

Trans-Cultural Perspectives on Digital Practices and the Arts in Higher Education

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Imagine improvising movement in real time to a choreographic provocation generated by a dance artist several thousand miles away that is mediated through web-link and simultaneously viewed by a globally dispersed audience. Imagine presenting a paper with colleagues from across the globe where your physical presence at the conference is made possible, not through conventional forms of travel on planes, trains and automobiles, but through Skype technology transmitted live into the conference venue; or in an alternate scenario, where your physical presence is enabled and mediated in avatar form and where the conference takes place, not in the real world, but on a Second Life virtual island. These 'imaginings' are no mere flights of fancy but very real examples of technological practice that evidence our increasingly diverse, globalised, complex, and digitally engaged teaching and learning communities and environments. The educational landscapes that we inhabit as academics, artists, and administrators now routinely use digital platforms that include student management systems (Blackboard, Moodle), Web 2.0 services and applications (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Delicious, wikis, blogs), and mobile devices (smart phones, net laptops) that enhance the ways in which we live, learn, work, and play.

The digital revolution

According to one source, by December 31, 2008 there were currently approximately 1.574 billion internet users worldwide and a global

penetration rate of 23.8% (<http://www.internetworldstats.com>). In the space of approximately three decades, the capacity and capabilities of information and communications technologies (in particular the World Wide Web) have evolved at an unprecedented rate. Moreover, the advent of social networking spaces like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter, and Delicious have enabled the internet user – in contrast to the more static and consumer driven Web 1.0 – to engage with web content in a manner that is more dynamic, participatory, and social. This phenomenon has become so marked that a new term, Web 2.0, is now used to describe this era of user activity.

This digital revolution and the increasing capacity for users to not only engage as content users but also as content makers raises some key questions for us as educators. How do the possibilities of the digital world affect how and what we teach? How might the digital world transform the message, medium, and reception of dance? How might digital practices contribute to the development of higher education programs and artistic futures? With the intention of opening up the dialogue in regard to these questions this paper explores the evolving terrain and use of Web 2.0 and emerging digital technologies in higher education with attention to the way in which these are modifying relationships, enabling shifts in learning and teaching, and challenging the traditional practices and structures of faculty and institutions. Case study scenarios and perspectives on the use of digital technologies particularly in the context of the arts in higher education are described. The case studies include the impact of distance learning on re-imagining the locations and characteristics of dance study and a digital curation project that engaged artists in exploring relationships between mediated performance and site-responsive work.

Grabbing the trickster by the tail and holding on for the ride

Trickster isn't a run-of-the-mill liar and thief. When he lies and steals, it isn't so much to get away with something or get rich as to disturb the established categories of truth and property and, by so doing, open the road to possible new worlds.

(Hyde, 1998, p. 13)

The trickster in Lewis Hyde's *Trickster Makes the World* serves as a clever, but often disparaging, provocateur who struts through established systems leaving mayhem in his path. He enters into the world by feeding on the desires of individuals and, once interred, he transposes himself into a wily saboteur, one who shatters the rigid boundaries and walls constructed around traditions of truths and beliefs, values and hierarchies. At the risk of over extending a metaphor, the manoeuvres of this trickster might be likened to the sidestepping and mind shifting necessitated by the dance faculty member 'asked' to teach in a university online format. In this setting, the physical, economic, and cultural needs of the students' learning through online environments conjoined with the fiscal needs of the university often lead faculty on a precarious journey in which images for how dance might be imagined continually go in and out of focus. Further, available resources, often only accessible through the internet within the

realm of popular culture, may unsettle the aesthetic beliefs of both student and faculty taking them into uncharted areas; geographies no longer easily mapped using tools from prior academic training.

Consider the following sequence of events describing forays into the world of online education encountered by academic faculty, and the questions that consequently emerged:

1. Faculty members are told by the administration that all disciplines must raise the number of students taking classes in each department. However, the dance facilities (studios, classrooms, locker rooms) are presently being used at capacity. One option given to the dance faculty is to offer dance courses, (listed as fulfilling university-wide core humanities requirements), in an online format. In this format, courses taught face-to-face (f2f) in the traditional classroom can be translated into an online format. It is the expectation of university administration that no substantial extra faculty time should be needed. Further, that enrolments presently restricted by the size of the classroom could be doubled in the online setting.

This scenario provides the university with potentially large tuition increases without the need to increase faculty or classroom space. Additionally, any necessary technological enhancements needed to cover online coursework can be charged to the students as distance learning fees. From a cynical point of view, this scenario provides a veritable 'cash cow' for the university. However, in addition to the financial aspects, the process of creating this online environment opens up a myriad of new insights into pedagogical practice as faculty explore how to create exciting and engaging learning moments for the online student. In this exploration, it becomes clear that creating and teaching an online class requires about twice the amount of time as structuring a f2f class. Further, senior faculty must develop new technological skills as collaborative processes between the university's technological services and the dance program are formed.

2. The Department of Dance has a thriving graduate program. After realising the actual amount of technological training needed to prepare senior dance faculty as online teachers, the department notices that their graduate students have a more facile ability in this format – they access YouTube regularly, they blog, they tweet, and they do all of this with ease. Visions of numerous online courses taught by digitally savvy graduate students emerge as possibilities. This solution would not only increase the undergraduate head count, but would provide financial support to needy graduate students. The question becomes: Who will monitor these virtual classes? How will senior faculty know if these courses are successful? One solution for the department is the decision to join forces with a group of online educators working within the organisation of Quality Matters (www.qualitymatters.org), a faculty-centred, peer review process designed to certify the quality of online courses and online components.

3. After accepting the challenge to open online dance courses introducing the general college student to the discipline of dance, the faculty realises

that the video/DVD collection conscientiously gathered over the years in the university library is no longer of use to the student located out of state or even out of country. Course materials could be limited to articles and texts available in online databases, but then the most important element of dance is missing: the body actively shaping space and time. The Department of Dance purchases online access to the *Dance In Video* database, ([http:// daiv.alexanderstreet.com](http://daiv.alexanderstreet.com)) in which a private corporation has collected notable dance examples, especially in the field of world dance. This database is expensive (approximately \$2,500 per annum), but is currently the only possibility for students to access dance examples from the university in an online format and without personal cost. With this deficit of resources in mind, the following questions arise: How might further resources be developed in which online students can see dancers dancing? Who decides on the content of these resources? What aspects of copyright apply to sharing dance resources in an online class? Is the dance instructor willing to have online students discover their own dance resources through the various digital media on the Internet? What standards should be used to assess the quality of resources found on the Internet or from the online students' lived experiences and environments (churches, weddings, family celebrations, recitals, etc.)? If resources are not limited to the traditional dance master works, how will standards be met within the discipline of dance? By having students define dance in the context of their own lives, has the faculty member given up the long fought battle to place dance within the fine arts setting?

4. After teaching online courses and after connecting new technologies in communication to these courses, the graduate teaching assistants experiment with diverse methods for bringing dance into their classrooms. They develop virtual artistic collaborations between various dance programs in academe and in conservatories through YouTube exchanges and other digital media. At face value, these online exchanges seem to be a ready-made solution for creating student exchanges without the expense and risk of travel. However, if the missions of the two academic institutions are fundamentally different, how will the online exchange be developed to support the individual vision of each school? Who will be responsible for monitoring student interactions that can take place at any time and in the privacy of the students' homes? How do the instructors develop methods for effective and safe communication between the students?

The questions posed in this sequence of events highlight the shadowy corners formed as online education quickly begins disrupting the well-lit and stable walls of academe. The faculty member's willingness to risk entering those dark corners is often paralleled by a willingness to give up a certain amount of control within the teaching environment. Even though the faculty member still designs the syllabus, assignments, and assessments, the online course will take on its own unforeseeable life depending on how the students choose to interact with one another and the instructor from their distant, private settings. These interactions will be shaped even further by the academic background and life experiences of each student, the ease with which each student can access Internet and

computer resources, and the desire of each student for entering into an online format. All of these variables are made more volatile as new formats for virtual learning environments become available to anyone with Internet access.

Student engagement and innovation in Second Life

One such new, learning format is the popular 3D virtual environment of Second Life that was launched on June 23, 2003. Second Life (SL) enables its users to interact with each other through uniquely created avatars. These avatars can explore, meet other avatars, socialise, participate in individual and group activities, create and trade property and services as well as travel throughout various islands located in the SL World. As educators experimented with how SL could enliven student interaction, especially for students outside of the f2f classroom, universities began developing private islands in order to safeguard student interaction in the SL World. These private islands are often rented through the New Media Consortium (NMC), an 'international 501(c)3 not-for-profit consortium of nearly 300 learning-focused organisations dedicated to the exploration and use of new media and new technologies' (<http://www.nmc.org/about>). NMC institutions are found in almost every state in the United States, across Canada, and in Europe, Asia, and Australia. Among the membership are colleges and universities as well as a growing list of museums, research centres, libraries, and foundations. The Sloan Consortium (<http://www.sloanconsortium.org/>), an institutional organisation concerned with integrating online education into the needs of higher education, has developed numerous websites dedicated specifically to new ideas linking Second Life to innovations in interactive online learning and teaching.

Texas Woman's University (TWU), located in Denton, Texas, USA, has, for example, created an island in Second Life through New Media Consortium (SL Landmark address: Texas Woman's University4 132.115.23). Currently, the island houses a visual art gallery and a video theatre (videos can be downloaded from DVD's or from a YouTube site) where students share their dance for camera work in events open to all students and educators participating in New Media Consortium international islands. In April 2009, TWU hosted a creative and performing arts symposium in Second Life where the dance graduate students, through their SL avatars, presented their original dance videos to visitors from around the globe as well as to the students enrolled in the TWU online dance courses. Conversations between the avatars of the visiting artists and the dance hosts were often joined by the conversations of undergraduate distant education students. As a result of the virtual conversations created by this initial event, the TWU dancers are currently planning further Second Life exchanges with the students, artists, and educators met during the virtual symposium. In the guise of their avatars, the online students were able to join the artistic conversations by asking questions and posing ideas they may have felt uncomfortable sharing in a 'real life' conversations.

Underlying much of the work supporting engaged learning in an online setting, is how the 'reading' of visual culture can enhance scholarship, especially scholarship traditionally limited to textual resources. Visual culture theorist Kevin Tavin (2003, p. 197) goes one step further by portraying visual culture as 'trans-disciplinary discourses and practices that focus on the realm of the everyday – popular culture – as a site of struggle'. It is in this site of struggle that the online trickster plays. Traditional notions of what is dance, who dances, where dance is performed, and whose voice is an authority on dance become unsettled in an educational setting often relying on online popular cultural media for its content. The twenty-first century online dance educator who is constantly shifting pedagogical methodologies as new technologies and resources surface, will have the opportunity to take on this trickster role as she 'disturb[s] the established categories of truth and property and, by so doing, open[s] the road to possible new worlds' (Hyde, 1998, p. 13).

The digital revolution and its impact on higher education

As the scenario previously described might indicate, the impact of Web 2.0 technologies on education is likely to be profound. The advent of Web 2.0 social networking in particular enables the capacity for greater collaborative learning as students actively co-publish, edit and share content through such technologies as wikis and blogs. Similarly, the use of new and often *disruptive* technologies that redefine, through quite remarkable and startling innovation, what has previously been possible are impacting on our teaching and learning endeavors. One example of disruptive technology is The Red One camera, a 'high end' digital film camera released in 2007. The Red One is capable of recording directly to flash or hard disk based digital storage and is unrivalled in performance and cost when compared with conventional high-end film camera technology. The Red One has made high-resolution digital cinematography accessible to even smaller scale, low budget productions including those produced by student filmmakers in institutions of higher education. A more ubiquitous example of disruptive technology is the smart phone as exemplified by the Apple 3G iPhone with its capacity to incorporate multiplatform functions and applications into a compact handheld mobile device. Both the Red One Camera and Apple iPhone rely on strong online integration to engage and provide for their respective stakeholder communities. This phenomenon is most recently exemplified by the newer model iPhone 3GS, which enables existing iPhone users to upload aspects of the new features through free 3.0 software updates.

Given the estimate that 7 in 10 people globally have a mobile phone and that the annual growth of mobile subscribers is 45% compared to 6% for fixed landline phones (<http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/>) it is no wonder that mobile phones have increasingly become a tool used by administrators and academic faculty to facilitate student information exchange. First year students, for example, enrolled at the Faculty of Creative Industries at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia, in addition to face-to-face lecture and tutorial mode are also able to engage in the latest generation e-learning that incorporate text, audio and video, all of which

can be accessed via desktop computer, laptop or mobile phone. The first-year foundation units in the Creative Industries are large 1,500 cohort units and therefore challenging, particularly in regard to ensuring strong cohort identity and the maintenance of efficient and effective communication channels. Within these units, students communicate with their course administrators and lecturers via text messages, they access library support via a live-talk on-line Helpdesk, they download podcasts and vodcasts of lectures, access course information and other learning resources through Blackboard and other web-based interface. Moreover, students have the flexibility to choose when and where to engage with this material and at a time convenient to their particular lifestyle and other work commitments.

Web 2.0 services and technologies also expand the collaborative learning options for these students. Through wiki technology students collaboratively construct and co-create meaning as they collectively create, edit, link, and share web content. Similarly, blog (web log) technology enables students to actively engage in reflective learning through regular publication of personal content to the web and through invited commentary, responses and expansion of their ideas is also made possible. Wikis, blogs and similar Web 2.0 technologies provide a means for students and faculty members alike to easily participate in the creation of new knowledge rather than merely as consumers of pre-existing knowledge.

As Web 2.0 services and technologies become more commonplace and easier to use, particularly within the educational context, educators must shift attention away from the use of these technologies as resources to support learning and toward the impact of such technologies on our pedagogy and consequent transformation of practice. As Wenger observes:

What we must keep in the foreground is a determination about students as learners and a constant questioning of how learning takes place, particularly when mediated by ever more sophisticated digital media. This approach in turn must be accommodated within pedagogically grounded institutional strategies.

(1998, p. 226)

The millennial learner of the 21st century is very different from the learner of previous generations, as are the teaching spaces and learning environments that they inhabit. Increasingly, the capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known. Rather than viewing learning merely as a cognitive process of inputs coded for long-term recall or a process where meaning is internally and socially constructed, learning is now also being conceptualised as a process of connecting information across a web of specialised information sources. The ability, therefore, to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts, to critically filter a diversity of opinions and to negotiate and make meaning within a shifting frame has become a fundamental skill and competency. Pedagogically, this paradigmatic shift requires us as educators to re-tool. Learning requires students to not only 'know-how' and to 'know-what' but

importantly, to also 'know-where' to find the knowledge needed. Just as the computer through Web 2.0 has become more a networking portal rather than a repository or box of content, educators are increasingly less the 'sage on stage' and more the 'guide on the side' who assist to design and facilitate the connections between individuals and their learning and/or discourse communities.

One recent example of academic faculty and a higher degree research student collaboratively designing, facilitating and connecting artist researchers across a globally mediated performance project using digital technologies, is *Mediatised Sites* (2008). This project involved artists from around the world with an interest in exploring relationships between mediated performance and site-responsive work. The artists participated in a research and development project that investigated notions of place, performance, and mediation. The project involved a curated-making process through new media, including free online social technologies that include wikis, blogs, and streaming video.

Digital curation, performance, and the user culture

Digital curation is an emerging practice in the arts. It is a term that has a number of meanings. More often than not it refers to the management of existing data. The UK Digital Curation Centre (www.dcc.ac.uk), for example, has a role to archive and preserve in digital formats outputs from a variety of research projects. In 2008, Kate Craddock, PhD student and Tamara Ashley senior lecturer and program leader in choreography at Northumbria University (Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK) curated *Mediatised Sites*, a performance festival that investigated the use of online technologies as performance tools. The festival was supported by an Applauding and Promoting Teaching Award at Northumbria University and was hosted by Dance City, the national dance agency for the north east of England in Newcastle.

Part of the curatorial process involved working with international artists based in the United Kingdom, the United States, Thailand and Australia; some of whom the curators had never met and indeed, still have not met. Curation therefore, involved negotiating and developing project concepts, parameters, and artistic vocabularies and because online technologies were primarily used to mediate communication, Craddock and Ashley started using the term *digital curation* to describe what they were doing. In short, the term digital curation is used to apply to processes of developing artistic work through online technologies. The term encompasses project leadership, artistic development and pedagogical interaction as participants engage in learning about the technologies involved and one another's work.

Web as performance space: distributed participation and online collaboration

Of particular interest in the development of the festival was the concept of the web as a performance space. Interest in tools that have emerged with

the development of Web 2.0, such as wikis, tagging, social networking, open coding and open sourcing, informed its initial premise and the curatorial process. Participating artists were encouraged to make use of free online technologies in the development of their artistic vocabularies. These tools have transformed the web from a repository of information stored in static web pages, albeit linked through a linear hyperlinks, to an enactive adaptive environment that is open to modification by users that invites particular processes of social participation and becoming. As Tapscott and Williams (2006, p. 45) point out, the web is something that we are making together where 'it's about peering: sharing, socialising, collaborating, and, most of all, creating within loosely connected communities'. They call attention to a major cultural shift that is occurring where passive reception of media through television, radio and publications is being replaced by interactive-engagement in media production. What Tapscott and Williams identify is a bottom-up self-organising culture that challenges historical structures of fenced in and contained product development, production and distribution.

In the contemporary context, consumers are making things for themselves and they are collaborating in the development of new products in a culture that is defined and created by its users. In the user culture, it seems that everyone can not only be an artist but can use the tools of the web to mediate their work to an audience and maintain control of every aspect of making and producing their work in a do-it-yourself approach to making cultural artefacts. For Rebecca Solnit, the do-it-yourself approach is a credo of punk culture and it is also 'the highest ideal of democracy – that everyone can participate in the making of their own life and the life of the community' (2001, p. 216). In the development of the festival, Craddock and Ashley were interested in how web based user culture might open questions about our changing experiences of place, space, location and time as educators and performance makers.

Curating and creating in the globally distributed user culture

The use of web-based technological tools asks the artist to consider how one frames the site, in terms of setting up the dynamics of interaction, time, space, sound and image. As Craddock and Ashley worked with artists to support the presentation of their work, discussions were concerned largely with audience interaction and participation. For example, Laura Cooper's *Exercise Rose(es)*, performed in the British Council Building in Bangkok, invited online viewing through live one-way streaming, live feed audience comments through Skype chat, and live viewing from those present in the British Council Space. Performance group, Activelayers, anchored their performance in a web platform where all four could meet from their respective dispersed locales. Miriam Keye's *Transglobal Duets* documented an online movement duet where each of the artists responded to one another through photographs of movement once a month for a year. The end product was an online exhibition of the photographs with the artists in their respective locations; a documentation of movement, response and travel over one year between two artists living

on two different continents who were committed to using the web as a space of artistic exploration and practice.

Artists in the festival worked with both found technologies and with technologies that they created themselves. Researcher, Mark Hill, who contributed to a panel discussion in the festival, was interested in the current practice of merging of art and software design, where artists skilled in programming can engage in creating novel interfaces that extend and enrich the interactive dynamics of their work. For example, theybreakinpieces and Jon Aveyard used existing web-based technologies to conduct a series of sonic improvisations. Each of the artists performed from their respective homes – Jon Aveyard in Preston, Lancashire, Paul Stapleton in Belfast, Nick Williams in Gateshead, and Mona McCarthy in Newcastle. The audio signal was broadcast in a circuit between these four locations, connecting the disparate sites and creating an idiosyncratic feedback loop. This feedback loop created a framework within which each artist could contribute, and creatively respond to one another. The audio installation consisted of a bespoke software programme that enabled the audience to hear the tracks created by each of the artists singly or together in any combination they chose.

Fragile connections and failure as potential

Throughout the festival, the potential for failure was large. Many of the works relied upon live feed Internet connections, some complex bespoke software and the reliability of the hardware both in Newcastle and in the artist's location. Given that it was highly likely that a project might be compromised by its use of technology, festival co-curator, Kate Craddock was particularly interested in how we could use technological failure as potential. For Craddock, the failure reminds us of the fragility of our connections to one another, whether they are material or virtual. Nonetheless, with each of the live feed connections, testing sessions did occur beforehand. For her performance, Laura Cooper arranged for the British Council in Thailand to increase their bandwidth speed in order to accommodate streaming video through one web-based TV channel on Ustream.tv. With Cooper's project, the curators were very aware of just how fragile the connection would be, and of the 2-hour live stream scheduled, just 10 minutes was received in Newcastle. The audience became more interested in whether Cooper would become connected again. In some moments Cooper's technician was able to converse with through Skype text and was able to describe what was going on. Negotiating failure of connection is familiar to Kate Craddock through her work with the performance company mouthtomouth. In performance, the company have used strategies such as letters from absent performers, which are presented to the audience if a performer is not able to participate due to scheduling difficulties in the negotiation of time zones or through the failure of technologies, such as Skype, in establishing a connection.

Networked pedagogy: unHINGING the material and the virtual

Throughout the curatorial process, the work required the negotiation of tensions between the material and the virtual. Each project embodied an entirely different interpretation and configuration of material and virtual relations. In the context of Brian Massumi's idea that 'the border between nature and culture is unassignable' (2002, p. 237) the distinction between material and virtual might seem to be irrelevant. Massumi discusses the hinges that are assigned to nature and culture in order to operate, differentiate and understand ourselves. The distinction of the material and virtual as one such hinge point was used as Ashley and Craddock simultaneously explored the unHINGING of these terms. The making processes moved between material interactions with geographical spaces to virtual interactions between performers and geographical space to work that began in one location, was mediated through the web and ended in another location.

As the festival developed Ashley and Craddock began to think of space and place as processes that could be anchored in or across geographical and virtual locales. Andy Clark points out that humans are not autonomous agents, rather they are co-creators with the environment whose, 'thinking and reasoning systems are spread across biological brain and non-biological circuitry' (2003, p. 3). A context where silicons and molecules are regarded as interchangeable is exciting in that there is increased potential to galvanise energies and flows that support the distribution of intelligence in systems that synthesise the biological and the technological and transform the consciousness of those involved. For educators and performance makers, the constitution of such networks of learning and making offers potential ontologies of becoming. Working with the real potential of technological failure, for example, encouraged the audience to cultivate flexible ways of interacting with the work. In Ashley's and Craddock's work with artists they also experienced the uneven distribution of resources, bandwidth speeds and access to the web that evidences the hierarchical organization of the internet into hubs of intense activity and expanses of very little engagement. Along the way, a project in Indonesia and a project in Ghana were lost. Such experiences dispel notions of a borderless globally connected world and of the Internet as a network of equity.

Issues and implications

Web 2.0 technologies allow users to participate and express themselves; however, most producers are individuals and organisations with access to technology, computer skills, and money, resulting in what has come to be known as a 'digital divide' between haves and have-nots with respect to digital technologies. The great strength of Web 2.0 is its participatory nature, but if one cannot participate then its effectiveness is lost. In collaborative environments (such as wikis) questions of credibility, accuracy, authorship, and vandalism have arisen. Although open content is seen as a panacea for information and knowledge sharing, lines are being blurred in terms of rightful ownership, authorship, and copyright.

Further, social networking brings to the fore issues of trust, privacy and security. The social and cultural impact of Web 2.0 technology is not yet fully understood. As more and more of us adopt Web 2.0 technologies, we need to remain informed and aware of the changing nature of the web and the benefits and drawbacks made possible by such technologies.

Discussion in this paper has included possibilities for how the digital world can affect how and what we teach, its capacity to transform the message, medium, and reception of dance, and its contingent contribution to the development of sustainable higher education programs and artistic futures. Although there are, as have been described, advantages in using Web 2.0 technologies, there are also several issues that require awareness and attention. Some of these issues include: equal access, information control, intellectual property, copyright, authorship, trust, privacy, security and cultural considerations.

The World Wide Web is evolving, and as such the way users interact with it is changing. Higher education is a beneficiary of such change, as evidenced through more empowered, engaged, and open learning experiences that foster more social and collaborative lines of inquiry and practice. This use of Web 2.0 services and other new digital technologies is increasingly becoming commonplace. As a consequence a transformation is occurring across our teaching spaces and learning environments and in the ways in which we teach. Undoubtedly the Web will continue to evolve but what we must keep uppermost in our minds is that it is not the technology that is most important but the activity that it enables. As we re-examine, re-consider and re-tool our pedagogical paradigms and practices we must constantly remind ourselves that it is our activity as reflective artists, administrators and educators engaged in the pursuit and provision of scholarly teaching and research that enlarges and advances learning within and across discipline fields.

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Biographical statements

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Tamara Ashley, MFA (USA), BA (Hons) (London) is currently a senior lecturer and programme leader in choreography at Northumbria University in Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK. She co-directs the performance company *Brief Magnetics* through which she makes site-sensitive performance work in the landscape, online and through video. In 2008, Tamara co-curated *Mediatized Sites* an online site sensitive performance festival with participants from around the globe. Tamara is currently engaged in PhD research at Texas Woman’s University.

Valerie Alpert, MFA, BFA, is a native of Chicago and Artistic Director of VADCO/Valerie Alpert Dance Co. She received a BFA in dance from the University of Illinois in Urbana, IL and her MFA in Dance from The Ohio State University. Ms Alpert has performed, choreographed, and taught dance both nationally and internationally. During the course of Alpert’s career she has been utilising digital technology in all aspects of her art form from marketing, to art making, to teaching aids. Currently, Alpert is chair of the dance department at the College of Lake County in Grayslake, IL and is pursuing a PhD at Texas Woman’s University.