Vital Signs: poetry, movement and the writing body

This PaR project involves a long-standing collaborative enquiry between dancer Sarie Mairs Slee and poet Scott Thurston, exploring the creative possibilities of poetry and movement towards new transdisciplinary approaches to composition and performance. The practical investigations engage with past and present collaborations between poets and dancers as well as Daniel Stern’s theory of vitality dynamics (2010). Where most poet/dancer collaborations involve each collaborator primarily operating from their ‘home discipline’ – with dancers moving and writers writing or speaking – this enquiry involves both as mover-writers, exploring the creative potential of moving, physically writing and mark-making as well as poetry composition, speaking and reading.

To date, this research has sought to address: (1) How can collaboration between dancers and poets investigate both the embodied aspects of language and the power of the body to make meaning? (2) In performance, how might the written word and the act of writing become animated in a movement context? How might movement performances enable poetry spoken aloud to signify poetically, rather than dramatically, and to be integrated with movement? (3) Can an understanding of the ‘vitality dynamics’ of time, space, movement, direction and force (Stern, 2010) help to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration and to create new forms of transdisciplinary artistic practice?

The project commenced in 2013 and received funding from the Arts Council in 2018,
enabling the development of ‘A Poem in Four Movements’. These’ four movements involved the four new performance works, which were shown at:

- Leverhulme-funded ‘Aesthetic Pleasures Across Disciplines’ network workshop at the University of Manchester (April 2018)
- The Vital Signs festival at the University of Salford (September 2018)
- The 2018 Improvisation Festival at Cité Internationale Universitaire Paris (October 2018)
- The DRIFT platform at The Lowry (October 2018)

Written outputs have also included a keynote (Dec 2015), seminar (May 2016), workshop (April 2017), and two co-authored articles (Feb 2017\(^1\) and Apr 2019).

[SEE FIGSHARE PORTFOLIO FOR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION]

[website address: www.vital-signs.org]

\(^1\) To be submitted as a separate output (41454)