laneway. Landing, somewhat haphazardly, but forming a kind of map or score for citizens to negotiate, both physically and poetically. In my mind's eye, this was an expansive yet subtle work, dispersed across the vertical and horizontal surfaces of the lane but not disrupting its innate qualities and uses. It was ambiguous in both form and meaning, akin to the road markings already embossed throughout the city, but anchored in a process that had not yet revealed itself.

From this moment, one question preoccupied me: what is it to speak in public? What is deemed worthy for expression? What rhetorical devices are already in place, in this place, Sydney? Who is already speaking in public space if we choose to listen, and who is responsible for these voices of both our past and our present? I wanted to listen BELOW THE THRESHOLD OF AUDIBILITY.

To be present both in space and in time: to become aware of the echoes of past activities and the whispers of the present.

To begin to 'listen' I chose one sample tract – a series of

PHYSICAL DOORWAYS

through

which we would pass on our way to Wemyss Lane:

- * From Speakers' Corner in the Domain, once the pantheon of free public speech in Australia, to the Tuscan columns of the Art Gallery of New South Wales
- * Along the *Desire Line* – a path etched by collective, and perhaps unconscious, navigation
- * Carried by the *Moving Walkway*, a type of modernist, utopian monument to productivity and efficiency, adorned with a mismatched mural, complete with a culturally oblivious diorama of the Harbour Bridge as gaol cell and a John Brackesque three-dimensional collage of wage-slaves off to the CBD to work
- * Through St Mary's Cathedral – ambience design at its best and most dogmatic service to God (*Inside the Body's Cavern*)
- * Out into the arid open public space of Cathedral Square (*Spacious Public*)
- * Past Captain Cook and other monuments to unnatural death (*Discovered this Territory 1770*), and finally to
- * *Nascent Bronze*, a sculpture – *Naissance Bronze* – by Arthur Sherman depicting Captain Cook pulling apart from, yet in some kind of dance with, a nearby plaque informs us, an unnamed 'Aborigine'. From here we can apprehend
- * *Wemyss Lane*, a rear service lane, cast in shadow by the brutalist tower at 1 Oxford Street, home to numerous public service departments and other private enterprises.

Throughout these walks, and along these passages, I wanted to consider how to be present in a place. I returned to the act of walking as a way to understand site. I worked with Brooke Amity Stamp, a dancer and choreographer, to help me begin to unlock and research site and place. We engaged Jimmy Smith, via the local Aboriginal Land Council, to walk with us and talk about his experience of place and the act of walking. We walked daily, throughout the Biennale, from Speakers' Corner in the Domain to Wemyss Lane in Surry Hills.

We walked with friends and artists, writers, philosophers, international guests of the Biennale, and strangers we met along the way. Tourists and locals would join our

procession, which in itself became a kind of sculpture, amorphous, floating, edge drifting and open.

Neither purely performance, nor wholly research, these scored walks were always in the process of revelation, echoing both what is always already present and the actions we ourselves generated. Slowly, each site and each passage revealed more to us – the sounds, the populations, the activities, and the shapes moved in and out of focus. Hard to ignore, however, and what became increasingly apparent, was the dominance of a particular colonial discourse in public space – particularly in the way certain rhetorical devices, such as public art, produced arguments for possession and ownership of place and time.

Each day we would bring new information in the form of language to our walks – words gleaned from historical site research, articles sent to us by friends and audience members, conversations overheard, songs humming on the radio. These words became an information palette for scoring responses to different sites; this information merged with the information of the sites – their atmospheres, designs and occupants – and was made manifest in the body of Brooke and her changing relationship to each site.

Slowly, we introduced more elements – dancers and musicians joined us, improvising among the structures we had put in place. Gestures were repeated and then echoed across and between sites.

HER RIGHT HAND UPRaised

Resonances were located and replayed. Conversations recounted. We sought a way for the walk and the words to be complicit in an act of co-creation; that is, to make themselves without too much additional design or effort on our part. Each walk would find its completion at Wemyss Lane. As we hovered in the courtyard at the rear of 1 Oxford Street, we would consider how the action of scored walking could possibly be documented, or reside for perpetuity, in this laneway. We imagined the lane like a piece of audio tape unwound, upon which the recordings of the work had been etched, or a scaled plan view of the linear walk with its score words drafted in place. I conflated the act of parsing with the act of walking – to make sense both of site and of language.

Wemyss Lane – reaching hand outstretched to the rear of 1 Oxford Street, and at its foot, extending onto Goulburn Street – currently functions as a rear service lane to the adjoining businesses and tenants of Brisbane, Wentworth and Goulburn Streets. It is a receptacle for garbage bins, soiled eiderdowns and late night exchanges: drunken embraces, illicit relations and violent eruptions. It also provides the rear entry for many businesses and organisations, which in 2017 include Gemmology House, Philas House, The Real Estate Institute of New South Wales and Corporate Fight Gym, to name a few.

If I hover in the laneway long enough, I begin to see residents and employees entering and exiting, sitting in the gutter, having a cigarette or a phone moment in the shards of DIRECT SUNLIGHT

that momentarily shatter the shade of the lane. I see shirtless men pounding the pavement, appearing again and again, like some looped video art from the 1990s, as they endeavour to accelerate their heart rate and oil their ligaments in

preparation for their next foray into the corporate fight ring.

FEINTS AND REPETITIONS.

I picture the sleeping bodies, wrapped in high-class down, their resting heads just metres above the street in their state-of-the-art stainless steel-lined apartments. DWELLING, LYING AROUND.

My mind recalls the previous iteration of this piece of land as a residential laneway, lined with huddled terraces. People chatting in the street, brothels, horses, wafting smoke and streams of piss flowing down the decline AN UNTIMELY FOUNTAIN

– cooking smells, drunken shouts and babies' cries jammed into tiny dwellings purpose made for the working classes.

But this iteration of Wemyss is also just one chapter, an echo. The land was resumed by the local government in 1913, as its use was deemed too tawdry, too grubby, too foreign, for such a prime piece of real estate.

AUCTIONEER GAVEL CONTRACT.

It was 'returned' to state ownership, then divvied up among more respectable landlords – entrepreneurs, businessmen, manufacturers – for commercial use.

Wemyss today is lined by the driveways of these same warehouses and workshops. Garage doors open onto basements stacked with dead stock or disordered stationery. One open door reveals a makeshift capoeira studio; another doorway provides a temporary shelter for an itinerant. Often, the bins overflow and waste merges with the lane itself – litter flowing again like a stream down the gutters.

As we walked and I began to talk to more residents and tenants and audience members, the words began to gather – the language of the laneway conjured. NOT PREDICTABLY BUT INEVITABLY.

The basement of Philas House used to house the secret headquarters of the Australian Federal Police – switchboards to prove it, one tenant whispers to me. This used to be the Sapphire District, another boasts – sapphires and diamonds and rubies were cut and traded here. It's an industrious place – no ghosts – just humming working people, cutting rags and pressing metal, repairing wheels and tuning motors and radios.
A SINGLE STAMP

is the most valuable thing in the world by weight and size, especially a misprinted one. Australia is a real estate nation – if anything, we'd like an image of a man holding high his gavel in his hand about to sell a property. Can you paint that? A society determines the gems it values. We value diamonds for their refractive index and scintillation. Their sparkle. The inclusions are something within that are always already there in the formation.

INCLUSIONS AND MISPRINTS.

A disinterested outsider. A foreign body, a particle, an insect – something from out-side that finds its way into formation.

PLANTS AND BIRDS AND ROCKS AND THINGS.

The participant observer.

The ethnographer. This is the preparation ground, I think. You have to listen. Generally, when you listen, it tells you. No, this is the ceremony ground. This is where we came when we were kids to get out of Newtown, out of Redfern. It's quiet up here. I think this is it. It's for men. Women shouldn't even really be allowed to speak here. I'll come and watch you. Where can you speak? Anywhere you like...

This is the cloud I have summoned, and as words begin to fall, I sweep and glean the most robust. These are the words that now lay ready for their placement in the laneway.

I see them like a two-way poem, head to foot/foot to head. They can be passed in sequence, but positioned as they are, the reader's body must twist and turn, reordering itself for both legibility and poetry. This act of reading, or parsing, becomes a type of choreography for the viewer, who is then unwittingly transformed into performer, and witnessed by anyone from the elevated dress circle at the rear of 1 Oxford Street or, for that matter, the surrounding offices and apartments whose view descends upon Wemyss Lane. The work becomes its own score for walking, and the viewer is invited to occupy the spaces between the phrases, making their own meaning. Here, walking and reading are intertwined, and the viewer, as they apprehend the work, creates their own dance – a choreography by and for the city.

I will end with Ursula K. Le Guin:

'What makes a story is – you want to "find out what happens next" – this bit of the story leads you to the next one.

Like running, when you have to put the left foot down ahead of the right foot, because you are actually not balanced on the right foot that touches the ground but are leaning forward into the run, and then you have to put the right foot down ahead of the left one because ditto. This is the cantputdowner type story, fast-paced, suspenseful. You don't see much scenery, running, or learn much. You run for the sake of running, the pleasure and excitement.

Then there is the story like walking, steady, and you fall into the flow of the gait and cover ground while seeing everything around you, scenery you may never have seen before; and the walk may end up somewhere you've never been.

And there's the story like dancing, where the next movement keeps growing out of the last movement, but not in a straightforward way, its direction isn't merely onwards but involves circles and feints and repetitions and all kinds of strange gestures, and yet if the dance is true to itself, all the movements are connected and every one follows from the last, not predictably, but inevitably.¹

1. Ursula K. Le Guin, *What Makes a Story*, www.ursulaklequin.com/WhatMakesAStory.html, viewed 25 April 2017.

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Agatha Gothe-Snape
Here, an Echo, 2015–2017

Here, an Echo was commissioned by the 20th Biennale of Sydney: *The future is already here – it's just not evenly distributed*, curated by Stephanie Rosenthal. This is the second City of Sydney legacy artwork, and a series of large-scale texts remain in Wemyss Lane, Surry Hills, as part of the City Art Collection.

These words and phrases respond to the ambience of this location and its surrounds, while also reflecting an extensive process of research and conversation with tenants, residents and passers-by. Accumulating through anecdote and observation, *Here, an Echo* is also a record of three performances Agatha Gothe-Snape presented with Brooke Amity Stamp during the Biennale, on 17 April, 15 May and 26 June 2016, 3.30–4.30 pm.

This book was published in an edition of five copies by the Biennale of Sydney in 2017 as one last element of this expansive work.

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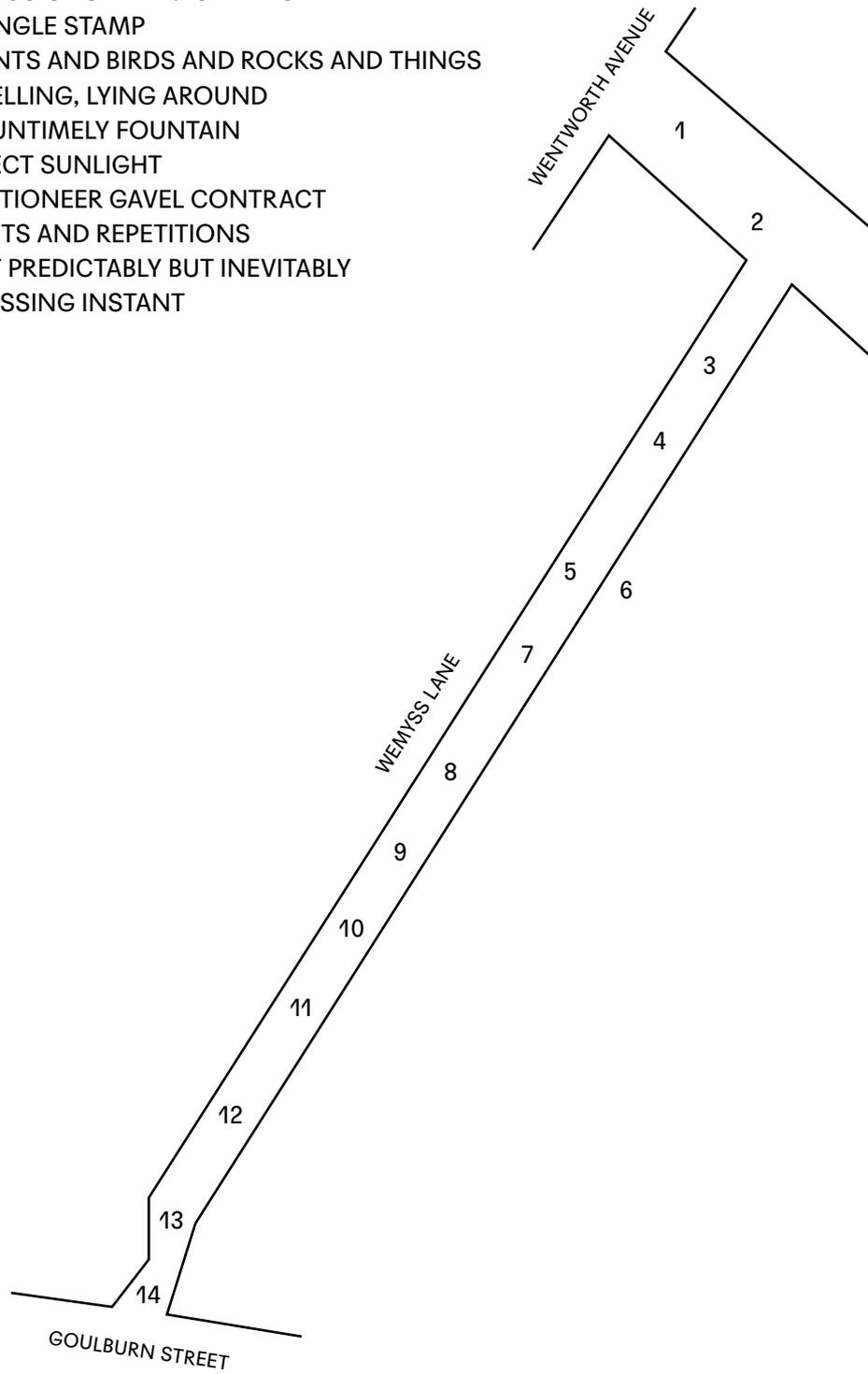
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↑ North

