

ATLANTA EKE – REPORT

The residency at Bundanon proved to be an important experience that I continue to learn from retrospectively. Being the third time I had the opportunity to work with Deborah I travelled to Bundanon with anticipation expectations and presumption. This was a new context in which to experience her work and her relationship to me as a dancer. I had not raised the commission myself to learn this solo, in this case I was being paid. This created a new perspective on what it is to work on such material I had many questions and curiosities regarding what I consider the integral component of Deborah's practice, the most pressing being, what does this work communicate to an audience? How can an engagement in a specific perception of self translate into a platform for exchange and relation between performer and audience? I was also and still very much am curious about how and what this perception of self-produces aesthetically in respect to expression and how this work is potentially a technique that can be learned.

For myself Deborah Hays work is a continual de-codification of ingrained conditionings, an ongoing questioning and deconstruction of inscribed codes of conduct perhaps even a reconfiguration of my perception of the capacities of what dance can be. She comes to the studio with huge generosity of rare intelligence. A very interesting part of the residency at Bundanon was noticing the affect of Deborah's carefully chosen and sculptured language on other dancers and how this transformed as the ten days progressed. This work causes 'catastrophic loss', in respect to the stripping back of ego and taking away of safety nets, and to witness how several dancers with different interests and in different stages of the artistic career responded to her work. It was very interesting and reassuring to see an established artist like Ros Warby sit with the score and struggle. This work is difficult. I had in September 2009 learnt the solo *At Once*, a solo choreographed by Deborah. Immediately the language in the score written by Deborah for *At Once* resonated with me, emotionally and politically. This was a score that she had written and rewritten and performed herself over a yearlong period. It felt huge to me in terms of the potential it unearthed in my body. In *The Dark* had a very different feeling. I could feel that it was the first draft and in so could not engage with the language and felt disconnected and debilitated by it. This of course should be helpful because in actual fact the score is to be superfluous, the written instructions are impossible to actualise and the emphasis is placed on the perception of self and the noticing of space and time passing. In having difficulty with the score, it became apparent to me, that for one to be committed to this work, one had to believe in Deborah's practice and not just be in love with her wisdom and poetic radicalism. Of course Deborah says 'you don't have to believe any of this' and I have learnt to take from her practice what interests me. But during my time in Bundanon my frustrations grew because I felt my questions about what her work communicates to an audience were not answered and because I am always suspicious of artists that are their own best advocates and have one hundred percent belief in what they preach I struggled with the work with the score of *In The Dark*, that is until my adaptation process begun. Being alone with the work renewed my appreciation of Deborah's dedication, the unrelenting unfading passion and belief in her practice is phenomenal and it is difficult to question the conviction forty years of inviting being seen from the bones. This process of adaptation has been a multiplicity of experiences in respect to the choreographic score written by Deborah. The text of *In The Dark* requires time and space for it to be absorbed and integrated into the body. My adaptation process is a

transmission of the dance; it is an intervention with my personal aesthetic, and an intervention with my personal experience and conditioning. . There is an impossibility in respect to the choreographic language, and what attracts me to Deborah's work is her practice is always applied in the form of a question. At the moment the score is a skeleton and as I take it forward I give it a particularity. As with previous solos I have learnt from Deborah I am undergoing a deconstruction of *In The Dark* to determine and differentiate elements of interest and enjoyment from areas of dislike and difficulty. This fragmentation aims to investigate how likes and dislikes of the choreographic score shift and evolve over time and how they coexist, affect and are affected by the questions that are the form and choreography that is the shape of how I perceive the dance. I am interested in how Deborah's work communicates with an audience. As an audience member for her work I have found Deborah's performances extremely captivating but with out being able to articulate why or how. Something in the specificity of the vagueness of her performances makes it almost impossible to articulate what her work communicates to me.

Some ongoing questions and problems I have with this work through the process of adaptation:

Performance Presence as opposed to Performance Practice has become problematic in this work. How can one be present and simultaneously carry experience from the past and future? If there are no transitions in this work, if it is not episodic and sequencing is diminished in its disguise, then how does one be 'here' and then 'gone'? To be 'here' is to be contained and to be 'gone' is forgotten. Am I not always only in the present in passing? Isn't the present the transition from the past to the future? How much of transition is anticipation? How much of my dance is a reflex for the future? The body is what it can do as it goes along, it is defined by the constantly shifting and transforming capacities it carries with it from step to step, the body is never fixed. This contradicts the function of the 'tools' – the questions that are continually applied to the practice of *In The Dark* - that I am equipped to work with in the dance, in order to perceive that there is no such thing as repetition and that there is no one way that the choreography should appear. I notice that I am making aesthetical choices based on my past experiences of the work. For a practice in which there is no 'one way' in which the dance should look, the 'feedback' or coaching if you like, given to myself from Deborah at Bundanon as I practised *In The Dark*, to readdress the questions, has inferred to me that I was doing something wrong. I feel in this situation there is a divergence away from the dance as an experimental practice and towards the supposed nonexistence of predefined conditions. I feel a strong possibility that I am dancing an established yet undefined technique generating a specific aesthetic. Through my adaptation process more and more I am discovering catastrophic losses, in terms of my relationship to my own history and how I have trained as a dancer and how I am conditioned to perceive what dance is. Since experiencing Deborah's work such questions continue to re-emerge; how can the dance escape its ultimate determination in history as a precondition? Can I sustain the dance within the indeterminate time that is the memory of sensation as an intervention into history? How can I defy passing of time, the historicizing of dance as a conditioning continually producing preconditions, to expand of the possibility of the present? My attraction to Deborah's work is in the asking unanswerable questions of myself, for me this generates humanity or intimacy and vulnerability exposed to the audience. In having to recognize that I am here, I have to be here, in order to recognize I am

here and gone here and gone here and gone. I like to see this as a political act, not to fall into organized time but to notice the pattern of where I am, but don't fall into it again. This work brings paradoxes into the body, 'invite being seen, seeing' creating an energy, engagement and tension that I want to maintain, it feels satisfying in an unsatisfying way, forcing me to reassess how I measure success and failure, or reconfiguring my desire to measure anything at all - again I am unsure what this communicates to audience

Some poignant notes made from during the time at Bundanon and the thoughts they evoked:

The sensual material is enormously rich in terms of how I perceive

Keeping the depth on the surface

Giving the audience breathing space to have an experience

You are dancing in front of them; you do not have to tell them what you are doing.

All of space changing as I move through it

Atmosphere as a swimming pool

Recognise all that I don't know about what is that I am looking at

Notice where I am in order to surrender to where I am, perceive it in order to dis-attach

Paradox of noticing time passing and seeing where I am

Get your visual field working for you

Visual field as an infinite source for movement

I am the audience of my own dance

The more perspectives I have of myself in any given moment the more intimate the moment

The body is the site for experiment; there is no room for exploration

In the performance if the dance I learn what the dance is

Details of the work gradually reveal themselves through the process of the adaptation

We have learnt how not to see when we are dancing

Shifting tonality,

Non-linear: what is it? How do I notice?

Practice is how I learn without having to think.

What is the relationship between repetition and the question?

There is no such thing as repetition! Your relationship with time and space is always changing

Nothing is ever the same

Don't ever arrive at the end

Learn from my body instead of telling it what to do.

Practicing a much bigger relationship to the rest of the world

The bigger my perceptual field the more material I get – feedback. No need to be creative or to create

Selfishly receive the feedback for the dance material

We have been choreographed to perceive we are separate

The 'question' puts every one in relationship.

Exercising the potential to be in more than one place at one time

I sing songs to learn what I am thinking

To learn physical thoughts

The voice is not secondary to movement

Voice is movement

Inviting being seen, not performing
Get what you need, notice the feedback from my body
Take adrenalin to address the question use it to enlarge yourself
Don't let adrenalin drive you in performance.
Don't fill time with movement
Don't 'do' something to someone else, creates a separation from the audience. You
get lost
Avoid building energy towards a climax if you don't know when it is, you will loose
the audience after
I am in relationship; I don't have to create it
Get what you need, notice the feedback from my body
Take adrenalin to address the question use it to enlarge yourself
Don't let adrenalin drive you in performance.
Notice/use the feedback from the audience
Seeing beyond the audience
Don't fill time with movement
Don't 'do' something to someone else, creates a separation from the audience. You
get lost
Avoid building energy towards a climax if you don't know when it is, you will loose
the audience after
I am in relationship; I don't have to create it
I am not going to be limited by muscularity
Cellular body is inviting being seen
I am not 'showing' what I can do
I invite being seen as a body in question
Seeing is like eating – feeds your feedback
Seeing includes what you can't see and this enlarges your dance
Fucking amazing what the eye can do
Sight supports you
Inviting being seen seeing
There is no such thing as abstract movement. In the theatre you are always in
representation
Practice the enlargement of your dance using space
Go beyond the limits of what the movement should look like
Why is it important to 'ask the question' What if?
What if where I am is what I need? As opposed to 'Where I am is what I need'