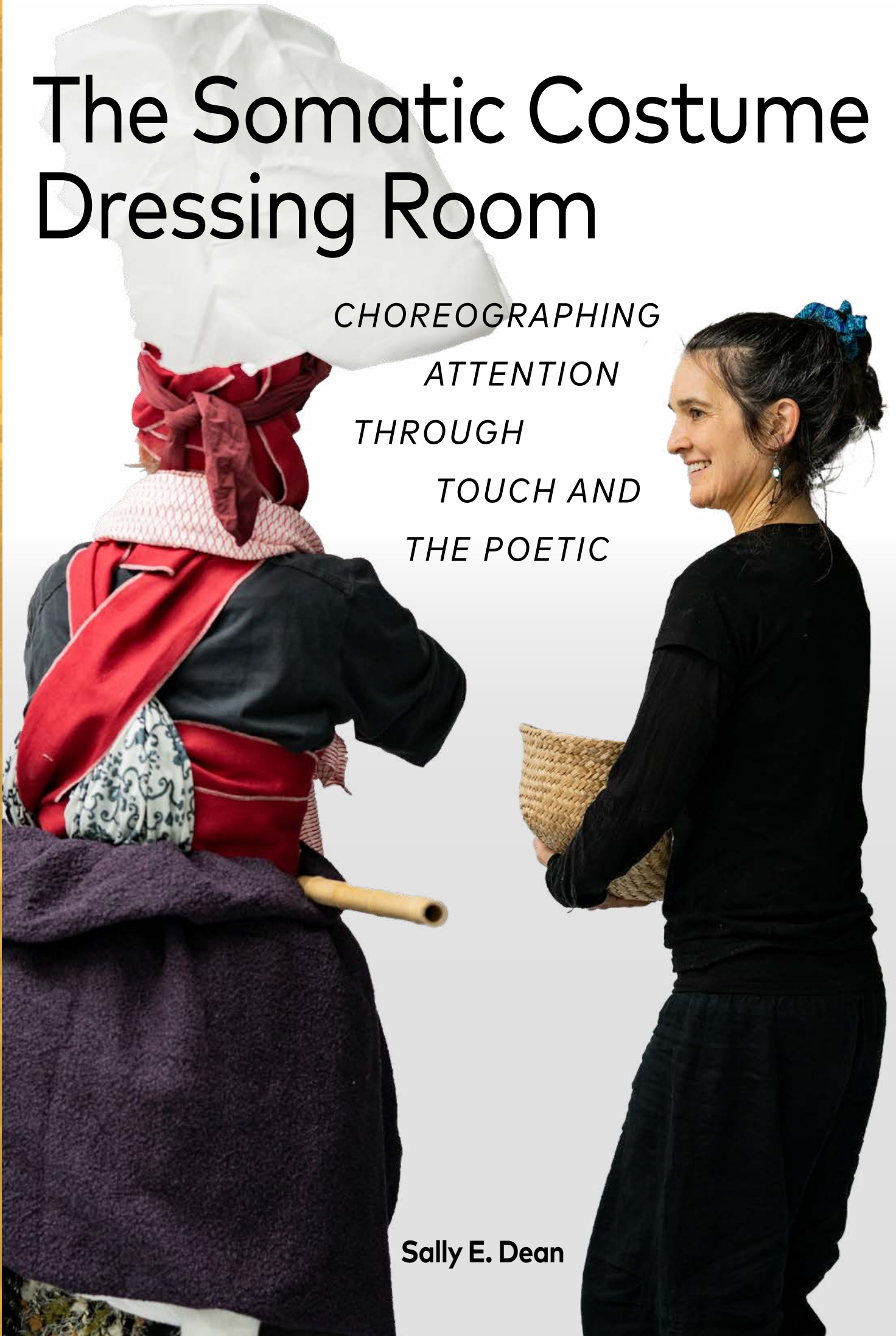


The Somatic Costume Dressing Room

*CHOREOGRAPHING
ATTENTION
THROUGH
TOUCH AND
THE POETIC*

Sally E. Dean



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Artistic Research PhD Thesis

Sally E. Dean

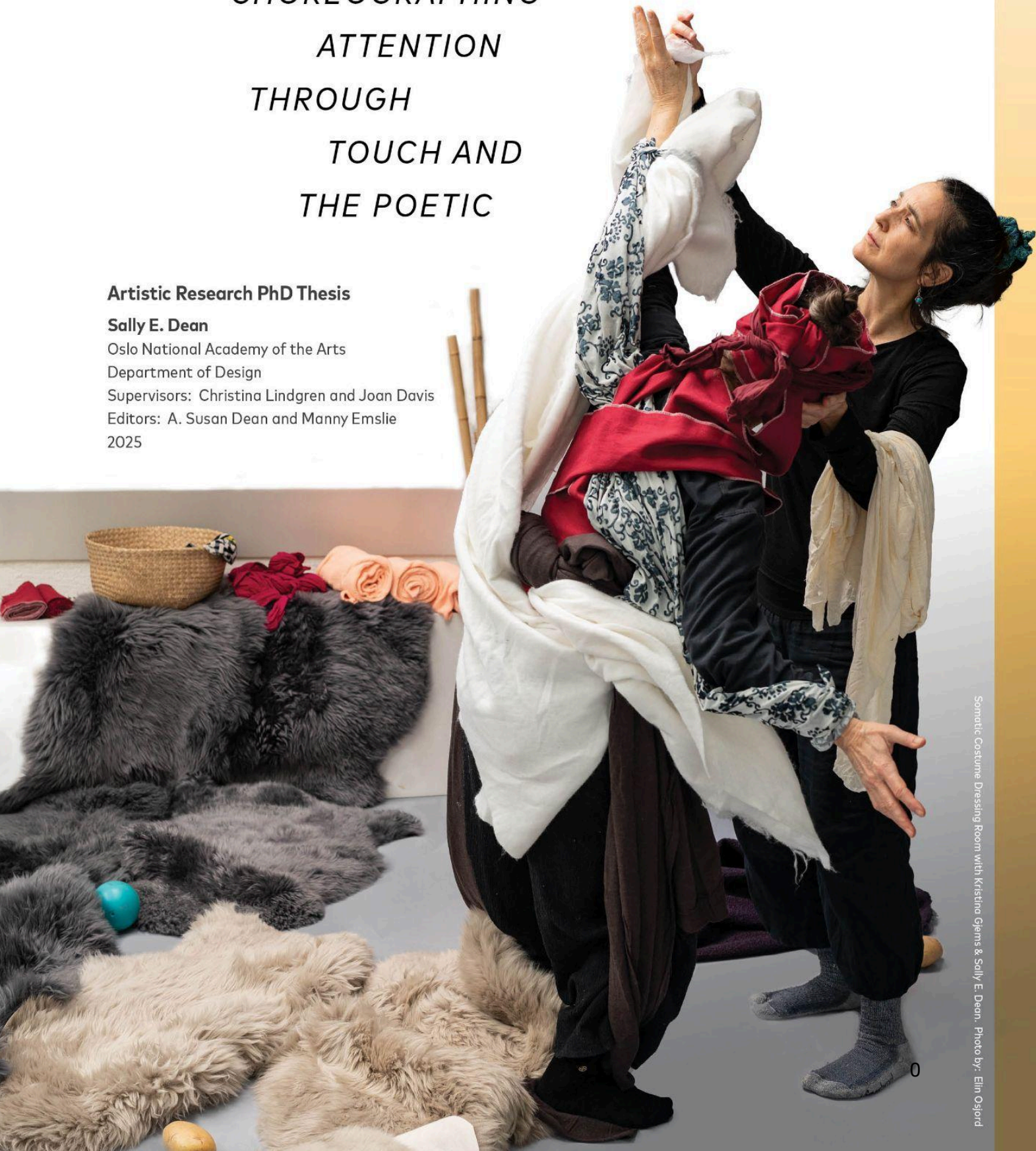
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Department of Design

Supervisors: Christina Lindgren and Joan Davis

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DEDICATION

For my beloved parents –
who met in Western Samoa
in the Peace Corps
in 1969

Gifting me
the curiosity
of other cultures
and perspectives

Showing me the importance
of integrity,
generosity,
and perseverance

And most of all -
how to love.

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SOMATIC ACTS

Invitations into Embodied Experience

Throughout this document, you'll encounter **Somatic Acts** – embodied invitations designed to deepen your engagement with the core concepts and methodologies of this artistic research. These acts are more than just exercises: they are integral to the very fabric of the research, weaving together theory, practice, and sensory experience.

WHAT ARE SOMATIC ACTS?

Somatic Acts draw directly from **Somatic Movement Practices**, offering an embodied and sensory way of being with bodies and materials. Central to this approach is **how we attend and what we are attending to** – ourselves, others, and to the 'things' around us. These acts serve as:

Embodied Preparations: Practices for direct, sensory engagement with materials, costumes, others and one's own body, inviting you to include yourself in the research process.

Experiential Learning: A pathway to understanding concepts, theories, and practices through direct bodily experience, bridging intellectual comprehension and felt sensation.

A Medium for Touch: They facilitate a profound physical and psychological connection with the reader, addressing the often abstracting nature of purely verbal-visual academic discourse.

Poetic Integrations: Referred to as '**Somatic Poems**' (a term also used for the Somatic Costumes), these acts weave in a poetic approach. This method taps into deeper layers of consciousness, offering multi-interpretive, non-linear insights beyond analytical thought.

PURPOSE AND CONTRIBUTION

Somatic Acts contribute to the research by:

Fostering Direct Engagement: Inviting you to be 'touched by the work' and to participate actively rather than be passively read.

Innovating Research Methodology: Demonstrating how somatic practices generate original knowledge and serve as a distinctive approach within artistic practice.

Providing Future Resources: Designed as valuable teaching tools for connecting bodies, touch, materials, and costumes in educational and artistic contexts.

NAVIGATING THE SOMATIC ACTS

The Somatic Acts are structured for accessible and personalized engagement:

Visual & Tactile Identification: For easy navigation, all Somatic Acts are presented in a light yellow color and, in the printed version, on distinct tactile paper.

Placement & Flow: Typically appearing before chapters and interwoven throughout, they act as an experiential introduction to upcoming concepts.

Flexible Access: Each act is numbered and titled, allowing readers to choose and experience them in any order, despite an intentional progression.

Pacing & Adaptation: They require and allow time. Approaching them by slowing down and creating gentle transitions is crucial, as is adapting the material to support your individual body and experience.

ACCESSING THE SOMATIC ACTS

Each Somatic Act includes multimedia and textual elements for multi-modal engagement:

Format: A combination of written guidance, audio and video components.


In-Document Access: Playable directly within the PDF document, often via pop-up, and within the printed document via QR code.


External Access: A QR code links to Research Catalogue, where all Somatic Acts are hosted and can be accessed externally.

QUICK REFERENCE INFORMATION

For easy navigation, a reference appendix listing all Somatic Acts is included at the end the PHD Thesis. This includes four icons by each Somatic Act, detailing:

 **Duration:** Estimated time (e.g., 20 minutes).

 **Participants:** Number of people needed (S Solo , D Duet, G Group; All options listed).

 **Materials:** Specific objects or props (e.g., Coat, 3 Potatoes).

 **Setting:** Recommended environment (e.g., Comfortable place to lay down).

PART ONE

DEFINITIONS & CONTEXT

PROLOGUE

In this unusual time of crises, our path falls closer to either nihilism or hope. As an American with an 18-month-old daughter, facing the stark reality of our ecological, humanitarian, and political crises, I write this PhD in, for, and with hope.

This research is an artistic act, a performance-based exploration of a politics rooted in connection. Dr. Rachel Hann asked a question during my mid-term presentation of my PhD that has come to frame the intention of my thesis: 'How is your work political with a small 'p'?' Living as a foreigner for over 20 years, and now in a somewhat chosen exile, I have witnessed how 'Politics', with a capital 'P', can tear families and communities apart. I believe the antidote to extremism and despair is not to ignore our problems, but to seek a politics rooted in connection. My research is a quiet, yet direct answer to Rachel's question, proposing that the somatic, touch, and costume approaches I apply are potent political agents in their own right.

Our profound sense of disconnection from our bodies, others, materials, and the environment stems in part from our culture's prioritisation of the visual and the neglect of our other senses. Our eyes operate through distance, leading us to perceive the world and its inhabitants as separate, consumable objects. Touch, on the other hand, operates through intimacy and reciprocity.

It is in the teachings of my mentor, Suprpto [Prpto] Suryodarmo, that I found a powerful philosophical anchor for this idea: 'usually when we are in the constellation of human, we only see nature, we only see *or feel* the Life, but [do] not [sense being] *part* of [the Life].... 'you are always in relationship' (Suryodarmo, personal communication, 2017, 'The Field of Reciprocity' workshop in Tejakula, Bali; and workshop in Solo, Java, 2008). This focus on connection, cultivated through the tangible and tactile, returns us to the 'sense of the real' — what Suryodarmo referred to as 'The Fact' — a grounding in the present moment that cultivates differentiation and diversity.

This artistic approach, inspired by thinkers like Tim Ingold, draws us away from viewing 'things' as static, separate objects. It instead invites us to approach our bodies and materials through touch, to emphasise movement and relationality. This methodology finds a natural home in the fields of costume and dance, utilizing their capacity for somatic and relational exploration. This is a deliberate choice. By positioning my research in these female-majority fields, I am making a political act to advocate for women and their historically undervalued work. By choosing costume over fashion, I am subverting an industry that, as Rachel Hann argues, often functions as a 'system of moral and aesthetic control' (2016, p. 113), turning the act of wearing into a politically subversive practice.

This work is also a powerful resource for cultivating embodiment. Connecting with our everyday clothing as a 'costume' can bridge the gap to a more direct and conscious sensing of our bodies, environment, and others. Consciously embodying 'otherness'

through costume challenges societal norms and offers a vital counterpoint to the rising nationalism of our time.

Ultimately, my research proposes a new paradigm for our future, one rooted in the metaphor of our own skin. As the body's largest organ, the skin is a living, permeable, and ever-changing membrane, adapting and regenerating itself after injury. It is not only the essential gateway of touch but also an intelligent interface able to respond to our needs as well as our environment. In this profound quality of a living membrane—its ability to adapt and connect—we can find a new source of deep resilience and resistance.

SOMATIC ACT 1: **Touch of our Water Bodies**



Allow for at least 25 minutes. You will need a comfortable place to sit and rest.

Ideally experience it as a duet, but you can also experience it as a solo or with a relatively still feline or canine friend.

After listening to the somatic poem, allow time for the experience to resonate.

.....

Begin by finding a comfortable position to touch your (or your partner's) hands.

Sensing the quality and contact of your (or your partner's) touch.

Allowing the hands to settle and rest.

Close your eyes.

*Our bodies:
mostly water
like the earth*

Resting in this reservoir

*Sensing
rivers, lakes, tides*

Inside and

Outside

Circulating.

*Fluids navigating
and nourishing*

*Not striving,
but yielding.*

*A constant, relentless, persistent current
that carves stones
shapes mountains*

*And transforms
from ice to mist - rain – clouds.*

Tiny estuaries of blood.

Vast oceans of floating organs.

*Sensing our watery dwellings
Inside
and outside
 a powerful force
 pulsating.*

*Dew on a morning leaf
A bead of sweat on the face
 -Dispersing
As a bird or hand lands
Becoming part of everything*

*As we are
touching hand to hand
sensing
water meets water.*

Allowing time...



Gorse Hill, Ireland. Photo by Sally E. Dean. 2023

INTRODUCTION

This PhD research is situated where material agency and sensorial relationships are under-researched both artistically and theoretically. Referencing the anthropology of the senses, this thesis's central argument is that a choreography of attention can be found in the intimate, often-overlooked practice of engaging with our bodies and the materials we wear. My key research question is:

How do we choreograph attention through the touch of Somatic Costumes?

The methodology for this artistic research is 'Wearing Research', which activates material and sensorial agency through exploring the effects of materials on bodies. It builds directly upon my ongoing Somatic Movement, Costume and Performance Project (SMCPP) since 2011, which first opened the need to understand the role of the live body and touch in artistic practice. The bridge to experiencing, designing, and choreographing between costume and body is found in my somatic training, specifically in the work of Skinner, Suryodarmo, and Poynor.

THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis is structured in three parts that trace this journey:

Part One: Context & Definitions sets the theoretical foundation for the research. This section establishes the context by exploring and defining key terms that are fundamental to this thesis, including Somatic Movement, Costume, Choreography, Embodiment, Touch, and Poetic Material-ity.

Part Two: The Somatic Costume Dressing Room details the methods of my artistic research. Born in part out of the COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions on touch, this

project serves as a core methodology—a haptic-focused process where costumes are co-designed in the moment based on the wearer's arising psychophysical needs. It is in this section that I explore the questions: *How can the costume become the choreographer? How can a costume be co-designed in the moment based on the wearer's psychophysical needs?*

Part Three: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces presents the application of this research in my final immersive costume-based performance. This section guides the reader through the performance journey itself, applying and integrating methods from Part Two. It describes the roles of the Travellers and Witnesses, and the resulting discoveries about how this work, starting with touch and using sound as a bridge, cultivates a 'nature landscape' way of attending to find remedies for 'modern eyes' and offer holistic ways of being with bodies and materials.

SOMATIC ACTS:

An Invitation into Embodied Experience

Woven throughout the entire thesis is a separate, parallel structural element: **Somatic Acts**. These embodied invitations are integral to the research, serving as a distinct approach for bridging theory, practice, and sensory experience. They are more than just exercises; they are a medium for touch, a pathway to experiential learning, and a key element in making this thesis a participatory, felt journey—inviting you to be touched by the work and actively engage rather than passively read.

Final Invitation

Ultimately, this thesis not only aims to contribute to future costume and choreography discourses, but it also offers a new paradigm for performance and a vital path to cultivating a more resilient and attentive way of being in the world.

SOMATIC ACT 2A: Touch of Breath



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a comfortable place to lie on the floor.
This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group.

.....

*Begin by finding a comfortable place
to rest on the floor
lying on your back*

*Take a moment to
arrive and settle.*

*Noticing the places
where the floor is touching you...*

*Rising to meet and
support your weight.*

With each breath

As you are resting,

Noticing, where does your breath move...?

*Can you sense its rise and fall,
with each inhale and exhale,
somewhere in the torso,
or in the chest or belly?*

*As you are ready,
place your hand on the area
where the breath tends to move.*

*The hand is listening
-receiving what is there*

without needing to do anything.

*Your breath is nourishing you
and moving you – gently*

*Can you allow yourself
to sink and settle into the floor,
a little bit more
as if lying on warm sand.*

*Allowing any tension
in the muscles or bones,
to begin to soften a little*

*As your hand rides
with the ebb and flow
of your breath,*

*Sensing
that there is an inner world
underneath your hands.*

*An entire eco-system
of blood, cells, organs, tissues, bacteria, and more-
all circulating
and being nourished
by the breath.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
you can add another hand
listening to another place
where the breath moves
the torso, the chest, the belly,
or the sides of the ribs somewhere*

Allowing the weight

*of the hand
to settle.*

*The hand is listening
– receiving what is there –
without needing to do anything.*

*As it rides along the wave
of your breath
How does your breath move here?
The breath is nourishing you.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
broadening our attention
to another area
where the breath is moving
in the body,
even if it is subtle*

*Such as near the lower pelvis,
a shoulder, or even the neck or face.*

*Gently, finding a transition
to moving one of your hands
to this place.*

Allowing time...

*To sense the moment
when the hand leaves the body
and arrives
at a new place
to rest.*

*The breath,
supporting the transition*

and movement.

How does the breath move here?

Allowing time...

*Slowly, this begins
a listening and attending dance
with hands and breath.*

*At any time, you can gently shift
the position of the hands
to another area of the body
that can be easily touched.*

*As your hands ride
with the ebb and flow
of your breath,
sensing that there is
an inner world
underneath your hands
an entire eco-system.*

The breath is nourishing you.

*Noticing the quality of the breath
underneath your hands...*

*Sensing and following the transition
as one hand rises,
and settles again
following your own rhythm.*

*Perhaps you can
broaden your attention
to sense
the growing map
of touch imprints,*

*from where your hands have been
resonating along the skin, tissues, bones
while the next hand
gently lands
on a new place.*

*Sensing a growing map of touch imprints along your body
from all the places you have touched.*

Allowing time...

*Your hands
are inviting your breath
and your breath
is inviting your hands
to listen
and rest.*

Noticing how the breath moves here...

*Sensing the rise and fall,
the inhale and the exhale,
moving you, gently.*

*Gradually finding a transition
to placing both hands on your face,
directly over your eyes
Allowing the weight
of the hands
to settle.*

The hands are listening

*Riding on a wave of breath
your hands,
are surfing along,
following the undercurrent.*

The breath breathing you moving you

With each moment.

Allowing time...

*And when you are ready,
allowing both hands to rest at your sides.*

Your whole being, resting

Allowing time...

SOMATIC ACT 2B: Attending to Stillness and Movement



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a comfortable place to lie on the floor.
This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group.

.....

*Begin with lying on the floor,
on your back,
with your legs extended
or knees bent with feet resting on the floor.*

*How is your body touching the floor?
Or the floor touching your body?*

*Allowing the body to be
how it is today
without needing to change
or fix anything.*

Your body is naturally asymmetrical.

*Noticing the different pressures, weights, sense of comfort or tension
in the left side of the body
vs. the right side of the body...*

*Starting with the feet all the way up to the head,
begin by giving yourself a short check-list
of bodily awareness*

*Noticing how each area
contacts the floor...*

Beginning with the heels of the feet

- the right and the left – sensing the floor's touch.

*And then broadening your attention to
the legs and the pelvis – how they touch the floor.*

*And then travelling to the lower, middle and upper back
Sensing the places where the floor touches or not.*

*And then broadening your attention to
the shoulders,
the arms and hands,
the head,*

How they touch the floor today.

Your bodies are naturally asymmetrical.

*Noticing the different pressures, weights, sense of comfort or tension
in the left side of the body
vs. the right side of the body...*

*Sensing the overall support
of the floor
As it allows you to rest and
settle a bit more
and a little bit more.*

Allowing time...

*And then,
Tuning into your breath,
sensing the breath's gentle ebb and flow
moving your body, a little, on its own,
slightly shifting your contact with the floor.*

Allow yourself to simply follow this breath's wave through sensing.

Noticing the breath passing through the nose and the mouth...

Sensing the temperature

and the rhythm.

The inhale

the exhale

*Noticing the natural pause and rest
after the exhale
before the inhale...*

*With each breath
there is a moment of movement
and a moment of stillness*

Allowing time...

*And with the movement of your breath
allow a gentle roll
to one side
as if an ocean wave
gently rocks you over
to rest*

*pouring the weight
through your skin
down through the tissues
and bones.*

*Follow the breath's waves
As you begin rolling
From side to side.*

*Sometimes rolling
all the way to your stomach.*

*And resting
now and then.*

Allowing

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

Allowing time...

*As you are rolling and arriving in stillness,
Discovering all the ways
and positions
your body
would like to rest in
allowing the body
to be touched
by the floor
along all surfaces
even the unusual positions.*

*This begins a gentle dance
of the waves of breath
rolling, rocking you*

*With
Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

Allowing time...

*How does the movement arise from the stillness
and the stillness arises from the movement?*

Allowing time...

Allow the movement to grow a bit larger.

*Perhaps
The breath waves inviting you
into rising into sitting,
Or crawling,
Or eventually coming to your feet*

When you are ready.

*How does the stillness arise from the movement
and the movement arises from the stillness?*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
gradually rolling and arriving
into a moment of stillness,
lying on your back*

*How is your body touching the floor?
Or the floor touching your body?*

Noticing the breath...

*The inhale
the exhale*

*Noticing the natural pause and rest
after the exhale
before the inhale.*

*With each breath
there is a moment of movement
and a moment of stillness.*

*And resting now
For a moment.*

Allowing time...



Skin, photo by Sally E. Dean, 2025

SOMATIC MOVEMENT / SOMATICS

‘The cultivation of consciously embodied movement is at the heart of somatic movement practice’

(Hartley, n.d, para. 1)

DEFINING ‘SOMATIC’

Somatic Movement Practices and ‘somatics’ are at the heart of my artistic process and research. They are the core and foundation of my costume design and performance practices and underpin the philosophical and theoretical approaches that I apply. The essential values of care and relationships, and the way that bodies and materials are connected and related, start from this Somatic Movement Practice foundation.

For over 25 years, I have lived and breathed as a somatic practitioner. Each morning, my day begins with a type of Somatic Movement Practice. Walking in nature, how I meet another person are Somatic Movement Practices. Creating costumes, making performances or dancing are somatic movement practices.

For me the term ‘somatics’ is not just a concept, but it is a way of life and is based upon ongoing daily life, experience, reflection, and practice.

I use the term somatic as Thomas Hanna referenced it for the Somatic Movement Practices emerging in the 1970s – an experiential, holistic approach to the body that supports body-mind integration and process-based learning (Hanna, 1988). The Somatic Movement Practices aimed to create movement re-patterning, changing movement habits through

conscious awareness. The Practices were influenced by existentialism and phenomenology and were prominent in the fields of education, dance and therapy (Eddy, 2009, p. 6).

The 'somatic body' or soma is defined as a sentient, perceiving being(s), whereby perception is inherently relational. It begins with the senses. A somatic approach typically begins by bringing awareness to the 'inner body', the body underneath skin, as opposed to the outer form of the body and its aesthetic style or placement (Dean & Nathanielsz, 2017, p. 180). Bodies are not static or fixed, but ever-changing, and are guided best through orientation, which gives bodies a sense of direction as opposed to shapes.

My work as a somatic practitioner supports people in sensing and experiencing the physicality of their bodies. For me, internal experience is not imagined; it is a tangible and physical reality. Drawing on archaeologist Tim Ingold's concept of 'the stuff that things are made of' (2011, p. 20) and the ideas of outdoor-movement artist Paula Kramer in *Dancing Materiality* (2016), the difficult concept of body materiality is here defined as the 'stuff that the body is made of'.

Somatic movement pioneers of the early to mid-20th century (e.g., Frederick Alexander, Moshe Feldenkrais, Mabel Todd, Charlotte Selver, Ida Rolf, Irmgard Bartenieff) influenced dance practitioners, instigating a hybrid of dance and somatic practices in the mid to late 20th century (e.g., Joan Skinner, Bonnie Bambridge Cohen, Elaine Summers, Sondra Fraleigh, Anna Halprin, Nancy Topf), and definitively changing pedagogical approaches to dance training and education (Eddy, 2009, p. 6). The internal experience of the body became paramount to the external form of the movement

In 1997, I was a student at Bennington College and, due to a dance injury, took a somatic based dance class called 'Skinner Releasing Technique (SRT).' Before this, dance to me was about copying outer movement forms with my body and getting the 'right placement'. But in SRT, I was being guided to experience the inner terrain of my body and to sense 'dynamic alignment' from the inside out

Dancing was not just about 'getting the forms right and as quickly as possible', but time was given to sense connections within the body and with others through imagery, sound and touch. This approach to dance training changed my life and my direction. Somatic Movement Practices also became an essential base for improvisation and choreography, as taught by teacher, somatic practitioner and choreographer Stephanie Skura. It opened up imagination, creativity and a profound connection to bodies and materials.

In the 1970s, this somatic approach in the field of dance was revolutionary and challenged traditional approaches to dance training and the making of choreography. Even further, it fundamentally challenged the current social-cultural conceptions of dancers' bodies – bodies became subjects and no longer objects. Embodiment entered not only philosophical discussions, but also the practices happening in dance studios. Dancers had inner lives and were not just servants of choreography. This was happening alongside the postmodern dance movement, which was also challenging who could be a dancer (anyone, all bodies) as well as what could be choreography.

As I continued dancing, improvising, and choreographing, I trained in and practised a collection of different somatic practices over the years. The key somatic practices that I apply from my background and training are: Skinner Releasing Technique (American: Joan Skinner), environmental movement (British: Helen Poynor), Amerta movement (Javanese: Suprpto Suryodarmo, referred to as Prapto), Scaravelli yoga (International: Giovanni Felicioni), and more recently somatic approaches experienced with Joan Davis (Ireland) to include Body Mind Centering (BMC) and Embryology.

Each somatic practice is unique – creating psychophysical awareness in the body through different focuses: Skinner Releasing Technique utilises poetic imagery; environmental movement accesses the outdoor environment of south-coast England; Amerta movement combines imagery, environment and ritualistic sites from Java; Scaravelli yoga integrates external body forms with internal sensation and imagery; and Body Mind Centering works with the materiality of body systems (muscles, bones, organs, nervous system, etc).

Clarifying that somatics is a practice and not a concept is critical. In 2011, I started the Somatic Movement Costume & Performance Project with Carolina Riekhof and Sandra Arroniz Lacunza. At that time, somatics or somatic movement was neither a term often used within the costume field nor the fashion field. In the last 14 years, I have witnessed the term being used exponentially, to include more rigorous conversations about the moving body's role in the costume design and fashion world, thanks to numerous fellow colleagues, academics and practitioners.

At the same time, although somatics has been a practice for me, for many it has started and can remain as a concept. As in any theory, there is a danger in 'thinking' yet not 'living' the concepts and definitions. I have also seen 'somatics' become more of a general term to refer to bodies, as opposed to a specific Somatic Movement Practice approach. This is why I further emphasize that each Somatic Movement Practice is different, and each embodies varying perspectives and approaches not only to the body, but also to the way we relate to the world. For this term 'Somatic' to be more rigorously applied, developed and practiced, it is essential to have more specification – what is the 'somatic' that is being referred to?

Although the somatic movement arose nearly 50 years ago, it has taken time for it to be valued within both an artistic and educational context. This slow change may be connected to the shifting perception and values of bodies beyond objects and also to the value of 'care' that only recently became a more critical and focused discussion, especially during the COVID 19 pandemic. (March 2020 – May 2023). (Northwestern Medicine (n.d.), When Did the Pandemic Start and End? Covid Pandemic Timeline).

In 2003, I began teaching Skinner Releasing Technique in dance and theatre schools in London and the UK – Laban, Middlesex University, Chichester University, Central School of Speech and Drama, Independent Dance, and more. This was led by Kirsti Alexander, Gaby Agis, Mary-Clare McKenna in London, Rebecca Skelton in Chichester, Manny Emslie across the North West of England (e.g., Liverpool, Chester) and more, who at the time were fighting to have it within dance-training programs. And it was a fight. Somatic Movement Practices were not seen as necessary – the external forms of bodies and how they were shaped were

paramount, and they remain to this day. In her comprehensive text *Mindful Movement: The evolution of the somatic arts and conscious action* (2016), Martha Eddy explores and discusses the historical tension between somatic education and mainstream dance training.

SOMAESTHETICS

Richard Shusterman's *Somaesthetics* (2000) bridges the realms of philosophy, art, and bodily practices. His philosophical approach focuses on lived experience and sensory appreciation, influenced by aesthetics and pragmatism and integrating theory with practice. This discipline emphasizes the fostering of a deeper understanding of oneself through conscious bodily attention. Shusterman's background, in somatic movement approaches, is his training in the Feldenkrais Method.

Although Somaesthetics shares numerous parallels with my own artistic and somatic methods, at the moment I am not aligning my research with Shusterman's philosophy. This is because of my current reservations and questions, below, that I am still unpacking:

First, I prefer an anthropological paradigm as opposed to an aesthetic one, when both theorize about and practice somatic movement. Anthropologists are philosophers from everyday life, participating in experiences with others rather than solely reading and writing books as philosophers. As Ingold states, anthropology is 'immersed in its [the world's] processes and relations' (Ingold, 2018, p. 8). The focus is on wisdom, instead of knowledge (Ingold, 2018, p. 9). Also, an anthropological perspective includes the role of culture, making the relational context of any self-reflective and sensory awareness process critical. Somatic Movement Practices are socially and culturally specific, with preferences in ways of cultivating bodily awareness.

For example, Shusterman's somatic movement training and background are largely based on the Feldenkrais Method. The Feldenkrais Method has a preference for the discursive approaches in Awareness Through Movement (ATM) lessons, relying on verbal instructions. The language is not typically poetic, but practical: 'gently slide your heel along the floor', often comparing the left side with the right side of the body. There is a bias towards floor-based work where changes in the felt sense of the body are noted, often in relation to which areas of the body are or are not contacting the floor.

The Feldenkrais Method is more of an individual experience where movement, even if lying in a group together, is typically done on one's own. Somatic Movement Practices are not all individualistic practices — some are collective practices where the group's wellbeing is prioritized over one's own.

As Moshe Feldenkrais himself wrote, 'environment, mind, and body are an indivisible one. No method is effective that deals with any one of these alone' (Feldenkrais, 1985, p. 149). While this philosophy acknowledges the importance of the environment, the practice itself tends to be self-referential, focusing inward on the body's internal sensations and kinesthetic awareness rather than the body's dynamic relationship with the environment

(apart from the floor). This tendency is evident in the language of a typical ATM lesson, which guides a practitioner's attention inward. For example, common phrases are: 'Let your attention go into yourself. Notice where you have arranged your four limbs for now' and 'How close are your arms to your sides?' This focus on internal sensation, rather than on an external, environmental stimulus (except for the floor), is a core element of the practice (Strauss-Klein, n.d.).

This tendency in the Feldenkrais Method appears to be embedded in Shusterman's definition of experiential somaesthetics:

'It seeks to improve the acuity and performance of our senses by cultivating a heightened attention to their bodily functioning and experience and also by freeing us from body habits and defects that impair our sensory performance' (Shusterman, 2000, p. 166).

A useful contrast can be found in a growing field of somatic-based environmental movement practices, which reconnect the individual to their environment. These approaches, often rooted in ecological knowledge systems, explore the body's relational continuum between bodies and the landscapes from which we belong—shifting the focus from individual self-improvement to a sense of embodied belonging and collective ecological awareness. This is exemplified in the work of somatic movement teachers and performing artists such as Poynor, Prapto, and Davis.

Poynor's Environmental Movement sessions, for example, take place outdoors on the Jurassic Coast, where the 'natural environment becomes both partner and teacher' and elements like 'the changing seasons, weather and tides' are a key part of the experience (Poynor, n.d.). Similarly, Amerta Movement, taught by Suryodarmo, was often embedded in specific Javanese historic and environmental sites, such as temples.

Another example is Davis's artistic and somatic work, where she uses animal materials like hearts, livers, and bones to teach about different body systems, inviting exploration through the sense of touch. In her 'Garden as Gallery' site, in her home garden, these materials are woven into the natural environment, further bridging the divide between body and place. Both the performers and the audience are invited to be active participants within this environment.

While Shusterman emphasizes the cultivation of bodily awareness for improved sensory performance, there is a risk of this approach becoming overly individualistic and self-absorbed. The pursuit of heightened sensory acuity can easily morph into a narcissistic project, where the focus shifts from experiencing the world to merely optimizing the self. Somatic practices are not just about attending to self, but to others, to include things, and the environment.

In the absence of a social-cultural context, 'freeing us from body habits and defects' can lead to a sense of alienation, where the body becomes an object to be perfected, rather than a lived experience to be embraced. A relentless pursuit of self-improvement can detract from our engagement with social and political realities.

Furthermore, the emphasis on 'sensory performance' risks reducing experience to a utilitarian function. What about the sheer joy of sensation, the wonder and mystery of being in the world? By focusing on improvement, we might lose sight of the inherent value of simply being present in our bodies, with all their imperfections. As Suryodarmo reminds us in the practice of Amerta Movement, 'Please find the habitat of your habit' - making our habits our homes to journey from and return to if needed, as opposed to something bad to discard and get rid of.

This 'self-improvement' tendency can be seen in the fields to which his work has been applied, such as interaction design. Again, while I am an advocate of supporting ways of designing with the body (such as the important perspective of 'soma design' in Kristina Höök's book, *Designing with the body: Somaesthetic interaction design*, 2018), I am concerned that self-improvement can align very well with the consumer market, driven by agendas of marketing product sales, and in this case digital products, systems and services designed to make our lives 'better' through consumption.

The focus on technology can easily overshadow the fundamental value of materials and the power of the analog. The simplicity of materials (water, balloons, etc.) and their impact on bodies is an under-researched resource that is both highly accessible and sustainable, offering bodily awareness through touch. With a re-prioritization of materials, relationships become multi-faceted with bodies and materials responding to each other.

Last, the self-improvement focus of experiential somaesthetics, which may be further revealed in its applications to interaction design technology (where there is a need to sell products), tend to advocate a 'positive' experience where you will be and feel 'better.' But somatic movement practices are not necessarily comfortable and 'positive'. Many can create dis-orientation, in the process of re-orientation, with experiences being uncomfortable, awkward, and even emotionally painful at times. Trauma can also be awakened and released, and it can touch the unknown, hidden places within our bodies and selves.

Therefore, while Shusterman's somaesthetics offers valuable insights into embodied experience, its reliance on an aesthetic paradigm and the Feldenkrais method's individualistic and discursive approach presents limitations when considering the culturally embedded and relational nature of somatic practices. A shift towards an anthropological perspective, emphasizing wisdom and cultural context, may offer a more nuanced approach.

SOMATIC ACT 3A:

Touch of Shoes



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a pair of shoes and a comfortable place to move.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group.

.....

*Following your shoes
as a guide,*

*Begin by standing in bare feet
on the floor,
with shoes nearby.*

Closing your eyes.

Noticing your breath...

*Sensing the weight
of your body and
the support of the floor.*

*How are your feet today?
The floor is touching your feet
and your feet are touching the floor.*

Can you sense your toes, the heels, the middle, the sides of the feet?

*Gently shift the weight
from one foot to another
sensing the skin and the bones of the feet,
moving and touching the floor.*

*Allowing the floor to give your feet
a gentle massage - awakening them.
Noticing the tactility of the floor
- cold or warm, soft or hard?*

*Can you sense
how the movement of the feet
travels up through the legs, the pelvis, the spine
and even up to the head?*

*Slowly, begin opening your eyes
as the weight shifts grow
into walking or travelling on the feet in some way.*

*Follow your feet and
how they meet the floor
as a guide.*

*With each shift of weight,
sensing the feet soften
and dance with the floor.*

*Every detail of the foot is alive,
resonating with life.*

Allowing time...

*And then finding a pause
next to your shoes.*

*Sensing that your feet
are touching the floor
and the floor is touching your feet.*

*Experiencing this meeting – of reciprocity
in stillness.*

What do you notice?

*Where does the weight of the feet rest?
Towards the heels, the toes, or the middle of the foot.*

*Noticing how the right foot
is touching the floor
and the left foot...*

And breathing.

*As you are ready,
with eyes closed,
navigate your feet
to being inside your shoes.*

*Sensing, through touch,
the dressing journey.*

Allowing time...

*Once your feet are dressed,
with eyes still closed,
return to standing on your feet,
gently shifting the weight again
from one foot to the other foot.*

*Your shoes are touching your feet
and your feet are touching your shoes.*

*What is it like to have your feet inside these shoes?
Noticing the texture and temperature -
Hard or soft. Cold or Hot.*

*Wiggling the toes, noticing the pressure of the shoe
on your feet.*

*Sensing if there is space
inside the shoe or not.*

*Gently moving the feet inside
the shoe and noticing
how the shoe's form
responds.*

Allowing time..

*As the eyes begin
to open,
gradually, begin travelling
on your feet
along the floor
exploring the landscape
of the shoes*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*Now and then
noticing
how the shoe affects
the movement of the feet
up through the legs, pelvis, spine
and even up to the head
and out through the arms*

*Allowing time...
allowing them to move you-
taking you somewhere
perhaps surprising you
now and then*

Allowing time...

*Gradually –
Accentuate the movement and rhythm
of your walk or dance,
guided by your shoes.*

Noticing if the shoes:

- *invite a heaviness or a lightness to your walk*
- *encourage a wide base of the feet or a narrow one*
- *create a long step or short step*
- *awaken a quick step or a slow step*

Play with emphasizing whatever movement qualities are arising – becoming a bit larger or even a bit bolder.

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

Allowing time...



Gradually, a moment of stillness emerges as the eyes return to closing.

Noticing where our attention is called, for a moment along our body...

Sensing the breath.

Broadening our attention to the feet and their contact with the floor.

Sensing where the weight of the feet are resting – towards the heels, toes, middle, sides of the foot

*Noticing the right foot
in relation to the left foot...*

Allowing time...

*Slowly, with eyes still closed,
following your sense of touch,
peel off your shoes-
Gently .*

*This becomes a small and subtle moving, dancing duet
as you return each foot and shoe
to the floor.*

*And eventually, find your way to standing,
on your feet*

Allowing time...

*Noticing what it is now like
without your shoes...
sensing the floor is touching your feet
and your feet are touching the floor.*

*Are there any sensations
that are surprising
or unexpected?*

*Attending to how your feet
contact the floor
now
-sensing the toes, heels, middle, sides of the feet
And the right foot in relation to the left.*

Noticing your breath...

Allowing time...

SOMATIC ACT 3B: Touch of Invisible Shoes



Allow for at least 20 minutes. You will need a pair of shoes and a comfortable place to move. This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group.

This Somatic Act is a continuation of Somatic Act 3a: Touch of Shoes.

.....

*As you are ready,
sensing the touch imprint
of the shoes
reverberating
along the skin, tissues, bones
of the feet.*

*Attending to this felt sense
as if your shoes
are still there-
Wearing invisible
yet tangible
shoes.*

*With eyes slowly opening,
experiencing the
touch sensations
by walking or
moving on your feet
in subtle, gentle ways
following your
invisible yet tangible
shoes.*

*Discovering
Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

Allowing time


SOMATIC ACT 3C:



Touch of Shoes - Character

Allow for at least 20 minutes. You will need a pair of shoes and a comfortable place to move.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group.

This Somatic Act is a development of **Somatic Act 3a: Touch of Shoes**. From the Shoe Icon , before you undress from your shoes, continue with the below text

.....

*Gradually, as you are ready
allowing a moment of stillness
to arrive in your body*

*Sensing how
the shoes
invite a specific physicality—
a way of standing
a way of sitting
a way of walking*

*From the feet,
all the way up the legs and pelvis
through the spine
out the head and arms
the shoes shifting
our inner and outer form.*

*And then, slowly begin walking
as if the shoes
are walking you
as they shift the placement
of your everyday feet, pelvis, head -
inviting new ways of being in the body.
Perhaps the head is more forward*

*or the pelvis sways much more
from side to side
or your feet rest more
on their toes.*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

As we are walking, standing and sitting.

Allowing time...

*Slowly begin amplifying the physicality
that you are noticing
invited by your shoes.*

*If the shoes encourage the chest
to rise and move forward,
amplify this further
in your physicality.*

*Noticing how this shift
in physicality
can invite
a new way of walking, sitting, standing
As if you are another character.*

Allowing time...

*Continue to sense
the character that is emerging
coming from your shoes
resonating and changing
the inner and outer form
of your body.*

As we are walking, standing, and sitting.

Moments of movement

Moments of stillness.

Allowing time...

SOMATIC ACT 3D:

Touch of Shoes – Contrasting Tactilities



Allow 60 -120 minutes, or more. You will need two pairs of shoes, with a strong tactile difference and a comfortable place to move.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group.

.....

This Somatic Act is a continuation of **Somatic Act 3a: Touch of Shoes**. After finishing **Somatic Act 3a**, repeat it again but this time wearing another type of shoe with a strong tactile difference to the first. For example, a pair of fleece slippers and a pair of leather-based heels.

After each pair of shoes is worn, you can also add **Somatic Act 3b: Touch of Invisible Shoes** and **Somatic Act 3c: Touch of Shoes: Character**. This can include exploring walking back and forth between wearing both pairs of 'invisible shoes', noticing the difference in not only sensing the movement of your feet, but how it informs the character of your walk.

Allowing time and spaciousness between all steps to support rest when needed.

SOMATIC ACT 3E:

Touch of Somebody Else's Shoes



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a pair of 'Somebody Else's shoes and a comfortable place to move.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group.

.....

This Somatic Act is a continuation of **Somatic Act 3a: Touch of Shoes**. After finishing **Somatic Act 3a**, repeat it again but this time wearing Somebody Else's shoes. For example, a friend, partner, a sister, and more.

After each pair of shoes is worn, you can also add **Somatic Act 3b: Touch of Invisible Shoes** and **Somatic Act 3c: Touch of Shoes: Character**. This can include exploring walking back and forth between wearing both pairs of 'invisible shoes', noticing the difference in not only sensing the movement of your feet, but how it informs the character of your walk.

Allow time and spaciousness between all steps to support rest when needed.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces, Guide & Witness. Photo by Elin Osjord, 2023.

COSTUME

‘Costume is one of the most powerful mediums [sic] of expression ever devised by humans. It serves as a frontier to the human body and as a determinant of the individual’s inner consciousness. It is also one of the primary links among people’ – (Storm, 1987, p. viii).

DEFINING COSTUME

I use the term ‘costume’ instead of ‘clothing’ or ‘dress’ purposefully to denote and provoke the context of performance. I reference performance-studies’ scholar Richard Schechner’s definition of performance here, whereby performance encompasses ordinary life events to formal theatre productions (e.g., rituals, social dramas, sports, entertainment) (Schechner, 2003).

I intentionally approach ‘clothing’, the costume of everyday life, as a performative event. This allows ‘performers’ to be perceived as ‘audience’ or spectators, blurring and challenging the boundaries between these two roles. Most importantly, wearing a ‘costume’ offers the potential for transformation to experience ourselves, others, and the environment anew.

In my definition of ‘costume’, I refer to dress scholars Eicher & Roach-Higgins’ definition: an ‘assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements’ (Eicher & Roach-Higgins, 1992, p. 1). I do not include permanent body modifications into my definition of costume, as does Eicher & Roach-Higgins or what dress scholar Storm refers to as ‘corporal adornments’ (Storm, 1987, p. 2), where the physical body is permanently altered in some

way (e.g., tattooing, piercing, scaring, foot binding, plastic surgery). ‘External adornments’, such as cosmetics, jewelry, hair design and more, are included.

In my definition of costume, I do not include corporeal adornments because first, my research is looking at and practicing with the *touch* of the costume – the meeting between body and material. Second, the interface and relationship between costume and performer is intended to be in ‘a state of flux’, and a permanent corporeal transformation is not.

Third, I want to specify and emphasize that transforming the body can be through kinesthetic awareness or kinesthetic body consciousness (attending to the felt sense¹ of the costume on the body), as opposed to the physical form of the body itself. And fourth, permanent corporeal transformations can lead, in their extremes, to deformations and physical and health complications, a tendency of some live art performances that I aim to differentiate from in my costume design and performance approach.

Although it is easier to show how a costume can affect a body physically, such as by showing examples of women’s bodies molded by corsets and women’s feet bound and deformed into Chinese lotus feet, my focus leans towards wellbeing - where transformation includes changes in the felt experience of being a body or bodies (to include body image² and body schema³ to include body image⁽²⁾), as opposed to changes in permanent corporeal form.

I also include Eicher & Roach-Higgin’s approach to dress, defined as both a collective or social group’s dress or an individual’s dress (Eicher & Roach-Higgins, 1992, p. 2) by costumes that can be made for more than one person or for a person and an ‘other’ (e.g., person, environment). In the performance *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* (2023), I extend this definition even further – the costumes not only connect humans to others and the environment, but costumes *can also become* the environment, movement and others. This is discussed later in more detail.

¹ The ‘felt sense’ is a term coined by Gendlin that refers to ‘a bodily awareness of a situation or person or event’ that is not a mental process but a physical one (2003, p. 32).

² Gallagher defines body image as follows: ‘A *body image* consists of a system of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs pertaining to one’s own body. (Gallagher, 2005, p. 24). Body image includes the terms of body percept, body concept and body affect. Blakeslee & Blakeslee define body image as ‘the psychological construct that includes learned attitudes, expectations, assumptions and beliefs about yourself, your body, others, the environment and the world’ (Blakeslee & Blakeslee, 2007, p. 42). Body image is also highly influenced by the social and cultural context from which you came: ‘It is about your attitudes toward those traits in yourself, your emotional response to how you experience your body, including how you dress, pose, move, and believe others see you’ (Blakeslee & Blakeslee, 2007, p. 39).

³ Gallagher defines *body schema* as ‘a system of sensory-motor capacities that function without awareness or the necessity of perceptual monitoring’ (Gallagher, 2005, p. 24). Blakeslee & Blakeslee define body schema as the physiological construct that your brain creates ‘from the interaction of touch, vision, proprioception, balance, and hearing. It even extends it out into the space around your body. You use it to help locate objects in space or on your body’ (Blakeslee, 2007, p. 32).

The term 'costume' also implies an inherent relationship to both the performer and spectator. Costume can act as a verb or a noun, allowing it to operate in two important roles as an action or a subject. Theatre scholar Aoife Monks uses the term 'costuming' to imply its important role as an activator of experience and perception between the costume and performer, a role that requires relationship – there is no costume without the actor (Monks, 2010).

Building on Monks' definition of costume, I define it further: Just as there is no costume without the performer, there is no performer without the spectator, the witness to the performative event. This costume definition then presupposes a dynamic and important relationship among all three – performer, spectator and event/space/environment. (Dean, 2021, p. 233)

This becomes apparent further in the *Somatic Costume Dressing Room* sessions and the *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* performances, where the roles between performer and spectator become further blurred in an immersive environment.

Lygia Clark, the late Brazilian artist, and her 'Relational Objects' (Brett, 1994) offer a compelling parallel to the Somatic Costumes discussed here. Clark's *Nostalgia of the Body* series from 1964 sought to redirect the focus of art from the material object towards bodily sensations and experiences. Her interactive, touch-based, and wearable pieces were conceived as encounters with wearers, emphasizing the significance of the interaction over the inherent value of the object. (Dean, 2021, p. 233)

In this context, I want to underscore the agency and material nature of both costumes and bodies, highlighting their simultaneous independence and interconnectedness as what Kramer terms 'intermaterial confederations' (Kramer, 2016, p. 6). This perspective draws upon Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of 'relational aesthetics' (2002) and 'expanded scenography,' which identifies 'relationality' as a key principle (McKinney & Palmer, 2017, p. 9). Building on this, I propose that relationality in expanded scenography includes not only human connections but also those with the environment and all 'things'. (Dean, 2021, p. 233)

WHY COSTUME?

An Underexplored Somatic and Performer Resource

– Bodily Awareness

Costumes 'can heighten awareness of the body and movement, leading the dancer [performer] to question and think actively in the moment as opposed to presupposing or following learnt behaviors, thus extending the dance [performance]' (Bugg, 2014, p. 79).

As a somatic practitioner, I choose costume because of its inherent connection to bodies and its acting as an essential but often under-researched somatic resource (Dean, 2016, p. 99) for awakening bodily awareness through the sense of touch.

Our costumes, like our sense of touch, implicitly connect us to ourselves and the world around us: 'it both touches the body and faces outward toward others' (Hansen, 2004, p. 372). Metaphorically, it has been called a 'second skin' as well as a 'social skin' (Turner, 2012), referencing again its strong link with touch and bodies.

According to neuroscientists, costumes become part of our body schema – changing and adapting to what we wear: 'Anything which participates in the conscious movement of our bodies is added to the model of ourselves and becomes part of the schemata' (Blakeslee & Blakeslee, 2007, p. 33) – an idea first mentioned in 1911 by British neurologists Sir Henry Head and Gordon Holmes. 'Tools', such as costumes, become extensions of our bodies. Our bodies create maps to include them, allowing us to perceive and interact with the world as if the costume were part of ourselves (Blakeslee & Blakeslee, 2007, p. 33).

If I wear high heels, the shoe affects the experience of my feet, the gait of my walk, the posture of my upper body - transforming the character I present to the world, how I act in it, and how I am perceived by it. Our sense of self, even the parameters of our bodies, blend/merge with the costumes we wear. In this way, choosing a costume to wear is a choreography on the body itself. The costume designs us. (Dean, 2019, para. 2)

In a traditional ballet performance, for example, the pointe shoe in ballet gives the female dancer a particular relationship to the earth, a small point to balance from as her body posture rises towards the sky. The quality of the movement is informed by it, as well as the structure of the foot. They choreograph each other. (Dean, 2019, para. 3)

Until recently, despite the clear connection between costumes and bodies, there has been a lack of scholarly attention researching their relationship: 'while dress cannot be understood without reference to the body and while the body has always and everywhere to be dressed, there has been a surprising lack of concrete analysis of the relationship between them' (Entwistle, 2000, p. 324).

With performers being the bodies who often wear costumes, it is not surprising that there is an absence as well in writing and documenting performers' experiences when wearing the costumes, to include their kinesthetic effects: 'Although there is an emerging research that addresses the agency of dress in both fashion and performance, there is little research into the experience and perception of performers in relation to dress and action' (Bugg, 2014, p. 68).

This includes the psychophysical effects of costume on wearers. Although the experience of wearing a costume is wearer-specific, patterns are evident between bodies and materials. The amount of movement/restriction of the clothing itself, as well as the type of material used to construct it, affects how we move and experience our bodies: For example, 'A long, flowing garment will "encourage, if not require, broad, outwardly flowing

gestures that cause [it]... to balloon, flap, and swirl''' (Storm, 1987, pp. 308-309). Similar trends are found within my Somatic Costumes, such as the Bin Bag Skirt, with its rustling bags filled with air, which tend to create lots of movement in participants and create a sense of freedom and flying (Participant writing, Workshop I).

According to Storm and the research of Barr, certain materials/fabrics tend to elicit similar psychophysiological responses. For example, silk is often associated psychologically with feelings of 'well-being, moral support, freedom, and energy' (Storm, 1987, p. 306) and is 'purported to give the most positive physiological sensation' (Storm, 1987, p. 305).

Research into the significance of costume's touch and its resource in transforming bodily awareness through clothing can be found in the works of cognitive psychologists / neuroscientists: vibrating insoles (biomedical engineer James Collin) to instigate postural alignment in the elderly and a full-body neoprene suit (Dr. Grunwald) for reprogramming anorexics' body image and schema, with data showing brain changes and weight gain.

Costume as a Performance Generator

With costume being an intrinsic connector to bodies, for a performer and choreographer of immersive performances, it becomes a critical resource in the creation and performance process.

My artistic research also builds upon a recent legacy of costume work (refer to Costume Agency chapter) advocating for the prioritization of costume as a starting point for performance creation - challenging its usual subjugated role, often in hierarchical performance production systems that typically place it last in the creation process, as a servant to the concept/story/text from the director/choreographer.

Performers often receive the costume at the end of the performance process, giving them little time to embody its numerous psychological, physiological, and artistic impacts. Consequently, costumes are put on top of the choreography/performance as opposed to the costume creating the choreography/performance and influencing the movement of the dancer/performer.

The role of the costume designer and the costume itself are often invisible: 'costumes are expected to somehow appear to disappear, so that they don't interrupt the flow of the character's presence' (Monks, 2010, p. 10). These tendencies can often lead to underutilizing the collaborative potential of all involved in the performance process.

REFRAMING COSTUME – THROUGH TOUCH

My research aims to shift Western ocular-centrism and re-balance our 'sensorial hierarchy' (Classen, 1993) by starting with our sense of touch - the experience that the costume generates while wearing it. In doing so, I aim to shift the value of costume from the visual 'aesthetic' towards a touch 'aesthetic'- utilizing its somatic resource for bodily awareness and generator for performance. The visually dominated performance approach to costume

is replaced by an experience of costume as a multi-sensorial experience' (Dean, 2014, p. 114).

Costumes can act as portals of perceptions - shedding light on our socio-culturally informed psychophysical habits, creating new gestures, movement qualities, behaviors, or ways of being that might have been missing from one's repertoire. How can this innate kinesthetic transformation, that happens when costumes are worn, become intentional and explicit and applied as a starting point for costume design and performance processes?

In modern society, the tendency is to ignore everyday costumes and the implicit relationships they create and their 'touch' affects. Costume in performance follows this pattern - overlooking the costume's touch and its psychophysical effects.

Sensorial vs. Semiotic Approach

The psychophysical effects of costume may be overlooked because of the preference towards the sign or symbol of costume - a semiotic approach. In my research, I begin with the opposite, starting with the sense of touch and its psychophysical effects and how these impact and facilitate kinesthetic awareness.

From a neuroscientific standpoint, I am starting with body schema (physical construct) first, as opposed to the body image (psychological construct). Or, as Suryodarmo describes with his somatic Amerta Movement practice, I am starting with the 'Fact/Reality World'⁴ instead of the 'Fiction/Dream World'⁵, and what Pallasmaa refers to as 'the sense of the real' (Pallasmaa, 2011, p. 22). I refer to it as 'Poetic Material-ity': starting from touch opens us into the poetic, to include the fictions, the subjective and body image (to be discussed further in the Part Two, Chapter 9: Method 8: 'Costuming the Sense of the Real').

The Act of Costuming – Subverting and 'Othering'

'The process of preparing a body for a liminal act, while exposing the regulatory structures of a fashion system, facilitates an important discussion on how bodies are designed and felt through our most immediate material relationship' (Hann. 2019, p. 33)

I choose to consciously situate my artistic research in costume rather than in the fields of dress and fashion. From my somatic and performative approach, even everyday clothing through the act of Aware-Wearing (consciously attending to the touch impact of costumes (see chapter 'Wearing / Aware-Wearing'), aims to subvert the 'disciplined normativity' (Hann, 2019, p. 29) of fashion and dress.

⁴ 'Fact/Reality World' refers to the concrete and typically encompasses objective experiences. Facts of a costume would include its function, colors, texture, orientation, location, weight, shape..

⁵ 'Fiction/Dream World' refers to the imagination and the symbol, and enters the terrain of the subjective. Fictions of a costume would include its associations, meanings, metaphors, feelings, characters.

Following Hann’s discussion of costumes’ subversive and othering qualities, costumes inherently challenge social-cultural norms—including gender, bodily presentation, economic status, and aesthetics—by disrupting mainstream fashion systems (Hann. 2019, pp. 28-29).

In addition, costumes, as with the Somatic Costumes, intentionally invite wearers to experience themselves differently, being or becoming ‘other’. This othering is a conscious choice, not accidental or forced, and both ‘presents and contests the construct of identity’ (Hann, 2019, p. 25). The act of costuming becomes a liminal, transitional, in-between event, opening costume’s potential towards the pluriversal and multiple: ‘of not-costume, costume, impersonation, normative dress’ (Hann, 2019, p. 30).

Last, this ‘othering’ of costumes and costuming has the potential of moving us towards an understanding of ‘others’ (‘things’ to include humans): through kinesthetic empathy we are invited to literally and metaphorically ‘step into someone-else’s shoes’. Such an approach is much needed at this time.

SOMATIC ACT 4: Touch of Stagen



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a Stagen - see below. For the dressing process, ideally, you need a friend/colleague, but it is also possible as a solo.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group.



Drawing by Molly Andrews

.....

Close your eyes.

Allowing a moment to touch the material of the Stagen.

What’s its texture like?

What’s the weight like?

How does it move?

Pause...

Open your eyes.

Prepare your Stagen by rolling it into a tightly formed cylinder shape. This makes the dressing process easier.

Then, either as a solo, or a duet, begin the dressing process. The aim is to wrap the Stagen around the waist to create a strong and firm contact with the body.

Begin by locating the waist – the place between the bottom of your ribs and the top of your pelvis.

Place the Stagen's end starting at the belly, over the navel, holding it with the palm of your hand and with the material positioned horizontally to the floor.

Begin to wrap the Stagen around the waist. If you have a partner, you can ask them to help hold the Stagen's end in place as you first begin the wrapping process. The material needs to lie flat against the body, with few wrinkles or bumps.

The key to creating a firm and smooth wrap, is to, when coming to the right hip or left hip, tug firmly on the Stagen to create further compression at the waist, just before turning the corner and wrapping around the hip. Your hands can also slowly check the smoothness of the wrap after each completed circle around the waist.

*As you are wrapping
or being wrapped,
notice the gradual increase
in compression
at the waist
as each layer
is added...*

*The compression touch
from the Stagen
is to be supportive
but not restrictive
so do adjust it
as needed.*

Continue the wrapping process until you come to the last 20cm of the Stagen. Give a final tug and then tuck the material into the wrap, next to the skin/clothing from the top (rib-side) down towards the pelvis.

Then, explore three ways of being in relationship to the Stagen: Walking and standing, sitting (on a chair or on the floor), lying and rolling. Notice, in particular, the transitions between the different levels.

Now and then pause...

Finding

Moments of movement

Moments of stillness.

Sometimes with

Eyes opened or

Eyes closed.

Allowing time...

(You are invited to also continue to wear the Stagen while reading the next chapter)

Then slowly, with eyes closed, take off the Stagen.

Sense through touch, the undressing process.

Allowing time...

Gently, explore walking/standing, sitting and lying/rolling on the floor once again.

What's this like now?

Can you sense the reverberations

from the Stagen's touch?

The touch imprint

as you move

around your waist

*Moving from this felt sense
as the Stagen is still there-
wearing an invisible
yet tangible Stagen.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready, gently roll your Stagen back into a cylinder form,
As you notice your breath
And the touch of the material...*

Allowing time...

*And then finding your transition
In stillness or
movement.*



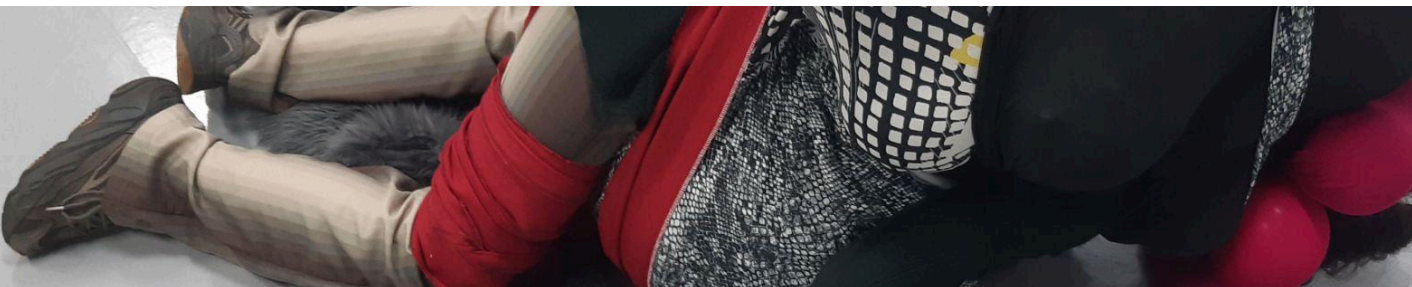
Somatic Costume Dressing Room – Kristina Gjems & Sally E Dean, KHIO, 2023.
Photo by Elin Osjord.

Note: The impetus for this PhD research, and the creation of ‘Somatic Costumes™’, developed while living in Java (2007-2009) and during my first encounter with the Javanese Stagen. A *Stagen* is a tightly wrapped sash (4 meters long, 14 cm wide, made

of woven cotton fabric) between the pelvis and ribs worn during traditional events and dance performances. I experienced a containment quality in my body / movement that was profoundly new – shifting my felt sense, movement, sense of character and emotion. This episode instigated reflections and future investigations into the powerful kinesthetic affects of costumes.

The Stagen has become one of the key and ongoing Somatic Costumes that I continue to use as part of the *Somatic Costume Dressing Room*. With only one piece of material, it can through its touch, create a powerful kinesthetic affect. When worn, it creates a slight compression around the waist – and tends to amplify the experience of suspension, a slight upward orientation of the torso, a lengthening of the spine and a sense of containment.

The Stagen, wrapped around this book, has been sewn by Molly Andrews and dyed by Lieu Le.



The Somatic Costume Dressing Room, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Sally E. Dean

SOMATIC COSTUME™

SOMATIC COSTUMES

The term 'Somatic Costumes™' started as part of the ongoing Somatic Movement, Costume & Performance Project (2011-2023) led by me, Sally, in collaboration with costume designers Carolina Rieckhof and Sandra Lacunza. The design process integrates key principles from somatic movement practices.

Somatic Costumes are designed based on the sense of touch, to bring a specific psychophysical awareness or 'kinesthetic body consciousness' to the wearer. How do you design a Somatic Costume that brings awareness to the weight of the pelvis or the opening of the heart? This touch-based designing process opens, both the wearer's and costume design's potential, into the felt experience of wearing, as opposed to viewing (starting from an external shape or form). Please refer to Appendix: Somatic Costume™: Designing from Touch, for an example of the design process.

Originally, Somatic Costumes were designed from 'Somatic Instigators'. For example, the Balloon Hat was designed to sense the volume and buoyancy of the skull. Somatic Instigators aim to bring a specific kinesthetic awareness through the costume's touch and include some of the following: quality, orientation/direction, space, movement, relationship, volume, weight, dynamic, musicality and more. For example, the weight of the tailbone towards the ground would be both weight and orientation/direction awareness.

It is important to note that this design and later performance process does not start from story, text, character, or visual image, per se as in typical costumed performances. Instead, the process begins from the somatic instigator and the felt experience of wearing the costume, which activates the imagination through materiality. This process of meaning making, coming from the touch meeting between wearer and material/costume, I refer to as Poetic Material-ity. This is an alternative costume design performance method as opposed

to starting from the pre-planned idea/concept/text of a director/designer. Poetic Material-ity will be discussed further in *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces*.

In the beginning, Somatic Instigators came directly from somatic practices that I was trained in or somatic-based resources such as workshops or books. For example, *The Balloon Hat* was adapted from the poetic kinesthetic image of the floating skull with weight and buoyancy (Classes 1 & 10) from *Skinner Releasing Technique*, developed by somatic practitioner Joan Skinner. Joan Skinner's poetic image of sponginess and spongy feet (Class 3 & 5) was translated into *Spongy Shoes*. This arose from my own need to experience some of the images directly through the tactile. Sponginess was an image that I struggled to experience in my body until I experienced it directly, kinesthetically, through the touch of the sponge. I couldn't just imagine it – I needed to experience it in live substance. I needed the 'sense of the real' (Pallasmaa, 2011, p. 11), which I will discuss further in *The Somatic Costume Dressing Room*.

Gradually, the Somatic Costumes arose not only from a somatic practice, but from the psychophysical need of my own body. For example, the *Furry Heart Protector Costume* arose in 2015 during somatic practitioner Helen Poyner's 'Walk of Life Training Workshop' in environmental movement. While lying on the stony beach in Southwest England, I gradually began sliding rocks on top of my body while listening to the sounds of the tides coming in. Most ended up on top of my heart – I loved the texture, weight, temperature – heavy, slightly damp and cold, solid and smooth. In that moment, I realized I needed and wanted a 'heart protector' (Dean, 2021, pp. 235-236). The interaction between my own body and the beach's materials generated the 'Somatic Instigator'.

During my PhD work at KHiO, and with the development of *The Somatic Costume Dressing Room*, my artistic research evolved further, creating costumes not only based on my own body or somatic resources, but from the meeting of other people's bodies and simple materials. The final costume form became further de-emphasized as the focus shifted to prioritizing, and including the dressing/undressing and making process, an essential part of the somatic experience.

In my new definition, Somatic Costumes are no longer necessarily one costume, pre-prepared, but rather, a collection of costume elements that collaboratively with the wearer and I as guide, we co-design to support a psychophysical need that arises in the moment based on the sense of touch. For example, in the *Somatic Costume Dressing Room* session with Christina Lindgren, the psychophysical need that arose was to have an 'Armour'.

This new Somatic Costume approach not only expands the possibilities of responding more personally to those who are to wear the costumes, but also opens potential somatic experiences that are needed or desired in somatic approaches. It also further entangles the role of the designer, choreographer, performer, wearer and maker.

SOMATIC ACT 5: Touch of Materials



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need one small soft, light and warm piece of material (such as a feather, swath of fur or felt) and two solid, heavy and cool pieces of material (such as two potatoes or two smooth river stones). The two materials ideally contrast with each other in their tactile experience.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet, or group. If done as a duet or group, please touch yourself before touching others with the materials. Also, at any point, the touch can be stopped if not wanted.

.....

*Begin in a comfortable position lying or sitting
with eyes closed.*

*You are welcome to adjust
your position at any time
to support the comfort
and care of your body.*

Begin with your soft and light material.

*Gently and slowly first touch the surfaces
of the skin that are not
covered by clothing
such as the face
or the hands.*

*Trace the landscape of the skin
contacting all the details
and surfaces
noticing if any touch
is slightly ticklish
and then adjusting
the place or the pressure
of the contact
where needed...*

*Gradually the touch
of the material
travels to the surfaces
covered with clothing
noticing the change
of not only the touch sensation,
but gradually
how your body begins
to adapt and adjust
to sensing touch details
the pressure passing
through your clothing
to touch your skin.*

Allowing time...

*Allow a little movement
to begin to emerge
from this quality of touch.*

*How does this soft and light material
call attention to the skin
or certain areas of the body
as you move?*

Allowing time...

And then pausing for a moment...

*Allowing the touch sensations
to resonate
along the skin and surfaces of the body.
And then finding a transition
to changing to
your solid and heavier materials.*

*As you are ready,
placing this material, such as the potato*

*in stillness
on your body to rest,
perhaps on the belly, or the forehead, or the upper leg.*

*Noticing the quality of this touch,
the temperature, the weight...*

*Allowing time for the material's touch
to seep into the skin and tissues
or even to meet bone
before adding another potato
to a different place on the body.*

*This begins a gentle dance of
moving potatoes
from one body area
to another area
to rest,
offering time to sense
the connection between the
two places of contact
before shifting the material
to another place
on the body.*

*For example, one potato on the hand,
the other at the chest
or one potato on the solar plexus,
the other at the lower leg.*

*The material, inviting awareness,
to the places, it touches.*

*And at any point,
you are welcome to change
your body position
to touch or more easily
access another body area.*

For example, rolling onto your back or your belly.

Allowing time...

*And gradually, finding a transition
to moving the materials
off your body
allowing for a moment
to rest.*

*What do you notice now?
Are there touch sensations
resonating anywhere?*

*How does the material and its touch
call a different way of attending to the body?*

*Does a light touch,
such as a feather,
awaken the surface – at the skin?*

*Does a heavier touch,
such as a potato,
seep a bit deeper meeting tissues and possibly
the presence of bone?*

*How does a soft touch vs. a solid touch
or a warm touch vs. a cold touch
transform
the way in which you experience your body?*

*As you are ready,
finding a transition
to allowing the eyes to open.*

Share through speaking or writing your bodily experiences and sensations from the contrasting tactile materials. Refer to the Appendix called 'Tactile Vocabulary' if needing support to describe your tactile experiences.



The Somatic Costume Dressing Room with Siv Lier & Sally E. Dean, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Amy van den Hooven

COSTUME AGENCY PROJECT

BACKGROUND

This artistic research PhD has been part of The Costume Agency Artistic Research Project (<https://costumeagency.khio.no/>), a four year (2019-2023) project funded by DIKU, based at Oslo National Academy of the Arts [KHiO], with main researchers Christina Lindgren and Sodja Lotker.

This is the first artistic research project of its kind and size to be funded for costume for performance. It supports a rigorous and critical shift in bringing costume agency in performance to the forefront – creating conferences, workshops, publications, and other events that show the critical role that costume plays in our performative experiences.

It also generates countless discussions and artistic practices focusing on the often underexplored relationship between performer and costume while tapping into the collaborative potential of costume designing, making, and wearing with all involved (performers, directors, costume designers, makers, etc.). The Costume Agency Project also builds upon an important wave of costume and performance research that has been accelerating over the last fifteen to twenty years.

As a PhD Research Fellow, being part of The Costume Agency Project enriches and supports my artistic practice and research. It provides an important context for my work and instigates many questions that are integrated into my artistic works and the writing of this PhD. It also forges new artistic relationships for future endeavors.

Costume & Performance Context: 2006 - Present

In 2006, Donatella Barbieri founded the MA in Costume Design for Performance at London College of Fashion (LCF), which prioritized the performer and costume relationship. It generated a community of costume designers and costume-performer relationships (to

include myself and colleagues Sandra Arroniz Lacunza and Carolina Rieckhof) who continue to work and advocate on costume's behalf (e.g. Nadia Malik, Kate Lane).

In 2010, Aiofe Monks wrote the book *The Actor in Costume* to begin to address the invisibility of costume in both artistic and scholarly research: the actor is

approached as 'already dressed' or 'already undressed' (Monks, 2010). Costume's invisibility continues to be challenged and fought for by a collection of artists, designers, scholars, researchers, and curators worldwide.

For example, *Extreme Costume* was curated by Czech costume designer Simona Rybáková at the Prague Quadrennial in 2011, and PQ Tribes (where tribes of costumed people traversed the city of Prague) was devised by PQ curator Sodja Lotker. Despite exposing the subversive and critical importance of costume, the PQ jury decided not to award a prize for costume either year (Hann, 2016, p. 129).

In 2013, *Critical Costume* was initiated by Rachel Hann and Sidsel Bech, which included a conference, exhibition (at Edgehill University, UK) and a double issue of *Scene* on costume practice. This launched the Critical Costume into a biennial event (Aalto University 2015, University of Surrey 2017, etc.), which continues today.

In 2016, the first issue of *Studies in Costume and Performance* journal was published, with the first issue edited by Barbieri and Pantouvaki.

'Clothes and Choreography - an interdisciplinary approach' was launched as a course and four-week laboratory created by Christina Lindgren at Oslo National Academy of the Arts in 2016. It brought together students, teachers, artists, and theorists from the fields of costume and dance.

Costume & Fashion in Context & Practice Symposium & Exhibition was also initiated in 2016, at Sheffield Hallam University, created by Nadia Malik, Natalie McCreesh, and me, Sally E Dean.

In 2019, *Innovative Costume of the 21st Century: The Next Generation* in Moscow, an exhibition with talks at the Bakhrushin Theatre Museum (head of project Rodionov, artistic project director Roussanoff, and chief project curator Tsu). This follows a previous international project and exhibition called *Costume at the Turn of the Century: 1990-2015*, also by the Bakhrushin Theatre Museum in 2015.

A flurry of books addressing costume and performance began in 2017 with *Costume in Performance: Materiality, Culture and the Body* by Donatella Barbieri, followed by *Performance Costume: New Perspectives and Methods* (edited by Pantouvaki and McNeil 2021), *Costume Agency* (edited by Lindgren & Lotker 2024), and *Insubordinate Costume: Inspiring Performance* (edited by Marshall 2025).

This costume context, above, is also a context of my own participation in the costume community history, with my involvement in many of the conferences, exhibitions and

publications listed. I am aware that my list above is currently Euro-centric and biased towards the places I have lived and the events I have participated in.

Perspectives from Costume Agency

During Costume Agency, I met fellow designers who were also challenging ocular-centric design models, as well as exploring the performative act of dressing, researching the collaborative and performative relationship between designers and performers, and advocating wearer-material relationships over pre-established costume forms.

Vidmina Stasiulyte and Lotta Carlach both created costumes based on sensorial models other than the visual. For example, during one workshop, Stasiulyte and her collaboration with Linnea Bågander called 'Choreographic Sound' researched performances and costumes made starting from sound and listening: 'This fundamental shift suggested to an audience listening to a movement rather than looking at it and for the dancers, it suggested "playing" the costumes, similar to playing an instrument' (Lindgren & Lotker, 2024, p. 133). Lotta Carlach designed her costumes based on both the sense of smell as well as the kinesthetic experience of 'weight': She wrote, 'I begun [sic] the process by letting the dancers explore the costumes through wearing them, inhaling the scent and experiencing the weights' (Lindgren & Lotker, p. 121).

The performative act of dressing, with the performers listening to the impact of the costume when worn, was researched in the workshop with Fridtjof Brevig: 'Dressing the Immaterial. The Material Language of Costume' (Lindgren & Lotker, 2024, p. 71). Brevig was interested in costumes that were able to 'communicate both to the audience and the actor at the same time' (p. 71). In a 'fictional fitting room' (p. 72), the actors begin in character, and as Brevig dresses them in another item of clothing, the actors are confronted to make decisions, in the moment, on how to respond. In this dressing role, Brevig also becomes a 'performer' and is just as much present as the 'actors'- blurring the lines between the two.

Performative acts of dressing and transformation continued in our five women collaboration in Workshop 8 (Dean, Lindgren, Lotker, Østergaard, Holmberg); in this case, simple white clothing was re-used and worn in non-normative ways to create characters (e.g., trousers worn on the head and wrapped).

Designer Charlotte Østergaard prioritizes the relationship between the costume/materials and the performers, referring to her costumes as 'connecting costumes' and 'conversation costumes' (Lindgren & Lotker, 2024, p. 97). In this way, it is not necessarily the forms that are the most important (e.g., some of them were 'unfinished knotted wearable textile samples' (p. 97), but rather the unfolding relationships that arise. 'Listening', which she develops further in her PhD Thesis, is one of the key strategies of her research and process.

This collective focus on sensory, performative, and relational aspects of costume in the Costume Agency workshops is further supported and challenged by two scholarly perspectives. The essays 'Costume Scenographics' by Dr. Rachel Hann and 'Appearances in the Dark' by Mikkel Tinn, in the *Costume Agency* (2023) book, where both reflect on my

artistic practice, have not only been instrumental in shaping the direction of this PhD but have also provided a critical framework for my own reflections and future artistic practices.

In her essay, 'Costume Scenographics' (Hann, 2023, pp. 203-211), Dr. Hann interrogates her own ocular-centric approach to design, aiming to 'rethink the established orthodoxies of costume—as simply visually codified, 'symbolic dress' (p. 203). Hann's reflections on her bodily experiences in my work—such as the sensations of lentils on her feet—have prompted me to further position my practice as a subversive act of 'othering'. As she writes, 'if costume scenographics irritate learnt normativities of appearing, costume somatics irritate the normativities of feeling' (p. 211). Her insights have been instrumental and invaluable in supporting my argument for staying within the frame of 'costume' rather than fashion and for examining its potential political power in challenging normative knowledge-making systems. I include Hann's writing about the performance in Part Three: *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces: Chapter 6 Inside the Experience*.

In contrast, the essay 'Appearance in the Dark' (Tinn, 2023, pp. 213-224) presents an interpretation of my work that, while provocative, has informed this PhD. His essay serves as a notable example of how Western modern thought, rooted in the visual, influences our sensory engagement and a sense of disconnection. While Tinn is a phenomenologist, his writing offers surprisingly little description of his bodily experiences, referring to them only as 'detached sensorial fragments in the dark' (p. 222). This description fundamentally demonstrates a visual perception rather than a tactile one. Vision operates through distance and separation, whereas touch fosters intimacy and reciprocal relationships. The feeling of detachment, from a somatic perspective, signals that the body's ability to integrate sensation has been disrupted.

Tinn's perspective, I propose, is anchored in this ocular-centrism, an orientation deeply embedded in Western philosophy. This is evidenced by his description of perception as a 'projection of our minds' (Tinn, 2023, p. 217), a term rooted in a visual paradigm that is at odds with the non-projective, direct nature of touch. His use of this term suggests a disconnection not only between the body and mind, but also a fundamental misunderstanding of tactile perception. His references to being 'receptive' and 'passive' during the experience indicate that while Tinn was granted the agency to explore the environment and its materials, his experience of touch remained based on traditional, passive perceptual models (Gibson, 1962, redefined perception as a purposeful act rather than a passive one - thereby introducing the concept of active touch). This visual paradigm also appears to influence his separation of personal experience from art, as he writes that 'meaning-making does not commence unless her participants break down the workshop walls and allow their own lifeworlds to flow in' (p. 217).

The disconnect between touch sensation and meaning-making is particularly evident in Tinn's description of the materials themselves:

The sensuous materials she presents to her participants are *real in a radical sense* [emphasis added]. They are not made to represent something they are not, they do not signify or illustrate anything, they simply are what they appear to be by virtue of their inherent sensorial qualities. (Tinn, 2023, p. 223)

While Tinn and I agree that my work is based on ‘the sense of the real’ (Pallasmaa, 2011, p. 11) and aims to strip away normative, visually-based meaning, we differ on its outcome. After over one hundred encounters with participants in my work, I was initially surprised that an individual could be touched and yet feel “detached” and that contact with materials would not evoke meaning. This inquiry revealed significant differences in our definitions of a costume and how we understand meaning-making. I argue that a costume is a relationship between bodies and materials, with its signification co-created with the wearer in the present moment, and the surrounding environment, rather than being a fixed form solely determined by the designer. Tinn’s commentary, which includes remarks such as, ‘there are no costumes in Sally E Dean’s workshop’ (Tinn, 2023, p. 222), suggests a particular definition of a costume. As he explains, a costume is ‘a complex whole with an intimate and essential connection to the body and the social world, a connection it cannot fail to signify’. From his perspective, the ‘detached sensorial fragments’ of my workshop do not meet this definition, thereby revealing a visual-centric bias that fails to recognize the deliberate choreography of non-visual significations that are central to my work.

I contend that the performance is, in fact, intended to signify through a careful orchestration of tactile and auditory experiences, whose type, quality, order, and timing are designed to evoke specific meanings. Tinn also asserts that, ‘Sally E. Dean’s workshop hardly offers an environment for semiosis’ (Tinn, 2023, p. 217). This is because I perceive him to stop at the initial stage of a touch encounter—one where the primacy of sensation and feeling exists prior to conscious thought—without allowing meaning to arise from it. This limited perspective aligns with Tim Ingold’s critique in *Imaging for Real* (Ingold, 2023), which states that a ‘break between reality and imagination’ is ‘at the heart of modern thought and science’ (Ingold, 2023, back cover).

Failing to continue with this process risks conflating imagination with mere mental representation, and separating the ‘real’ from the ‘imagination’. Touch, as an experiential and intimate sense, has the capacity to yield powerful and unexpected meanings, a process that can be blocked when a visual paradigm dominates sensory engagement.

Lastly, while the removal of visual stimuli invites a deeply personal and intimate experience through touch, this approach may also present significant challenges for many individuals. Acknowledging this is a critical part of a responsive and responsible somatic practice. The creation of a safe and supportive framework is paramount, enabling participants to explore these powerful, non-visual based sensations and relationships in an environment of trust and agency.

This dialogue with other designers, combined with the scholarly critiques of Hann and Tinn, offers valuable insight into how Western modern thought processes continue to influence and dominate our sensory engagement. Ultimately, this research responds to these perspectives by cultivating a somatic approach that challenges the dominance of the visual. In this way, the project creates what I now call a ‘Somatic Costume Landscape’, an approach rooted in ‘Poetic-Material-ity’ where meaning is multi-sensorial and co-created from the ‘sense of the real’ which is discussed further in both the second and final section of this thesis: *Part Two: The Somatic Costume Dressing Room: Method 8: Costuming the*

Sense of the Real, and Part Three: Give them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces: Method 8, Chapter 3 and Chapter 5.

SOMATIC ACT 6A: **Attending to Nature**



Allow for at least 60 minutes. You will need a forest or nature area with a collection of clear paths to choose from and walk in. You can walk as a solo, duet or group but please walk without talking. You are welcome to make sounds. If walking together as a duet or group, explore how you make choices together and individually.

This Somatic Act cultivates the practice of how we make choreographic choices through movement (walking) through forming and attending in nature.

Begin by walking along a path.

Pause when you come to a 'cross-roads' between paths.

Sense the space before the choice.

*And then
which path do you choose
or chooses you next?*

How do you make choices?

From your body

From a thought

From your clothing

From the visual look or a sound

From a person, creature or leaf.

*Allow the natural environment to inspire you.
Allow moments to rest and sit if needed.*

*Finish by writing or sharing your reflections
at the end of your walking journey.*

An example is included in Somatic Act 6b: Attending to Crow & Ant

SOMATIC ACT 6B: Attending to Crow & Ant



Allow for at least 15 minutes. You will need a comfortable place to sit outside, in a nature environment. This Somatic Act is an audio to listen to with closed eyes.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group.

.....

*I'm walking in a forest
on the Bygdøy peninsula
in Oslo, Norway
near the sea
practicing how I
make choices
inspired by the movement work
of Prapto.*

*There are many paths
to choose from
right or
left
or I can continue to go on
straight ahead
or I can choose to turn around and
go back.*

*How do I make choices
as I am walking
locating in movement
and in choice
while on a sense of a journey.*

*What I realized is
sometimes I would stop, and
would allow time
to sense the different choices
that I had:*

*Which path do I want to go towards?
or which path do I want to go away from?*

*Sometimes I would make a choice
based on what I saw in the distance
- the light would look in a certain way or
I was curious about how the path
turned towards the right
and what lay ahead.*

*But then other times
I could sense the choice
not necessarily coming from my eyes
but coming from my body
and choosing from
different areas
- like my belly or heart or head.*

*Sometimes I could sense
when facing a certain direction
that part of my body (heart) really opened
towards a path
and had a sense of 'closing'
towards another path*

My body guiding my choices.

*Sometimes I couldn't sense which way
to go
and I had a lot of fear
about choosing the wrong direction*

*But then I remembered Suprpto
calling these places
'before the choice'
- temples.
a place of prayer
allowing time*

*to be guided,
to wait for the choice to arrive,
if you can,
so we do not choose
blindly.*

*At the same time,
not to worry
so much about the choice
because sometimes
you just need to choose.*

*For example one time
I didn't know where to go
so I decided to go forward
down this path
and then
not very far along
there was another cross-roads
another choice*

*And then it was very clear
in my body
that I wanted to go to the left trail
it created
a sense of opening
in my whole being
a 'yes'
I continued on that path*

*Until I came to a clearing
within the forest
which harbored
a cathedral of trees
with light streaming
through the leaves
like stained glass
speckling the ground*

*with shadow
and light.*

*I paused there
and spent some time sitting
on a bench nearby.*

*It reminded me
of another cathedral of trees
in London's Hampstead Heath*

*And then all of a sudden
I noticed a crow sitting
on one of the trees
and I thought
'well I wonder
how you make choices
crow'?*

*The crow shifted its head
and its body position slightly
on the little tree limb
and then suddenly
took flight
into the air.*

*I watched as it flew above me
creating a vast overview
of the forest
embodying a very different perspective
than my human one
walking in the woods
making choices
to the right
to the left
forward
backward.*

*How can I walk again
in this forest
not from only my human location
with the boundary of my body
as the periphery
but to include the overview
created not just through vision
but the sounds crows make?*

*It was almost as if I had
implanted the way I walk
in a city
into a forest
right - left
front - back.*

How does a fish travel or even an ant?

*The perspectives of the creatures
that live under the earth?
the sensorial choices made
from the touch of an antennae
locating smells and sounds
sensing dirt and air
for direction.*

*And here I was- walking alone
what about walking with others?
the tribes of ants
or the schools of fish
navigating the forest and rivers
together?*

*How can I return now
to walking along the forest paths
sensing the overview-smell-sound-touch-taste
and the underview-smell-sound-touch-taste
while navigating*

*myself within
right
left
forward
back
while walking*

*these perspectives
travelling with me
as I make choices
or choices make me
not from my human view
but more from
the perspective of nature itself
a multi-directional way
of attending.*

*As you have been travelling through
this audio journey,
how and where
in your body
have you been touched?*

*Returning to your felt experience
for a moment,
before finding
a transition.*



Oslo, Norway, 2023. Photo by Sally E. Dean

CHOREOGRAPHY

'Composition in Living Measurement'

- Suryodarmo

BACKGROUND

My choreographic approach originates from my background as an improvisational dancer, performing in my own work and others' for over 25 years, and my training in improvisation ('instant composition') and somatic movement practices. This dates back to my foundational time at Bennington College from 1997-9 (Creach, Reitz, Sgorbati), and later with such choreographers and teachers as Stephanie Skura, Joan Laage, Suprpto Suryodarmo, Helen Poynor, and Joan Davis, to name a few. It is also highly influenced by my time living in Java, Indonesia, from 2007-2009.

ATTENDING AND FORMING

Choreography is the practice of composing attention and, at the same time, materials / substances. This process of attending and forming is ongoing and in response to the changing and unfolding environment. Composing attention involves performers and the audience, including myself, as well as all organisms/things.

Attending begins with what Suryodarmo called the 'space before the choice'. This is a process of 'orientating' through attuning (a sense of whole body listening), before a choice

occurs. There is a quality of 'dwelling in the place'. It is a time to 'Relax, Receive, Remember⁶, Release' (Suryodarmo), to sense the substance of bodies, places – all 'things'.

Attending includes attuning to multi-perspectives – not only to how the forms are appearing to the audience (e.g., 'outside') and to how they are being experienced in my body ('inside'), but also how attention is moving to and locating (e.g., inside my belly, between my legs, from another's chair, from the corner of the room, from underneath the floor, from the nest of a bird, or the eye of a spider).

As we are attending, there is a quality of 'following' (as opposed to directing). Choice is made from a place of receiving and sensing what is present before action is taken. This does not mean that every choice is followed. Part of choosing is also allowing yourself to be chosen and allowing choices to come and go.

As we are attending, we are 'orientating'. 'Orientation' is the potential towards something. This can include directionality, which is typically associated with space, but also includes body, place, atmosphere, time, quality, and more. It incorporates Sara Ahmed's definition of orientation here: 'proximity' (near or far) and 'familiarity' (familiar or strange) (Ahmed, 2006, pp. 3 & 7).

Orientation is a process that includes and celebrates disorientation and reorientation – an essential component of somatic movement practices. A body orientation, for example, would be the upper torso's postural movement pattern of rising towards the sky or dropping towards the feet. Somatic Costumes can disorientate and reorientate such bodily patterns, which trigger further disorientations and reorientations to place, space, others, and more.

Forming begins as we are orientating. Our patterns of attending, the way in which we 'follow' (e.g., movement, thoughts, feelings, sensations) bring into being certain forms that reflect this, revealing our preferences towards certain 'things' more than 'other things'.

This is evident in choreography all the time, where choreographers or even dance forms become known for their 'orientations'. This can include not only the style of movement, but also the aesthetic choices that are underneath it, based on what is 'attended to'. For example, Butoh dance follows imagery, attending to slow movement, often with the aesthetic choice of painting their bodies white.

Forming also includes movement, to include stillness, although not 'static'. As the attending becomes more repeated and patterned, substances become more formed. This 'forming' process is what choreographers refer to as certain 'aesthetic' choices, but in actuality, they are, in essence, how attention is being choreographed and is orienting within the work

RETURNING TO PLACE

⁶'Remember' is defined here not with memory, which can be associated with 'the mind', but referencing a return to sensing the body.

‘We do not live in abstract space, we exist in nameable places and related situations. We become part of the place, and it becomes part of us, while space is doomed to remain as conceptual abstraction’ (Pallasmaa, 2024, p. 11).

Although choreography is traditionally defined as movement in time and space, I prefer to challenge the historic stronghold of ‘space’ in choreographic practice and instead reorientate towards ‘movement in time and place’.

This is for two reasons. One is because spatial relations are culturally and socially specific. Psychologists Taylor and Tversky name three different kinds of perceptions of space: “deictic or viewer-centred, intrinsic or object-centered, and extrinsic or environment-centered” (1996, as cited in Grau, 2011, p. 14). Despite this, our western more ‘egocentric-anthropomorphic’ (p. 14) spatial orientation, is often not questioned in choreographic practice (p. 18), with a default assumption that ‘space’ is a universal concept.

Scholar and philosopher Ahmed also returns us to the relativity of space, where the body and space are interwoven: ‘If we think of bodies and spaces as orientated, then we re-animate the very concept of space’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 12): ‘spaces are not exterior to bodies; instead, spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 9). Spaces are charged with orientations and meaning. Second, historically, ‘space’ has been defined as void, ‘empty’, following on from modernist ‘tabula rasa’ thinking. An empty space is more vulnerable to ‘occupation’, a colonialist strategy. The relativity of space is crucial, returning us to attending and responding to what is there and present.

Peter Brook's book ‘The Empty Space’, published in 1968, suggests how a tabula rasa mindset has been part of theatre: ‘I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage’ (Brook, 1996, p. 9). Black boxes, white gallery cubes are created to be ‘neutral’ spaces.

Ocular-centrism has not helped us, with the stage becoming a projection and a representation of what we imagine.

‘Are you starting from the Place or the Space?’ (Suryodarmo).

Place begins with the body and its position in ‘living measurement’ (Suryodarmo) within the surrounding environment. This is similar to what Ahmed refers to in her description of orientation – attuning to the ‘here’ of the body and the ‘where’ of its dwelling’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 8). Place cultivates nearness and substance. Place’s tangibility connects it to touch and the tactile. Place is not abstract, but embodies specificity and relationship.

What does choreography do when starting from the concept and experience of place as opposed to space?

TIME

Time is also a culturally specific term. Western preferences towards linear instead of cyclical, monochronic instead of polychronic, and clock time instead of event time, profoundly 'choreograph' expectations and processes of time in performance. This can include something as simple as how long a performance is, the expectation of having 'attention' to be held during the specific time, to practically composing sound based on meter, rhythm, harmony, and counterpoint, as opposed to emphasizing cycles, melodies, rhythmic complexity, and improvisation.

While living in Solo, Java, Indonesia, I experienced the traditional Javanese shadow puppet performances that start after sunset and finish at sunrise. The performances rarely had advertised times, they began when enough performers had arrived and were ready. 'Rubber time, as it is called in Java, means that time is approached not as a specific point but is a more fluid and flexible container where relationships, context and adaptability are prioritized over schedules. When it rains, schedules change, and people come late or not at all. Dance rehearsals might begin with the first few hours of just hanging out, eating and chatting. Javanese gamelan music offers a unique approach to time, emphasizing cyclical structures, rhythmic complexity, and a fluid, non-linear experience of time. Suryodarmo referred to such a cyclic, non-linear quality of time as 'Nature Time' as opposed to 'Human Time' or clock-based time. How can time in the 'choreography of attention' be reframed in performance to enter such a non-linear and cyclical quality? Does starting with touch shift our experience of time?

SOMATIC ACT 7:

Touch of Spine

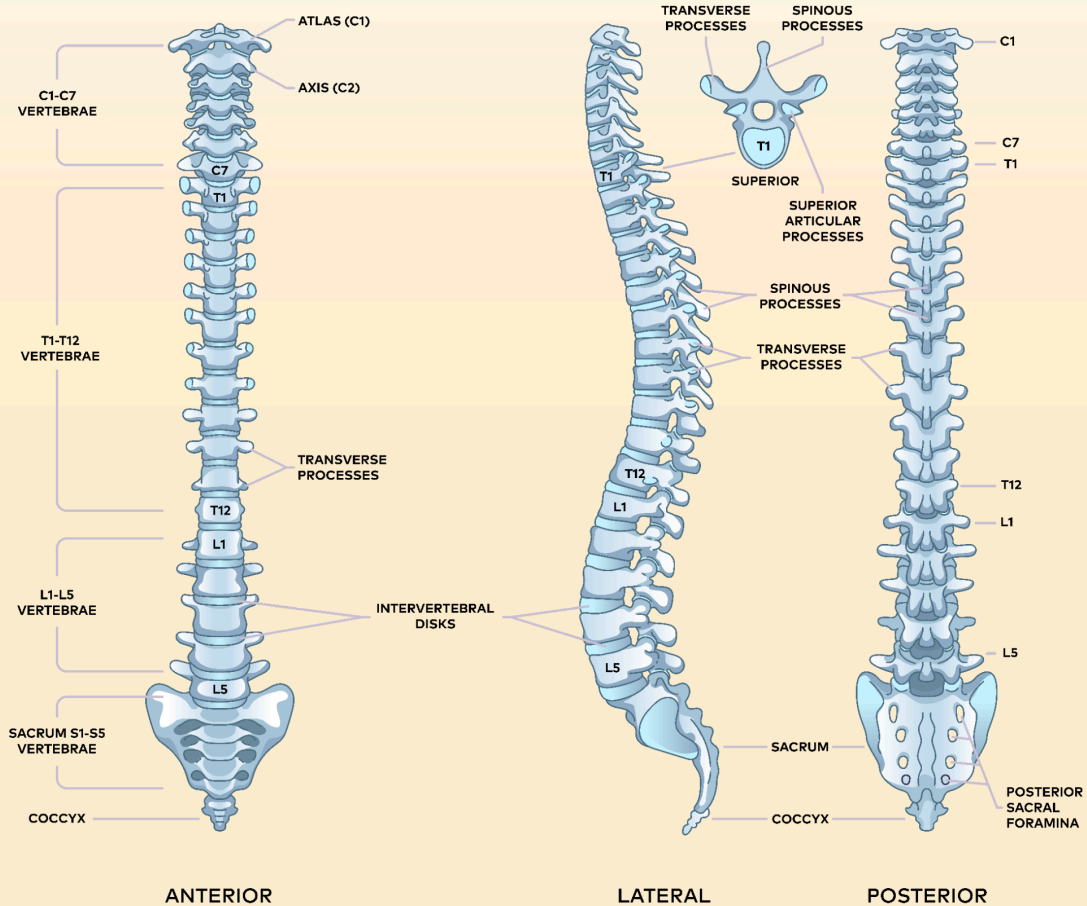


Allow for at least 45 minutes. You will need a comfortable chair, stool, or ball to sit on that allows your pelvis to have a sturdy yet comfortable base and your feet to comfortably touch the floor.

This Somatic Act is ideally done as a duet, or with a group, but the below text offers the possibility of experiencing it as a solo.

If done as a duet or group, please touch yourself before touching others. Also, at any point, the touch can be stopped if not wanted.

HUMAN SPINAL COLUMN



*With eyes closed,
and sitting comfortably,
noticing your breath...*

Allowing it to move

*on its own
sensing the rise and expansion
of the inhale and
the settling of the exhale
towards the earth.*

*Sense the weight of your body
through the support of gravity
meeting and arriving
into the place
you are sitting now.*

*What are you touching
the chair, the floor, your clothing, your own hands?
Allow the contact to soften
any unnecessary holding or tension
in the tissues or bones
allowing your body to
rest into the touch and
into the arms of gravity.*

*Allowing the belly to soften a little
and the jaw.*

*Changing your position if you need
to be a bit more comfortable
at any time.*

Breathing, arriving, settling.

Allowing time...

*With eyes still closed,
gently bring your hands to
explore and touch the back of the spine
-yours or your friend's-
tracing the bony prominences
sensing the texture and shape
the hardness of bone next to
the softness of skin*

*from the tailbone
all the way to the atlas
deep inside the skull.*

*Noticing each vertebrae as you pass it
the slight bumps or curves
meeting the bony landmarks...*

*Sensing the spinous processes
extending back as bony noses or ridges.*

Allowing time...

*And gently allowing
your hands to rest on your legs
or at your sides.*

*With eyes still closed
can you sense the bony landscape
you just touched?
Each individual vertebra?*

Allowing time...

*And in contrast
to this bumpy back landscape
broadening your attention
to the front vertebrae
from the tailbone
all the way to the base of the skull
at the atlas.*

*Placing your hands
on the front of your body
as you picture your hands
touching
your front vertebrae
awakening your felt sense
of their smoother texture*

and more cylindrical shape.

*Slowly, starting at
your tailbone,
touching the front of each
individual vertebra
one at a time
as your touch travels
up your spine
to the top of the base
of the skull.*

One vertebra at a time.

*A smoother texture
a more cylindrical shape.*

Noticing your breath...

Allowing time...

*And then, expanding your awareness
to the sides of each vertebra
sensing the transverse processes
reaching out as two bony wings.*

*As you picture your hands
touching*

*each bony wing
supporting your felt sense
of this subtle widening
on the left
and on the right
along the spine*

*Slowly, begin
at your tailbone,
touching the sides
the bony wings
of each vertebra
one at a time
as your touch travels
up your spine
to the top of the base
of the skull.*

One vertebra at a time.

*Bony wings inviting
a slight widening
from either side.*

Noticing your breath...

Allowing time...

*And gently allowing
your hands to rest on your legs
or at your sides.*

*And now, allowing your attention to
travel to the places between each vertebra
cushioned with disc pillows
offering the spine
buoyancy, protection and support*

*Sensing their presence
for a moment
from the tailbone
to the base of the skull
inside the bony landscape
of the vertebrae.*

Allowing time...

*And bringing your attention
towards the river of breath
travelling up, down, and around your spine as an axis
bathing each vertebra from the tail bone to the base of the skull
with the pelvis as an anchor and
the skull floating on top.*

*How does the movement of your breath
gently rock and move*

*your spine
allowing any tension
to unfurl and unravel
as the vertebral column is naturally
suspending
and lengthening
tail bone dropping towards the earth
skull rising towards the sky.*

*Sensing how the atlas, the top vertebra
sits deep inside the top of the skull
allowing the skull to float on top.*

*Sensing how the tailbone, the end of your axis,
sits deep inside the pelvis
widening its base of support.*

*The breath bathing each vertebra
moving each one
just a little.*

Allowing time...

*Allow your spine
to move a little
a string of around 24 pearls
opening, closing,
spiraling,*

lengthening

*sensing the front, the back
and the sides of the vertebrae*

*Tail and head moving
towards and
away from each other.*

*Each vertebra
participating
responding to each other
a community of vertebrae
dancing together*

Allowing time...

*The rest of the body
may also follow
in small ways
or not
the arms might move slightly
or the pelvis, or the legs
the spine conducting
a tiny movement and vertebrae orchestra*

As you are breathing

Allowing time...

*The spine - offering structure, support, flexibility
protecting your spinal cord – the central hub
of your nervous system
as messages quickly pass through
as you are moving
and breathing.*

Allowing time...

*Opening, closing,
spiraling,
lengthening
as the spine moves.*

Breathing.

*And gently, allowing a rest
or a pause to emerge.*

*Sensing how you are making contact
with the place you are sitting now.*

Noticing your breath...

*As the felt experience of your spine
continues to resonate*

I invite you into a few questions:

*What if you created a costume
from this recent experience?*

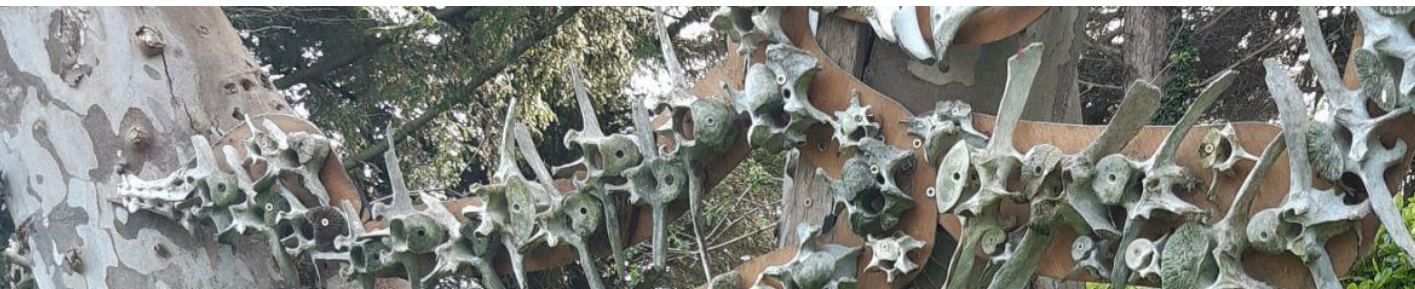
The sensation inside your body?

The sense of your spine from within?

*A costume that brought awareness
to the lengthening of the vertebral column
or the widening of the sides of the spine, for example?*

*And as you are ready,
slowly opening your eyes.*

*And sharing your experience and reflections through writing, drawing
and speaking with a friend.*



Bone Woman Ancestor Tree, a garden installation by Joan Davis, Gorse Hill, Ireland, 2022. Photo by Sally E. Dean

EMBODIMENT / BODY ASSEMBLAGE

Embodiment is ‘the act of incorporating and bringing... expression to, the materiality of lived experience’

(Dean and Nathanielsz, 2017, p. 180)

DEFINING BODY/BODIES – BODY ASSEMBLAGE

Body or bodies are terms used interchangeably to denote and refer to a wider, more academic term called ‘body assemblage’. Assemblage theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980) emphasizes that things, such as bodies, are not isolated, but interconnected, influenced by and part of their environments. As Rachel Hann further discussed in her talk at Innovative Costume of the 21st Century in Moscow (2019), bodies are not singular but plural – biologically, such as being made of cells, muscle fibers, bacteria and more, as well as socially (relationships and culture) and technologically (prosthetics, such as costumes). Because of this, bodies are considered ‘in process and ‘perform differently each and every time (even if only at a cellular level)’ (Hann, 2025).

The definition of ‘body assemblage’ has arisen in response to a historical background of ‘the body’ being approached as either ‘empty’, ‘neutral’, or ‘singular’. This is apparent not only in Western philosophy (Aristotle and Locke - ‘tabula rasa’), but also in the performing arts and dress/costume design practices and discussions.

For example, in prior dance training, even in such somatic practices as Skinner Releasing Technique, there is an orientation towards finding a neutral or natural body. However, as

dance anthropologists Grau and Fortin argue, the body is culturally specific without a 'neutral' or 'natural' body to be found underneath: 'the body as a pre-social, pre-cultural subject/object is impossible to sustain' (Fortin and Grau, 2014, p. 3).

In costume design, the body can be absent in the process, until the end, and the mannequin, a still, non-moving body, acts as the 'neutral' body.

THE EMBODIED TURN

Bodily experiences of clothing and textile materials entered academic discussions/writings in fashion and costume design following the 'embodied turn' (where tacit, experiential, and embodied knowledge becomes valued). This embodiment turn challenges the perception of the body as an object, as well as challenges the mind-body dualism found in structuralism. Although many philosophical approaches have influenced it, phenomenology (Husserl, 1859-1938; Merleau-Ponty, 1908-1961) is notable, with its emphasis on lived experience, consciousness, and placing bodies at the centre of experience.

Joan Entwistle's chapter, *Body Dressing* (2000) is one of the seminal texts that started the embodiment discussion in the field of dress and fashion. It pointed out that clothes are situated and embodied practices.

Prior to the 'embodied turn' was the 'material turn' (late 1990s and early 2000s) where value is given to the materials (clothing or costume). Discourse of the embodiment turn develops this discussion by exploring the relationship between bodies and materials (not just the materials themselves) and includes bodies also inside, experiencing, making and wearing the materials.

Building upon discussions of embodiment, recent academic work has increasingly focused on the lived experience of wearing and the application of the term somatic. For instance, Ruggerone (2017) explores 'the feeling of being dressed' through the lens of affect and non-representational theories, while Robinson refers to the 'somatic experience in fashion' (McNeil & Bellanta, 2019, p. 325), highlighting the sensory and bodily engagement with clothing. Similarly, costume design has also embraced these embodiment perspectives, evidenced by Bugg's concept of 'the embodied experience of dress' (Bugg, 2014, p. 67) and 'body-centered' approaches (e.g., Barbieri, 2013), which particularly emphasize the moving body in the design and performance process.

Dance also has its own 'embodiment' history, which has been associated with postmodern periods of dance history, and the emergence of somatic movement practices. Notable academic texts, such as *The Phenomenology of Dance* (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, original thesis published in 1966) and writings by Foster (1986, 2010), show that such embodiment discussions have been in the dance field longer than in dress, fashion, and costume.

This is to emphasize that embodiment discussions and their histories vary depending on the specific field referred to. This might be obvious, but in practice, terms such as embodiment and somatic perform differently depending upon their disciplinary location and history.

For example, the 'embodied' interaction in fashion and costume tends to lean more towards discussions about the clothing/costume, whereas in dance, it leans more towards the body. Embodiment is considered in the making process and less so in the wearing process in fashion and costume. If it is considered in the wearing process, discussions are more focused on how the body affects the material (Sampson, 2016), as opposed to how the material affects the body (Dean, 2011). The reverse tendency is true for the dance field, where, although embodiment discussions can be largely absent in reference to clothing or costume in general, their importance has emerged in somatic movement practices (Dean, 2011 & Smith, 2020).

Interestingly, embodiment in dance, costume design, fashion/dress, tends to be described more from the visual sensorial frame, even when discussing movement that is kinesthetically based. The emotional or affective body ('feelings') also tends to be the locus of describing experiences as opposed to the sensorial body. Bodily experiences are expressed through story, narrative, symbols, or feelings – and the direct, tactile or somatic effect can be neglected.

But, discussions involving the relationship between senses and clothing, in particular, fashion and design, are on the rise, with a 'sensorial turn' as part of the current emerging paradigm of today (McNeil & Bellanta, 2019).

Will embodiment practices, with terms such as somatic, enter the costume and fashion fields merely as concepts, or will they integrate within the practices themselves and become lived experiences? One key will be to observe how bodily experiences are being named and described, and if the sensorial is part of the discussion, especially touch, or remains still in the background, overlooked or conflated with 'feelings'.

SOMATIC ACT 8: Aware-Wearing



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a comfortable place to sit; wearing a long-sleeved shirt, trousers, socks and shoes.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group.

.....

Closing your eyes.

*Noticing your breathing
and your contact with the chair...*

*Gathering your attention
to the touch
of your clothing.*

*Clothing is like a second skin
a meeting between your inner world
and your outer world.*

*Your clothing is touching you
and you are touching your clothing*

you touch each other

*a place of meeting
a place of reciprocity*

*a place of intimacy
a place of attending
a place of resting.*

Allowing time...

Noticing the places

where the clothing's touch

is calling your attention-

a place of strong pinching or pressing, for example.

And then noticing the places

where the clothing's touch

seems to disappear into your skin

as if the material has merged

into your body...

Allowing time...

As you are ready,

sensing your shirt's

contact against your skin

Noticing the quality of the touch

firm or light pressure

Or if there is space

Or not between

a sleeve and an arm...

*Sensing the texture,
the temperature,
the weight,
from the material*

*Allow a little movement
in the arms, or in the torso
to support this sensing journey.*

Allowing time...

*And returning to your breath
sensing the movement around the belly
and noticing
how the clothing contacts
your body here...*

*Noticing if there is movement
or constriction around the waist
from the touch of your trousers
either from its elastic or a button or tie...*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
sensing your trousers'
contact against your legs
and pelvis.*

*Noticing the quality of the touch-
firm or light pressure
Or if there is space
Or not between
the trousers and the legs...*

*Sensing the texture
the temperature
the weight
from the material*

*Allow a little movement
in the legs, or pelvis
to support this sensing journey.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
sensing your feet
inside your socks
and shoes.*

*Noticing the quality of the touch
firm or light pressure
Or if there is space
Or not between
the socks, shoes and feet...*

*Sensing the texture
the temperature
the weight
from the material.*

*Allow a little movement in the feet
such as wiggling your toes
to awaken this sensing journey.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
sensing your underwear
touching the skin
of your pelvis*

*And if wearing one,
your bra, touching
your chest, ribs, back and breasts*

*Allowing spaciousness
for the intimacy
of such places
and inviting subtle
movement
to integrate this sensing journey.*

Noticing your breath...

Allowing time...

As you are ready,

broadening your attention

to any accessories

that you are wearing

such as a ring, earrings, or necklace

a scarf, headband, hat or glasses.

Noticing the quality of the touch

firm or light pressure

Or if there is space

Or not between

your skin

and the material...

Sensing the texture,

the temperature,

the weight

of the accessory.

Allow a little movement

around the area

where you are being touched

by the material

to support this sensing journey.

Allowing time...

*Attending to the movement
of your breath.*

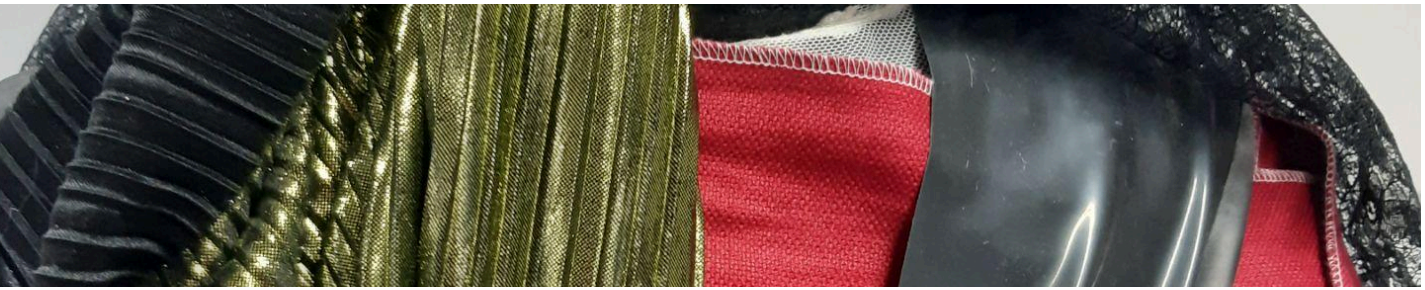
*Sensing that
your clothing is touching you
and you are touching your clothing.*

As you gently allow the eyes to open

*Noticing how the felt sense
of your clothing
can change
as the visual is invited in...*

*How is the presence
of your clothing
resonating for you
now?*

*Allowing time to find a transition into sharing your experiences and reflections in writing,
drawing or sharing with a friend.*



The Somatic Costume Dressing Room, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Sally E. Dean

WEARING / AWARE-WEARING

WEARING – A METHODOLOGY

How do we write about, design and perform costume as a ‘wearer’ opposed to as a ‘viewer’? Inviting scholars, practitioners and spectators to become active participants in a live multi-sensorial costume experience?

There is little research into costume designers’ and scholars’ experiences and perceptions of wearing costumes. ‘While dress cannot be understood without reference to the body and while the body has always and everywhere to be dressed, there has been a surprising lack of concrete analysis of the relationship between them’ (Entwistle, 2000, p. 324). The act of consciously wearing is a practice of embodiment, and a return to the empathic relationship between costume and the body.

Body and costume move each other in metaphorical and literal ways. The multi-sensorial, intersubjective act of wearing allows subjects to increase their experience and understanding of their bodies, costume and environment as well as the interrelationships between the three zones.

Wearing becomes the bridge to knowing and knowledge, a powerful untapped research methodology in the field of costume design and costume-based performance.

What if costume designers, performers, directors/choreographers, spectators and scholars wore costumes during all phases of the design, performance and writing processes and asked themselves, how does what I wear affect my body and perceptions? How does the costume affect how I sense, notice, move, act, feel, think, create and write? (Dean, 2021, pp. 229-230)

In the case of designers, there is a tendency not to wear the costume or to sense how it impacts their bodies, and they might not be aware of their bodies in the making process. In the case of choreographers or performers, there is also a tendency for materials/costumes to be neglected and seen as servants of the movement and choreography, and then the materials' or costumes' impact is not explored. In both cases, they lose the inherent and powerful reciprocal relationships between the two.

HOW DO WE WEAR? DAILY-LIFE WEARING VS. AWARE-WEARING

There are two types of wearing, 'Daily-Life wearing' [sic] and 'Aware-Wearing'. Daily-life [sic] Wearing is the way we use our bodies and our garments in daily life. Daily-life movement can often be habitual. I brush my teeth, but I might not be aware of how I brush my teeth or even what I am experiencing in the process. How do my teeth feel while being brushed? Can I sense the rhythm of it, the movement, the sensation it creates in my gums? The way we brush our teeth becomes, then, a metaphor for daily-life wearing [sic]. (Dean, 2021, p. 232)

Applied to costume, if I am wearing high-heels, I may no longer be aware of how it is affecting my psychophysical experience. Although in Daily-Life Wearing we can still be impacted by what we wear (how the shift of weight onto the toes by wearing heels changes the alignment of the spine and the length of the Achilles tendon over time), we simply are not conscious of the effects.

Once we begin to notice the costume's impact on the body, we transition into 'Aware-Wearing'. Aware-wearing [sic] is a somatic approach to wearing that invites wearers to bring attention to their perceptions and experiences of themselves, the costumes, others and the environment. (Dean, 2021, p. 232)

Aware-Wearing becomes a design and research tool to understand if the costume is creating the desired experience or design effect.

For example, a designer is asked to make a costume for a character of a noble and regal queen. The costume design, when worn, creates pressure and restriction in the shoulders, causing the performer's upper body to slouch forward and the chest to slightly collapse. Such a bodily position, created by the design of the costume, may challenge the performer in a negative way. In contrast a costume designed to support the experience of the upper body with chest rising upwards would create more of an effect of the regal and powerful needed to perform the character of the queen. It is not just how the queen looks, but how her body is shaped through touch to perform the character.

Aware-Wearing includes the process of sensing, listening, and attending to the costume, the body and the meeting in between. This leads to awareness and consciousness, giving the wearer choices.

Aware-Wearing includes dressing/undressing and moving. In the design process in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, we examine each stage, noting that sometimes the effect of the costume becomes more apparent after it is taken off than when it is worn.

Aware-Wearing is more akin to how the body is accessed and utilized in performance practices as opposed to those of daily life. Aware-Wearing is similar to Barba and Savarese's term 'extra daily-life technique', how bodies are used in performance versus 'daily-life technique' or daily-life wearing (Barba and Savarese, 1999, p. 9). In extra daily-life technique, the wearer has the potential to access their body beyond the habitual patterns created through social-cultural conditioning. The context of performance also heightens awareness for the wearer in relation to spectators. If you know someone is watching it heightens your awareness of what you are doing. (Dean, 2021, p. 232)

In Aware-Wearing, the spectator is always present. In this somatic approach, a spectator can exist within anything: the costume, the wearer, the environment, the spirit and within oneself. The spectator's location can be internal and/or external and may operate in a state of flux:

I touch/see the costume

The costume touches/sees me

We touch/see each other -

As I touch/see the sky through my heart

The sky touches/sees me through one ray of sunlight

(Dean, 2021, p. 232)

This chapter includes quotes and ideas developed from my publication 'Aware-Wearing': A Somatic Costume Design Methodology for Performance' in the book *Performance Costume* (Dean, 2020) edited by Pantouvaki & McNeil.

SOMATIC ACT 9: Touch of Place



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need an indoor or outdoor place that has designated boundaries – such as a room or specific garden area. Choose an environment where the place is dynamic and suggests the personal (not a black box theatre or dance studio) with other objects/materials already inside. Begin in comfortable clothes to move in and bring a heavy coat.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group

.....

*Choose a place to begin
in your environment*

*Standing
with coat*

Draped over one shoulder

Eyes closed.

Be clear on your location.

*Where your body and coat
want to be.*

*Follow coat and your body
as a guide.*

*Sensing weight of coat
pouring into body
downwards through
feet and into floor.*

The coat is touching you

And you are touching the coat.

Noticing your breath...

Allowing any tension to unravel.

*Sensing the weight of the coat
and the weight of body
in relationship to each other.*

In stillness.

Allowing time...

*And then slowly
inviting a little movement
through the body
by shifting the weight
of the feet
from one foot
to another
side to side and
forward to back
gently rocking and
guiding the movement*

*Like how water pours
drop by drop
the small increments
of weight
travelling through
your body
supported by
the feet.*

Noticing your breath...

Allowing any tension to unravel

Finding many moments to pause...

Allowing time...

*Gradually, allowing the eyes
to begin to open
as the movement grows
just a little
with your simple weight shifts
of the feet*

*Allowing the weight
to move, pour, drape,
over and along your body.*

Allowing time...

*And then with eyes
still open,
allowing the weight shifts
of the feet to
slowly transform
into a gentle walk*

*As if you are on a micro-journey through
your environment.*

*Pausing along the way – sensing the place
and the many things you are passing
not through the eyes
but sensing their substance
your substance
as you walk.*

*Sensing each foot contacting the floor
as an invitation for the
weight to arrive
into your substance and being.*

*Allowing the support of gravity
to walk you
and the weight to travel through the feet
to connect you to the earth.*

*The walk is slow and consistent – like a steady beat
repeated again and again.*

Allowing time...

*Until you come to a location
where you want to 'place'
your coat*

*Placing your coat in your environment
as if returning it to a place of rest
for a moment.*

Allowing time...

*Then, continue on your gravity, weighted walk journey
sensing substance, feet touching the floor,
following a steady, slow, constant beat.*

*Sensing the place
you are in
and the many things you are passing
not through your eyes
but sensing their substance
your substance, your weight
as you walk.*

Noticing the breath...

Allowing time...

*Continue walking
until you arrive at a location*

*where you want to 'place'
your body– yourself
placing yourself – in your chosen environment
as if returning to a place of rest
for a moment.*

*Allowing your body to
relax, arrive.*

*Sensing your body
touching and meeting the environment.*

*Noticing the places you are in contact with
the floor, your own body, objects, plants, materials, and more...*

*Sensing this arrival into 'place' in
stillness.*

*You are touching the place
and the place is touching you.*

Allowing any tension to soften.

Noticing your breath...

Allowing time...

*And then, staying within this place
you have chosen,
explore, with the support of gravity,
the sense of the moving, pouring, draping weight
of the body.*

*Discovering unusual and surprising
positions
to rest in
as the weight pours
in increments- through the bones, tissues, cells, organs.*

Moments of movement

Moments of stillness.

In a subtle dance of weight and place

*You are touching the place
and the place is touching you*

Allowing any tension to soften and unravel.

Noticing your breath...

Allowing time...

*As you sense the touch of weight and place
in movement and stillness
And as you follow the shifts of weight
pouring through your bones, tissues, organs, cells*

*Perhaps noticing the moments
of hanging, swinging,
but also
buoyancy and suspension
that arrives
from the weight pouring downwards,
something springs upward.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
finding a journey
following the weight of your body
and the touch of place
to your coat.*

Allowing time...

As you arrive at your coat,

*noticing the first moment
of contact...*

*You are touching your coat
your coat is touching you*

*Gradually, beginning a gentle pouring weight dance
together
into dressing
sensing the weight of your body
in relationship to the weight
of the coat
through touch
through movement
through stillness.*

Allowing time...

*Once dressed in your coat
begin a journey,
travelling and moving
through the environment together*

*Sensing the weight of your body
in relation to the weight of the coat.*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*Allowing the weight
to move, pour, drape
through your body*

*Sensing your substance
the breath
and also the substance
of place.*

*Arriving now and then
in more unusual and surprising
positions
with your body.*

Noticing your breath...

Allowing time...

*Finding a place to arrive at in stillness
sensing the support of gravity
the relationship of weight
with body and coat.*

*And slowly, undressing in the coat
following the touch
of weight and place.*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*In the stillness, releasing any hidden tension
allowing gravity to invite the pouring, draping of weight
and the quality of rising suspension and buoyancy.*

Allowing time...

*When you are finished undressing
place the coat, once again, over your shoulder
and
returning your coat and then your body
to the place of rest.
you chose before.*

*Then, continue on your gravity, weighted walk journey
sensing substance, feet touching the floor,
following a steady, slow, constant beat.*

Allowing time...

*Once coat and your body
return to their places,
closing your eyes.*

Allowing your body to rest into weight and place.

Noticing your breath...

*Allowing any tension to unravel
as the journey continues
to resonate
in your tissues, bones, organs, cells.*

*The place is touching you
And you are touching the place.*

Allowing time...



The Somatic Costume Dressing Room, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Sally E. Dean

DRESSING ROOM

THE DRESSING ROOM

How may the frame of a 'dressing room', as a liminal site of 'entanglement' (Barad, 2007), rupture and transform the pre-defined roles of designer – performer – audience – and costume?

Dressing Rooms are liminal places of entanglement and transition: the 'pre' and 'post' performance space and a temporary home for performers. As both public and private spheres, they are continually improvised and rehearsed, a place of intimacy and separation. As a threshold between the ordinary and extraordinary, they harbour both the mundane and the interior and exterior transformative process of dressing up.

These changing rooms and their inhabitants come and go, people, materials, and even animals pass through. Dressing Rooms, in more experimental or low-budget performance works, can be homes, bedrooms, trees in a city park, nearby bathrooms, storerooms, cars, or even the performance space itself. If there is no 'designated space' for the dressing room, performers create it, however temporary (and now, even online).

Dressing rooms often reveal 'unfinished states' where bodies are between dressing and undressing, with costumes and environments in a state of flux. This in-between state of both body, costume, and environment can be perceived as a place of multiplicity.

Human bodies inside are not yet performers, but not yet audiences. Costumes are between being worn and taken off, between daily life attire, and clothing for a performance. All bodies and costumes become entangled with unknown potential – pluriversal - connecting through a sense of assemblage and entanglement.

Summary of Key Elements of a Dressing Room

- A liminal space – locations are transitory, impermanent and harbour many comings and goings of body assemblages

- A home
- A social and private sphere that fluctuates between intimacy and separation
- Includes the mundane as well as the extraordinary acts of transformation through dressing rituals
- A threshold between daily life and performance
- The unfinished, in-between states of costumes and the wearers
- Multiplicity: More than one costume, more than one body
- The role of the costume and the performer/audience becomes disoriented and entangled

SOMATIC ACT 10:
Attending to Eyes



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need comfortable clothes, a quiet place to move and rest outdoors sitting, and if warm enough, bare feet. Choose a quiet nature environment where there is less human activity.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group

.....

*Begin in a comfortable sitting position
facing in the direction of a landscape view
with many layers
and textures
near and far
with feet touching
the earth.*

Sensing the quality of the air

*touching you today
moisture or dryness
heat or cold.*

*Allowing the smells
to gather into your nostrils
and awaken your
bones, tissues, organs, cells.*

Noticing your breath...

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
close your eyes.*

*Our eyes
open and close
as do flowers*

*Gently allowing your breath
to soften
Touching and releasing
any hidden tensions
behind the eyes.*

*Placing the palms of the hands
just over the eyes
for a moment*

*Sensing the bones of the hands
meeting the bones surrounding the eyes*

*The soft tissues of the palms
meeting the soft tissues of the eyes*

*Allowing the pressure, heat and weight
from the palms*

*to soften and gently
cleanse and release
any hidden tensions
surrounding the eyes.*

*And then allowing our hands
to rest again
at our sides
with our feet
touching and sensing
the support
of the earth.*

*With eyes still closed,
sensing the eyes resting
as if floating like water lilies
in their deep pools*

Allowing time...

*As the eyes are resting
broadening our attention
to the sounds
of your environment:
the rustling of a nearby leaf
the gentle beating of your heart
or the far away drone
or an airplane passing through the sky.*

*Being with this orchestra of near and far sounds
and how it meets and resonates
inside your body
for a moment.*

Allowing time...

*And then gently,
allowing the eyes to slowly open*

*little by little
with more and more light
entering the eyes.*

*Allow your eyes to rest in a soft gaze
allowing the breath of the landscape
to be received by your eyes*

*The colours, the textures, the movement
being there
nourishing your eyes.*

*No need to reach or search
for anything
to look at
but the eyes gently receive
what is there.*

*It's as if the eyes are seeing
from the back of the skull.*

Allowing time...

*Allow the sense of touch, sounds and smells
to support your 'seeing.'*

*The touch of earth on your feet
and air on your body.*

The sounds near and far.

*The smells awakening
your bones, tissues, organs, cells.*

Allowing time...

*And when it is time,
especially if the eyes are calling*

*for a further rest,
slowly, little by little,
allowing the eyes to close slowly
with less and less light
entering the eyes.*

*The eyes resting in their deep pools
The breath unraveling
any extra tension
that might arise in the body
during this process
such as in the jaw or
the back of the neck
or the spine
or the shoulders or legs.*

*Allowing time to be with
eyes closed again
for a moment.*

*Sensing the earth
touching your feet
the sounds and smells
nourishing your
whole being.*

Allowing time...

*Allowing time for the eyes
to find a gentle dance
of slowly opening
and slowly closing.*

*As the sense of touch, sounds and smells
support your 'seeing'*

*The eyes opening
the eyes closing*

as do flowers.

Allowing time...

Noticing your breath...

*Sensing how your
experience of touch
shifts
as the eyes open
as the eyes close.*

*Your feet touching
the earth
the quality of the air
touching you
with moisture or dryness
heat or cold*

*Or even how your clothing
touches your skin.*

*Sensing how your
experience of touch
shifts
as the eyes open
as the eyes close.*

Allowing time...

*And resting again, sitting,
with eyes closed,
feet touching the earth
the air touching our skin
the smells awakening
and the sounds resonating in
our bones, tissues, organs and cells.*

Allowing time...



Trees by Akerselva River, Oslo. Photo by Sally E. Dean

SENSORY SYSTEMS

The senses are a gateway for meaning and knowledge. Starting from the ‘somatic body’ (Reeve, 2011, pp. 17-22), or somatic approach, the senses are key to experiencing and accessing the ‘materiality of the body’ as well an ‘interface between body and mind’ (Grau, 2011, p. 8) and an interface between the interiority of the body and the external world. Sensation, the base of the ‘somatic body’ and somatic approach, implies a relationship between an organism and its environment (Schiffman, 1996, p. 2). With senses being a site of interaction, meaning is constructed as an active interpretative process as opposed to a passive reaction to stimuli (Vannini, Vaskul & Gottschalk, 2012, p.10). Sensation leads to perception of ourselves, others, and the world around us. (Dean, 2015, p. 161)

It is important to note that the senses and the act of sensing return us to a basic connection that we have with all living beings – plants, animals, trees, all of which are sensing. Although research about how plants and trees sense is beyond the scope of this research (e.g., Trees see through photoreceptors and smell each other: Wohlleben, 2016), the key point is that sensing is our basic mutual resource with all life forms and is present before the construction of or our understanding of concepts (Selver & Brooks, 2007, p. 15).

The Senses as Social-Cultural Constructs

Anthropologists of the senses remind us that the senses are not necessarily biological, but are also social-cultural-historical constructs.

Scholars in this field such as Constance Classen (1993), Paul Stoller (1997), David Howes (2005), Tim Ingold, Kathryn Geurts, Michael Jackson and Caroline Potter (2008) have re-awakened the primacy of the senses and have emphasised its potential resource in researching and understanding other cultures. ‘Senses are both the shapers and bearers of culture’ (Howes, 2005, p. 17). (Dean, 2015, p. 161)

Sensory models are not universally shared between different cultures and throughout history. Classifications of what a sense is, the number of senses, and how senses are ranked and prioritized changes depending upon history and culture. Although the Western society today typically follows the Aristotelian sensory model of five senses (touch, smell, taste, hearing, vision), with a prioritization of vision, historically there were other classifications. Plato did not separate senses from feelings; in 'one enumeration of perceptions he begins with sight, hearing and smell, leaves out taste, instead of touch mentions perceptions of hot and cold, and adds sensations of pleasure, discomfort, desire, and fear' (Classen, 1993, p. 2). (Dean, 2015, p. 161)

Scholars in the field of Sociology of the Senses (Vannini, Vaskul & Gottschalk, 2012, pp. 6-7), name thirteen potential senses. They begin by placing sensory experiences into two categories: exteroceptive senses, sensory modes giving information about the external world outside the human body; and interoceptive senses, sensory modes providing information about the internal world inside the human body. Exteroceptive senses include sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. Interoceptive senses include the sense of hunger, thirst, pain (nociception) and the sense of internal muscles and organs (proprioception). They then propose other sensory modes that operate and bridge between the external and internal to include: sense of balance (equilibrioception), movement (kinesthesia), temperature (thermoception) and sense of time (polychronicity and monochronicity).

Sensory categories, models and ranking affect how we value and perceive the world. For instance, in Buddhist cultures the mind is classified as a sixth sense. In other cultures, each sense is not linked necessarily to a specific organ in the body. For example, for Suprpto in Java, there were at least two ways of experiencing sound: the sense of 'hearing' with the ears and the sense of 'listening' with the whole body. (Sally's Java Journal). The Hopi of Arizona, USA, emphasise the sensation of vibrations, and the Desana of Colombia emphasise the sensation of colour (Grau, 2011, as cited in Dean, 2015, pp. 161-162).

Sensorial ranking is also culturally specific. Anthropologist Constance Classen found that the Ongee of the Andaman Islands in the South Pacific live in a world ordered by smell. For the Ongee, odour is the vital force of the universe and the basis of personal and social identity. Therefore, when an Ongee wishes to refer to 'me,' he or she points to his or her nose, the organ of smell' (Classen, 1993, p., 1). Smell is also prioritized when choosing a mate: finding a potential spouse is based on contrasting smells (Dean, 2015, pp. 161-162).

For the Anlo of Ghana, the kinesthetic sense is an essential component of the language (they have more than 50 terms for varying kinesthetic styles) and a key barometer for understanding people: 'each way of walking says something about a person's moral character' (Blakeslee, 2007, p. 127).

A culture's sensory ordering is not just a theoretical construction, but affects how they live, how they see their world, and what they value: 'The sensory order, in fact, is not just something one sees or hears about; it is something one lives' (Howes, 2005, as cited in Dean, 2015, p. 162).

Culture creates and affects our habits of attention through the senses. For example, in a study done using an eye tracker system to track the gaze of participants, differences emerge between American cultures and East Asian cultures on how the eyes attend to a photograph: 'When Americans look at a photograph of a tiger in a jungle, their eyes fixate first and primarily on the animal. When East Asians look at a photograph, their eyes fixate on objects in the background with occasional fixations on the big cat itself' (Blakeslee, 2007, p. 127).

These patterns of attention in our sensorial systems even affect the way we perceive and value performance and performers. For example, in Java, Indonesia, the performer's presence and the role of the performer in relation to the audience are very different in intent and training. Human beings in Java, traditionally and culturally, are seen as being a 'shadow' of God and Nature (metaphorically revealed through the Javanese shadow puppet play).

Suprpto applies this metaphor further to explain the performance presence of a Javanese performer as a 'shadow performer': 'The "shadow" performer seems to be somehow part of their environment, quiet, their energy contained, blending with other performers in the ensemble. Butoh dance often has this quality, in which dancers act like blank slates, in order to embody imagery, allowing them to become anything' (Dean, 2009, p. 2). Their attention is more in the relational field as a whole, rather than specifically focused between themselves and the audience. In occidental cultures, such as the United States and parts of Europe, performers, according to Suprpto, are 'light' performers: 'they stand out from the background, and from other performers, drawing the audience's attention' towards themselves (Dean, 2009, p. 2). Our preferences for how a performer 'performs' is embedded in our social and cultural patterns of attention within each sensory system.

The effects of a culture's relationship with and construction of sensation cannot be underestimated. It affects how we think and how society functions. It frames the social and intellectual aspects of culture – including, how we make and experience design, movement, performance and art. The visual, in design and art practices today, still dominates. As sensory anthropologist Constance Classen states: 'It would never occur to the ordinary Westerner viewing one in a museum that meaning might lie not only in its form and function, but also in its texture, taste, and smell' (Classen, 1993, p. 136). In the film world, the visual is at its forefront, and much the same is true in theatre: 'The most important thing about the stage is that it is a visual arena...The very word 'theatre' comes from the early Greek 'theatre', which means 'a seeing place' (Packard, 1987, p.21). (Dean, 2015, p. 162)

The Senses are Multi-Sensorial

The senses are inherently multi-sensorial, where all senses are interconnected and related. Philosopher Michel Serres refers to this dynamic sensorial overlap as the 'mingled body' (Serres, 2008). Although we begin our lives primarily with the sense of touch or the haptic

system, at the same time, we are coming from a multi-sensorial body and the perspective that all senses are interconnected and interrelated.

We have 'multi-sensory neurons' which allow sensations to overlap: 'What you feel with your body literally shapes what you hear' (Blakeslee, 2007, p., 117) and 'You will see something faster if it also makes a noise....What you hear influences what you feel' (Blakeslee, 2007, p. 116).

Awakening a De-sensitized Culture

Why is returning to the senses important?

The dominance of the eye and the suppression of the other senses tends to push us into detachment, isolation and exteriority' (Pallasmaa, 2005, p. 19).

In the wake of a de-sensitized culture, where violence is readily accessed and seen everyday on television, the internet for example, the effect on our bodies often becomes a 'shutting down' of sensing and experiencing. Might this not, in turn, lead to a propagation of seeking extreme sensory experiences, a lack of empathy or understanding towards others, and also create confusion between the sensual and the sexual? A return to our multi-sensing bodies supports the practice of embodiment and is a strategy to return to sensorial and material re-connection with ourselves and the world. And, it perhaps offers one an antidote to our current social and cultural disconnection and crisis.

Note: This section includes extensive quotes and ideas developed from my publication (Dean, 2015, pp. 155-180).

SOMATIC ACT 11: Attending to Sensing into Feeling



Allow for at least 30 minutes. Please wear comfortable, loose clothing and bring one piece of clothing that has a strong personal and emotional resonance for you.

You can experience this Somatic Act as a solo, duet or group. If experiencing it as a duet or group, you can witness the 'opening and closing journey' below, of each other.

.....

*Begin already dressed
in your chosen piece
of clothing.*

*As you are ready,
begin standing
forming an X-shape
with your body.*

*The legs are in a wide
but comfortable base with arms overhead
and extended in full length.*

*Head and eyes
are slightly gazing
in an upward direction.*

*Picture yourself
as a blossoming flower
– opening and gathering warmth
into all your petals
along the front, back and sides
of the skin
from the sun.*

*Very slowly
move into making a small, contracted
O-shape*

*with your body
as your spine
and knees bend,
gathering your arms, legs,
and head in towards
your centre.*

*Head and eyes
are slightly gazing
in a downward direction.*

*Picture yourself as a flower
closing itself at night
– protecting its nectar and pollen –
from dew and cold.*

*Gather in all your petals
as close to your stem as possible
to stay warm.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
explore moving back and forth
very slowly
from this extended and open position
of the body in an X
to slowly moving into
this more contracted and closed position
of the body in an O.*

*In the X, your legs are in a wide
but comfortable base
with arms overhead
and extended in full length.*

*Head and eyes
are slightly gazing*

in an upward direction.

*In the O-shape
spine
and knees bend,
as you gather arms, legs,
and head in towards
your centre.*

*Head and eyes
are slightly gazing
in a downward direction.*

*Sensing this transformation
in your physicality,
X to O
to X
as you are journeying
from opening
to closing
to opening,
little by little
layer by layer
slowly.*

*Allowing time...
The blossoming
and closing
of a flower.*

*Creating connection
and differentiation
with yourself
and your environment.*

*Sensing the edges
of your body
meeting the edges*

*of the place
surrounding you –
touching air, earth, light
and the nearby 'things'
in your environment.*

Allowing time...

*As you continue this
essential journey
of opening and closing
with your whole body
inviting your attention
to 'sensing'
your breath,
skin,
tissues,
bones,
organs.*

*Inviting the eyes
to close, for a moment*

*As you are
sensing breathing
sensing skin
sensing tissues
sensing bones
sensing organs*

*As you travel in and out
of opening and closing
– X and O.*

Allowing time...

*Slowly,
broadening your*

*attention to
sensing how the touch
and movement
of your clothing shifts
as the physical form
of your body moves
from X to O.*

*Your clothing is touching
and moving
along your skin
and your skin is touching
and moving along
your clothing
in this opening
and closing
dance.*

Allowing time...

*As you are attending
to the touch sensation
a direct tactile meeting
in this present moment.*

*Noticing the texture,
weight,
pressure,
temperature,
of your clothing
against your skins as you move...*

*Opening
closing
opening
closing*

and breathing.

Allowing time...

*And as you continue,
Allowing the eyes
to open
a little
layer
by layer.*

*Head and eyes
are slightly gazing
in an upward direction
in the X shape.*

*Head and eyes
are slightly gazing
in a downward direction
in the O shape.*

Allowing time...

*Sensing the touch
and movement
of clothing against
your skin.*

*Attending to the tissues,
bones, organs, breath
in your dance
of opening and
closing.*

Allowing time...

*Slowly, from this place
of sensing
and breathing
and attending*

*to the substance
of your bodies
and the touch
of your clothing
begin inviting
a small window
of emotion
into the experience.*

*As you stay with sensation,
how does the simple
movement form of
an X or an O
enter into feeling with an emotional tone?*

*Noticing how it is to sense and feel
being in the form of an X
or the form of an O
and the transitional places
in between.*

Allowing time...

*As you are attending
to sensing into feeling
in your opening and closing
dance
returning again
and again to
sensing.*

*Your sense of touch
your chosen piece
of clothing are
anchoring you
to this present moment.*

*An invitation into
resting into substance*

*as you are
sensing feeling.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
sharing your experiences
speaking, writing, or drawing
with or without a partner.*

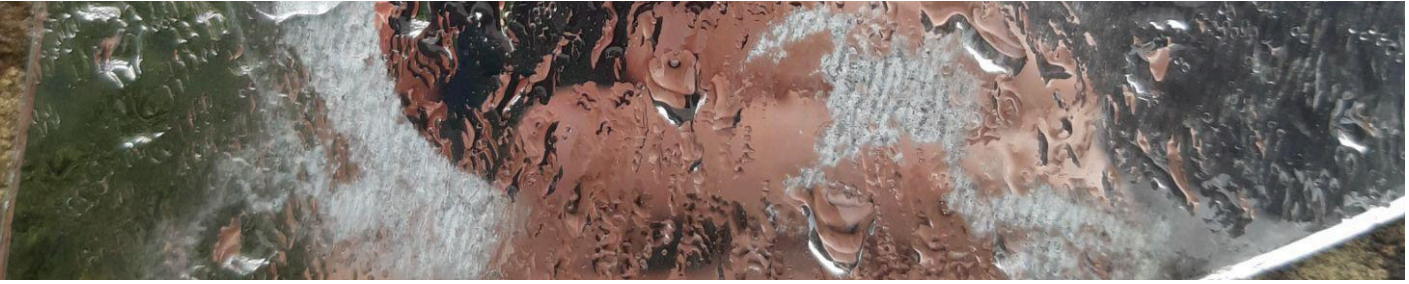
*How was it to experience
and/or witness
this opening and closing journey?
How does the position
of the body in X or O 'feel'
to a participant and to a witness?*

Notes: Reflections on Sensing into Feeling

Flowers open and close. Butterflies open and close their wings to fly. People open and close their legs to walk. Nature, as a sentient being, senses this process of opening and closing, responding to light, temperature, visiting insects, and more. How can you stay with sensing, as nature does, before entering the terrain of feeling?

The movement of opening and closing invites a particular direction and way you experience your feelings in your body. As qualities and orientations of movement, they define a living boundary, becoming a constant dialogue between your body, the chosen clothing, the things in the room, and the world around you. This dialogue creates a relational field, allowing you to differentiate your own being while remaining in connection to the clothing, to another body, or to the place. Through this subtle dance, you discover the threshold where self meets world.

By staying with the sensation first, in the physicality, attending to this living boundary, you can move into the place of feeling from an embodied position. This offers a sense of safety by welcoming feelings that arise from the substance of our bodies.



Joan Davis' Garden, Gorse Hill, Ireland, 2022. Photo by Sally E. Dean.

SENSING *INTO* FEELING

In the development of the Somatic Costume Movement practice, which continued further into the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, I made a clear distinction between the words 'sensing' and 'feeling'.

'Feeling' or 'to feel' often activates more of an internal experience with an emotional or affective response. 'Sensing' or 'to sense' tends to act instead as the bridge and meeting place between the interiority of the body and the external world, activating both the internal and external. For example, 'I touch the costume and the costume touches me'.

In my experience, 'sensing' has supported both myself and others to experience and return to the materiality of both bodies and costumes. This is especially important when there is a strong emotional response to wearing a costume or touching material. Returning the wearer to 'sensing' can support a sense of safety in the experience. For example, in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, when one wearer began crying from the touch experience, I encouraged the person to sense their feet on the floor, the temperature of the room and listen to the sounds around them, bringing their attention to the 'sense of the real' and the present moment.

Starting with sensing before feeling is also intentionally incorporated into the performance, *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces*. This shifts the meaning-making process to further reflect on how imagination can be activated. For example, as one Traveller shared, 'It was sensing into feeling before thinking' (Feedback from Audience Six, August 2022, KHiO). This will be discussed further in Part Three, Chapter 3.

My intention is not to separate sensing and feeling, but rather to clarify the difference between them so that there is a choice to lean towards one more than the other.

Sensing and feeling is developed from the work of Suprpto Suryodarmo.

SOMATIC ACT 12A:
Attending to Skin & Touch Direction



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a blanket, a sleeveless T-shirt and shorts. The clothing, when worn, needs to be loose and comfortable, allowing for space and movement between the clothing and the skin. Natural materials such as cotton are best.

This Somatic Act can be done as a duet or a group.

Begin by finding a comfortable place to rest in lying, sitting or standing while wearing your shorts and T-shirt. If you are in a colder climate, you can place the blanket on your body to keep you warm.

*As you are ready,
begin lying on your back
closing your eyes
gathering your attention
towards the movement
of your breath.*

*Allow your body
to arrive and rest
sensing the support
of gravity.*

*With each inhale
sensing the breath's pulsation
rise and slightly expand
towards the edges
of the body.*

*With each exhale
sensing the breath's pulsation
returning towards
the centre of the body
settling towards the earth.*

*This ongoing pulsation
is moving you
quietly
with each breath.*

Allowing time...

*As you are breathing, pulsating
gathering your attention
towards your skin.*

*The skin
one of the largest organs
in your body
composed of about
60% water.*

*A living, breathing,
permeable membrane
offering protection,
circulation, regulation,
and irrigation.*

*The skin is
the interface between
your inner world and
your outer world.*

*Sensing this resource
as you breathe,
and if you like,
move, in small ways,
for a moment.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
begin with your palms and fingers*

*gently brushing and sliding your hands
along the surfaces
of your bare skin
that is easy to reach.*

*The touch is light
but with clear contact
with a moderate pace.*

*Touch as much
of the bare skin directly
as possible.
If it is covered
by hair or clothing
then simply touch
the hair or clothing
while sensing the skin.*

*Begin at the places
that are easy
to reach
while lying down
and when and if you need
you can also
roll to one side
or even sit
to access touching
your body
more easily.*

*Discovering
all the surfaces
of the skin
the front
the sides
the back
of the body.*

*This becomes
an awakening dance
of touch and skin –
your living, breathing,
moving landscape.*

Allowing time...

*As you are breathing
and touching skin
noticing the quiet hidden places
- the bottom of the feet
the sides of the fingers...*

*Offering a little extra time
on the landscape of the face
sensing the different qualities
of skin.*

*The crevices of the ears
the valleys of the eyes
the hill of the nose.*

*An awakening dance
of touch and skin –
your living, breathing,
moving landscape.*

Allowing time...

*And gradually
allowing the hands
to rest
for a moment
returning to resting
on your back.*

Sensing the reverberations

*of your touch
along your skin*

And breathing.

*With each inhale
sensing the breath's pulsation
rise and slightly expand
towards the edges
of the body.*

*With each exhale
sensing the breath's pulsation
returning towards
the centre of the body
settling towards the earth.*

Allowing time...

*As you are inhaling
and exhaling
sensing the breath's pulsation
moving towards
and away
from the centre of the body.*

*With eyes closed,
picturing
following the direction
of your exhale
with the touch
of your hands.*

*On each exhale
picturing
hands brushing
the skin
starting from the head, feet and hands*

*to the belly
and middle of the back area.*

On the inhale, picturing the hands now resting.

*Continue picturing
brushing **towards** the centre
of your body
on each exhale.*

On the inhale, picturing the hands now resting.

*The brushing is with a slightly quicker pace
but with many little brushes
as you picture
your touch travelling towards
the centre
of your body
on each exhale*

*Brushing towards
the centre of the body
on each exhale.*

Allowing time...

*And pausing for a moment
sensing the reverberations
of the touch direction
of the exhale.*

*As you are ready,
with eyes still closed,
picturing
following the direction
of your inhale
with the touch
of your hands.*

*On each inhale,
continue picturing
your hands brushing
the skin
starting from the belly
and the middle of the back area
out to the head, feet and hands.*

On the exhale, picturing the hands resting.

*On the inhale,
picturing brushing **away**
from the centre
of your body.*

On the exhale, picturing the hands resting.

*Brushing the skin,
this time,
is with a slightly quicker pace
but with many little brushes
as you picture your touch
travelling away from
your centre to the extremities.*

*Brushing away
from the centre of the body
on each inhale.*

Allowing time...

*And gradually,
returning to resting
for a moment
sensing the reverberations
of the touch direction
of the inhale.*

*Allowing the breath now
to move on its own.*

Allowing time...

*As you are breathing,
slowly finding a gentle transition
to sitting or standing
allowing the eyes
to open.*

*Gradually, moving towards
a partner to begin
a brushing touch exploration
together.*

*One person is the toucher
the other person
is the touchee.*

*As you decide on
which role to start with
please have a brief
conversation with your friend
if there are any areas
that you would prefer
not to be touched
or any touch-based needs.*



*The touch can be stopped
or adjusted, at any time.
Please be in communication
with each other, when needed,
during the touch experience.*

As you are ready,

*the toucher begins
brushing with their fingertips
and palms of their hands
along the surfaces
of your skin
starting from the extremities
and moving **towards** the centre
of your body.*

*As you begin brushing
from the hands – to the centre (the belly and middle back area).
from the head - to the centre
from the feet - to the centre.*

*With a slightly quicker
yet not at a hurried pace.*

*With time and spaciousness
to sense the reverberations
of the touch directions
on your skin.*

*The brushing is repetitive-
with many little brushes
as the toucher travels towards
your centre
with their touch*

*From the hands – to the centre (the belly and middle back area).
from the head - to the centre
from the feet - to the centre.*

*Allowing the breath
to move on its own.*

*Brushing all the surfaces
of the skin
the front
the sides*

*the back
of the body.*

Allowing time...

And finding a pause...

*Allowing a moment
for the touchee
to sense the reverberations
of the touch
that has travelled
towards the centre
of the body.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
the toucher begins
brushing with their fingertips
and palms of their hands
along the surfaces
of your skin
starting from the centre and moving towards the extremities
of your body.*

*As you begin brushing
from the centre (the belly and middle back area) to the hands
from the centre – to the head
from the centre – to the feet.*

*With a slightly quicker
yet not at a hurried pace.*

*With time and spaciousness
to sense the reverberations
of the touch directions
on your skin. The brushing is repetitive-*

*with many little brushes
as the toucher travels
away from your centre
with their touch.*

*From the centre (the belly and middle back area) to the hands
from the centre – to the head
from the centre – to the feet.*

*Allowing the breath
to move on its own.*

*Brushing all the surfaces
of the skin
the front
the sides
the back
of the body.*

Allowing time...

And finding a pause...

*Allowing a moment
for the touchee
to sense the reverberations
of the touch
that has travelled
away from the centre
of the body.*

Allowing time...

*And changing roles,
repeating the above journey
from the hand icon.*

Allowing time...

*And then, after each person
has offered and received touch
moving away from your partner.*

*As you are sensing
the reverberations
of the touch and breath
explorations,
allowing a dance of skin, breath
and resonating touch imprints
to emerge.*

*Perhaps still sensing
your partner's hands
travelling towards the centre
and away from the centre
of your body
as you move.*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*Riding the inhales
and exhales
of your breath
pulsating with the skin.*

*Sensing all the surfaces
of the skin
front
sides
back.*

*An awakening dance
from touch and skin –
your living, breathing,
moving landscape.*

Allowing time...

*And gradually returning
to resting and sensing
the touch of the floor
as your breath
moves on its own.*

In your own time, finding a transition to writing, drawing and sharing your reflections. What was your experience of the difference between the brushing touch towards the centre of the body or away from the centre towards the extremities? Other reflections?

Note 1: Pulsation inspired by the work of Joan Davis in her Essence project.

Note 2: The quality of touch, its weight, pressure, direction and more, activates different body systems. The lighter brushing quality in this Somatic Act will awaken the skin, as opposed to a deeper, more pressured and sustained touch will awaken the muscle and bone systems, for example.

SOMATIC ACT 12B: Touch of Skin & Clothing



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need trousers and a long-sleeved shirt. The clothing, when worn, needs to be loose and comfortable, allowing for space and movement between the clothing and the skin. Natural materials such as cotton are best.

This Somatic Act can be done as a duet or a group and is a continuation and development of Somatic Act 12a: Attending to Skin & Touch Direction.

.....

*Slowly, finding a transition
to wearing your long sleeved shirt
and trousers
and finding a friend
to move with
for later.*

Allowing time...

*And then, finding a comfortable place
to lie on the floor.*

Closing your eyes.

*Noticing that your clothing
is touching you
and you
are touching your clothing...*

*Your clothing is like
a second skin
- a living moving permeable membrane
and boundary.*

*Slowly, finding small ways of moving,
allowing your skin*

*to slide along your clothing
and your clothing
to slide along your skin.*

*Perhaps a simple rotation
of one arm at first,
or a gentle bend of one knee.*

*Clothing and skin,
meeting and touching
each other.*

Allowing time...

*And noticing the skin places
without clothing,
such as the face,
allowing the skin to slide
along the air or the floor,
as if it is a second clothing.*

*This becomes a gentle dance
– a duet of sliding skin and clothing.*

*Sometimes sliding over each other
Sometimes meeting
Sometimes resting on each other.*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*As the movement grows
allowing the eyes
to open a little
now and then
with a soft focus.*

Allowing time...And allowing a momen

*of stillness to slowly arrive
returning to sensing
your breath
and all the surfaces
of your skin.*

*Gradually, gathering your attention
to the space between
your two skins – your skin
and your second skin – your clothing.*

*A gentle duet emerges
– a dance
sensing the space between
the two skins.*

*Perhaps there is a lot of space
between a sleeve and an arm
or very little space between
the trouser and the leg.*

*Allowing the dance to unfold
and move you.*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*As the movement grows
allowing the eyes
to open a little
now and then
with a soft focus.*

Allowing time...

*As the dance continues,
begin sensing the presence
of your friend*

in the place with you.

*As you are ready, begin slowly sensing the presence of your friend
in the place with you as your dance continues.*

Allowing time...

*And returning to sensing
your breath
and all the surfaces
of your skin
as a pause,
a moment of stillness
arises.*

*Your clothing
is touching you
and you
are touching your clothing.*

*While still sensing
your clothing, skin
and the space between
begin sensing
the presence
of your partner's clothing,
skin, and the space
between.*

*A dance begins to emerge, at first,
without touch.*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*If the eyes have been closed,
allowing them
to slowly open
little by little*

and in layers.

*Sliding skin, clothing
and the space between.*

Allowing time...

*Allowing the breath
to support you
as you begin playing with
moving towards
or away from
your partner.*

*Exploring how close
before touch arises
when moving together.*

*Discovering how far away
spatially, to be
while still sensing
the presence of
your partner's clothing, skin
and the space between.*

*Moments of spatial closeness
without touch.*

*Moments of spatial distance
while breathing.*

*As the dance continues
of sliding clothing, skin
and the space between.*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

Allowing time...

*The movement
of the inhale
the movement
of the exhale
supporting the dance.*

*As you are sensing
the presence
of your clothing, skin
and the space between
and your partner's clothing,
skin, and the space
between.*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
you can begin to include
brushing touch
with your partner.*

*Brushing touch towards
the centre of the body
and away from the centre
of the body
while still sensing
the layers of clothing, skin,
and the space between.*

*Moments with touch
Moments without touch.*

Allowing time...

*And then slowly,
moving away from
your partner
and moving with
an invisible partner
as if they are still
touching and moving
with you
as you move.*

*Sensing their tangible presence
with sliding clothing, skin
and the space between.*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

Allowing time...

*And gradually,
your dance slowly
invites you into the floor
into a place of rest
and stillness.*

Allowing time...

*Closing your eyes,
returning to your breath
with each inhale
with each exhale
sensing your body
settle into the support
of the floor.*

*Your clothing
is touching you
and you*

are touching your clothing.

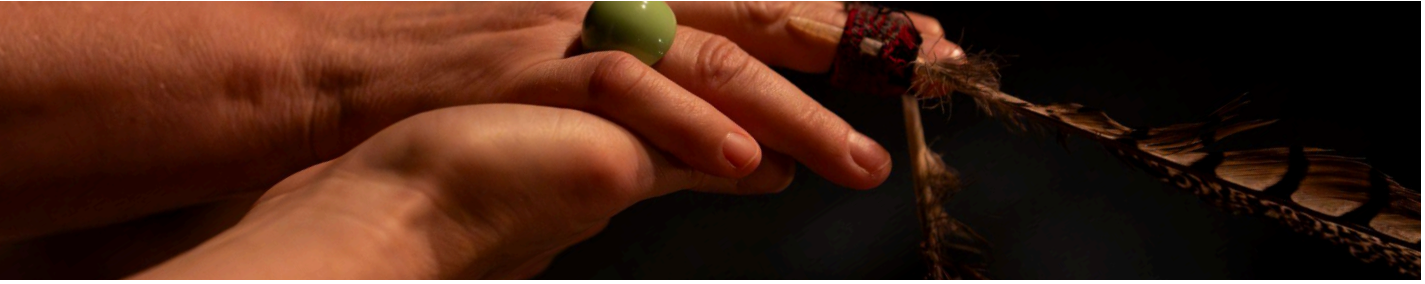
*Your clothing is like
a second skin,
a living moving
permeable membrane
and boundary
enveloping your body
in touch.*

Allowing time to rest and settle...

*And when you are ready,
gently opening the eyes
layer by layer
as you find a way to your feet.*

*Allowing your skin and clothing
to support your transition
into the rest of your day.*

You are welcome to write, draw, and/or share your experiences with your friend.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces, photo by Elin Osjord, 2023

TOUCH

'(The skin) is the oldest and the most sensitive of our organs, our first medium of communication, and our most efficient protector.... Touch is the parent of our eyes, ears, nose and mouth'.

(Pallasmaa, 2005, p. 11)

A SOMATIC APPROACH TO TOUCH

How do we attend through touch? Touch can range from a spectrum of receptive to active qualities – oscillating from a 'being' touch towards a 'doing' touch.

Typically, a somatic approach begins with attending and attuning to and with things, whether bodies or costumes, through this receptive quality of touch - 'being present with' and without a particular objective. This includes attending and being present with oneself while attending to other things. For example, with hands resting on the belly while listening to the fall and rise of the breath underneath the hands, there is this receptive quality.

From this receptive quality, arriving together in a place of presence, a more active quality arises without a prior plan. A movement 'towards' something emerges - a direction/orientation. This could be an orientation towards something spatial, such as moving the hands while touching slightly upwards towards the sky, or to a certain quality of movement, such as slightly vibrating the tissues.

Touching when active in this somatic approach is more about giving a direction, 'a path', rather than a specific shape or form. For example, I could put the body in a particular position, place it in a shape (pull and fix the shoulders back), but, in this way, I am

approaching touch and the body as a static form, as opposed to forming with the body as a living, dynamic, responsive being. This approach also applies to a costume.

In somatic practitioner Bonnie Bambridge Cohen's embryological approach, and in her series called 'Embodied Touch as Transformative Practice (2019)', she names two different approaches to touch with these receptive and active qualities: the egg approach and the sperm approach. The egg approach is touch 'without an agenda', with 'nothing to do and nowhere to go'. It can be 'infinitely still and long' (Bainbridge Cohen, 2019). The sperm approach is 'spontaneous, creative, it knows where to go'. It knows the direction but not necessarily where it leads (Bainbridge Cohen, 2019). Starting from an egg approach, you 'yield to the (touch) meeting to discover the movement that transforms' (Bainbridge Cohen, 2019).

As Bambridge-Cohen suggests, and as I found in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, attending to things through touch has transformative qualities and can even be 'mending', in the absence of the goal to 'mend'. For example, during a Self Dressing session in 2020, I wore the 'Balloon-Tight Ring' which helped my upset stomach. This is discussed further in Part Two, Chapter 2 of the PhD. This is also evident in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room session with Clare Ballard (please refer to Part Two, Chapter 10 of the PhD) who began the session feeling disconnected during the COVID pandemic. The simple material of tights facilitated her reconnection.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TOUCH

Sight 'operates at a distance and requires no physical interaction. Compared to touch, which *attaches* one body to another, sight is detached....Touch is intimate and reciprocal: when we touch someone, that person feels our "touch" and we feel theirs' (Classen & Howe, 2014, p. 8).

With the current paradigm of perception, consciousness, and knowledge mainly based on the sense of seeing or vision, how does a touch paradigm shift the way we connect in relationship to the world?

Alva Noë (2013) postulates such a question with an example of seeing a tomato vs. touching a tomato as a metaphor for perception and consciousness. The visual, following the traditional theory of the mind, perceives the tomato as being 'out there' and enters consciousness by producing an internal representation of the tomato in the brain. Instead, approaching the tomato through touch, postulates that the tomato and the person are indisputably linked, and consciousness arises not from our brains *per se*, but from the web-like interactions of a larger environment. 'Tomato consciousness' is dependent upon and part of a relational field (Alva Noë, 2013, 8:30 to 10:27).

Paradigms of perception typically focus on specific qualities or features revealed by a particular sense. In the case of vision, there are often metaphysical questions arising about

colours. Philosophically, there is an absence of research into the nature of the qualities we experience through touch, specifically its tangibility (Fulkerson, 2024).

As the book, *Modernity and the hegemony of vision* (Lewin, 1993, p. 2) elaborates, the Western and modern ocularcentric paradigm has historically dominated how we describe and define knowledge, power, and ethics. Further, perceptual and knowledge paradigms become cultural and political.

Artistic practices are also embedded within ocularcentric approaches. Costume design practices typically start with the visual aesthetic – what would design practices be like if they started from touch first? How would the tangibility of touch and substance, and its way of being in relationship, open up other models of designing and living in this world?

SENSE OF TOUCH AND THE HAPTIC SYSTEM

Defining the Sense of Touch

The sense of touch includes the tactile, the kinesthetic or kinesthetic body consciousness and proprioceptive senses.

Humans receive sensory information from two receptors: our mechanoreceptors (responding to mechanical pressure or distortion) and thermo-receptors (responding to changes in temperature). These receptors are found on both the skin (cutaneous inputs) and in our muscles, tendons and joints (kinesthetic inputs) (Lederman & Klatsky, 2009, p. 1439). The kinesthetic sense is our perception of the conjoined body and its movements. (Dean, 2021, p. 231)

The sense of touch includes both perceptual touch and extended touch. Perceptual touch is primarily a localized sensory experience at the point of contact between the skin and things, such as sensing textures, temperatures and pressure. This is more of a receptive experience where sensing comes from our skin receptors (cutaneous inputs) (Fulkerson, 2024).

Extended touch (often associated with haptic perception) includes a more distal awareness through tools (such as a cane, a costume, or a tall hat) with the whole body being included in an active exploration. These touch experiences come from both our skin receptors (cutaneous inputs) and from our muscles, joints, and tendons (kinaesthetic inputs), as well as other cognitive processes (expectations, memory, patterns of attention, etc.) (Fulkerson, 2024).

The material, texture, weight, form and movement of the Somatic Costume itself typically creates a direct and tactile kinesthetic experience for the wearer. For example, if the costume is heavy, the person may experience a corresponding ‘heaviness’ in their body’ (Dean, 2021, p. 231).

Movement and stillness are essential in this touch experience. The Somatic Costume of Feather Fingers is an example of activating both perceptual and extended touch, through the compression activated through the material directly on the fingers and the extension the feathers provide into the environment.

The Haptic System

Many researchers propose that touch is best conceptualized as a comprehensive 'haptic system' that extends beyond the skin's surface receptors to include motor functions, integrating sensory input with movement (Fulkerson, 2024). 'Haptic touch' encompasses the entire body and active engagement with the environment (Grunwald, 2008, p. vii), incorporating movement, whether self-initiated or experienced by an external source.

Because perception was historically defined as largely receptive and passive (Locke & Hume), a 'tabula rasa' waiting to be filled, the importance of emphasizing the 'active' quality of perception is understood. However, there is a potential danger of reducing haptic touch to a 'doing' quality and excluding a receptive and 'being' quality that is essential in a somatic approach. Because of this, I include 'receptive touch', as part of haptic touch, and that attending and 'being' with before visible action or external movement of the body takes place is a way of engaging and being part of the ever-changing environment.

Why touch?

I start with the sense of touch, the haptic system, for many reasons. First, because in costume design, dance and performance processes, 'touch is central to experiences, learning, knowledge and creation process. Second, the haptic system has an inherent relational and multi-sensorial approach; its multi-sensorial modes enable us to perceive 'weight, pressure, balance, temperature, vibration and presence' (Fisher, 1997, p. 4). Dean 2015, p. 162)

Third, it can be argued that the sense of touch is closely linked to bodily awareness through its connection to proprioception – our awareness of where our body is located and orientated (O'Shaughnessy, 1995, Ratcliffe, 2008, 2012).

Fourth, the haptic sense also implicates the body's proximal and distal senses, linking our experience both to the interiority of the body and the space around us.

Five, the haptic system in the visually dominated Western culture, has been the least researched. This lack of research is also due to the complex role touch plays as being inherently multi-sensorial, with various theories about how the nervous system makes sense of the resulting information (Scharf, 1975, p. 178). Scholars tend to approach touch from a visual framework, although visual versus touch sensorial processes can be quite different. (Dean, 2015, p. 162)

Six, a variety of philosophical perspectives on touch continue to be published, offering exciting new debates and an understanding of how touch functions. For example, currently there is a debate on the extent to which touch provides direct awareness of external objects versus awareness mediated by our own bodies, as well as theories that further interrogate the spatial aspects of touch (Fulkerson, 2024).

Finally, 'haptic' implies intentionality, engagement, and movement where the body is participating in its explorations and experiences in the world: living, changing organisms in response to living, changing environments.

The Haptic System is the doorway into how we become aware of our surroundings and our sense of self. In 'this way, the sense of touch is sine qua non for thought, action, and consciousness' (Grunwald, 2008, vii). It is through touch that we come to understand ourselves, others and the world around us. (Dean, 2015, p. 162)

Note: This chapter includes quotes and ideas developed from these two publications (Dean, 2015 and 2021).

TOUCH-LED PERFORMANCE AND TACTILE ART

Immersive performances, starting from the sense of touch, include Kate McIntosh's choreography 'In Many Hands' (McIntosh, 2016), Gry Worre Hallberg's sensorial durational performances 'Sister's Hope Home' (Hallberg, n.d.), and Liv Kristin Holmberg's/ Hanna Barfod's immersive work starting with the skin called 'Hudriket' (Holmberg & Barfod, 2022). The Tactile Art and Poems of Jan Svankmajer, included in his book *Touching and Imagining* (2014), are a future resource that I intend to return to, with its initial writings resonating with my own: 'I propose an expansion of tactile Poetism, a return to the fundamental substance of being' (Svankmajer, 2014, p. 97).

SOMATIC ACT 13A:

Attending and Following Body



Allow for at least 45 minutes. You will need comfortable clothes, and a clear place to move in.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group.

.....

How and what do we attend to and follow in the body?

Purpose: This Somatic Act is a movement improvisation that invites you to explore how our preferences, embedded in choreographic and costume design practices, influence what we choose to attend to and follow within the body. Sounding is also welcome.

Practice: You are invited to practice resting your attention on an internal or external body area. From there, you will follow that awareness through movement.

In a duet or group context, one person can also guide another's attention, with their voice, by naming different body areas to follow. If exploring this option, slowly transition from one body area to the next, leaving the previous one behind. For example, transition from following your arms in movement to following your legs in movement instead.

As the act develops, you can broaden this dance of attention to multiple body areas, playing with how many you can be present with at once. Support the process through the transitions, offering time, stillness, and subtlety to allow the attending to deepen.

Below is a guided audio version of this Somatic Act.

.....

*Begin by closing your eyes
in standing.*

*Sensing if there is a body area
that is calling to be attended to
an area needing a bit of presence
and attention,*

such as the spine, the pelvis or the feet.

*And then with a soft inner focus,
begin following in movement
your chosen body area.*

*Begin moving slowly and subtly,
allowing your breath
to support you.*

*Allowing the eyes
to open a little
now and then
if the movement
becomes a bit larger
on your journey.*

Allowing time...

*Gradually, allowing the movement
to become a bit smaller
and more subtle
closing your eyes
as you broaden your attention
towards another body area.*

*With a soft inner focus,
sensing what body area
wants to be attended to now
noticing our inside and outside places,*

such as the organ of the heart, the fingers or the kidneys.

*And then slowly transitioning
to following in movement
this different body area of your choice.*

Begin moving slowly and subtly,

*allowing your breath
to support you.*

*Allowing the eyes
to open a little
now and then
as the movement grows.*

Allowing time...

*Gradually allow the movement
to become a bit smaller
and more subtle
as you return
to your soft inner focus.*

*With eyes closed
broaden your attention
towards another body area*

*Perhaps sensing a body area
that is more quiet
that you might easily miss,*

such as the tongue, the elbows or the ears.

*And then slowly transitioning
to following in movement
this chosen body area.*

Begin moving gently and subtly,

*Allowing your breath
to support you*

*As the movement
Becomes a bit larger
Allowing the eyes*

*To open just a little
now and then.*

Allowing time...

*Gradually, with a soft inner focus
broadening your attention
to include another body area
to sense and eventually
follow in movement.*

*Two body areas that are calling
to be attended to,*

such as the hands and the feet.

*This begins a
body area duet.*

*Allowing your breath
to support
Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*Follow your body areas
as a guide
along your journey.*

Allowing time...

*Gradually, with a soft inner focus,
broadening your attention
to include another body area
to sense and eventually
follow in movement*

*Perhaps sensing a body area
that is more quiet -*

*that you might easily miss –
to add to your
attending dance.*

*As a body area trio
emerges,*

such as the hands, feet and tongue.

*Allowing your breath
to support
Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*Follow your body areas
as a guide
along your journey.*

Allowing time...

*Gradually, with a soft inner focus
broadening your attention
to include another body area
to sense and eventually
follow in movement.*

*Sensing a body area
wanting to join
your attending dance*

*As a body area quartet
emerges,*

such as the hands, feet, tongue and ribs.

*Allowing your breath
to support
Moments of movement*

Moments of stillness.

*Follow your body areas
as a guide
along your journey.*

*Noticing the surprising
relationships that unfold
along the way...*

Allowing time...

*Gradually, with a soft inner focus
broadening your attention
to include another body area
to sense and eventually
follow in movement.*

*Sensing a body area
wanting to join
your attending dance*

*As a body area quintet
emerges,*

such as the hands, feet, tongue, ribs and eyes.

*Allowing your breath
to support
Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*Follow your body areas
as a guide
along your journey.*

*Not to worry if you
forget now and then*

*some of the body areas.
Attending to what you can.*

*Noticing the musicality
of your unfolding dance
as your attending widens...*

Allowing time...

*Gradually allow the movement
to become a bit smaller
and more subtle
as you begin to
close your eyes.*

*Slowly gathering
and returning
your attention
to one body area
– an area that is
strongly resonating
for you now.*

*Following this place
in movement
as a gentle, subtle
solo.*

*Inviting your attending
and following
to soften
with a sense of ease and rest
as your breath
supports you.*

Allowing time...

*As your attending dance
becomes slower
and smaller*

*with more and more
moments
of stillness,
sensing how your body
is resonating now
along the tissues, bones,
organs, cells.*

Noticing your breathing...

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
journeying to the floor
For a moment
of rest
and stillness.*

Allowing time...

Finish with writing, drawing and/or sharing your reflections.

SOMATIC ACT 13B: Attending and Following Costume



Allow for at least 45 minutes. You will need a clear place to move freely and a costume— to include a piece of your everyday clothing—that has a distinct tactile quality (e.g., a specific texture or weight) and is made out of a material that is responsive to your body's movement.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet, or group.

How and what do we attend to and follow in the costume?

Purpose: Building on the internal body awareness from Somatic Act 13a, this practice extends that focus to the costume. This movement improvisation invites you to attend to and follow the relational elements of a costume, revealing the preferences often embedded in our choreographic and costume design practices.

Practice: This act suggests beginning by following the general categories and then, later, becoming more specific. The general invites more freedom, while the specific offers more structure. This choice depends on your needs and where you are in your choreographic and costume design process.

For example, a general category is to 'follow the relationship between the costume and your body'. A specific category is to 'follow the relationship between the costume's zipper and your nose'.

Below is an audio example to journey through, and at the end, a list of optional 'following' categories to explore on your own as a daily schedule.

.....

*Begin by closing your eyes
in standing.*

*Sensing if there is a body area
that is calling to be attended to
an area needing a bit of presence
and attention,*

such as the spine, the pelvis or the feet.

*And then with a soft inner focus,
begin following in movement
your chosen body area*

*in relationship to your
costume.*

*Begin moving slowly and subtly,
allowing your breath
to support you.*

*Opening your eyes
as the movement
becomes a bit larger
on your journey.*

Allowing time...

*With eyes open,
gradually broaden your attention
to following the touch
of your costume.*

*Allowing your breath
to support
Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready, slowly
your attention travels
to following
the movement of your costume.*

*Allowing your breath
to support
Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

Allowing time...

*As you continue,
gathering your attention
to following the movement of your legs
in relationship to
the movement of your trousers or skirt.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
broadening your attention to
following your costume
in relationship to the walls
of your place.*

Allowing time...

*As you continue,
following the story
that emerges
from your costume.*

*Allowing your breath
to support
Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

Allowing time...

*Gradually allow the movement
to become a bit smaller
and more subtle
as you begin to
close your eyes
with more and more
moments
of stillness.*

Sensing how your body

*is resonating now
along the tissues, bones,
organs, cells.*

Noticing your breathing...

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
journeying to the floor
for a moment
of rest
and stillness.*

Allowing time...

Finish with writing, drawing and/or sharing your reflections.

Examples of 'general following':

Following the texture of your costume

Following the speed of your costume

Following the weight of your costume

Following the musicality of your costume

Following the story of the costume.

Examples of 'specific following':

Following the movement of your costume and the movement of your legs.

Following the costume's inner lining in relationship to your skin.

Following your arm in relationship to the costume's sleeve.

Following the pocket of the costume in relationship to the window of the room.

Examples of 'following' categories:

Body Areas

Senses

Texture

Direction in space

Shape/Form

Paths in space

Musicality – Rhythm, Melody, etc.

Speed

Weight

Quality

Energy

Voice

Character

Emotion

Image

Story

Action

Task

Relationship

Environment/Site

Atmosphere

Others (the animate)



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces, photo by Elin Osjord, 2023.

ATTENTION / ATTENDING

'Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity'

(Simone Weil, Letter to Joë Bousquet, 13 April 1942)

*'...wisdom is about attending to things,
both opening up and responding to their presence'*

(Ingold, 2022, p. 53)

The act of attending and bringing attention to self, others and things offers a sacred moment of presence where awareness is not held but allowed, invited and experienced. Inviting attention through consciousness opens the possibility of awareness. 'Awareness is the first step', as Skinner would say, 'to change.' It houses the potential of doing something differently – a reorientation.

Attending, in a choreographic approach, asks two key questions:

- How are we attending?
- What are we attending to?

HOW ARE WE ATTENDING?

In my choreographic approach, how we are attending includes quality, location, time, and aperture.

Attending and guiding attention has a quality of 'waiting without waiting' (Suryodarmo)—a way of 'being with' others or self without a particular objective. Such a waiting quality is referred to by Ingold as a relational waiting act between practitioner and the world: 'In one sense, the world is ready and waiting for the practitioner, in the other the practitioner is obliged to wait upon the world' (Ingold, 2022, p. 6). This waiting is a form of active presence, a concept articulated by Simone Weil as a 'suspending of our thought' (1951, p. 113) in order to be 'penetrated by the object'.

Attention, and the act of attending, is not only a mental process but a way of engaging with one's whole being. For Weil, the very 'substance of prayer' (1951, p. 106) is this attention. The purpose is not to empty the mind, but rather to wait for truth to reveal itself, much like the patience required for an answer to prayer. The effort is not in actively searching or analyzing, but in passively waiting with complete openness. This provides a theoretical foundation for the active-passive spectrum of attending.

This distinction is crucial, as the 'suspending' of thought is not an effortless absence of thinking, but a deliberate act of putting one's own will, beliefs, and expectations on hold. It is a state of active waiting that allows for what is to come, to come, rather than trying to force a conclusion. This stretches human life 'between sedentism and flight' (Ingold, 2022, p. 5), aligning with Ingold's definition of attention as a 'stretch of human life' derived from the Latin compound *ad-* ('towards') plus *tendere* ('to stretch').

Suryodarmo refers to this as starting from the position of the traditional approach of audience (passive) or performer (active). The quality and spectrum of both passive and active I refer to as 'following' and 'guiding/directing' (Dean & Nathanielsz, 2017) in a choreographic approach. 'Following' also includes movement.

Where do we start when attending? Typically, I begin with this passive or 'following' approach and only later, when necessary, shift to a more active or guiding one. In this following approach, I first attend, listen, and attune to all elements in the environment—including both people, to include myself, and materials—before guiding. This is done to prioritize connection over a predetermined course of action. Conversely, starting with action can create a disconnection because the action is initiated before a connection with the place and its elements is fully sensed, attended to, and experienced.

Attending is also an act of tending to. As one tends a garden—by providing the right light, soil, and water—this approach is about offering resources to support the life already embedded within. It is a process of being present with and supporting an unfolding, blossoming process, not one of trying to fix anything. Attending can create mending, but mending is not the starting point. Mending implies something is broken or wrong, whereas tending starts from a place of wholeness and supports what is already there. The healing effect that arises from bringing one's attention to another without judgment is a byproduct of tending, not its primary aim.

The quality of attending shifts with the way we attend:

- How wide is the aperture of our attending – narrow or wide? From the point of a finger or the breath of an arm?

- What is the time of our attending – quick, short, sustained, long?
- Where are we attending from, the location? From the body, place or space? From the inside of our being or the being of another? From the top of a tree, from a rabbit's burrow or the crook of a chair? Or from multiple perspectives at once?
- How is the contact of our attending? Loose or with a firm grip?

WHAT DO WE ATTEND TO?

What we attend to I often refer to with the question, 'What do we follow, consciously or unconsciously, in our choreographic choices, in our movement and material-making? This can be attending to certain body areas or choreographic elements, such as shape/form, character, weight, musicality, sensorial mode, environment/site and more.

What is being attended to also creates the aesthetic of the work. Attending and 'Following' the element of character in our movement or material-making will create a very different movement and material aesthetic than if attending and 'following' the shape/form.

GUIDING ATTENTION IN PERFORMANCE

As a performer, choreographer, costume designer, I have the possibility to guide people's attention towards specific directions of experience. How a costume touches the feet opens up the possibility of awareness to the feet or another way of walking, moving and experiencing oneself in the world (a re-orientation).

A performer's movement and presence also bring a spectator's attention to specific locations and relationships, such as directly through the compositional choices of moving bodies-materials (e.g., a very tall dancer next to a very short dancer could add perspective and humour) or through how and what the performer is attending to.

For example, in Oida and Marshall's book, *The Invisible Actor* (2013), there is an example of two different actors in a scene where the actor is talking to and about the moon. With one actor, we 'see' the actor in the scene, whereas with the other actor (the 'invisible actor') we 'see' the moon. The actor's attention in the first resides within the actor himself; in the second example, the actor's attention rests with the moon and the relationship between them.

The experience of any performance comes from patterns of attention that we follow and choose, consciously or unconsciously, for both spectators and performers. It is the dance between these two that will generate the perceptions about the artistic event.

‘PROCESSUAL ATTENTION’ AS ARTISTIC RESEARCH

‘Processual attention’ in artistic research is a term developed by academic and somatic practitioner Jane Bacon. She not only asks the question of how and what we give attention to, but also how we articulate what is happening in the process.

Rather than focusing on isolated occurrences, processual research ‘is the study of processes rather than discrete events’ (Bacon, 2019, p. 2). This type of research holds both methodological and ontological significance. Methodologically, it involves ‘process and processual, attention and attending’ (Bacon, 2019, p. 2) while its ontological aspect signifies research into ‘the nature of being’ (Bacon, 2019, p. 2).

‘Processual attention’ is also a way of being present with the unfolding of experience and how it changes over time. For Bacon, while we are in an artistic practice (e.g., drawing, dancing, sculpting, writing, sewing), we also may notice and be conscious of the activity we do. We also may ‘track the changes’ (Bacon, 2019, p. 10), moment by moment of our activity.

For example, as I am wearing the tube costume, I am also noticing the soft compression it creates around my hips, and how this shifts my awareness to the connection of my feet to my pelvis. In each moment, the somatic experience shifts to reveal a new awareness. (Refer to video example ‘Tactile Reflections in Action’ in Part Two: Somatic Costume Dressing Room, Chapter 3).

In this mode of artistic research, the process becomes the subject of inquiry, moving away from simply researching about a specific topic, concept, method, or practice. Rather than using external theories to ‘explain’ artistic work, the topic, concept, method, or practice reveals itself through our subjective experience of the process (Bacon, 2019, p. 10). While we are ‘attending to our practice,’ we are at the same time ‘practicing our attention’ (Bacon, 2019, p. 10). This process-focused attention is experiential and welcomes the unexpected and the unknown.

Reflecting on and developing Bacon's ideas further, this approach of ‘processual attention’ is also possible in the non-verbal realm. Becoming conscious and aware of what we are attending ‘to’ does not necessarily implicate speaking and thinking. Consciousness can be embodied in the non-verbal realm through the felt sense, for example.

HOW HISTORY AND CULTURE SHAPE OUR ATTENTION

Today, in our contemporary society, we are living in what has been referred to as an ‘attention economy’ (Goldhaber, 1997). ‘Attention’ has become a valuable commodity, where information is plentiful and attention scarce. This commodification of attention, frequently mediated through visual platforms, often pulls us away from sensing ourselves – exiting our bodies into cyberspace.

Major sociocultural shifts accompanying modernization, including industrialization, the growth of mass media, and the arrival of the digital age, have significantly altered what is expected of our attention. These changes have accelerated the pace of life and increasingly emphasized the need for sustained focus on repetitive and lengthy tasks, often facilitated and exploited by emerging technologies.

Jonathan Crary (2021) argues that the very nature of attention underwent a significant historical transformation during the late nineteenth century with the rise of modernization. He suggests that the development of concepts of focused aesthetic perception was intertwined with the processes of modernization that made the management of attention a central concern for emerging institutions seeking a productive populace (Crary, 2021, p. 2). This period also saw the rise of psychology as a discipline, with figures like William James (1890) and subsequent research defining the mechanisms of attention (Mole, 2025). The scientific study of attention thus developed alongside its increasing social and economic importance within modernizing societies.

Furthermore, Crary highlights a related 'crisis in perception' during the 1880s and 1890s, a period marked by the transformation of attention through new technologies like spectacles, displays, projections (such as early cinema), and recording devices (Crary, 2021, p. 2). He contends that 'modern attention' became a distinct problem linked to what he terms the 'historical obliteration of the possibility of thinking the idea of presence in perception' (Crary, 2021, p. 4). This suggests a historical shift away from direct, unmediated experience towards more constructed and potentially fragmented forms of attention shaped by these technological and social forces.

Beyond historical shifts, cultural differences also play a significant role in shaping our attentional patterns. For example, East Asian cultures often prioritize holistic perception (perceiving the context), while Western cultures typically favor analytical perception (perceiving individual objects). Fostering a deeper understanding of both our historically and culturally shaped attentional biases can inform more balanced and intentional ways of engaging with the world around us, ultimately enriching our experience and understanding.

In conclusion, given the pervasive demands of our modern attention economy and the constant influx of information, particularly visual stimuli, consciously cultivating attentional practices that emphasize bodily awareness and presence (a somatic approach fostering 'embodiment') may offer a valuable counterpoint. By grounding our attention in our physical experience, we might better navigate the fragmented nature of 'modern attention' and move towards a more integrated way of perceiving the world.

SOMATIC ACT 14: Attending to Poetics



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a comfortable environment and clothing to move and rest in and a `costume` to wear that includes trousers, a skirt, socks, scarf, with one of these items having a pocket, zipper and a button.

This somatic practice is an invited movement improvisation following bodily awareness and costume poetically in movement. Sounding with your voice is also welcome.

This Somatic Act is divided into two parts:

Part One: Poetically Following the Body

Part Two: Poetically Following the Costume

This experience can be done as a solo, duet or group. If you have a partner or group, one person can name different `poetic followings` while the other person moves, or people move. If you are participating as a solo, you can follow the suggested journey below on your own.

The list of suggested `poetic following` below offers suggested possibilities. You are welcome to create your own, but please make sure you include a body area (for Part One) or clothing element (for Part Two), in each description.

.....

Part One: Poetically Following the Body

Following the curtain of your lips

Following the anchor of your belly

Following the fish gills of your armpits

Following the whirling blender of your brain

Following the tendrils of your shoulders

Following the map of your veins and arteries

Following the kaleidoscope of your spine

Following the teardrop of your heart

Following the question mark of your brain

Following the limbs of your heart
Following the heart inside your hand
Following the eyes on the bottom of your feet

Following the secret of your pelvis
Following the night of your fingertips
Following the canyon of your ears

Following the opera of your lungs
Following the laughter of your ribs
Following the circus of your colon

Following the accordion of your breath
Following the ancientness of your bones
Following time resting in your skin

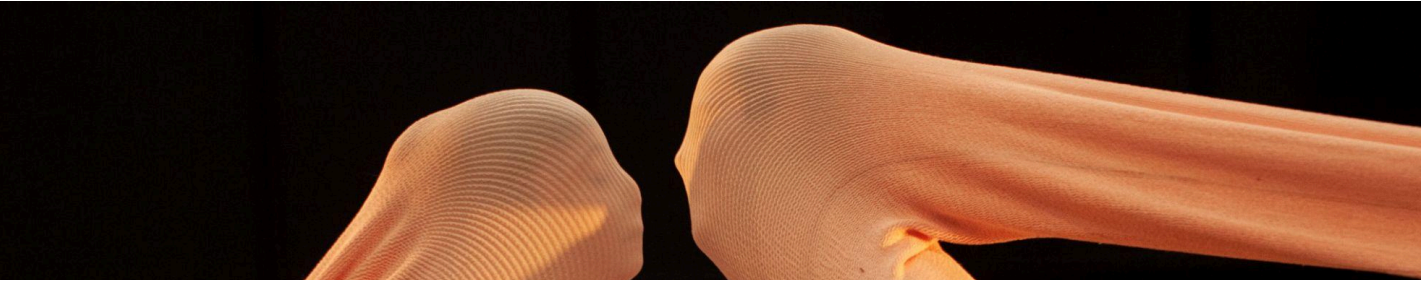
Part Two: Poetically Following the Costume

Following the steamy jungle of your sleeve
Following the chattering teeth of your zipper
Following the slippery dilemma of your button

Following the hairy secret of your pocket
Following the wild tornado of your pant leg
Following the itchy reservoir of your underwear

Following the spongy warmth of your sock
Following the billowy breath of your skirt
Following the toasty sanctuary of your slipper

Following the icy dissent of your metal button
Following the firm strangle of your waistband
Following the slimy entrails of your scarf
Following the warm canopy of your sweater



Tube Costumes, Costume Agency Workshop #3, Performers Lenka Rozehnal and Tova Ekenberg.
Photo by Espen Tollefsen.

POETICS

What is Poetics?

The term 'poetics' is used both to refer to a 'poetic mode' of knowing and being (or Zambrano's and Ingold's becoming), as well as to the way a poetic image is experienced and embodied in the somatic movement practice, 'Skinner Releasing Technique' (Skinner), and developed further through the somatic work of Suryodarmo (Amerta Movement), and Poynor in her environmental movement practice. These practices, as well as the writings and talks by anthropologist Ingold, philosophers Zambrano, Bachelard and Gumbrecht, lay down many of the foundations for developing the practice and term 'poetic materiality' embedded in the Somatic Costumes.

Poetic Mode of Knowing and Being

Philosophically, 'poetic knowledge' is cited by St. Thomas Aquinas' 'poetica scientia' and refers to the senses and direct experience being the source of intellectual knowledge (Cruz, 1996).

The 20th century Spanish philosopher, Maria Zambrano, introduces 'poetic reason' [razón poética] as a critique of the dominant systems of Western rationality established by the Enlightenment (Caballero Rodríguez, 2008, p.146). She first introduces the term in *Madre España* [Mother Spain], published in 1937 in Chile, calling for a poetic reason that 'encuentra en instantáneo descubrimiento lo que la inteligencia desgrana paso a paso en sus elementos' [is capable of discovering instantly what is little by little lost in the elements of intelligence] (Balibrea, Lough, & Sánchez Cuervo, 2018, p. 15). Her book 'Filosofía y poesía' (Philosophy & Poetry) was written in 1939, while she was in exile in Mexico during the Spanish Civil War. Poetic reason aims to overcome the limitations of language, and her writing invites more than one interpretation.

Drawing on significant inspiration from Martin Heidegger, the philosopher María Zambrano built upon his concept of being by reframing it as a process of becoming. For Zambrano, Being is not a fixed state but an ongoing process (Caballero Rodríguez, 2008, p. 167). While Heidegger's philosophy often grappled with anxiety and the limitations of human existence, Zambrano instead emphasized the potential for creativity, hope, and transcendence through the poetic.

James Taylor (1998), elaborates further in his book *Poetic Knowledge - The Recovery of Education* on this poetic mode: knowledge not based on poetry per se, but rather a poetic experience of reality coming from a sensorial-emotional place (Taylor, 1998, p. 5), 'where the mind arrives at material and immaterial knowledge of a thing by way of the senses' (Taylor, 1998, p. 57).

Taylor emphasizes that such a poetic mode of knowing is immersing oneself in the experience 'knowledge from the inside out,' (Taylor, 1998, p. 8), connecting to the essence and going beyond mere description. Intuition, and the role of 'wonder' and 'delight' (Taylor, 1998, p.13) are crucial elements in this mode of knowing as well as 'being' rather than 'doing' (Taylor, 1998, p. 35). In contrast to scientific objectivity, this poetic mode is based on a holistic understanding of the world.

This emphasis on being part of the experience itself is reiterated in Gumbrecht (2004) in his *Production of presence - What meaning cannot convey*. Gumbrecht calls for a return to 'presence effects' before meaning is created - 'meaning effects'. This is a clear step towards questioning the semiotic stronghold in the field of humanities and re-prioritizes ways of learning and experiencing that are not solely 'sign' and linguistically based. In his book, he connects the concept of being to the concept of presence.

As with Zambrano, Gumbrecht also elaborates on Heidegger's work *Being and Time* and his notion of Dasein, 'being-in-the-world' (Gumbrecht, 2004, p. 71) where humans are situated in a world of meaning and relationships. Gumbrecht also follows Heidegger in shifting the location of 'truth,' which in early Platonism was housed within a 'concept' to instead to a place of 'being' (Gumbrecht, 2004, p. 67).

'Being', according to Gumbrecht, is 'things of the world before they become part of culture' (Gumbrecht, 2004, p, 70); and 'Being' is not a meaning. Being belongs to the dimension of things' (2004, p. 68). Being in Gumbrecht's definition is not static, but includes movement in space: multi-directional and multi-dimensional (2004, p. 68) and implies substance (2004, p. 77). Last, Gumbrecht moves us away from the potential duality between meaning and presence, articulating that there is an oscillation between them and that they 'appear together' and there exists an ongoing tension between them (Gumbrecht, 2004, p. 105).

Ingold (2007) embraces a similar position in his focus on tacit, implicit knowledge as opposed to explicit knowledge, along with relationality (e.g., correspondence) and the being or becoming of materials. Ingold expands Gumbrecht's definition of 'being' belonging to the 'dimension of things' with his focus on 'being' in relationship to materials.

In Ingold's article, *Materials against Materiality*, he makes a distinction between the material world and the world of materials (Ingold, 2007, p. 14), and he mourns the surprising lack of attention given to the specific properties and characteristics of the materials themselves, despite the extensive body of anthropological and archaeological research focused on materiality and material culture (Ingold, 2007, pp. 1 & 9).

Akin to Gumbrecht's 'present effects', Ingold calls for us to have a 'heedful presence' - being in the world that is attentive to the unfolding of experience. This is a presence, similar to Gumbrecht's definition of being, that is in a state of flux. But Ingold also departs from

what he calls a 'philosophy of being' and moves towards what he terms as 'a philosophy of becoming' (Ingold, 2018), using the term becoming to imply a presence that is in process, not fixed, with organisms shaped by their interaction with environment, other beings and the passage of time (as in Ingold's terms dwelling and line making, 2022): 'And as the environment unfolds, so the materials of which it is comprised do not exist – like the objects of the material world – but occur.' (Ingold, 2007, pp. 13-14).

A critic of representational thinking, his philosophy is a shift away from object and subject towards materials and things. According to Ingold, objects as well as subjects are 'already thrown, already cast, in a fixed and final form' (Ingold, 2018), while materials are 'substances in becoming' (Ingold, 2018).

Ingold moves away from Heidegger's view of objects being 'out there', with things having pre-given entities with inherent meanings (e.g., *Vorhandenheit* - 'Readiness-to-hand', in the book *Being and Time*, meaning is derived from its function with human activity), and a preference for a fixed human subjectivity with a neglect of the inherent agency of materials (Ingold, 2018).

For Ingold, materials are in movement with fluid boundaries: They are no longer 'stopped-up objects' but instead, 'leaky things': 'So to touch or observe a thing is to bring the movements of our own being (or rather, becoming) into correspondence with the movements of the materials' (Ingold, 2018).

Embodying a Poetic Image – Approaches from Somatic Movement & Bachelard

Connecting to the term 'being', as in the work of Ingold, Zambrano and Gumbrecht; Bachelard focuses on an image's capacity to evoke and expand human experience, going beyond mere reflection of reality: 'The image is a potentiality of being, a surplus of being, an invitation to further dreaming.' (Bachelard, 1971, p. 1). As with Ingold, a return to 'substances' is key: 'One cannot dream profoundly with objects'... 'To dream profoundly, one must do so with substances' (Bachelard, 2014, p. 22).

In Bachelard's philosophical approach, the poetic image acts as a portal interweaving the material and immaterial, the visible and invisible, reality and imaginary, the micro to the macro cosmos within and beyond. Images can arise from material forms (trees, houses, costumes) or/and from the immaterial (dreams, emotions). The gift of Bachelard's philosophical approach of poetics is that he merges material with immaterial, showing us 'ways of dwelling again in the flesh of space' (Bachelard, 2014: xviii). (Dean, 2021, p. 162)

'Poetics' comes from the Greek word 'poiesis' meaning 'to make or create'. According to philosopher Bachelard (2014), this process of making is reciprocal – we inhabit poetic images and poetic images inhabit us. Poetics are intersubjective experiences between poet, poem, reader/mover and the environment. This living dynamic relationship activates both our receptive faculties (e.g., sensing, listening, feeling) and our active faculties (e.g., creating, crafting). Poetic images make and

form us and we make and form them. In this way, images are multi-sensorial, somatic experiences – not just read or seen, but embodied and lived. (Dean, 2021, p. 162)

Skinner refers to her images as ‘accessing and embodying the poetic, referring to them as “haikus” (Skura, 1990, p. 11).’ Skinner, similar to Bachelard, approaches an image as having a life beyond mere representation - images become portals, activating the ‘kinesthetic imagination’ and ‘utilized as a method for kinesthetic experience’ (Neuhaus, 2010).

In the Somatic Movement Practice of Skinner Releasing Technique (SRT), a poetic image is given, often integrating language, touch and sound. For example, the following ‘Image Action’ is intended to cultivate poetically and kinesthetically the experience of the legs being connected to the solar plexus:

And as we float in the sea of breath, perhaps we can spend a moment with a fanciful image, that all our bones can soften and float, and transform into soft, warm, moist sea sponges. And that deep space of the solar plexus can transform into a nest of sea sponges — and the legs, perhaps, can trail from the new of sea sponges as long, willowy ferns. (Introductory Pedagogy, Class 5)

In this pedagogy, an image is given auditorily through language (the teacher’s voice), and dancers are invited to ‘picture the image’, awakening the visual sense of the ‘inner body’ (Dean & Nathanielsz, 2017, p. 184) or ‘felt sense’⁷ with eyes closed. The image is often received lying down after a ‘letting go’ check-list is given that is aimed to bring awareness to the body, releasing tension in the dancer and guiding them into a receptive state.

The location of the image is initially connected to the physicality of the body and may be placed inside the body (as above, ‘solar plexus’ transforms into a nest of sea sponges), but may also connect to the outside (marionette strings attached to the sides of the head and soaring into the space above).

The images are often accompanied by sound/music or even touch, for example, for the image of ‘hollow legs’, music will be chosen that evokes a spacious and resonating quality similar to the image. Dancers touch and attach metaphorical marionette strings to the sides of the skull that rise into the space above during Movement Studies.

The body image relationship in SRT tends towards accessing more our receptive faculties with language such as ‘allowing the image to move you’ as well as an emptying and disappearing of the body, uniting with an image through shedding materiality (e.g., language such as ‘blending’ and ‘merging’ with an image). ‘Tissues soften; become supple, spongy and porous; sigh; melt; and unravel in spirals. Bones soften; loosen and dangle;

⁷ The ‘felt sense’ is a term coined by Gendlin that refers to ‘a bodily awareness of a situation or person or event’ that is not a mental process but a physical one (2003, p. 32).

become shadows and spaces; hollow; velvety moss and transparent; and disappear into breath' (Dean & Nathanielsz, 2017, p. 188).

In Amerta Movement, Suryodarmo refers to two worlds or ways that images can be embodied: 'Dream World' or 'Fictions' and 'Reality World' or 'Facts'. This is similar to what Bachelard referred to above as poetic images arising from the immaterial (fictions) or material forms (facts). In Suryodarmo's work, the environment and ritualistic sites in Java are practiced in and translate specific somatic knowledge through their material forms and through sensorial relationships to include the tactile.

Poetic images also still arise from Suryodarmo's language (e.g., 'feel the sole of the feet – the sole of the earth' or 'the boundaries or clothing of the heart'), but now images may also arise from the moving body itself, as well as from site and objects. This also continued through the work of Poynor, where we worked outdoors, moving in the Jurassic Coast of Devon, as well as in forests nearby. A non-verbal, tactile, and material relationship to both image and body began to be developed in my artistic work and practice.

The initial Somatic Costumes were first developed to translate some of the SRT images into non-verbal and tactile forms, such as spongy shoes for experiencing the quality and image of 'sponginess'. Later, the Somatic Costumes came from my moving body and the environment, such as the 'Heart Protector' costume, which came from Poynor's workshop while on a beach in Beer, Devon, while moving with stones.

Previously in the SRT practice, the felt sense of the materiality of my body would 'disappear' in order to identify, merge and 'become' an image. After the work with Suryodarmo and Poynor, I experienced that the materiality of body could co-exist with an image: A 'complete identification with both body and image', My arm has its physicality of bones, tissues, etc, and at the same time is a green tendril. (Dean, 2021, p. 173).

In this way, I began to experience what Bachelard referred to as 'the flesh of space' – when the material and immaterial forms merge and co-exist. The Somatic Costumes are also intended to do just this – poetic images that are 'alive' – not static, but in a process of forming and reforming themselves as intersubjective experiences (Dean, Galanter, Kiara, Nathanielsz, 2019).

Through the Somatic Costumes, the poetic experience is received directly through the touch and wear of the costume. (Dean, 2021, p. 160). The poetic image does not have to be verbal or visual. These costumes serve as multi-sensory poems, embodying poetic imagery in a tangible, non-verbal way through the tactile.

The Relationship of the Poetic between Body & Image – Summary

- A poetic image can arise from language (verbal) or from sensorial systems (non-verbal).
- The poetic image can be immaterial (not able to touch) such as 'picturing' an image in SRT, or material (able to touch), arising from the place (such as in Amerta Movement and Environmental movement), the body, the costume, others and more.

- The poetic body can have the felt experience of being merged with a poetic image, disappearing to 'become' a poetic image (complete identification with the image as in SRT) or can experience 'becoming' translucent – being with the material body and the poetic image at the same time (my arm is a 'fern' and is an arm with bones, muscles, etc.).
- The location of the poetic image might arise from outside of the moving body (e.g., language in SRT), inside the body (e.g., 'focusing' by Gendlin, sensing the body and emotions allow images to arise, or the place in-between (costume). The power of a costume is that when worn, it can be experienced as inside through its touch and outside through its external form, relinquishing the duality between inside and outside.
- The poetic image may be received or activated from a moving or still body.
- The poetic image can be static or moving – alive – unfolding and reforming itself.
- The poetic image dwells both in the body as well as in the space and place.

Note: This chapter includes quotes and ideas developed from these two publications (Dean, Galanter, Kiara, Nathansielsz, 2019 and Dean, 2021).

SOMATIC ACT 15: Touch of Sound & Home



Allow for at least 15 minutes. You will need a comfortable place to sit inside or outside, to close your eyes and listen.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet, or group.

.....

*I'm outside listening
to the sound
of the church bells.*

*I can hear a little rustle
of a leaf
and a bird
who's plopping itself down*

*on a red berry and
inserting its beak
like a big, deep weapon.*

*I know that there's a quiet
sometimes
that resides in myself
and I wonder,
do you ever look for that
sometimes on a Sunday?*

*I'm here in Oslo, Norway,
far from home
but I wonder what home is
for all of us now.*

Something inside a place?

*Wherever you are,
wherever you find yourself,
can you let
the sound fill you
into the home of your body,
into the home of your heart,
into the home of your pores,
into the home of your skin,
into the home where your feet land today.*

*Can you let that sound
move you?*

*Can you let my voice
and its sound resonate
in all your tissues
and all your
bones?*

Can you hear the little bird?

*Can you hear the little children screaming?
Can you hear the buggy,
strolling down the road.*

What do you hear?

*Sometimes
if it's really quiet,
you can hear your own heart
beating
like it has something to say,
like there's something important
that you might have missed
if you weren't listening
just in that moment.*

*Maybe you can even feel
my lips move while I speak,
and maybe
it touches yours,
and maybe
in that moment
something
settles.*

*I don't know where you are,
but I hope
you're 'at home'.*

Note: This audio recording was created and performed for and in 2021 as part of 'SILENT', by Terez Ondrová, a collective audio performance, *PONEC- divadlo pro tanec*, Prague, CZ.



Gorse Hill, Ireland. Photo by Sally E. Dean, 2023.

POETIC MATERIAL-ITY

POETIC MATERIAL-ITY⁸

In defining materiality, I follow Ingold's definition: 'the stuff that things are made of' (Ingold, 2022, p. 24) with a focus on materials as 'substances in becoming' (Ingold, 2018, para. 8). This includes both the 'substances' of bodies and costumes.

Poetic Material-ity starts with substance as a place to awaken the poetic imagination. This includes beginning with a 'heedful presence' (Ingold 2011) or 'present effects' (Gumbrecht, 2004) with substance before meaning arises. This act of being present with is practiced through attending - being attentive to the unfolding of experience (please refer to Part One, Chapter 13: Attention /Attending).

Poetic Material-ity includes attending multi-directionally – to the inside, outside, and the place-in-between⁹. This allows for the choreography (the composition of attention and materials) to emerge from matter and 'what matters' into forms that occur in response and in relationship to the surrounding ecosystem.

Poetic Material-ity begins with the senses as opposed to the semiotic. This place of 'being with' substance or starting from a 'philosophy of becoming' (Ingold, 2018), allows for the poetic to emerge not through representation, where a mental image is projected upon substance, but experienced before the verbal, linguistic and conceptual arise (before 'meaning effects').

⁸ In response to Ingold, I am using the term 'material-ity' as a way of reasserting the properties, value, and practice of being with 'materials' and returning materials back into the concept of 'materiality', where Ingold argues it has been lacking.

⁹ In choreography and design, this multi-directional attending is essential. As a choreographer and designer, if I only know what it is like to be 'outside' of the dance (not being in the movement or wearing the costume), or only being 'inside' the dance (not experiencing a spatial perspective) an important perspective is lost in the making process and vice versa.

Poetic Material-ity starts with the sense of touch, because of its tactility and tangibility, and offers a bridge into connecting directly with substance. It also highlights that the poetic does not need to be visual – imagination can be activated through other sensorial systems.

Poetic Material-ity offers a gateway into embodying the immaterial. Bodies and images, in the felt experience, can coexist, merge and also transform into a third entity – a place of transparency (Dean, 2021, p. 173), where the material and immaterial dwell together. For example, I experience my arm as both a substance - with its bones and tissues - and, simultaneously, as an image of a green tendril.

This is further apparent within the Somatic Costumes – when worn, they become part of place, space and bodies. Somatic costumes are material expressions of substance and form, as well as somatic experiences. A costume is experienced as inside the body through its touch and outside the body through its external form.

Poetic Material-ity starts with what Suryodarmo refers to as ‘Facts/Reality world’ or what Pallasmaa refers to as ‘the sense of the real’. This will be discussed further in The Somatic Costume Dressing Room section.

Lastly, Poetic Material-ity relates to substances as living organisms that are processual and relational, acting more as ‘things’ than ‘objects’, where their ‘liveness’ occurs from being in a flux, circulating, regenerating environment: ‘things are in life rather than life in things’ (Ingold, 2022, p. 35).

POETIC MATERIAL-ITY INTO MEANING MAKING

Referencing a tacit or implicit way of knowing, not only does poetic materiality start sensorially and pre-linguistically as opposed to semiotically, meaning can also be experienced ‘pre-conceptually’. Attending to materials can create what Suryodarmo called ‘speaking’. Meaning can be sensed and experienced before it becomes discursive.

Such an approach aims to further reveal how meaning-making arises based on touch-based versus visual-based paradigms of perception and knowledge. The process of creating meaning from ‘substance’ as well as meaning’s ‘location’ shifts when starting with a Poetic Material-ity approach. This will be discussed further in ‘Part Two: *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces*’.

PART TWO

THE SOMATIC COSTUME DRESSING ROOM



SESSION WITH KRISTINA GJEMS



Somatic Costume Dressing Room – Kristina Gjems & Sally E Dean, KHIO, 2023.
Photos by Elin Osjord.







SOMATIC ACT 16:
An Invitation into a Somatic Costume Dressing Ritual



Allow for at least 60 minutes. You will need to start by wearing comfortable clothes to move in, prepare a space at home near your wardrobe to dress and move, and then find a witness to be present during the process (e.g., friend, dog, camera).

This Somatic Act can be experienced as a duet.

.....

Start at home.

Prepare by wearing an outfit

that feels like your second skin.

Sit down for a moment

Pause...

What is the temperature like?

What is your breath like?

*Place a hand on your body,
where it feels like it might need
a bit of support.*

Allow the hand to listen

Pause...

Pause...

Slowly

Slowly and

Ready?

*Journey to your bedroom
with a witness - a dog, a camera, a best friend.*

Notice how you walk there...

*With eyes closed,
enter or reach into your wardrobe.*

As a ritual

*Sense the presence
of the clothing through touch
as a sensorial exploration-
texture, temperature, weight,*

movement and sound.

*With your sense of touch
choose eight pieces of clothing
that you love.*

Allowing time...

*After choosing
your eight pieces
of clothing
slowly, opening your eyes.*

*Share the sensorial experiences and associations
- speaking, writing, drawing.*

What is important to you now?

*Is there a place in your body
that is speaking?*

A place that needs a little attention?

*Write it down and then
close your eyes.*

*Begin from this place
in your body
that wants attending to
by dressing yourself
with your eight pieces
of clothing
where your body
calls for touch.*

For example,

- *a heavy jacket tied around the waist to sense your pelvis*
- *a silk shirt tucked underneath your clothing at your chest to support your heart and breath*

- *your favorite sweater, worn with legs through the sleeves, to keep your feet warm and connect your feet towards the belly by attaching the material with a belt at your waist*

Allowing the clothing to dress you...

Playing

Allowing time...

*As you finish dressing
noticing how
your 'costume'
invites movement
by taking a little walk
around your room
to sense the materials
surrounding and touching
your body...*

*How do your feet
want to move now?*

*Is there a dance to move?
Is there a song to sing?*

*The clothing might whisper a bit of wildness
into your bones, into your tissues,
into your cells, into your breath,
into your skin.*

*Allow the movement and/or sound
to surprise you...*

*It might even surprise your dog,
your camera, your friend, yourself.*

*Stomping your feet
the sound of your voice*

resonating in your room

*Your clothing moving with you
singing with you.*

Allowing time...

Until

A pause emerges

A moment when rest is needed.

Allowing time...

Resting.

And then, when you are ready,

*Slowly
begin undressing
noticing what it is like
when each piece of clothing
is removed...*

As a ritual

*Sensing the shedding
of the material
layer by layer
Allowing time...*

*And then
after each piece of clothing
is removed,
walking again, slowly,
around your room.*

*How do you experience
your body and clothing now?*

*Can you sense your invisible clothing,
the tangible imprint of what you wore,
travel with you in your walk?*

Supporting you.

*Simply notice
and share, if you like,
as you thank your dog,
your camera,
your best friend,
your witness.*

*Allowing time
to digest the experience
or celebrate with some cake,
drink, or a chat with a friend...*

*And returning
each piece of clothing
back into the wardrobe,*

When they are ready.

INTRODUCTION

The Somatic Costume Dressing Room arose in response to the COVID pandemic when a lack of resources (to include live people and workshop space/materials) and restrictions on human touch, shifted my research to the concept, practice and liminal site of a dressing room. From 2020-23, I gave 85 one-to-one dressing-room **guided sessions**, mostly online, as well as a collection of **self-dressing** and **collaborative-dressing sessions** and **workshops**. The guided sessions lasted from 45 to 90 minutes. Participants were mostly colleagues from the fields of somatic movement, dance, costume design and theatre, as well as MA Costume Design students from Oslo National Academy of the Arts and participants from my Somatic Movement Costume workshops and one-to-one sessions. Participants were international (including Norway, Finland, Ireland, UK, Peru, Brazil, Colombia and China) and ranged in age from early 20's to mid 70's.

Each session was mainly documented in two stages: 'Reflection As & In Action' and 'Reflection After Action'. During 'Reflection As & In Action', the session is video/audio recorded, as the dressing, wearing, making and moving process is kinesthetically and verbally reflected upon in the moment. 'Reflection After Action' occurs at the end of or after the session - to include conversations, reflections, notes, drawing and reading material that may further develop the artistic research.

The Somatic Costume Dressing Room became the backbone of my artistic research - a project, a portal, an online or live meeting place, often in home environments with myself, Sally, guiding wearers through the transformative potential of wearing-dressing-making with simple materials.

These haptic-focused processes of embodying materiality become 'embodied conversations' (Osmond, 2020), through the somatic method of 'processual attention' (Bacon, 2019); attending to the non-verbal/verbal and the unstable assemblages (Deleuze, 2006; Bennett, 2009; Hann 2019 & 2025) of bodies (designers, performers, materials).

The Somatic Costume Dressing Room applies embodied costume design and somatic practices/methodologies to the concept, practice, and liminal site of a dressing room.

In the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, costumes are co-designed in the moment, from the wearer's arising psychophysical needs - such as rest, grief, or connection and reconnection to the heart. Instead of costume being a visual effect to serve a theme/character within a performance, or a garment to sell, could it be a haptic-focused process - advocating embodiment, consciousness and well-being?

This somatic approach choreographs attention to the internal, tacit, tactile experiences of the wearer. Wearers are guided into 'Aware-Wearing' (Dean, 2020) - bringing attention to the effects of costumes' touch on bodies. 'Wearing,' a meeting between bodies and materials, becomes a bridge to knowing and knowledge through sensorial and embodied experience.

With this somatic approach, the value of costume is decentralised from its more external and aesthetic preference as a 'finished form'. In contrast, Somatic Costumes become somatic material elements, which are unfinished - in a 'state of flux' - and are in response to body assemblages (materials & humans). The costume is no longer one specified form that exists before it is worn by performers/wearers. It opens its potential to being a collection of materials/pre-forms with its existence coming to life through invited rituals of interaction – a 'costume' being the live meeting between the wearer and the materials.

This approach moves beyond a static assumption of what bodies and costumes do to each other. Instead, it responds to the ongoing emergence of multiple bodies—human, costume, and others—in a shared space. By working with these shifting elements, it blurs the strongly upheld distinctions between performance and daily life, allowing for a more fluid definition of what a costume can be.

From the dressing room's somatic and touch paradigm, the intention of design and choreography shifts – it is no longer a design for a single costume or a single performance, but instead becomes about choreographing attention – an experiential place that is always changing and in a state of flux. It becomes about attending through touch, returning us to material and sensorial connection.

Key Questions of the Artistic Research & Arising Key Methods

Key artistic research questions include:

How do you choreograph attention through the touch of Somatic Costumes?

How does the touch of costume/materials impact bodies? How does the touch of bodies impact materials/costumes?

How do you design a costume through the sense of touch and the arising psychophysical needs?

How can this process support sensorial and material re-connection?

Key artistic arising methods applied to choreographing attention through the touch of Somatic Costumes include:

Method 1: Attending to Bodies – Attending to Materials

Method 2: Attending to Simplicity – Less is More

Method 3: Attending to Touch Patterns When Wearing

Method 4: Attending to Tactile Collaborations: Equal, Merge, Foreground / background, Dominant / Disappearing

Method 5: Guiding Attention

Method 6: Activating the Parasympathetic vs. Sympathetic Nervous System

Method 7: Aware-Wearing & the Invisible Costume

Method 8: Costuming the 'Sense of the Real'

SOMATIC ACT 17: **Touching & Moving Attention**



Allow for at least 20 minutes. You will need a jacket and a comfortable place to move and rest.

This Somatic Act can be experienced as a solo, duet or group.

.....

*Begin in a comfortable position
of sitting, standing or lying
while holding your jacket
in your hands.*

Close your eyes.

Notice your breathing...

*As you are ready,
begin slowly touching
and exploring your jacket
with your hands*

*Sensing the texture,
the weight, the form.*

*Noticing the small details
a button, an inside pocket,
the wrinkles and creases...*

How does the material move?

Allowing time...

And finding a pause...

Noticing your breath...

*Slowing transitioning
to allowing the jacket
to touch you
exploring all the surfaces
of your body
from head to toe
even the subtle quiet places
like behind an ear
or between the fingers.*

Allowing time...

Pausing...

Noticing the arising sensations...

*Slowly, dress yourself in the jacket
so you are wearing it.*

Allowing time...

*Sensing how the jacket touches you
the places where there is*

weight or sense of compression

*Slowly, allow the jacket to touch and move you
as if it were your dancing partner.*

*Inviting you to move
gently at first
small and subtle gestures
a gentle dance
of attending
Your jacket is guiding you.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready, begin to
now and then
guide your jacket
touching and moving it.*

*Sometimes your jacket guides you
sometimes you guide your jacket.*

*As you move and touch
each other in
a gentle dance of attending.*

Allowing time...

*Gradually, the movement
can grow
moving in or out of the floor
or even travelling on your feet*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

Allowing time...

And gently pausing...

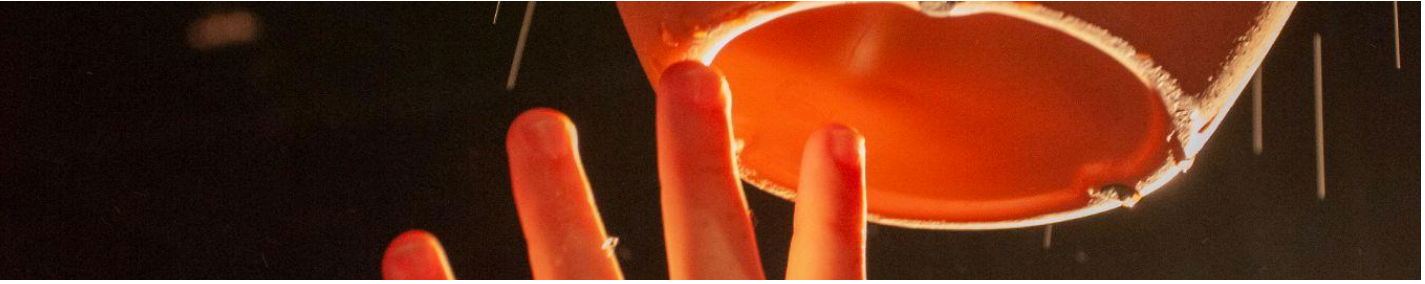
Notice your breathing...

*As you attend
to each other,
the dance continues
between you*

*The jacket and you touching
and moving each other.*

Allowing time...

*Slowly, the attending dance
becomes a bit smaller
and slower
as you find
a way
together
to return to resting
on the floor
for a moment.*



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces. Photo by Espen Tollefsen, 2021.

METHOD 1: ATTENDING TO BODIES – ATTENDING TO MATERIALS

Touching & Moving Attention: Costume – Body

How do you choreograph attention through the touch of Somatic Costume?

I touch materials
Materials touch me
We touch each other

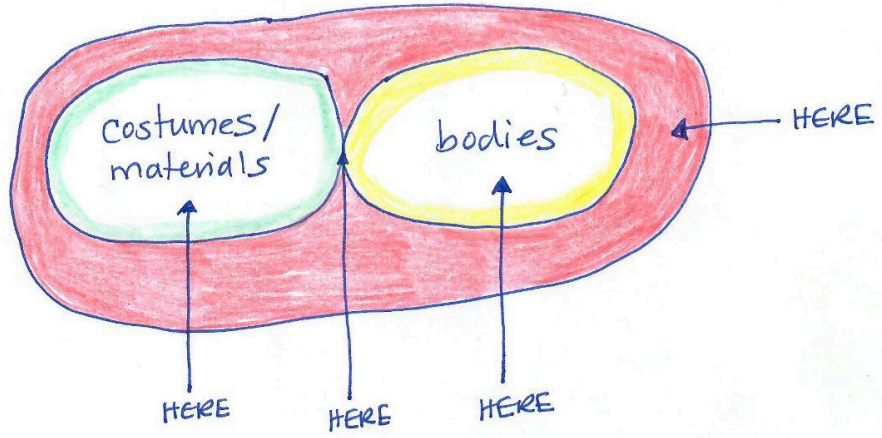
I move materials
The materials move me
We move each other

When wearing a costume, do you sense how the costume is touching you (bringing an awareness towards the body), or do you sense that you are touching the costume (bringing attention towards the material)?

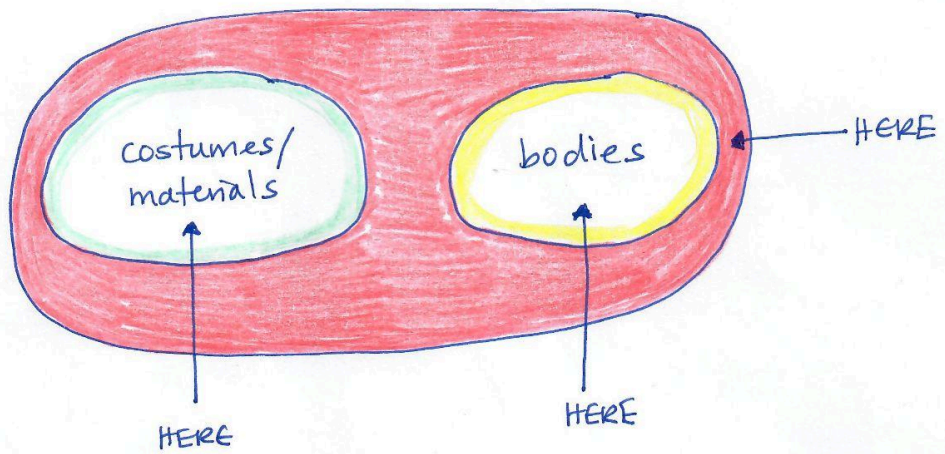
Or, do you sense the third place, allowing attention to rest on the meeting place between body and material? This place can act as a bridge and reveal the potential of touch itself – a dynamic relationship between bodies and materials, where attention is able to move in both directions (towards body and material) simultaneously.

Where does your attention go?

with
TOUCH



without
TOUCH



Drawing by Sally E. Dean. 2020.

Where does your attention go – to materials or bodies?

Each person who enters the Somatic Costume Dressing Room will bring with them their own habits of attention. As costume designers or dancers/choreographers, we have specific ways of how to train attention, most of which lean toward tendencies of starting with either attending to the body/bodies or attending to materials.

In somatic practices, there is a tendency to start first with how a costume can bring awareness to the body/bodies, and then from there the practice moves towards exploring how bodies affect costumes. Because I am a somatic practitioner, I begin my research attending to bodies and then gently move towards attending to materials as well as the 'third place' as mentioned above.

In the case of designers, their hands are often fluent in how they can impact a material to create a costume, but they tend not to wear the costume to sense how it impacts the rest of their bodies, and might not be aware of their bodies in the making process. In the case of choreographers or dancers, they might be more aware of how the materials impact their bodies, but there is also a tendency for materials/costumes to be neglected and seen as servants of the movement and choreography, and then the materials' or costumes' impact is not explored. In both cases, the inherent and powerful reciprocal relationships between the two, bodies and materials, is lost.

In the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, we are bridging or navigating these relationships directly through the sense of touch.

Through the process of attending, and myself as guide supporting the 'choreography of attention', wearers may begin to find new relationships to bodies that create intimacy with themselves and costumes/materials.

For example, one wearer describes her new relationship with her shoes: 'I put it to my heart and I was like "I love this shoe"... I never really thought about it before but at that moment... I fell in love with my shoes! And it's nice because they are a scruffy old pair of cros"' (Somatic Costume Dressing Room Wearer, 2020).

And another wearer discovers the three dimensionality of her heart: 'my idea of my body is super frontal...feeling of my body is usually two dimensional... (but) in fact my heart is on both sides (front & back) and also on the sides... my heart is even on my sides!' (Somatic Costume Dressing Room Wearer, 2021).

In the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, depending on who is in the room and what is needed, sessions begin by either attending to bodies or materials first, and then cultivating the relationships between.

For example, for some wearers, I begin with them touching materials and choosing one that they are drawn to, while others I begin with bringing attention to their bodies, and if there is an area that is particularly present that needs a bit of touch, I invite their hand to rest there. The intention is to bring them slowly into dialogue between costumes/materials and bodies

so that the attention rests in this third place – where they meet – to allow them to experience the impact of bodies and costumes/materials with each other.

SOMATIC ACT 18: **Touch of Balloon**



Allow for at least 25 minutes. You will need a balloon, cotton with spandex T-shirt that fits close to the body and a comfortable place to move and rest. It is important that the T-shirt is not too tight, but creates a bit of compression. Start already dressed in your T-shirt.

This Somatic Act can be experienced as a solo, duet or group.

.....

*To begin, we will blow up a balloon
about the size of a large grapefruit.*

Close your eyes.

*Begin touching
the balloon
noticing how it responds
to the touch of your hands...*

*Also noticing how the balloon
touches your hands...*

Allowing time...

*Finding a transition
to placing the balloon
down on the floor.*

*And placing one hand
at the top of your chest
by the breastbone or sternum.*

*Closing your eyes
noticing your breathing...*

*And how the hand
rises and falls
in response to your breath*

Allowing time...

*Slowly open your eyes
and placing the balloon
underneath the T-shirt
at your chest
where your hand was*

*Closing your eyes
noticing your breathing...*

*Sensing how the contact
of the balloon shifts
as you breathe*

*Perhaps you can sense
the rise and fall of your breath
with the rise and fall
of the contact of the balloon
against your chest*

*the balloon is touching you
and you are touching the balloon.*

Allowing time...

*If you need,
you can also slightly shift
the location of the balloon,
moving it slightly to the right or left
or up or down*

*to support how the balloon's touch
is contacting your chest.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
you can explore this
with a little bit of movement
sensing how the balloon's touch
shifts against your chest
as you move.*

Noticing your breathing...

*Perhaps noticing
how it affects your arms
or legs or chest...*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

Allowing time...

*Gradually opening the eyes
as the movement grows*

Perhaps exploring walking, sitting or lying

*Noticing how
the contact of the balloon
shifts
as you move...*

Allowing time...

Gradually finding a place to rest.

Perhaps you can sense

*the rise and fall of your breath
with the rise and fall
of the contact of the balloon
against your chest*

*the balloon is touching you
and you are touching the balloon*

*Finding your transition
as you are ready.*



The Somatic Costume Dressing Room, 2021. Photo by Sally E. Dean

METHOD 2: SIMPLICITY OF MATERIALS – LESS IS MORE

SIMPLICITY OF MATERIALS

How do you choreograph attention through the touch of Somatic Costumes?

To unpack this question further, I return to the touch of materials and the touch of bodies and invite you into some of the research experiences inside the Somatic Costume Dressing Room.

How does the touch of costume impact bodies?

How does the touch of bodies impact materials/costumes?

With costumes often being a collection of materials put together, The Somatic Costume Dressing Room has often typically been a return to the simplicity of researching the impact of one or a few materials in simple combinations to return to the profound touch impact they have on bodies when wearing.

In the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, I began with materials that were easily accessible for participants in their home environments. Whereas, for live sessions, I used my current 'Somatic Costume Wardrobe' which consists of many previously used and specifically designed Somatic Costumes; as well as an ample collection of materials, which through my interest in their specific and contrasting tactile qualities have been gathered over a long period of time.

Focusing on the use of only a few materials at a time, a more minimalistic approach, became a key method in choreographing attention both in the Somatic Costume Dressing

Room and later in the ‘Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces’ performance (2021-2023). A research question posed was, ‘What can one material do?’, with a focus on tactility and with a somatic approach? I discovered that one material can alone create significant tactile effects on bodies.

This ‘less is more’ approach raises social-cultural questions about our modern society that fundamentally shaped my artistic choices. With our sensorial systems constantly overstimulated—by mobile phones, computers, numerous apps, and digital billboards, to name just a few—and a societal bias toward visual dominance, I had to ask: in exploring ‘choreographing attention’, should I embrace or move away from these patterns?

More sensorial information is not necessarily, from a somatic perspective, supportive of our nervous systems and bodies in general. By keeping our sympathetic system (fight or flight response) on constant alert, our physiological systems are not given the chance to rest (the role of the parasympathetic nervous system): ‘heightened stimulation eventually causes general exhaustion, and the shunting of blood from the internal organs adds to this depletion....The digestion of our own protein stores first strips us of reserves, then begins consuming our own flesh....keeping the physiological machinery in high gear’ (Juhan, 2003, p. 365).

I prefer to artistically move in the direction of an antidote for society – balancing our sensorial hierarchy starting with touch and leaning towards less sensory information, with tactile experiences given one at a time, often slowly with time for transitions and rest - instead of a plethora all at once.

Choreographing attention through touch has been approached as a way of also listening to the limits of sensory information that each wearer/person can process and be given choice – bodies are all unique with differing sensorial needs.

TOUCH OF MATERIALS/COSTUME AND BODIES – THE BALLOON



Photo by Sally E. Dean, 2021

The balloon's tactility, materiality, and versatility has been an incredible resource for somatic awareness. It has become an essential component in my Somatic Costume Wardrobe collection.

A balloon's touch has the capacity to offer a similar touch quality and impact as that of the human hand. When taking an oval shaped balloon, I fill it with air to a volume

that allows for the balloon's contact surface to be about the circumference of a human hand. The balloon then needs the collaboration of another material and the moving body to experience the hand and the balloon as a similar touch pressure.

This is done through attaching the balloon to the wearer with an 'activating material' that will allow the balloon's form to slightly concave, from the compression – the balloon needs to be sandwiched between the body and the activating material.

This quality of compression is essential to experiencing the impact of the balloon's touch and can also be enhanced further through the weight of the wearer through their body (for example, sitting or lying on a balloon).

Similar to human contact, the balloon is able to respond to the weight or direction of the given touch, causing it to 're-activate' its touch-contact on the body. When you move, the balloon slightly moves. Why is this important? If the costume does not change its way of contacting the body, the body desensitizes to this experience. The wearer no longer feels it. If a material has an ability to 'respond' to the body, then it has a greater potential to invite ongoing awareness and consciousness (Aware-Wearing).

The temperature of the balloon is also an important component of the touch experience. A recently inflated balloon tends towards a very lukewarm temperature. When experimenting with inflatable balls made of another material, they were colder and my body reacted by contracting slightly and moving away from the touch-contact. The temperature of the balloon, on the other hand, invited a movement towards and contact with its more neutral or subtle temperature.

Where the balloon is placed on the body also shifts the experience and the amount of weight and compression needed to experience its impact. Furthermore, all bodies are different, so the amount of weight and compression will also vary from wearer to wearer.

The texture of the latex of the balloon, with its smooth but sometimes tacky surface when placed next to skin (may cause perspiration), can sometimes irritate the wearer. I have found that covering the surface of the balloon with a soft tight is a helpful solution (as well as being a great activating material for supporting compression and contact against the body) or simply by putting the balloon on top of clothing being worn at that time

Another important element of the balloon is its adaptability of form. The volume and size of the balloon can change, shifting the experience of the touch-contact on the body. The larger the balloon, the more touch-contact surface area. The smaller the balloon, the smaller the contact surface area.

A balloon's inner substance can also change, such as when it is filled with air, water, helium, beans, dirt and more. These contents can expand its touch impact to a variety of other tactile and sensorial experiences.

For example, with the Somatic Costume of the Balloon Hat, we fill the balloons with approximately ten uncooked lentils. With the balloons close to the head and ears through the compression of the contact of the hat with the balloons to the head, an auditory experience occurs: the movement of the lentils resonates in the ears and throughout the body. I experience it as if I have a rainstick inside of me when wearing it. It can also amplify the awareness of the connection of the head to the rest of the body. There are many more possibilities.

Also, it is important to note that there can be a disjunct between the tactile and visual experience of the balloon. The visual effect of the volume of the balloon will not be experienced through the haptic sense unless there is enough contact, compression and weight between the activating material, the balloon, and the wearer's body.

If this is absent, there will be a difference between the visual effect of the balloon and its tactile effect. This disjunct between the visual versus tactile effect in the design world is essential to discuss further.

There can sometimes be an assumption that the visual effect will translate automatically in its tactile effect. From my research in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, the volume of a balloon, or any costume with volume, will not necessarily translate to the experience of the wearer as sensing the volume of their bodies. A costume's structural and visual volume often needs a tactile bridge to be able to translate the sensing of the volume of the body: this includes being able to directly be in contact with the volume either through compression, weight, movement and many other qualities and strategies.

For designers, the same can be applied in the reverse – a tactile effect of volume might not create a visual effect of volume. For example, when I wear the Stagen (element of the Javanese costume, a cotton non-stretching material that is wrapped around the waist - refer to Somatic Act 4: Touch of Stagen for a picture) or an elastic material that creates compression around my waist, which enables me to experience the volume of my body. Compression and weight can support the experience of volume, but the material itself might not visually have volume.

SOMATIC ACT 19: Making the Balloon-Tight Ring



Allow for at least 25 minutes. You will need sixteen latex balloons (recommended: 10” Belbal latex, 100% biodegradable), 1 long tight (recommended: 50 Denier, 91% Nylon and 9% Elastane) and a comfortable place to sit.

This Somatic Act can be experienced as a solo, duet or group.

To begin you're going to need one tight that is quite long, slightly thick, with a stretch that has a little bit of 'give' but that also creates a bit of compression. The tight should not be too loose. The balloons also need to be strong and of a high quality.

Start with taking one balloon and blowing it up to about the size of a small grapefruit. The balloons blown up later should all be similar in size.

Next, take the tight and open one of the legs.

Gather the tight material together to the end as if getting ready to put your foot into it.

Open the tight wide and take your blown up balloon and manoeuvre it into almost the end of the tight where a foot would usually go. Instead of the balloon touching the end of the tight, leave a couple of inches of space between the end of the tight and the balloon. You will use these few inches later to tie your Balloon-Tight Ring together.

Continue to fill the leg with balloons to total eight balloons on one tight leg and eight balloons on the other tight leg.

When putting in additional balloons into the tight leg, make sure that the balloons are touching each other with a really good and strong contact between them so there's no space between balloon one and balloon two. This is important because it affects how it contacts the body later when you wear it.

Now, we will make the tight legs into two rings. Take the tight waist and tie it to the tight foot. Again, make sure that your ring, when tying it, makes a loop that creates a strong contact between balloons and without space.

And then, you can wear it...

THE TOUCH OF MATERIALS/COSTUME AND BODIES – SELF DRESSING & COLLABORATIVE DRESSING

The Balloon & Tight with Tube & Stagen

As part of my documentation process of the touch impact of costume/materials, I have hundreds of video-recorded material of the dressing, wearing, moving and undressing stages of the artistic research ('Reflection in Action') as well as written reflections, summaries, and references to other somatic work ('Reflection After Action'). For the purposes of this written reflection, I will start with sharing the earlier stages of the Somatic Costume Dressing Room research in Summer 2020 with my artist residency at Gorse Hill with Joan Davis in Ireland in the form of Self Dressing and Collaborative Dressing sessions with Joan.

These sessions are also selected because they reveal the importance of the material of the balloon in its development in my artistic research (an element of it is included in the final performance). Plus, I include this documentation because of an important touch pattern 'compression' that was a recurring theme and touch need in many of my Guided Dressing sessions.

Certain amounts of compression can not only have a calming effect on the body, but can also support sensing the materiality of the body. The releasing of tension/holding patterns in the body, activate the parasympathetic nervous system and create the feeling of being held and supported. In the examples below, you can also see how it supported a 're-alignment' of my body.

The documentation also reveals how two contrasting touch patterns/qualities (compression/suspension), embedded in a costume, can have the potential to create a 'balancing effect' on the body. It also reveals how touch patterns/qualities interact with each other and are essential to consider in the design process.

This method of contrasting two touch patterns/qualities I apply again and intentionally to the costume in the Give Them Wing Performance – the Feather Fingers, giving both compression and extension, to be discussed later.

TACTILE 'REFLECTION IN ACTION' – PHOTOS & VIDEOS

In this costume/material touch journey, I explore designing at first a single then double balloon ring, starting at the pelvis with balloons and pink tights and add different layers of compression materials with the beige Somatic Tube Costume and the red Stagen (an element of the Javanese costume, a cotton non-stretching material that is wrapped around the waist). The balloon ring becomes attached to both the back and front of the body and moves to different locations on the body. The excerpt below is from selected videos, and not the entire process that took place on July 10, 2020. Both the reflection process of the touch impact of the materials, and the design process, are embedded together.

Another key component of the process was inviting Joan Davis to wear aspects of the design and to share, during the sessions, her experiences of and feedback on the tactile and somatic sensations.

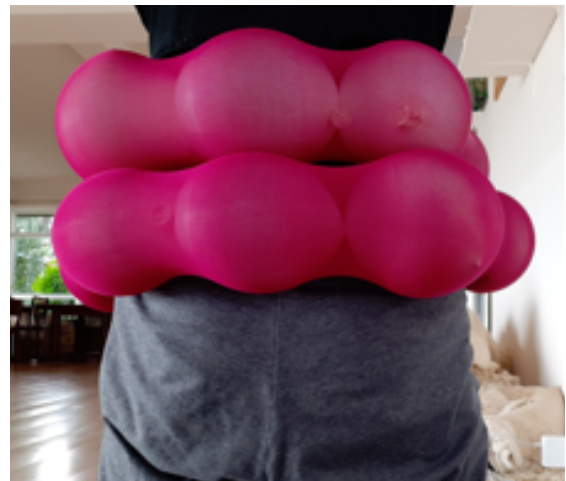
DOCUMENTATION



Somatic Costume Wardrobe



Balloon Pelvis Half Circle Two Rings



Balloon Pelvis Half Circle Tube Back



Balloon Pelvis Half Circle – Sally Making



Balloon Pelvis Half Circle 2 Rings Front – Sally Wearing



Balloon Pelvis Half Circle 2 Rings Front – Sally Wearing



I can really drop down into my pelvis. I don't have to hold anything.

That's what's so good. I don't have to do any of the pelvic holding' -(Joan Davis)

**Balloon Pelvis Tube Stagen
- Joan Walking**



Balloon Torso Lying - Sally

TACTILE 'REFLECTION AFTER ACTION' – DIARY AND NOTES

Below is an edited diary entry from July 2020 with initial key reflections and methods from my Self Dressing sessions that were applied and developed further in the Guided Somatic Costume Dressing Room Sessions and Workshops:

The touch of the nylon, through its stretch, can create compression, while the balloons, filled with air, create a sense of suspension and volume. This allows for the body to be touched in two directions at the same time – towards the body and away from the body.

The touch of the balloons, filled with air, respond to the movement of the body, for example, if you lie on them, they spread out further.

The balloons, if put together in a collection, can support the weight of the body and in doing so can give a different orientation to the experience of gravity through its suspension quality.

The location of the touch of the costume on the body shifts the experience.

Joan and I shared the experience of being held by the Balloon & Tight design. This created the felt sense of support and enabled the releasing of tension or holding patterns in the body.

How much compression is needed seems to be very specific and depends on the person. It is therefore important to have options for people to choose from. Layers of compressive elements can be added to this balloon and tight design such as the tube costume – made of stretchy material – and the Javanese Stagen, which is non-stretchy material.

Sometimes the touch effect can be very subtle in the beginning, almost unnoticeable. It was important to allow time to sense and acknowledge an effect.

The costume's touch location on the body can have an effect elsewhere: Placing the Balloon-Tight Ring around my torso releases the pelvis in another way - giving it a sense of being more weighted and connected to the ground. This underlines the importance of not necessarily always starting directly, in designing the costume, with the area that we would like to offer a somatic effect. The costume's touch resonates throughout the whole body.

The act of undressing is a pivotal moment, a transitional space and shedding journey that requires careful presence and time. Rather than a rushed action, it is a process of listening to the body's relationship to each layer of clothing, as some materials may want to be shed quickly, while others wish to stay on longer, revealing a dialogue between the body and the costume.

Undressing and moving afterwards also becomes a method for integrating the experience of wearing the costume, as well as a way to reveal its effects on the body. It can be sometimes difficult to perceive the costume's full impact until it is taken off, when its influence can be felt even more significantly – what I refer to as the 'invisible costume' or the tangible, felt sense of its imprint on the body.

There are different experiences of compression. Compression that supports and holds and compression that flattens. When wearing T-shirt 1, Joan experienced the compression to be flattening. Instead of sensing the three-dimensionality of her body, which compression can also invite, the pressure was too strong and reduced her felt sense of the volume of her body.

There can be a refined sensitivity in the body to what is too much compression and what is not enough. For example, in my self dressing sessions, two Stagens wrapped around the body felt slightly restrictive whereas one Stagen felt supportive and encouraged movement.

Different materials create different potentials of compression. This includes the elasticity and movement of the material as compared to the stiffness of the material.

In the Self Dressing sessions, another method of understanding the impact of the costume is to give it to another person to wear afterwards and to hear their tactile and somatic experiences. For example, I did this with Joan, with the experience of wearing the Balloon-Tight Ring with Tube on the pelvis and this clarified the potential to release tension in the pelvic floor.

The placement of a material on the body can support different directional patterns of movement. For example, the Balloon Ring created a side-to-side and circular motion in my hips. This effect could be attributed to several factors: the release of tension in the pelvic floor, a palpable sense of volume created by the compression, and a heightened awareness of the space between my pelvis and upper torso. Together, these elements allowed for a greater sense of freedom and an expanded range of motion.

SOMATIC ACT 20: **Wearing & Moving in Balloon-Tight Ring**



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need your pre-prepared Balloon-Tight Ring from Somatic Act 19 and a comfortable place to move and rest.

This Somatic Act can be experienced as a solo, duet or group.

.....
With eyes open,

*begin by walking
sensing
the contact of your feet
on the ground*

*Noticing how the pelvis
and torso
moves and shifts
with the weight
of your feet...*

*Attending
now and then
to your breath.*

Allowing time...

Finding a pause...

*Sensing your feet now
in stillness.*

*Closing your eyes
begin slowly
shifting the weight from one foot
to another*

*How does this
affect your pelvis,
torso, your breathing?*

Attending to the arising sensations.

Allowing time...

*And then slowly,
opening the eyes.*

*And now, taking your Balloon-Tight Ring,
placing its two circles together,
on top of each other,
and entering
through the hole
with arms or the legs first
as you would enter a T-shirt
or trousers*

*Gently move the Balloon-Tight Ring
along your body
so it arrives to sit
around the
top of the pelvis.*

Allowing time...

*Then, slightly adjust the upper Balloon-Tight Ring
to the right or left
so that its balloon's location
is at a diagonal to the lower Balloon-Tight Ring's
balloons.*

*This creates a more even sense of
compression around the pelvis.*

Allowing time...

*And then, return to walking
dressed now in your Balloon-Tight Ring.*

*Noticing how the weight falls
through the feet,
and their unfolding relationships
with pelvis, torso, and breath...*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
you can begin to explore
moving in your Balloon-Tight Ring
finding different body positions
such as lying, sitting or standing*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*Noticing how the touch contact
of the Balloon-Tight Ring
shifts the experience
of your body...*

Allowing time...

*If you would like,
you can also change
the location of the Balloon-Tight Ring
so that it rests
a little lower on the pelvis
or a bit higher up
towards the torso.*

*Sensing the unfolding
relationships between
feet, pelvis, torso, and breath.*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*Sensing the balloons
touching and surrounding
your body
three-dimensionally.*

Allowing time...

*Sensing how the touch contact
of the balloons
shifts and changes
as you move, breathe and rest.*

Allowing time...

You are invited to continue to wear this costume as you continue to read the text.

TACTILE 'REFLECTION AFTER ACTION' CONTINUED – DIARY AND NOTES – BALLOON-TIGHT RING

Direction of the Body – Direction of the Costume/Material



Sally wearing the Balloon-Tight Ring, July 2020, Gorse Hill Ireland

I continued exploring the Balloon-Tight Ring in different ways during my artistic residency. One day in particular, I wore it for an upset stomach.

This continued research brought forth two important insights. One, that costumes can also trigger profound emotion, and that I needed to be not only aware of and sensitive with this within the guided dressing room sessions, but also to have resources to support those going through the experience.

And two, within a touch capacity, how there can be a meeting or disjunct between the tactile direction of a costume's touch (towards the body, away from the body, towards the ground or towards the sky, etc.) and the tactile direction of the inner physicality of the body – in this case with reference to the organs. The potential of intentional contrasting tactile

inputs (in this case the costume creating both suspension and compression), became a new resource in designing further Somatic Costumes.

It also brought further clarification into the possibilities of supporting a wearer's physical patterns in the body through the touch of costume. In the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, and following on from the workshops/training (2011-2017) that I had with Giovanni Felicioni (Scaravelli Yoga Teacher and Advanced Rolfer), there are three possibilities of supporting a physical pattern:

1. Amplify the physical pattern and direction with touch (for example, if the shoulders are moving forward, then amplify this pattern further by moving the shoulders in this direction even more).
2. Support the opposite direction of the physical pattern with touch (for example, if the shoulders are moving up, then move the shoulders down).
3. Support by being present with touch - giving touch that does not direct the physicality of the person, but allows through the touch contact to sense their present physical pattern as it is (for example, my hands gently rest on tense neck muscles).

These possibilities are played with further in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room in the Self Dressing sessions below, but also in the guided sessions to be discussed later.

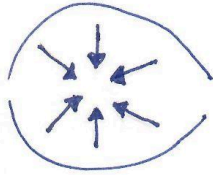
The Direction of the Costumes' Touch and the Direction of the Organs.

According to Somatic Practitioner, Linda Hartley, in her book, *Wisdom of the Moving Body*, a body-mind centering approach, she discusses the tendency of the organs to either be hypotoned (the organ has a sense of moving inwards towards the center) vs. hypertoned (the organ has a sense of moving outward away from the center). A hypotoned organ may feel 'too expanded, flaccid or unintegrated' while a 'hypertoned' organ may feel 'too tight and contracted' (Hartley, 1995, pp. 189-190).

This creates a reflection about how the direction of the touch of the costume affects the direction of the inner organs. The Balloon-Tight Ring costume seems to create two directions at once: a sense of compression or going towards the body (inward) and a sense of suspension or going away from the body (outward). This possibly has the potential of supporting an organ that has lost its tone and ability to move and respond (hypertoned or hypotoned organ) to re-balance.

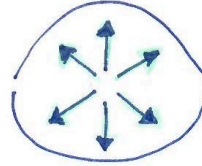
DIAGRAM: TOUCH OF ORGANS & TOUCH OF COSTUME

ORGANS



Hypertoned

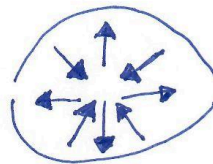
The pattern of the organ moves towards the centre



Hypotoned

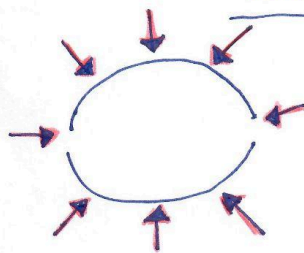
The pattern of the organ moves away from the centre

A Balanced Organ



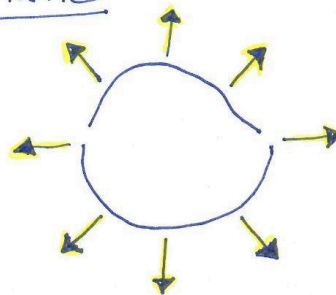
The pattern of the organ has tone and can move in both directions.
The organ is able to move & respond.

Touch of Costume



Compression

Towards the body



Suspension

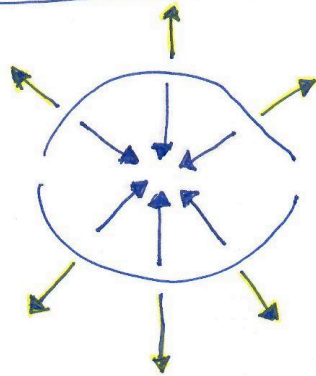
Away from the Body

If the organ is hypertoned, it is tight and contracted and creates a 'wall' which does not allow healthy movement or connection. If the organ is hypotoned, it is too placid, creating a lack of boundary – which again does not allow for healthy movement or connection.

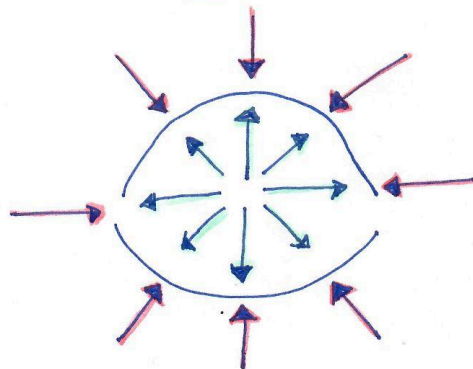
According to Hartley (1995, pp. 189-190), if an organ is hypertoned or hypotoned, you support it to move in the opposite direction of its pattern. If the organ is hypertoned, it needs softening and expansion with movement directed outward away from the organ's centre. If the organ is hypotoned, it needs integration and a sense of 'being knitted together' with movement directed inwards towards the organ's centre.

DIAGRAM: BALANCING THE DIRECTION OF THE ORGANS THROUGH THE TOUCH OF COSTUME

Balancing the Direction of the Organs (Tone) through the Touch Direction of Costume



Hypertoned Organ
with Suspension - Touch of Costume



Hypotoned Organ
with Compression - Touch of Costume

Personal Reflection - Drawing by Sally E. Dean 2020

Structurally, there is not a clear boundary between my stomach and esophagus because I have a hiatal hernia, which means my stomach can slip into the esophagus. My stomach then would be 'hypotoned'.

My stomach was in pain before I wore the Balloon-Tight Ring. On July 15, 2020, I wore the costume for just over an hour and explored different ways of moving and being in contact with it. My stomach loved having extra compression added to it. In particular, I enjoyed lying on my stomach on the floor with the Balloon-Tight -Ring on and rocking gently back and forth. I also spent time resting on the costume while doing nothing. (Interestingly, to activate support of the organs, Hartley discusses a process of first lying down to release muscular tension). Slowly, the pain began disappearing. It was also an incredible emotional journey for me – I was crying a lot.

When I took off the costume, the pain was mostly gone and there was a settling in my system both physically and emotionally. I needed to rest afterwards and took time again to simply lay on the floor but, this time without wearing the costume.

This personal experience had a profound impact on my understanding of the potential of the costume's touch on bodies. Although I intentionally keep the frame of this artistic research in the fields of somatic practices, performance and education and not therapy, there is a strong capacity for costume's touch to soothe and 'mend'.

Across both my personal self-dressing and guiding sessions, I found that the costume served as a crucial transitional object, providing a sense of safety. For individuals uncomfortable with human touch, connecting with a material can be a more accessible first step. This tangible, non-threatening engagement with the costume allowed me to re-internalize a sense of security, giving me the empowerment to make choices based on my own needs.

SOMATIC ACT 21:

Undressing: Balloon-Tight Ring



Allow for at least 20 minutes. You will need your pre-prepared Balloon-Tight Ring and a comfortable place to move and rest.

This Somatic Act can be experienced as a solo, duet or group.

.....

As you are ready,

begin a journey

of slowly

undressing from the

Balloon-Tight Ring.

Sensing the unfolding touch

of the Balloon-Tight Ring

along your body.

Moments of movement

Moments of stillness.

Allowing time and spaciousness...

Noticing when you arrive

into another way

of wearing the costume

pausing to attend

to the arising sensations...

Now and then

open the eyes

close the eyes.

Allowing time...

*After you have shed
your costume,
you can begin to
move
as if you are still wearing it,
sensing the touch imprints
resonating
along the felt sense
of your body.*

*Wearing and moving in
an invisible yet tangible
Balloon-Tight Ring*

*Noticing how it affects
the feet, pelvis, torso and breath...*

*Allowing time and spaciousness
for a subtle dance
of attending...*

*Until you arrive
into resting
with eyes closed,
for a moment.*



THE TOUCH OF THE BALLOON-TIGHT RING COSTUME: WORKSHOP



Somatic Costume Dressing Room Workshop – NOFOD Conference, Danish National School of Performing Arts, Copenhagen, 2022. Photo by Agnes Saaby Thomsen.

After COVID had settled further down, I was able to share and experiment with the Balloon-Tight Ring Costume in a workshop as part of the NOFOD (Nordic Forum for Dance Research) Conference in 2022, which I called 'Choreographing a Hug'. With more bodies, I was able to see that many of the effects I personally and also with Joan had experienced, translated to the workshop participants, and they can be seen here below in photos and video.



Somatic Costume Dressing Room Workshop – NOFOD Conference, Danish National School of Performing Arts, Copenhagen, 2022. Photos by Agnes Saaby Thomsen.



Somatic Costume Dressing Room Workshop – NOFOD Conference, Danish National School of Performing Arts, Copenhagen, 2022. Photos by Agnes Saaby Thomsen.

SOMATIC ACT 22: Resting with Balloon-Tight Ring



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need your pre-prepared Balloon-Tight Ring and a comfortable place to sit and rest.

This Somatic Act can be experienced as a solo, duet or group

.....

Return to your Balloon-Tight Ring.

*Re-tie the tights to make a linear balloon-tight form
with the two balloon-filled tight-legs
next to each other.*

*And then placing the linear balloon-tight form
on the floor
to one side for later.*

*Begin resting on the floor,
on your back
noticing how the touch
of your body
meets the touch
of the floor...*

Breathing.

*Noticing the places
where your body contacts the floor
or where there is space between
the floor and your body...*

Allowing time and spaciousness...

Slowly roll to one side,

*to rest on your belly
adjusting the position
of your legs
to find what is
comfortable for you.*

*Noticing your breathing
and where the contact of your
body meets the floor...*

*With each breath,
allowing the weight
of your body
to sink a bit further
into the floor.*

*Allowing any arising tension
to begin to soften
and unravel.*

Allowing time and spaciousness...

*Slowly, finding a transition
to placing
the Balloon-Tight-Legs
on the floor
underneath your belly-torso
following your spine
as you continue
lying and resting.*

*The top of the Balloon-Tight-Legs
will lie just below your chin
but do adjust the placement
to support your comfort*

*your head
rests on either cheek*

on the floor

*Allow the weight of your body
to settle*

*sensing the suspension of the balloons
supporting you
meeting the touch
of your body*

*Adjust and change
the position of your legs
or arms
as you need.*

Allowing time and spaciousness...

*And then return to lying on your belly
without the Balloon-Tight-Legs.*

How are you contacting the floor now?

Allowing the body to rest...

Allowing time and spaciousness...

*Finding a transition
to placing the Balloon-Tight-Legs
on the floor
under your back
following your spine
as you are lying
and resting.*

*The top of the Balloon-Tight-Leg
will lie near the back of your neck
with your back of the head
resting on the floor
but do adjust the placement*

to support your comfort

*you can place a cushion
if you need
under your head.*

Noticing your breathing...

*Allowing the weight
of your body
to sink into the balloons
as the balloons are rising
to meet your body
with their sense of suspension.*

Allowing time and spaciousness...

*As you are ready,
slowly rolling away
from the Balloon-Tight-Legs
lying on your back
and sensing the contact
of your body
on the floor now.*

How is your breathing?

*Adjust and shift the body
slightly, for your comfort
and as you need.*

Allowing time and spaciousness...

*From this deep place of rest,
allowing the eyes to open.*

*With the support of an exhale,
finding a way to roll to one side*

*rising to your feet
and eventually
finding a slow, gentle walk
around your place
as you breathe
to transition*

Allowing time...

METHOD TWO: SIMPLICITY OF MATERIALS – LESS IS MORE. CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

The focus on 'less is more' and 'one material at a time' was a method that developed over time and is even more pronounced in the *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* performance.

As demonstrated with the Balloon and the Balloon-Tight Ring, one or a few materials can have a profound tactile impact on the wearer. The deeper we delve into a material's touch, a multitude of somatic and sensorial experiences are possible to articulate and specify. At the same time, through this specificity of touch research, I began noticing touch patterns in wearing, becoming the **third method** of choreographing attention through the touch of Somatic Costume: '**Attending to Touch Patterns in Wearing**'.

What has come to light is that both costumes and bodies have patterns and preferences of tactile experiences. A costume that has the tactile impact of heavy weight will on the pelvis typically translate to the felt sense of the pelvis having heavy weight. It will not typically have a pattern of being experienced as light weight. Different wearers also have preferences for different tactile patterns and qualities. The meeting between the costume's and wearer's touch patterns becomes an important dialogue to recognize in the dressing process.

For example, in the Self Dressing session when I was wearing the Balloon-Tight Ring, the direction of the costume's touch met the direction of my organ's touch or tone. Once we begin to notice and attend to these kinds of touch patterns in wearing, we can choose to amplify, support the opposite or be present with the pattern in the dressing session.

In the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, although in most of the Self Dressing and Guided Dressing room sessions we used very few materials, and introduced new materials slowly, one at a time after inviting the wearer to sense the touch impact on their bodies. There were many sessions in which the wearer wanted more and more materials. I followed the wearer's needs which opened further important tactile insights and expanded on my method of 'simplicity of materials' into **the fourth method, 'Attending to Tactile Collaborations in the Costume'**.

It is interesting to note, and refer to the first method here, wearers in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room session that had a somatic or dance background, tended towards requesting or expressing needing less materials (most likely, prioritizing the bodies experience – Attending to Bodies), while those with costume design or design backgrounds were prioritizing and asking for more materials (Attending to Materials/Costumes). This is understandable for those with a design background and with the need for having a final 'form' and even more specifically, something that could look like a 'costume' at the end of the making and dressing process.

In the guided sessions where wearers wanted a lot of materials, I noticed that sometimes there were selective tactile experiences being created from the wearer's tactile preferences of attention (e.g., some will notice weight more than temperature of the same material) thus affecting the sensing and awareness of other tactile inputs coming from the costume.

For example, one wearer, as we discovered along the way, sought a specific tactile effect: a heavy weight on her shoulders that could connect her to the floor. This singular preference for weight was so dominant that it sensorially eclipsed all other textural sensations, effectively rendering the complexity and diversity of the materials resting on her shoulders unnoticeable.

When more materials are used together, their collaborative tactile patterns develop specific relationships that will also influence the wearer's tactile experiences. These tactile collaborations include:

- The materials' touch-inputs merge into another touch sensation.
- One material's touch-input moves into the foreground and another to the background.
- The materials' touch-inputs are equal.
- One or more materials' touch-inputs dominate while the others disappear.

For example, with the Balloon-Tight Ring, I was able to experience two contrasting tactile impacts at the same time (compression and suspension) – the tactile inputs did not override each other, but became collaborators. It is also important to note that the material's touch does not need to be giving the same touch pattern to create an 'equal' relationship – as with the Balloon Tight Ring. Contrasting tactile inputs such as two different touch directions, is another tactile collaboration that is possible.

This selective tactile impact whether person specific (for example, one person noticing weight more than temperature) or material combination specific (if the material's touch contact has intense compression, the pressure sensation will become more dominant than the touch impact of the soft materials used) is essential to become aware of in a design process involving the tactile.

SOMATIC ACT 23: Attending to Touch Patterns



Allow for at least 60 minutes. You will need a comfortable place to either sit or stand. You will need access to a nearby wardrobe of clothes that include a collection of different fabrics, with varying textures and weight (e.g., heavy wool sweaters, leather belt, long silk scarf, thick tights, corduroy trousers, long sleeved cotton-spandex shirts).

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet, or group. If done as a duet or group, you can dress each other. Please touch yourself before touching others. Also, at any point, the touch can be stopped if not wanted.

.....

Begin in a comfortable position sitting or standing.

Close your eyes.

Notice your breathing...

*With eyes closed, very slightly bring your head
towards looking downwards
and allow your spine
and your shoulders
to slightly follow,
inviting the chest
to sink slightly.*

*Notice how this might affect your breathing
And where the weight rests
on your feet or
over your pelvis...*

*As this sensation begins to arrive
clearly in your physicality
what could you wear
that through its touch
would support this
physical pattern and direction*

in your body?

*How can the touch of the clothing
such as the*

*Weight
Location
Direction
Texture
Movement
Pressure*

*amplify
the physicality
of this experience.*

*With eyes gently opening
begin dressing yourself
in clothes that heighten
and encourage
through their touch
the head moving slightly downwards
the spine following
curving a little
the shoulders following
dropping
with the chest slightly
sinking
backwards*

*Noticing how the touch of the clothing
such as the*

*Weight
Location
Direction
Texture
Movement*

Pressure

*can magnify
and support
the physical sensation
and direction
of the body...*

Allowing time and spaciousness...

*As you dress,
play with wearing
the clothing
in unexpected
ways - such as tights tied to the knees
or a shirt worn at the waist.*

*Noticing
how the touch
of the clothing
amplifies
the physical pattern
of the body...*

Allowing time...

*Once you have discovered
and created
a costume
whose touch
supports the physical pattern
of the head slightly moving downwards
with spine
and shoulders
following
with chest
sinking a little bit
back.*

*How can you dress
in the opposite costume?
Supporting the opposite
touch pattern
and physical direction
of the upper body?*

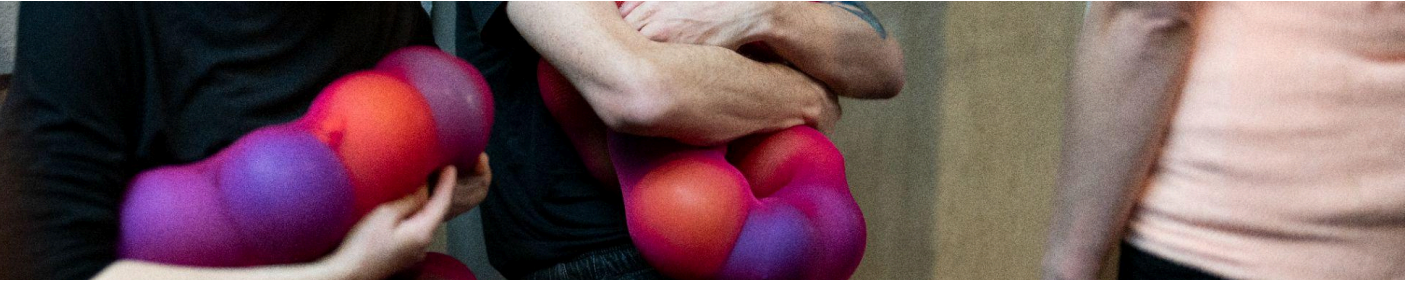
*Supporting your head
to slightly rise, as if looking
just above the horizon,
spine following
with shoulders dropping
backwards a little
and the chest opening
rising gently upwards.*

Noticing how the
 Weight
 Location
 Direction
 Texture
 Movement
 Pressure
*of the touch
from the clothing
supports the physical sensation
and direction
of the body...*

Allowing time and spaciousness...

*As you are ready,
finding a transition
of slowly undressing
and resting
for a moment.*

*And then, drawing, writing and sharing your experiences
with your friends.*



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces, Balloon-Tight Rings. Photo by Elin Osjord, 2023.

METHOD 3: ATTENDING TO TOUCH PATTERNS IN WEARING

How do we choreograph attention through the touch of Somatic Costume?

Both the costume and the wearer are embedded with touch patterns in wearing. My framework for analyzing this interaction considers various **touch patterns** as central to influencing wearers' psychophysical experiences. These evolving categories (referring to my publication Dean, 2021), which describe how and where the costume engages with the body, offer a practical approach for designing costumes where touch is a primary consideration:

Temperature of Touch: warm, cold, etc.

Weight of Touch: heavy/deep, firm, light, or no touch (affected by the space between the costume and body). An example of light touch is wearing a balloon inside a T-shirt while standing. If the body position changes to lying down on the balloon, the weight of touch changes to firm.

Location of Touch: where it is located on the body. Is the location a point, a surface or surrounding a body area from all sides? For example, wearing tight leggings would act as compression touch (direction towards the body) with a location of surrounding the legs from all sides.

Direction of Touch: how it moves towards the body or away from the body, or in many directions at once? For example, in the 'Balloon Hat for Two People', the head of one wearer may be pulled by the costume (the material moves away from its contact on the body) when the other wearer pulls away from their partner.

Texture of Touch: the quality of the material such as smooth, itchy, slippery, or the quality of the moving body such as sticky, coarse or soft.

Time of Touch: is the touch intermittent or constant?

Movement of Touch: how is the material moving on/with/without the body and the body moving on/with/without the material? Is there a quality to this movement? (flowy, bouncy, stiffly, stretchy) (Dean, 2021 pp. 233-234).

Pressure of Touch: does the touch create strong pressure or is it slack and loose? For example, wearing a snug tight that compresses the body strongly or a loose tight where there is no pressure created between body and material.

The above are intentionally simplistic and can have subcategories that I am still discovering, as well as can be combined in different ways with further specifications.

For example, in the Balloon-Tight Ring combination. The Balloon-Tight Ring in the pattern of direction of touch works in two directions (towards the body and away from the body) at the same time. With the elastic of the tight creating a stretchy quality of movement in the material, once it wraps around the waist its time of touch becomes constant, with its location of touch surrounding all sides of the waist. The balloon responds to the weight and movement of the body, in this instance the movement of touch being on the body, with a quality of a moulding-like movement. This combination seems to create pressure between the body and material and creates the compression and suspension touch attributes.

During wearing, the impact of the touch upon the wearer over time can be experienced as less significant than when first wearing the costume. To [reactivate] the touch's presence, 'Aware-Wearing' can be applied, bringing consciousness awareness to an aspect of touch listed above, as well as changing the costume's touch by changing the body position (e.g., from standing, to sitting, to lying) or moving (e.g., walking). The how and where of touch can also affect the timing and movement. Aware-wearing is also activated through dressing and undressing (Dean, 2021, pp. 233-234).

SOMATIC ACT 24:
Attending to Tactile Collaborations



Allow for at least 45 minutes. You will need a comfortable place to either sit or stand. You will need access to a nearby wardrobe of clothes.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet, or group. If done as a duet or group, you can dress each other. Please touch yourself before touching others. Also, at any point, the touch can be stopped if not wanted.

.....

*Begin playfully dressing yourself
following your sense of touch
in many layers of clothing*

*Explore, as a child would,
wearing clothing in
unexpected ways
such as trousers on the
head, or tights over your shoes.*

Allowing time...

*As you finish dressing
in your many layered costume
find a comfortable position
sitting or standing*

Close your eyes.

Notice your breathing...

*Sensing that your clothing
is touching you
and you are touching
your clothing*

Each layer of clothing

*touching and meeting
our bodies
in its own unique way.
Perhaps calling our attention
to our feet, legs, pelvis,
torso, arms, hands, head.*

*Sensing the tactile impacts
from the clothing
resonating in our bones, tissues,
organs, cells.*

Allowing time...

*And then bringing
our attention
towards the strongest or 'loudest'
touch sensations
noticing where
they are coming from...*

*Changing the position of our bodies
when and if
you need to.*

Allowing time...

*And then, sensing the places,
where the touch of the clothing,
is more subtle.*

*A quality of touch
that rests more in the background
than the foreground.*

Pause...

*Or a place where the touch
from more than one material
merges into one?*

Pause...

*Sometimes, adding a little movement
such as shifting the weight
from one foot to another
can support the sensing
of the clothing's touch.*

Allowing time...

Noticing your breathing...

*Sensing
if there is a place
of touch, from the clothing,
that has a sense
of disappearing into the body
as if it is not there?*

*Such as the underwear
that you wear.*

Allowing time...

Slowly, opening your eyes.

*While still dressed,
begin writing and drawing
the tactile experiences from
the clothing and its impact
on your body.*

Allowing time...

*As you finish, slowly undress from your 'costume' and share your tactile experiences
with your friend.*



Water Bags – Carolina Rieckhof. Photo by Sandra Arroniz Lacunza, 2022

METHOD 4: ATTENDING TO TACTILE COLLABORATIONS

*How do we choreograph attention through
the touch of Somatic Costume?*

As we begin to combine a collection of materials together, the tactile interactions can become more complex. The relationship between these tactile interactions may include the following:

Equalize – the materials' tactile impacts are equally present but experienced as separate and different sensations.

Merge – materials combine into a touch sensation experienced as one.

Foreground/ Background – one or more materials' tactile impacts are more present ('louder') while the other materials' tactile impacts are less present ('quieter').

Dominant / Disappearing - one or more material's tactile impacts dominate to the point where other materials' tactile impact disappears and are no longer sensed by the wearer.

With these possible relationships above, a general contrasting of different tactile inputs is possible within most of these. For example, giving a material with heavy weight (e.g., half pound water bags resting on the tops of the feet) while giving a material with light weight (e.g., long feathers attached to the fingers).

SOMATIC ACT 25: Guiding Attention



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need another person and a large enough room to move in with a clear floor. It is best for the feet to be barefoot, in order to sense the contact with the floor.

This Somatic Act can be experienced as a duet or group.

.....

Begin

*with your pointer finger
touching your partner's pointer finger
just at the tip.*

*One partner is the guide,
the other the follower.*

*The guide
has their eyes open.
The follower
has their eyes closed.*

*Sensing your breath,
your weight and
your feet clearly on the floor.*

*Can you both sense
your own bodies
while touching
the other?*

*The guide begins
leading the follower
into simple movement,
such as walking,
through the touch*

of the finger.

*Please start slowly
so you can sense
both the connection
through the touch
of the finger,
but also sense
your own bodies.*

Allowing time...

*As a guide,
make sure your follower
is safe enough
– that there is nothing that they will run into or trip on, etc.*

*As the clarity
of your touch connection grows,
you can begin to also
change levels gently
or play with slightly different speeds.*

*Now and then pause,
sense your own body,
as well as the place
where your fingers meet.*

*Continue, now-and-then
finding moments to pause...*

*If your fingers get tired
you can at any point change
to the other hand
and the other pointer finger.*

Allowing time...

And change roles.

Allowing time...

*After changing roles,
without speaking,
both close your eyes
with pointer fingers touching.*

Now,

*no one guides,
no one follows
– the place where your fingers meet,
in touch,
moves and leads you.*

*Please go slowly at first
and again sense your feet,
your breath,
your own weight
in your body.*

*No one guides,
no one follows
– the place where your fingers meet,
in touch,
moves and leads you.*

*As you continue,
perhaps you can sense
the space between you
grow and shift and change
as you move?*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
continue the process
but slowly allow the eyes*

*to open now and then
to begin to integrate
your inner focus
with your outer focus.
Still following
the place*

*where your fingers
meet in touch.*

*Change hands-fingers
when you need to.*

*Gradually, allow the eyes
to open a little bit more
and a little bit more
so eventually
they are 50% of the time
open.*

Allowing time...

*Sensing the space
between you
grow and shift
and change
as you move.*

*Gradually, allow the eyes
to open a little bit more
so that eventually
they are 75% of the time
open.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready,
you can begin to play with*

where you place your attention
– sometimes choose to guide,
sometimes choose to follow,
sometimes choose the place in-between.

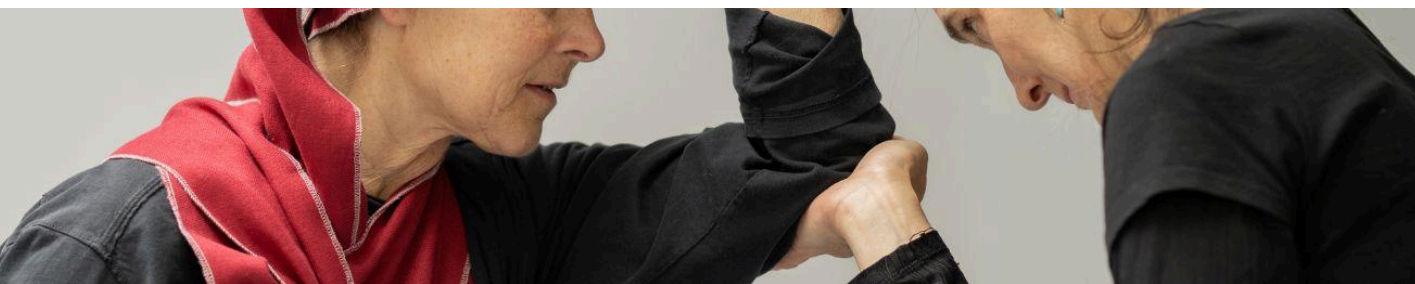
What happens?

What happens
if you both choose
to guide or follow?

Play with the possibilities.

Sensing moments
of pausing
now and then.

Allowing time...



The Somatic Costume Dressing Room, Kristina Gjems & Sally E. Dean, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

METHOD 5: GUIDING ATTENTION

Guiding Attention

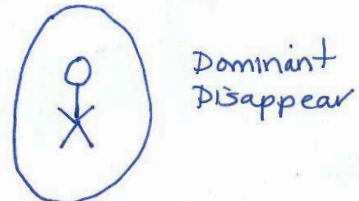
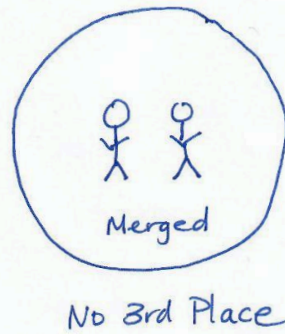
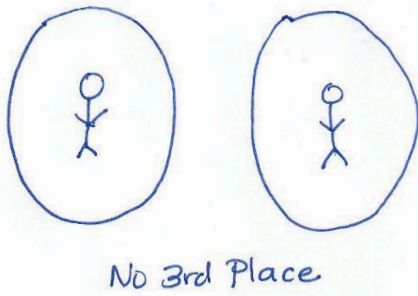
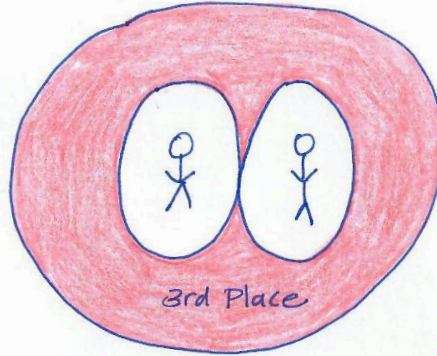
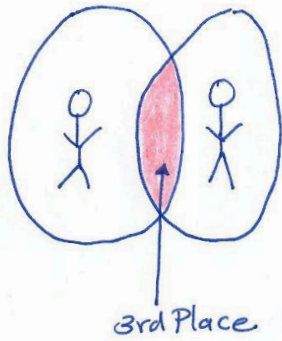
How am I guiding or choreographing attention with a wearer in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room? In the guided sessions, I am not only attending to bodies and materials and supporting the dance between the two (Method One), I am also listening to the dance of attention between myself and the wearer.

In the above exercise, there is again, similar to the relationship between the costume/materials and bodies, a third place between myself and the wearer. Where does my attention rest? This third place can act as a bridge – a dynamic relationship between myself and the wearer, where attention is able to move in both directions (towards self and wearer) simultaneously.

It is also important to say that this third place does not mean myself and the wearer are merged. Instead, the relationship tends to either be equal in presence with the third place being between us in an overlapping field or around us as a container field, and/or one might be more in the foreground while the other is in the background. I have drawn a diagram to further explain the experience.

Diagram: Relationships between Wearer & Guide

Relationships between Wearer & Guide



Background / Foreground

Personal Reflection - Drawing by Sally E. Dean. 2021.

Similar to Attending to Tactile Collaborations in the Costume (Method 4), it is also possible to have the wearer and guide to either merge completely or one be dominant to the point where the other disappears. These two possibilities I actively move myself, as guide, and wearer away from. The latter represents a hierarchical relationship which will prevent a third place from being possible, and therefore will not allow the necessary dialogue and listening between guide and wearer to unfold. The former, where both are merged, means that neither guide nor wearer has a sense of their bodies, and again, a third place is not possible, if both or either have 'disappeared'. Both bodies need a sense of presence and embodiment to create the third place.

Therefore, before a wearer enters the room, I attend to myself as preparation- through somatic exercises and movement to sense my own physicality, materiality and substance. I will not be able to attend to a wearer if I lose my sense of my body in the process. I check in throughout the dressing room journey – sometimes by simply shifting my attention inside my own body – how is my breath? How are my feet meeting the floor? Sometimes I also move in response to the wearer as a way of offering support, but also to sense my own moving body and presence in the dressing room.

When a wearer enters the dressing room, I also support them to begin to attune and sense their bodies either through the touch of our hands together or with the touch of the materials. I also attend to the wearer through simple questions that focus on the tactility of the experience. Sometimes the entire dressing room session can simply be about supporting a wearer to return to sensing themselves from the inside out.

But overall, I guide the process mainly through this third place – where no one guides, no one follows, the place where we meet, move and guide the process.

SOMATIC ACT 26: Calming vs. Activating Touch



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a comfortable place to either sit or stand. This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet, or group. If done as a duet or group, please touch yourself before touching others. Also, at any point, the touch can be stopped if not wanted.

.....

*Begin in a comfortable position sitting or standing.
With eyes closed,
tuning into your breath*

*allowing your weight to settle
sensing your feet on the floor
or your pelvis on the chair.*

*Begin by giving yourself a gentle squeezing touch
as if you are slowly squeezing a sponge.*

The touch creates a sense of compression.

Noticing how strong you would like the touch...

How much compression do you need?

*The squeezing touch is slow, firm and consistent
with a sense of repetition.*

*Start squeezing at the top of the head
and then slowly traveling down
all the way to the feet.*

Allowing time...

*As you are squeezing sensing the soft tissue
underneath your hands
and the structure of bone
and how your breath ebbs and flows
with the touch*

*When you approach the neck and throat
and other more vulnerable and gentle places
lessen the strength of the touch.*

*As you touch, check in with
the pressure of the squeezing.*

*What do you need now
and here?*

Allowing time...

*After the throat and neck
moving to squeezing
the shoulders, arms and hands.*

*Then travel
from the upper torso and back
to the belly and lower back
to the hips
the legs
and feet.*

Allowing time....

*Squeezing touch is like enveloping
the entire body
in a hug.*

*The hands are squeezing
contacting all the surfaces
of the body
the front
the back
the sides
offering a sense of
three-dimensionality*

Allowing time and spaciousness...

*And then taking a moment to pause,
after finishing at the feet.*

*Noticing the reverberations
from the touch...*

How do you sense your body now?

*Allow a moment to write, draw or share your experiences
with a friend.*

Allowing time...

*And then
let's experience
another quality of touch.*

*With your finger tips begin a quick more
light and sudden brush from
the top of the head towards the feet.*

*Next, another quick brush
from the feet towards
the top of the head.*

*And now a light and sudden brush from
one shoulder to the hand
and then from the hand
to the shoulder.*

Transitioning to brushing the other side.

*The touch is light, with clear finger tips,
quick and more sudden.*

*Moving your hands
to the centre of the body
brushing,
with more short strokes
from the middle
of the torso, chest and belly
out to the sides of the body.*

*Changing the position
of your handsto brushing, as best you can
with more short strokes
from the middle of the back*

out to the sides.

*Next, moving to the neck and face
with even smaller, shorter, quick, light brushes
from the centre
and then out to the sides.*

*Now travelling to the head
and finishing with gently
pulling your hair upwards
from many different angles*

*The back, sides, front
of your head
sensing it tug
at your skull.*

*Allowing your hands
to rest at your side.*

Returning to your breath.

*Sensing the quality of touch
of the second touch journey
resonating along your tissues
and bones.*

How do you sense your body now?

*Allow a moment to write, draw or share your experiences
with a friend.*

*And finding a moment
to rest
with eyes closed,
before transitioning.*



The Somatic Costume Dressing Room with Nadia Romerosa, 2022. Photo from zoom recording

METHOD 6: TOUCH ACTIVATING THE PARASYMPATHETIC VS. SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

*How do you choreograph attention through
the touch of Somatic Costume?*

In the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, especially during guiding sessions, I am making tactile choices based on whether the material or my own touch mostly through my hands (in live sessions) are activating the parasympathetic versus sympathetic nervous system?

Both systems control the automatic processes in the body like digestion, heart rate and respiration. In simplification, the parasympathetic slows the body down, and the sympathetic speeds it up.

Parasympathetic: activates the restorative function of the body – supporting rest, digestion, waste elimination. It conserves energy.

Sympathetic: activates the ‘fight or flight’ response, preparing and supporting the body for action and in times of stress or danger. It expends energy.

While certain types of touch can activate the parasympathetic or sympathetic nervous systems, the ultimate effect is always highly individual. The examples below are thus offered as general tendencies, not fixed rules, as the response is mediated by the wearer’s current situation, bodily state, and social-cultural background. For example, a cold washcloth on the head may be calming for a person who is very hot but activating for someone who is feeling cold.

Below are some examples which are still in process:

Calming Touch: examples include giving compression touch (hugs, squeezes), firm touch, touch with weight, constant touch, touch with repetition (e.g., stroking the back). Slow movement, rocking, swaying, moving against resistance (pushing, pulling, carrying heavy objects), and movement that leans into or rests against something. Textures that are slightly soft, smooth, and slippery and some types of elasticity as well as textures that typically create less friction between the skin and the material. Temperatures that are warm or tend towards human body temperature. Sometimes directing the touch from the periphery towards the body and centre (attention from the space to the body).

Activating Touch: Light touch that is gentle along the skin (like feathers lightly stroking the forehead), touch that gives the body a sense of direction or orientation (e.g., suspending the skull slightly away from the spine), unexpected touch. Fast movement, jumping, bouncing, rolling and spinning. Textures that are very soft or rough, woven or textured fabric that create different points of pressure and some types of elasticity and textures that typically create more friction between the skin and the material. Temperatures that are very cold and hot. Sometimes directing the touch from the body and centre towards the periphery or even extending it into space (attention from the body into space).

This focus on the parasympathetic and sympathetic systems arose also because of a recurring psychophysical pattern in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room. Many wearers entered the room with exhaustion and needed to rest. I was amazed at how often wearers wanted touch that was compressive – supporting their parasympathetic systems.

It took time for myself to recognize this need for rest and how essential it was. I appreciated such wearers with whom I worked, such as Nadia Romerosa, who was not afraid to rest as long as she needed which encouraged me to receive and recognize further its importance. Allowing wearers to rest in the costume facilitated the impact of the touch to further integrate into their bodies, often creating profound transformations of movement and qualities of presence during and after rest. I experienced wearers resting up to around 30 minutes max.

Resting became a key technique applied and an essential component of Method 6.

SOMATIC ACT 27:

Touch of Invisible Costume



Allow for at least 20 minutes. You will need a comfortable place to move and rest, and three winter heavy coats. The coats will be tied around the waist.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet, or group. If done as a duet or group, you can create a giant coat nest to rest in at the end.

.....

*Begin with eyes closed,
standing
with your three coats nearby
gently shifting your weight
from one foot
to the other.*

*Noticing the gentle transfer of weight
as one foot slowly rises from the floor
and the other sinks...*

*Allow your breath to soften
and begin to rest
inside your skin, tissues, organs, bones
as the rhythm of your movement
a simple sway from side to side
offers a settling or quieting
of any tension or thoughts.*

*Gradually noticing
how the movement of your feet
travels up to your pelvis...*

If you would like you can

*bring your hands
to rest on your hips
or at the tailbone or pubic bone,
listening and sensing
to the movement there
as you breathe
as you shift the weight
from one foot
to another.*

Allowing time...

And then gently finding a pause...

*Noticing how you experience
your feet and pelvis
in stillness...*

*And gradually opening the eyes
and begin dressing yourself
in your three heavy coats
one by one,
using the sleeves to tightly tie
them around your waist
near the pelvis.*

*Perhaps one coat is attached in front
and one is attached behind
for example,
making sure that they are securely
attached with the sleeves
creating a slight compression
at the waist
and a sense of weight
around the pelvis
as a whole.*

Once dressed,

*returning to closing your eyes,
noticing your breath
and shifting the weight
from one foot
to the other.*

*How do you sense
and experience your pelvis now?*

*Allow the movement of your feet
to take you somewhere
and the touch of your
coats
to begin to move you.*

*As the movement grows,
allow your eyes to open
keeping yourself safe enough
not to run into anything
in your nearby environment.*

Allowing time...

*And then finding a pause...
and sensing your pelvis
in stillness for a moment.*

Closing your eyes again.

*Slowly, one coat at a time,
begin undressing.*

*Sensing, when removed,
how the touch
of the coats – their weight,
compression, texture*

perhaps remains with the felt sense

*of our pelvis,
and perhaps
even our breath.*

Pause...

Breathing in – breathing out

*Shifting the weight again
from one foot
to another.*

*Allowing time to move a little, if you like,
with this after-touch resonance
from the coats.*

Allowing time...

*And returning to stillness
for a moment.*

*And then
returning to the felt sense – the tactile and kinesthetic memory -
of wearing the coats,
as if they were still on the body.
The coats attached firmly around your waist
creating a bit of compression
adding heavy weight around the
pelvis
and possibly being sensed
all the way down
to the feet.*

*As the coats return to touching you,
acting as an invisible costume
allowing yourself to follow
any movement or stillness
that arises.*

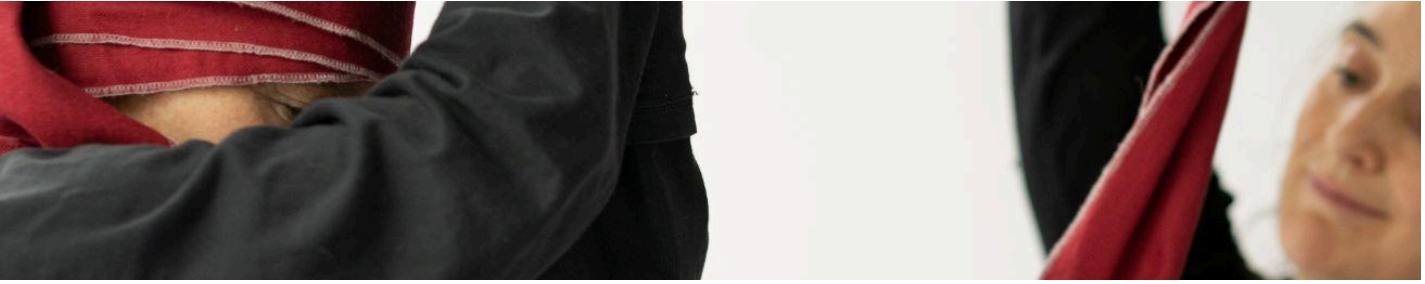
Allowing time...

*And then finding a moment
to pause...
returning to the simple
rhythm and weight shifts of the feet
one foot slowly rises
as the other slowly sinks
further into the floor.*

*Gradually, gathering the coats
creating a nest on the floor
with them
to rest and lie in
for a few moments.*

*Closing the eyes
and sensing the rise
and fall
of the breath
held by the touch
of coats.*

Allowing time...



The Somatic Costume Dressing Room, Kristina Gjems & Sally E. Dean, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord

METHOD 7: AWARE-WEARING & THE INVISIBLE COSTUME

In the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, we apply Aware-Wearing, as defined in the introduction, to the design-making and choreographing process. By bringing conscious awareness to the impact of the costumes' touch on bodies, the process of unpacking and articulating the depth of touch becomes possible. It also allows for further understanding of how attention is choreographed through costume's touch. Aware-Wearing includes dressing and undressing.

Undressing has become a critical component of the Aware-Wearing method. For example, sometimes a wearer will not be able to sense the impact of the costume until it is taken off – the undressing reveals the touch impact. In other cases, a wearer will experience 'the opposite touch effect' after the costume is removed. For instance, this often occurs in relation to weight and pressure. A Somatic Costume that adds heavy weight around the pelvis, when taken off, might give the after effect of light weight around the pelvis. The resource here is that by creating one costume we sometimes already have embedded within it, its 'Touch Opposite'. If I want to support a wearer to experience expansion, I could create a costume to support compression and then after a while invite them to undress.

In the process of undressing, other ways of touching and being in relationship to the costume arise – opening further movement, touch and choreographic potential. Undressing also gives the wearer an opportunity to engage with the costume-- this can be important when a wearer's sensory system begins to dominate and the motor system becomes more still or quiet. Undressing can offer an integration between our sensory and motor systems.

And lastly, after the Somatic Costume is taken off, the wearer can move with a sense that the costume is still on and touching them – an ‘Invisible Costume’. Often, the touch impact of the costume is still resonating immediately after undressing. The Invisible Costume offers again the further integration and understanding of the touch impact of the costume. At the same time, this ‘touch memory’ or Invisible Costume can be returned to, choreographically. My attention returns to my sense of touch historically. At this moment, I can move with my ‘Balloon Hat’ or ‘Spongy Shoes’, as if returning to a known movement vocabulary or spoken word that can be repeated. With this Invisible Costume potential, I can even dress up in an Invisible Wardrobe. Further, choreographically, you can begin to play with the ‘real’ and the ‘invisible’. I can wear a heavy coat and at the same time move as though I am wearing an invisible light coat. The possibilities are endless.

SOMATIC ACT 28: **Attending to Facts into Fictions**



Allow for at least 25 minutes. You will need a shoe and an audio recording device such as the one on your phone.

This Somatic Act can be experienced as a solo, duet or group.

.....

Start in a comfortable position that allows you to sit and hold your shoe.

Press record on your audio device.

Close your eyes.

Touch the shoe and begin sharing, verbally, through your sense of touch, the Facts. Facts include weight, function, form, texture, temperature, movement.

Allowing time...

Then slowly, begin sharing the Fictions are associations, images, feelings, and more from the touch of your shoe. Allow the Fictions to emerge from the Facts.

Allowing time...

What did you notice?

Listen to the audio you recorded.



Somatic Costume Dressing Room with Siv Lier & Sally E. Dean, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Amy van den Hooven

METHOD 8: COSTUMING 'THE SENSE OF THE REAL'

Why is sensorial and material connection needed now?

The 'sense of the real' (Pallasmaa, 2011, p. 22) is a term from Finnish academic, sensorial anthropologist and architect Juhani Pallasmaa.

Sensorial and material connection is a bridge to experiencing the 'sense of the real' during a time when the 'reality of the flesh' (Pallasmaa, 2011, p. 11), the concrete, tangible and what I refer to as 'the facts' tend to be disappearing.

In our modern virtual society where, through our often mass-produced yet fragmented visual media forms, our attention is typically being pulled away from sensing ourselves, others and the world around us. We are exiting our bodies into cyberspace. Is my body real or imaginary? While information is replacing knowledge, reality and fantasy are merging and creating confusion between what is fact and what is fiction. From entertainment to politics, 'The real and the imaginary have become almost impossible to distinguish' (Pallasmaa, 2011, p. 16).

In this time of disconnection, what is the critical role and task of the costume designer and choreographer?

In answer to this question, I once again, I quote Pallasmaa,

'the ethical responsibility of artists and writers...is to strengthen our experience of the real' ...in the spheres of perception and experience, as well as in cultural and social interaction' (Pallasmaa, 2011, pp. 22-23).

One step towards reawakening the 'sense of the real' is through the senses and the re-balancing of the sensorial hierarchy of vision. Sensorial anthropologists (e.g., Classen,

Stoller, Howes, Ingold, Geurts, Jackson and Potter) have advocated for the importance of sensorial experience as modes of knowing and knowledge, as well as emphasizing that sensorial classifications and ordering are social-cultural-historical constructs and effect how we create, perceive and live in the world.

The visual sense in our modern society still dominates and has an impact on how we connect to the felt sense of materiality – in both the bodies we inhabit and the materials that we make and design into costumes.

But it is not only this prioritization of the visual that has implications, but also the suppression of the other senses which impacts design and art practices as well as our society and culture at large: 'The dominance of the eye and the suppression of the other senses tends to push us into detachment, isolation and exteriority'(Pallasmaa, 2005, p. 19).

Returning and attending to the 'sense of the real' through the sense of touch, and the inherent multi-sensorial way of being in the world, offers us the chance to return to sensing inside our bodies – supporting embodiment, and is one small antidote to our current social and cultural disconnection and crisis.

Reconnection is offered, in my artistic research practice, through the modes of attending and touch – choreographing attention through the costume's touch.

The 'Sense of the Real' into Meaning Making

The return to the 'sense of the real' is a return to materiality or 'substance'. But this return to the sense of the real does not end in the realm of the concrete or 'fact', but is a portal into embodied imagination or what I will refer to as 'Poetic Material-ity.' 'One cannot dream profoundly with objects. To dream profoundly, one must dream with substances' (Bachelard, 1999, p. 22).

In Poetic Material-ity, meaning (with a pre-verbal beginning) begins with our presence with substances, or what Gumbrecht refers to as 'presence effects'(2004) of a material and sensorial experience. This engagement with substance then moves from what Suryodarmo calls the 'The Facts/Reality world' into The Fictions/Dream World, which Gumbrecht refers to as the 'meaning effects'(2004) of an experience. This distinction is similar to the neuroscience concepts of body schema (the physical construction of our bodies from sensory feedback) and body image (the social and cultural construction of our bodies) (Blakeslee & Blakeslee, 2007).

This approach, which moves from Fact into Fiction, therefore differs from a more typical artistic and academic practice of starting with a semiotic connection.

How does starting from the tacit and sensorial, specifically the tactile, shift the process of how we create meaning?

How can the sensorial turn and the 'sense of the real' further develop embodied design practices and discussions? How can artistic and academic writing about embodied experiences, which leans more towards articulating the experience of 'making' and 'feeling', further develop the articulation of 'sensing' and 'wearing'?

Entering the 'sense of the real' through touch and attention in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room

Facts/Fictions or Dream world/Reality world

Suprpto Suryodarmo who created the somatic practice of Amerta Movement has the terms and practices called *Dream world/ Reality world or Fact/Fiction*. Fiction/Dream refers to 'the imagination, the symbol' while Fact/Reality refers to 'the concrete' and substance. Fact/Reality typically encompasses objective experiences while Fiction/Dream does not mean that the experiences are untrue, but instead, enters the terrain of the subjective.

Applied to costume we can consider both its Facts (the function, colours, texture, orientation, location, weight, shape, etc.) as well as its Fictions (associations, meanings, metaphors, feelings, characters, etc).

A Somatic Costume affects the wearer directly through the kinaesthetic sense - the material, texture, weight, form, movement (Facts) of the costume itself typically create a direct and tactile experience, similar for all wearers. But the subjective experiences and associations (Fictions) are different and unique for each person.

For example, one person associates the Bin Bag Skirt with 'flying' and feels a sense of freedom, while another associates it with the feeling of 'suffocation' (Dean, 2014, pp. 21-22)

If I am designing or moving in a costume, when I bring my attention to the sense of weight, texture and direction in space, I am following the Fact. If I am designing or moving in a costume following my associations such as Duncce Cap, or character, I am following the Fiction.

Suryodarmo offers two different ways of starting in moving which I apply to design:

Starting with the Fact to create the Fiction: I find a tree branch, and I create a Tree Skirt from it.

Starting with the Fiction to create the Fact: I imagine a design for a hat, and then I create that hat.

Facts and Fictions are both needed in design processes, but sometimes Facts or what in Pallasmaa referred to as 'the sense of the real' can be forgotten or like the sense of touch, neglected.

In my research and meaning making process, I start with the Facts to create Fictions.

Disjuncts between Facts-Fictions and Touch-Vision

With the tendency towards a neglect of the 'sense of the real' and the dominance of vision, disjuncts can occur between Facts and Fictions as well as between touch and the visual. What we imagine is not necessarily 'real' when experienced - what a costume looks like might be very different in the direct, tactile felt experience of wearing.

Touch and Facts can return us to the 'sense of the real'. Fictions can override both touch and the 'sense of the real'.

High heeled shoes for women are one example – the social cultural narrative and feelings of power and confidence that may come from wearing high-heeled shoes can override, and be prioritized over, sensorial experience, such as the physical long-term damage to the achilles tendons in the feet over time. The following below is a poetic reflection on this idea:

*She is walking, wearing her high heels –
or her high heels are wearing her. Walking her into the room
'with confidence' she says.
She doesn't feel as if she is 'herself' without them.
She finds it difficult to take them off at night.
Her body has begun to reshape themselves around them
- her achilles tendons, each day, are shortening
- walking barefoot at night to the bathroom is now 'painful', an unfamiliar act.
It's the price you pay, 'she says,
'for confidence',
to see and feel her power in the world.*

This demonstrates that an external narrative—be it social or visual—can be prioritized over the physical, felt experience. This principle also occurs in design processes, where the visual look of the costume can be very different than the experience of wearing it. For example, a costume may visually appear to have volume but not provide that felt experience, or conversely, a costume may provide a felt experience of volume without visually appearing to have it.

If we say that all interpretation is subjective in our meaning making, we lose the possibility of understanding how fictions and facts interact with each other and create patterns. For example, a certain form of the body can generate and lean towards a certain emotional state. For example, if I am standing with my shoulders forward, my torso collapsed and my face looking downwards, interpretation will lean towards an emotional quality of sadness rather than towards an emotional quality of joy. Certain ways of touching the body and materials also have patterns of generated psychophysical states. For example, silk is often associated psychologically with feelings of 'well-being, moral support, freedom, and energy' and is 'purported to give the most positive physiological sensation' (Storm, pp. 305-306).

The 'Sense of the Real' in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room



Somatic Costume Dressing Room – Lieu Le, KHIO, 2022. Photo by Sally E Dean.

In the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, I am attending and guiding wearers to 'the sense of the real' through the sense of touch of bodies and materials.

Simple questions are asked, often very practical, giving wearers choice over materials or how or what they want for touch on their bodies. In live sessions, I sometimes use my own touch to clarify or ask what type of touch they want the materials to create on their body (such as quality of touch, its direction, or the actual location on the body). I also am noticing if the wearer is moving towards rest or action thus choosing different touch qualities that tend to activate either the parasympathetic or the sympathetic nervous system.



Somatic Costume Dressing Room – Lieu Le, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Sally E Dean.

Materials/costumes are mostly given one at a time, in order to attend to one touch experience, but also not to overstimulate or overwhelm the system with numerous stimuli. Within the session, the psychophysical need tends to arise on its own, from this sensorial and material dialogue, and from applying touch-based somatic approaches as discussed in Methods 1 to 7.

Below is an excerpt of dialogue in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room with Lieu Le, a costume designer and MA design student at Oslo National Academy of the Arts. In this moment, we were designing a 'hat' from simple materials based on tactile and material feedback.

Sally: Is there anything else that is standing out?

Lieu: My cheeks

Sally: Your cheeks

Lieu: They are cold

Sally: Do you want something warm on them?

Lieu: Something warm for the cheeks

Sally: Let's see if it is something like? (*touching with material*)

Lieu: Oh no, this is too cold

Sally: Is this too scratchy? (*touching with a different material*)

Lieu: Yes...I want it to support my cheek and my head...

It needs to be like a hat or something.

Sally: Is that too much? (*touching with foam material*)

Lieu: No - that is nice

Yes, I like it like this, it supports my ears too...

Sally: What about this?

Lieu: Oh yes, this is comfortable.

Sally: Is this better?

Lieu: Yes

Sally: Let me put two here (*placing two pieces of foam on sides of head*)

Do you want it just around the ears or do you need it on top of the head?

Lieu: I think on top of the head too

– Otherwise I feel cold

Sally: It's interesting how the temperature is really important...

Lieu: I like that the foam is soft and cold

This dialogue continues with other tactile conversations about temperature, weight and the need for compression starting at the sides of the head. Other costume designs grew and changed while in the session with Lieu Le - from compression around the entire body, to extending the lower body out through the feet, to the need of contrasting temperatures around the body.



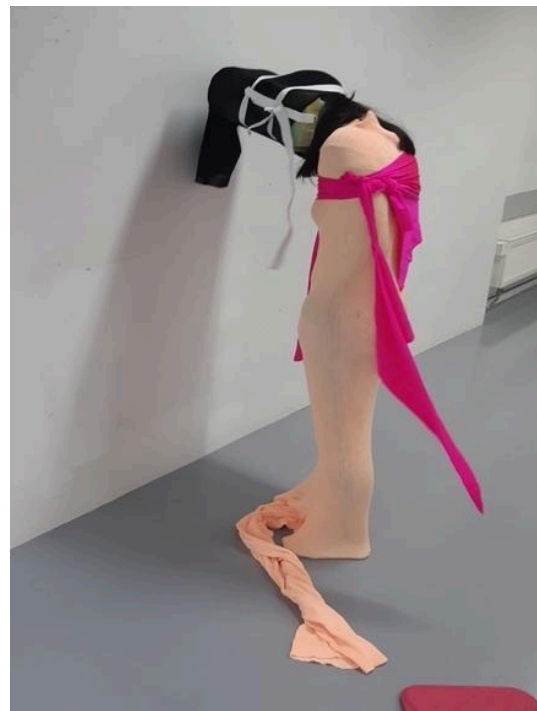


Somatic Costume Dressing Room – Lieu Le, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Sally E Dean.





Somatic Costume Dressing Room – Lieu Le, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Sally E Dean.



Somatic Costume Dressing Room – Lieu Le, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Sally E Dean.



Somatic Costume Dressing Room – Lieu Le, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Sally E Dean.

This material and sensorial dialogue in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room with Lieu Le integrates Fictions. For example, as Lieu Le states during the session:

'The shape is perfect for lying'

'I feel like I am being hugged'

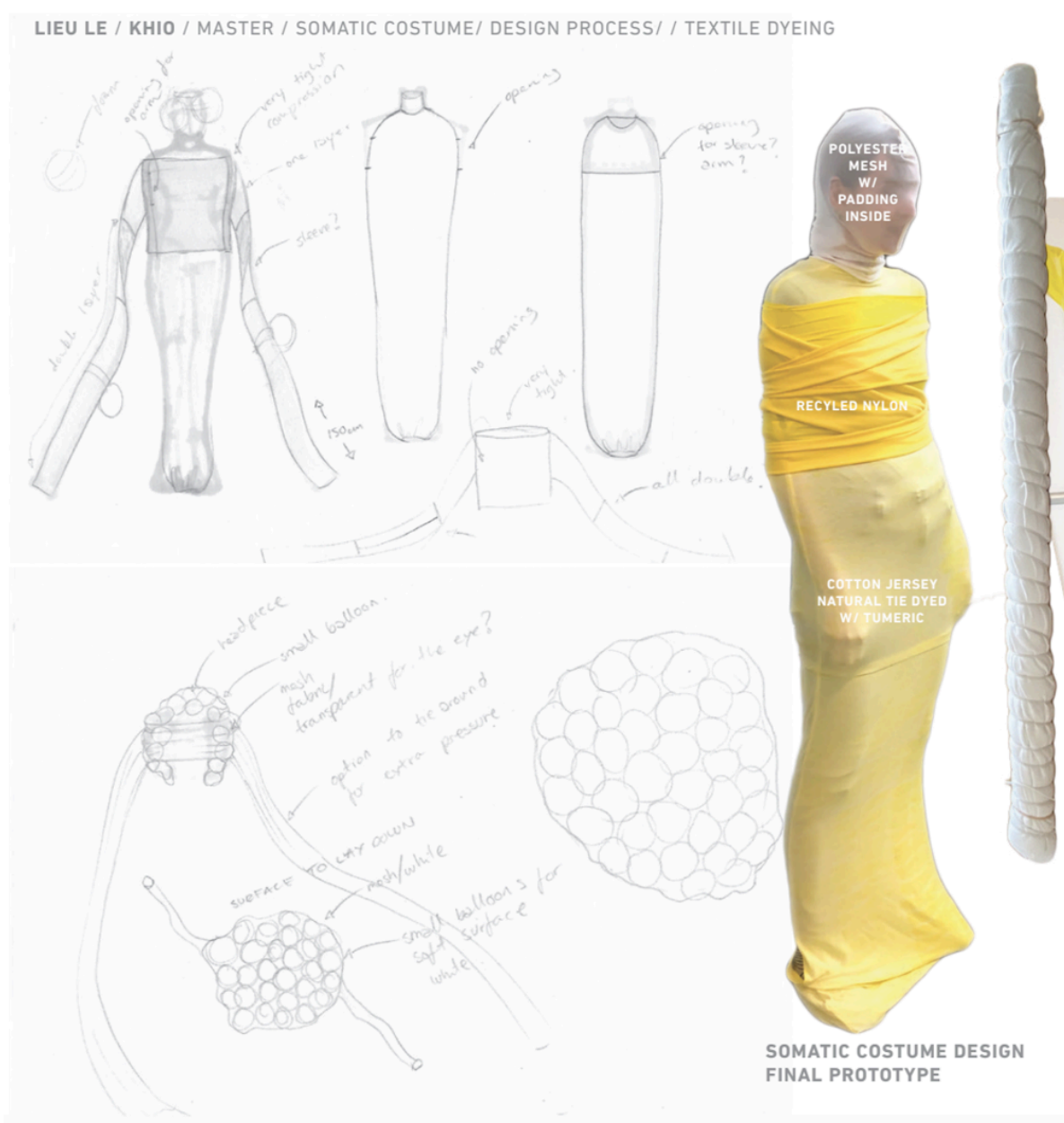
'I feel peaceful'

'It felt like a mermaid or having a tail'

'It's like the fabric gives me a massage'

Facts create Fictions.

As a costume designer, Lieu Le continued to develop the design from the Somatic Costume Dressing Room Session, and you can see the next steps in her design process and prototype below.





In summary, this artistic research process, the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, offers a way of designing by starting with the 'sense of the real' - designing attention from touch and material connection

Although this research can act as a costume design method, the main focus of the somatic costume dressing room is its site and potential for transformation, intimacy and connection with materials (bodies and costumes).

This process also requires that myself, as guide, continually returns to a place of 'not knowing', and even letting go of designs in mid-process, prioritizing the arising sensorial and material needs of the wearer through touch, as opposed to the visual aesthetic of the design. I am also continually surprised at the clarity that touch brings to the material and sensorial experience of the wearer – typically, without hesitation, they 'know' if they like or want a material or sensation or not. I also trust that the direct tactile effect of the material with their bodies, and their expression of what they want or do not want in this realm, will support and clarify what the psychophysical need might be.

Designing based on Touch & Arising Psychophysical Needs

How do you design a costume through the sense of touch and the arising psychophysical needs?

In the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, I allow the language of tactility to support arising psychophysical needs and the 'sense of the real'. I do not ask wearers directly if they have a specific psychophysical need at any point in the session, nor do I actively look for one in the session. Sometimes the wearer will directly present one at the beginning, but this is quite rare. I follow what they need in 'touch', whether that is for specific materials or ways the body is touched by the materials, and trust that through this simple dialogue the psychophysical need, whether verbalized or not, can be supported in some small way as demonstrated through the earlier recorded conversation with Lieu.

In the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, the needs of bodies come before the design of the costume. I may grow attached to a costume's emerging design, but the wearer might suddenly decide they no longer want to wear a certain part. In such cases, I must release my attachment to the final design and allow it to evolve based on the wearer's arising psychophysical needs, as expressed through touch.

THE SOMATIC COSTUME DRESSING ROOM EXAMPLES

Timeline & Context

Below is an overview of key Somatic Costume Dressing Room sessions from my research at KHiO, which feature a variety of psychophysical needs, locations, and wardrobes. The examples are presented here through various forms of documentation, including videos, photos, and written documents:

CLARE BALLARD: A video from the beginning of my research during the 2020 COVID lockdown. This was an online session.

MARIE ASKELAND: A collection of photos from a session in 2021, conducted in her own home with her own wardrobe. This was part of Ida Falck Øien's PhD research, as a guest contributor to her After Care Wardrobe Intervention Case Study, 2021.

DR. RACHEL HANN: Two videos from my midterm assessment in 2022, which was held in person after the COVID lockdown.

SIV LIER AND AMY VAN DEN HOOVEN: Written reflections and photos from a joint session they shared in late 2022.

These examples highlight the contrast between different Somatic Costume Dressing Room experiences and the importance of location and context. In Clare's case, the online session focused more on the simplicity of materials than on creating a costume design. Due to the

online situation, her own clothing, objects, and even the room itself became part of the wardrobe. Even though I could not physically touch her, the materials in her home became a bridge for a tactile experience. A pivotal moment for me was when Clare created her own 'jacket,' developed from a psychophysical need to support her belly. This action revealed the potential for wearers to become designers in their own costume process. I also include this example because of the specificity of her somatic and tactile experiences and her ability to verbally articulate them in the moment, which helps to translate the impact of the materials to the viewer. As in other sessions, the form of the final costume was not the main objective; instead, I followed the wearer's psychophysical needs.

The potential for a wearer to develop their own Somatic Costume further, following the initial session, was a theme that emerged later in my research. For example, MA Design students such as Lieu Le developed their own costumes after a session. The potential here is for a series of sessions to result in each wearer having their own specifically designed Somatic Costume Wardrobe, an idea I aim to develop further in the future.

The Somatic Costume Dressing Room session with Marie Askeland took place in her home using her own wardrobe, which presented a unique challenge: a personal wardrobe can be full of narratives and emotional attachments. In contrast, when I am able to use my own Somatic Costume Wardrobe, the historical and personal references are more absent. This allows for an easier transition as a guide, enabling me to focus on the immediate tactile impact of the materials rather than on memory, associations, or visual impact.

Eventually, it was possible to bring Marie into a deeper tactile engagement with the materials, responding directly to her body's needs. Working with her unfamiliar daily clothing proved to be surprisingly resourceful, offering a rich variety of sensory experiences. The costume that emerged was more formed than in the session with Clare, and the accompanying pictures aim to reveal the overall journey of this process, from dressing and wearing to undressing and resting.

The in-person session at Marie's home with her personal wardrobe introduced a new layer of intimacy and subtly shifted our relational dynamic. Unlike an online environment where each participant remains in their own space, this singular location made our roles clear: I was a guest in her home. The presence of Harold Lunde Helgesen and Ida Falck Øien, who were recording the session, added witnesses to the process and created a more performative environment.

The Somatic Costume Dressing Room session with Dr. Rachel Hann took place after the COVID lockdown had ended, allowing for fewer restrictions on touch. This in-person session was held at a studio at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts. While this location lacked the personal intimacy of a home environment, it was more familiar to me than to Rachel. The wardrobe, composed of my own Somatic Costume Wardrobe, contained materials that were more known to me as well. The presence of Dr. Rachel Hann as my opponent in the midterm assessment added a power dynamic that created a layer of both vulnerability and potential distance.

The video of the session with Rachel Hann reveals that even without the more personal setting of a home, the dressing process itself can foster intimacy and a deeper listening that enables attending to psychophysical needs. A notable difference from the session with Clare was that Rachel began by choosing a material she was drawn to, rather than prioritizing her body's needs (Method One: Attending to Materials versus Attending to Bodies).

The two video clips below offer different perspectives on the session. The first provides a quick overview, similar to Marie's pictures, of the entire process from dressing to resting. In this clip, moments are sped up to emphasize the costume-forming process and slowed down to reveal the movement, touch, and intimacy created. The second clip is a slowed-down excerpt of a single moment, designed to amplify the sensations of touch and movement of the costumes and bodies. It aims to reveal the experience of time in touch, which is often slower than the experience of time in vision.

The Somatic Costume Dressing Room session with Siv Lier and her friend and colleague, Amy Van den Hooven, occurred during the later stages of my research. As with the session with Rachel, we used my Somatic Costume wardrobe and were located at the Oslo National Academy of Arts studio. This session was unique because Siv brought a friend. I conducted two joint sessions, one with Amy and one with Siv, with each of them present during the other's session and participating in the dressing to resting process. Having a friend present not only added a personal element and an extra witness, but also a layer of safety and support to the process.

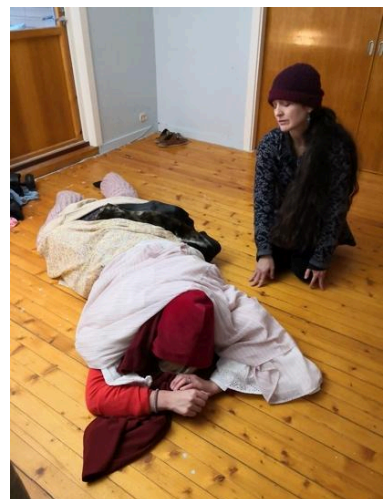
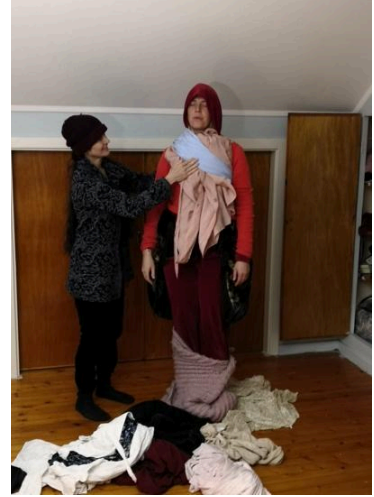
In the future, I aim to further develop the potential of these sessions. Siv Lier's written reflection, for example, articulates not only how the costume was formed from psychophysical needs arising in the moment, but also the difference of starting with touch and needs versus a visual-first approach. Her reflection also emphasizes how crucial collaboration is among all present—the materials, the people, and the room. This premise of collaboration, with more than one wearer present and witnessing each other, also transfers directly to the *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* performance.

SOMATIC COSTUME DRESSING ROOM SESSION
CLARE BALLARD, 2020



Somatic Costume Dressing Room – Clare Ballard & Sally E Dean, online, 2020.
Photo from zoom video recorded call.

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SOMATIC COSTUME DRESSING ROOM SESSION
MARIE ASKELAND, 2021





Somatic Costume Dressing Room – Marie Askeland & Sally E Dean, Marie's home, 2021. Photos by Harold Lunde Helgesen & Ida Falck Øien.

SOMATIC COSTUME DRESSING ROOM SESSION
Rachel Hann, Midterm Assessment, Aug 2022



Somatic Costume Dressing Room – Dr. Rachel Hann & Sally E Dean, Oslo National Academy of the Arts, 2022.
Photos from video documentation.





Somatic Costume Dressing Room – Dr. Rachel Hann & Sally E Dean, Oslo National Academy of the Arts, 2022. Photos from video documentation.

SOMATIC COSTUME DRESSING ROOM SESSION with Siv Lier – Dec 2022

*My experience in the Somatic
Costume Dressing Room*

.....
Siv Lier, September 2023

I had a SCDR experience with Sally in December of 2022 at KHiO. I traveled from Bergen with my friend Amy, and she and I took an active part in each other's SCDR sessions.

We started with picking out different materials and objects for the session from Sally's studio and brought them into the room where we had the session; stones, fabric, paper, balls, rubber, bands etc. The session started with being touched by Sally and Amy, and it felt like a good way of both grounding myself in myself and in the situation, as well as becoming aware of where I start and my surroundings begin. Sally asked where I needed support, pressure, extra care and attention, and how soft/hard I wanted the touch, and my

body knew what it needed. Sally's calming voice and presence made the experience immersive and I felt very much seen and cared for. It was quite intimate to be touched this way, yet it felt safe and as a deepening of my friendship with Amy, and a vulnerable and honest way to connect with and get to know Sally.

After this initial session, we started interacting with the materials and objects that we had available, and attached them to my body to protect, support, hide and/or emphasize different parts where I felt it was needed. It all happened very intuitively, and it was so nice to experience the alternation between knowing within myself what I need and at the same time being open to Sally and Amy's suggestions. It felt like an honest and safe dialogue that included and entangled the body and the mind, me and them as well as the situation. Sometimes I know at a detailed level what I need and give instructions to Sally and Amy: 'A little tighter, a little up. There we have it!' There is a lot of humor and laughter in the session as stones, balls and boxes are being tied and taped to my body.

At one point I felt I had a costume that grounded me, and that I also needed something that could help me preserve my energy and not make me sink too hard into the ground. Sally finds corrugated cardboard that we tear and tape to my upper arms, making me feel I extend myself into the space. My inner creature was awakened, and horizontal movements emerged as I started moving around in the room supported and awakened and grounded by my evolving somatic costume. I felt very free and supported by myself, the costume, the room, Amy and Sally. The costume made me able to really feel my body and my presence in the situation. I loved being squeezed, pressed and pushed and feel friction. At the end of the session Sally started to chant, and my movements evolved into a powerful dance as I shake my head and body, stamp my heavy feet, move the hips, shaking hands over my head. All three of us moved around in the room, making sounds, dancing, smiling. Sally using the pilates ball I had attached to my body as a drum, Amy shaking the paper strips I had attached to my upper arms.

I became really exhausted at the end of the session. I felt anxious I had over-spent myself and that it would take me days to recover like it sometimes does. But it was fascinating how quickly I recovered, first by just slowing down the intense dance and then by standing still as Sally and Amy were stroking me gently. Eventually I lay down on the floor feeling the support from the floor and the atmosphere in the room, and was able to really relax and recharge quite fast.

I could never have predicted how the costume would look in the end, and I find it so interesting that it emerged from me verbalizing my needs and feelings in the situation, and interacting with materials, objects and Sally and Amy. I experienced how the situation, the people and the materials/objects all participate equally and have agency. It felt like it was no longer I alone deciding but rather a symbiosis and entanglement with the situation. To start with needs instead of visuals is an interesting way of dressing oneself, and a strong contrast to the norms of society that emphasizes how clothes look rather than how they make us feel.

SOMATIC COSTUME DRESSING ROOM SESSION

with Amy van den Hooven – Dec 2022

My experience in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room

Amy van den Hooven, October 2023

Having the opportunity to experience the somatic dressing room experience with Sally impacted me on an emotional and physical level. It was a unique and inspiring experience that allowed me to explore my inner and outer world through touch, materiality and performance.

Together with my friend Siv, we participated in the somatic dressing room. Sally began by walking me through the different materials that were spread across many tables. I touched, rubbed and held the materials, a process to help me choose which ones felt right for my costume. My body told me what textures and somatic experiences I wanted, and perhaps, even needed. I asked for rocks on my chest, and a tightly wrapped torso with a rubber material, while also asking for peculiar objects, like a pinecone to be placed on my tailbone. Sally and Siv helped put my costume together as I chose each material and/or object. Eventually, it felt "right" and I began to embody a new character. I danced and yelled as the costume inspired a side of me to come out that I had never engaged with before. We called her the 'warrior', as the costume made me feel like I had more strength than when I entered the room.

It was once we had built the costume and I began to move around that I started to see that this had a therapeutic effect. As the costume began to take shape, I realized that each choice of material represented something deeper within myself. It highlighted needs and emotions that were before invisible. The costume acted as a tangible representation of these hidden aspects of myself, allowing me to access a part of me that I had not been in touch with since I was young. This costume was fierce and asked me to move in a way that embodied strength. I galloped and walked around the room. The costume also acted as a support, where I could use the materials I chose to support my back as I stretched backward amidst my dance around the room.

The experience became even more inspiring as I watched my friend Siv create her costume. Her costume was creature-like and allowed me to see a side of my friend that I had not seen before. It embraced her playful and curious sides, while it also showed her strength. There were moments when I helped put the costume together with Sally while listening to what Siv wanted. It was a moving experience to witness my friend in her costume and to join her in a dance. We began to make music with Siv's costume and to interact in a dance together. Our costumes impacted the way we moved and danced together. I feel that these costumes allowed us to be playful and feel like kids, while also warriors at the same time.

The experience was a beautiful one as it allowed me to open up, connect and move in ways that I would not have dared to before. It allowed me to understand and access the emotional layers of myself that were once hidden. It allowed me to create a costume that embodied some of the things I needed in my life outside of the dressing room. I left the experience needing time to reflect and process the whole experience. It was intertwined with so many impressions, both tactile and emotional, that have left an impact. Like my experience of undressing and leaving the costume behind, the process of reflection is also slow and takes time. There are many layers to the experience that I can continue to unpack and discover.

Thank you Sally for the experience!

PREPARING THE SOMATIC COSTUME WARDROBE

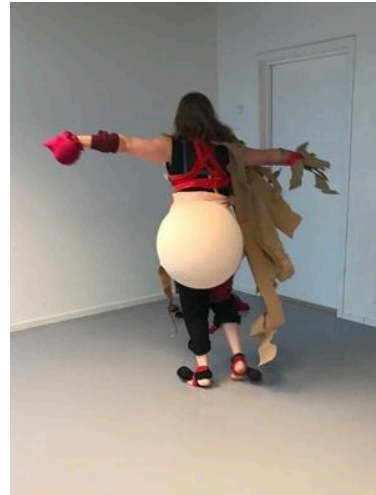
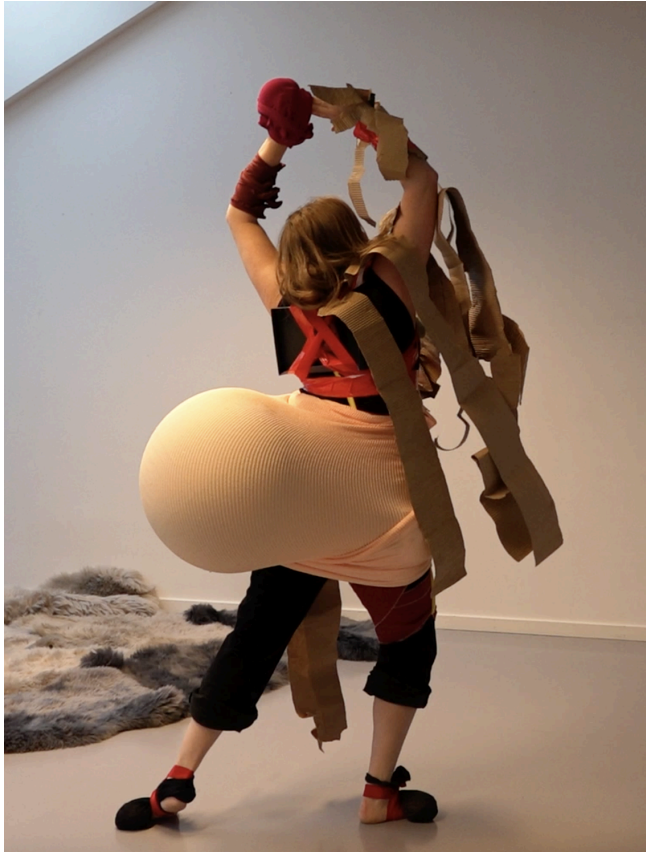


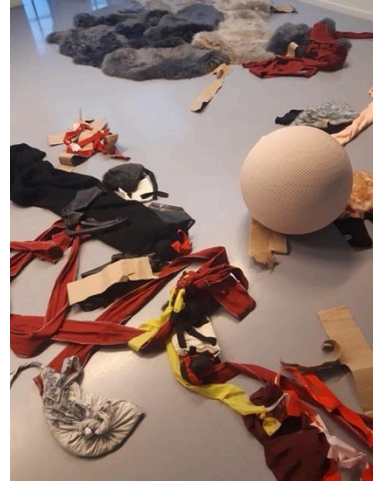
Somatic Costume Dressing Room – Siv Lier, Amy Van den Hooven & Sally E Dean, KHiO studio, 2022.
Photos by Siv, Amy & Sally.

.....
THE SOMATIC COSTUME DRESSING ROOM SESSION
with Siv Lier, with Amy Van den Hooven also present









CONCLUSION

The Somatic Costume Dressing Room has been a key resource in discovering and articulating methods of choreographing attention through the touch of Somatic Costume.

Attending to Bodies - Attending to Materials; Simplicity of Materials; Touch Patterns When Wearing; and Tactile Collaborations in the Costume have supported my research to uncover further the touch impact of materials on bodies and the basic collaborative components between and among them.

Methods of Guiding Attention; Activating the Parasympathetic vs. Sympathetic Nervous System; Aware-Wearing & The Invisible Costume; and Costuming the Sense of the Real have defined further the role of the guide in the Somatic Costume Dressing Room, including the process of designing based on psychophysical needs and the social-cultural necessity for material and sensorial connection at this time, a response to our visually-dominated, media-saturated world.

Lastly, all of these eight methods have the potential to be applied to both costume design practices and choreographing performances – hopefully strengthening and advocating for the important role the sense of touch plays in both. These methods are applied and integrated directly into my final performance piece – *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces*.

A close-up photograph of a person with reddish-brown hair, seen in profile from the side, looking towards a large, highly reflective, metallic sculpture of an insect. The sculpture is composed of many overlapping, rounded, metallic segments that catch the light, creating bright highlights and deep shadows. The background is dark with some out-of-focus light spots, suggesting an indoor setting with dramatic lighting. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is overlaid on the upper portion of the image, containing text.

PART THREE

GIVE THEM
WINGS &
WE SHALL SEE
THEIR FACES

GIVE THEM WINGS & WE SHALL SEE THEIR FACES

Video



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces
Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

SOMATIC ACT 29:

An Invitation into *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* Performance Ritual



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a bowl or bucket of water, one 3 x 3 inch square of water soluble paper, a pen and a quiet place to sit (water soluble paper is included with the book).

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group.

*Begin by sitting
in a quiet place
in stillness.*

*Have your bowl of water,
pen and paper nearby.*

*Allow the sounds of water
to touch you,
bathing and cleansing you
from your head
all the way to
the bottom of your feet.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready
sense if there is 'something'
that is missing
in your life
that you would like
to honor,
to call back or
towards you.*

Allowing time...

*As this becomes clear,
write this on your piece of paper.*

*Then hold your piece of paper,
gently in your hands
for a moment,
with eyes closed.*

*Sense the words,
the intention,
gently settling
and then resting
in your body.*

Allowing time...

*Gently, place the paper
into a bowl of water.*

*Allow the intention
to absorb
into liquid form.*

*Sensing a moment
of 'being with water'.*

Allowing time...

*Slowly
noticing
if the water calls
to be somewhere
a place to house
your intention*

*Perhaps into a houseplant,
the outside river, on your skin,
or on your clothing somewhere?*

*Follow the water
as a guide.*

*Take time
to gently pour the water
witnessing it merge
into soil, cloth, skin.*

Allowing time...

*Allow a moment
to sense the place
of your intention
a place you can return to
as the intention grows
in its own time.*

GIVE THEM WINGS & WE SHALL SEE THEIR FACES



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guides Manny Emslie & Leonie Cronin with Travellers in Brown Paper Costumes, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

INTRODUCTION

Part Three presents my insights and reflections on *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces*. As an immersive, sensorial, costume-based performance / installation, its journey unfolded across three iterations: first as part of the Costume Agency Artistic Research Project in August 2021, followed by performances in August 2022 and November 2023, all at KHiO, Stage 2. Many of the original reflections from these events, also published in the Costume Agency book (2023) edited by Christina Lindgren and Sodja Locker, have been integrated and further developed within this text.

The performance was developed during the COVID pandemic, a time when a tangible sense of disconnection and isolation was potent. The global experience of loss, stemming from

restrictions on human touch, significantly impacted the theme of this performance, as did the personal loss of my teacher, Suprpto Suryodarmo, who has greatly influenced my artistic research and this PhD. It is no coincidence that the heart of the Somatic Costume Environment is a live-water installation that sheds tears, one by one.

Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces also served as a direct way to integrate, develop, and adapt the artistic methods found in The Somatic Costume Dressing Room, which were previously framed as one-to-one encounters. This group based performative context allowed me to practice 'choreographing attention' with pre-designed costume elements and a pre-selected order, timing, and location, in response to the opening after the pandemic.

The performance intends to create a costume sensorium—awakening the absence and presence of others and within ourselves, addressing this palpable sense of loss. Ritual acts of dressing, walking, and listening, with eyes closed, prepare the audience to be touched by the invisible but tangible. One-to-one guides as well as whispered poetic sound scores lead the audience on a journey of honouring the 'missing'—as they travel through the touch of coats, feathers, lentils, brown paper costumes and the surrounding live-water installation.

To amplify the experience of touch, the primary audience group, named 'Travellers', was led by 'Guides'. Their eyes were closed through acts of wearing, dressing/undressing, moving, exploring, and resting in the 'Somatic Costume Environment'. For these participants, the visual element remained absent until the end, when vision was intentionally reintegrated. In the last two performances (2022 and 2023), to explore further the role of vision within this touch-centric work, an additional audience group, 'Witnesses', was introduced.

Each performance accommodated a small and intimate group, typically 4 Travellers and 4 Witnesses. Witnesses experienced the performance visually, with eyes mostly open. While their initial purpose supported research questions (What is it like to witness something designed not primarily for viewing, but for touch? and How is meaning constructed when the visual sense, typically dominant in performance, is partially or entirely absent?), their presence unexpectedly evolved into a significant artistic and performative element.

This section, **Part Three** guides the reader through my artistic research process. **Chapter 2, The Performance Journey**, invites you into the *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* performance journey itself, through tactile and sonic descriptions, visual images, and unfolding reflections within the 'Somatic Costume Environment'.

This is followed by Chapter 3, Artistic Methods, which applies and integrates the methods discussed in 'Part Two: The Somatic Costume Dressing Room', highlighting the significant role that sound, order, timing, location, Guides and Katrine Kirsebom contributed to the 'choreography of attention'. Notably, 'Method 8: Costuming the Sense of the Real' includes reflections on the Witnesses' contribution to understanding how the sense of time and meaning-making shifts across various sensorial systems.

Chapter 4, The Witness - Integrating the Visual System, then examines how the Witnesses' role developed throughout the performances. This final chapter explores the

visual role of the piece (how we see vs. what we see), and proposes further directions for integrating the visual system, with future work continuing to develop the Witnesses' role.

Ultimately, this research concludes by addressing how we create somatic-based performance work that cultivates a 'nature landscape' way of attending, one that deeply integrates sensorial systems, by creating 'Somatic Costume Landscapes' rooted in Poetic-Material-ity, where meaning is co-created. Starting with touch, this approach continues to cultivate a touch-based 'choreography of attention', uses sound as a bridge between touch and vision, aims to find remedies for 'modern eyes'¹⁰ and offers holistic ways of being with bodies, materials and performance.



Compressive Finger Sleeves – Sleeves made by Lydia Hann and co-designed with Sally E. Dean.
Photo by Molly Andrews, 2025.

¹⁰ a way of seeing that has been shaped by the conditions of modern life that includes visual dominance, screen-gazing and over-stimulation.

SOMATIC ACT 30A:

Touch of Compressive Finger Sleeves



Allow for at least 45 minutes. You will need six Knitted Compressive Finger Sleeves. The sleeves are colour-coded to indicate different sizes for specific fingers

Little fingers: Light blue sleeves

Thumbs: Black sleeves

Ring, Middle & Index or Pointer Fingers: Dark Blue sleeve

The slightly textured ribbing on one end designates the 'top' of the finger sleeve. The sleeve will cover the end of the finger except for the very tip. Make sure that the bottom end of the sleeve is close to but not covering the knuckle to allow for movement. If your fingers are longer, you can stretch the sleeve very slightly, to cover more of the finger.

In this Somatic Act, please wear a maximum of two sleeves at one time

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group.

.....

Begin by placing one sleeve on one finger.

*Following your sense of
which finger
would like
to begin.*

*Then close your eyes.
sensing your breathing.*

*Noticing what it is like
to be touched
by this sleeve...*

*The temperature
the quality
of the touch.*

*How does the touch
circulate
through
your body...*

*Touching your tissues
bones, organs,
cells.*

*Connecting from the fingers
through the arms,
to the top of the head*

*Or along the torso,
pelvis, legs,
to the bottom of the feet.*

*Notice the places
in the body
it awakens
for you...*

A subtle awakening dance.

Allowing time...

*Noticing if this touch
invites movement
or stillness
or both...*

Allowing time...

Notice if you would like to add a second sleeve...

*Is there another finger calling
for a little compression touch?*

*It can be on either hand.
And if so, gently
dressing another finger in a
sleeve.*

Allowing time...

*With two finger sleeves
now on
close your eyes.
noticing
how these costumes
together
are touching
you...*

*To be touched by two
instead of one.*

*Bringing attention
to the fingers
or even further
opening an awareness
to the shoulders
all the way down to the ribs, pelvis and feet*

Sensing, responding.

*Noticing
in your own way
a gentle dance of attending...*

*To be touched by two
instead of by one.*

*Inviting movement
or stillness
or both.*

Allowing time and spaciousness.

*As you are ready
there is an invitation
to begin a dance of dressing and undressing*

*Noticing the moment
when one sleeve
wants to come off and
another wants to come on...*

*Allowing time,
in the transitional places
to sense the touch imprint
from the sleeve
resonating
with eyes closed.*

*Sensing your recently dressed or undressed fingers
In relationship to the other fingers*

*In movement
in stillness
or both.*

Allowing time and spaciousness.

*As you are ready
finding a transition
of undressing each sleeve
from your fingers
placing them on the floor
and returning to
resting, sitting or lying.*

Sensing

*how the costumes' touch
continues to circulate
through your body.*

Allowing time...

SOMATIC ACT 30B:

Attending to Tactile Finger Collaborations



Allow for at least 60 minutes. You will need five Knitted Compressive Finger Sleeves. Please refer to Somatic Act 30a for how to dress and wear the Finger Sleeves.

Begin by dressing in one of the suggested and drawn finger sleeve combinations below. Start with wearing four or five sleeves.

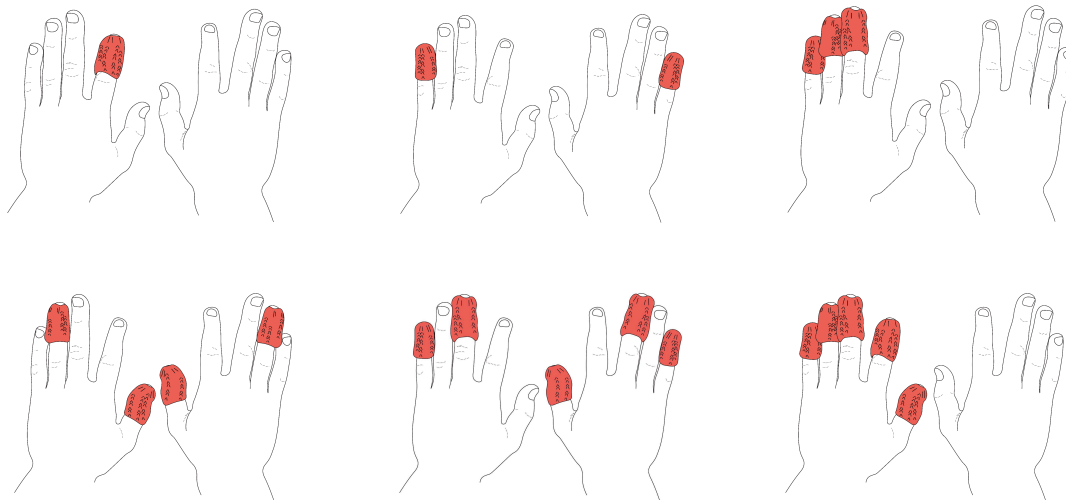
Follow your sensorial impulse of which combination to choose.

Each finger sleeve combination invites another way of attending to our bodies. For example, wearing the finger sleeves on the outside of the hand (little and ring finger) tends to bring attention to the outside of the arm, while the thumb tends to bring attention to the inside of the arm.

In this Somatic Act, you are invited to play with the possibilities and notice how the tactile collaborations move and awaken the felt sense of your body.

The Finger Sleeve combinations include:

- One sleeve, on the index finger.
- Two sleeves, one on each little finger.
- Three sleeves on one hand - on the little finger, ring finger and middle finger.
- Four sleeves, on the thumbs and ring fingers.
- Five sleeves, three on the thumb, middle and little fingers of one hand; and two on the middle and little finger of the other.
- Five sleeves, all on one hand.



Drawings by Molly Andrews, 2025.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, duet or group

.....

Close your eyes.

Sensing your recently dressed fingers

In relationship to the other fingers.

Noticing

how these finger sleeves

together

are touching

you...

A touch collaboration.

Inviting us to attend, connect

to different areas of the body

from a finger all the way to a toe

or to an ear,

or to the belly.

Opening another quality

of breathing

or resting

or even moving.

Listening to what your body needs

in each moment.

In movement

in stillness

or both.

Allowing time and spaciousness...

In this gentle dance of attending

following your curiosity

and sense of touch.

*Noticing if there is a sensorial impulse
to continue to wear the costume
or take one or more sleeves
off...*

*Inviting you to explore another tactile combination
it can be one suggested in the Somatic Act drawing above
or one, coming from your felt sense.*

*Which combination of fingers
would like a gentle
compression touch
now?*

*Sensing your recently dressed fingers
in relationship to the other fingers.*

Allowing time...

*A dance of attending
the subtle shifts from one finger
to another finger.*

*Noticing how some
touch combinations of the sleeves
invite movement
and others
stillness...*

Allowing time and spaciousness...

*Our dressing and undressing dance
continues.*

*Noticing
how these costumes
together*

*are touching
you...*

A touch collaboration.

*Inviting us to attend, connect
to different areas of the body.*

*From the fingers
to the top of the head
or the bottoms of the feet.*

*From the fingers
to the eyes
or the elbows.*

*In this gentle dance of attending,
following your curiosity
and sense of touch.*

Allowing time and spaciousness...

*Noticing the moment when sleeves
want to come off
and another finger sleeve combination
wants to come on...*

Allowing time...

*A dance of attending
the subtle shifts from one finger
to another finger.*

*Sensing the touch imprints
gathering, constellating
into the felt sense
of your body.*

*Circulating through the arms,
through the centre of the body,
touching the legs
and even to the face.*

*Noticing how some
touch combinations of the sleeves
invite movement
while others
stillness...*

*Sensing your recently dressed fingers
in relationship to the other fingers.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready
finding a transition
of undressing each sleeve
from your fingers
placing them on the floor,
and returning to
resting, sitting or lying.*

*Sensing the
touch imprints
circulating
in your body
with eyes closed.*

*Finding a transition
As you are ready.*



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022.
Photo by Elin Osjord.

THE PERFORMANCE JOURNEY

The Beginning Performance Journey

The performance began with the audience meeting at the front entrance of KHiO. After a short practical introduction, the roles of Travellers and Witnesses are clarified, as well as ethical considerations¹¹ discussed and agreed upon: the Witnesses will ‘witness’, visually see the Travellers; whereas the Travellers, with eyes closed, will not see the Witnesses until the end.

Next, the combined audience of Travellers and Witnesses is invited to take a short outdoor walk in silence, listening to the nearby sounds of the waterfall. The walk follows the Akerselva river, crosses over a bridge overlooking the waterfall, and wraps around to KHiO’s side entrance with doors that open to Vrimla – a large foyer to wait in, before entering the many theatre spaces.

¹¹ The Travellers were made aware that the performance journey includes being viewed by Witnesses. All Travellers and Witnesses agree to this arrangement before the performance begins. Travellers and Witnesses are also given the option to leave the performance if they need to.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guides Leonie Cronin, Ingunn Rimestad, Manny Emslie with Travellers, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Upon entering, the audience is greeted by the 'Guides' with sorting signs indicating 'Travellers' or 'Witnesses' dressing rooms.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Traveller, Dr. Rachel Hann, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

THE DRESSING ROOMS



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guides Monika Kochowicz and Lieu Le with Witnesses to include Charlotte Østergaard, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The two 'pop-up' dressing rooms are located in the Vrimla space, next to Stage 2, allowing easy access to the two door entrances of the black box theatre. The dressing rooms are simple black theatre wings put together to create a small box-like shape. Inside are both the costumes that Witnesses and Travellers change into, as well as a bowl or bucket of water, pen and dissolvable paper ready for the ritual. After dressed in costumes, Witnesses and Travellers are invited to sit on a fur rug, one by one, with their Guide close and next to the bucket of water. Each witness and traveller are, at different times, invited to: *Please write down something that is missing in your life that you would like to honor, to call back or towards you*. When the audience participant places the written 'intention' into the individualized water bucket, the paper slowly dissolves, disappearing, with the intention merging into a liquid form. This process seeks to infuse personal meaning into the omnipresent water element, which will later be encountered in the Somatic Costume Environment.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Traveller with Guide, Ingunn Rimestad, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The Witnesses and Travellers are invited to wear different costumes – but all with the similar tactile theme of creating compression on different areas of the body. The Travellers are dressed by their Guides in knitted finger compression sleeves and the Witnesses are dressed in the Balloon-Tight-Ring with Tube Costume (also created and discussed in *Part Two: The Somatic Costume Dressing Room*). In the dressing process, all Guides support the audience in a somatic attending process to both bodies and materials.

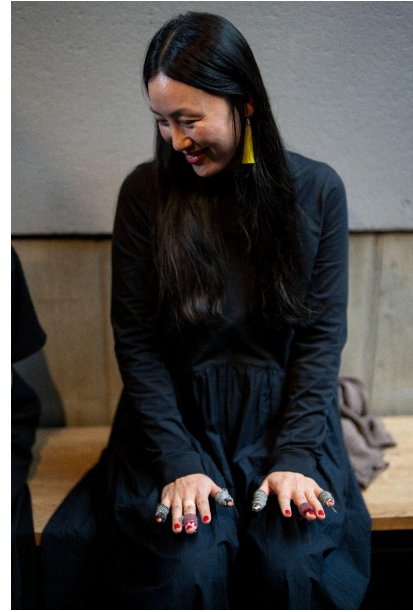


Left: *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* – (left to right) Witnesses, Charlotte Østergaard and Christina Lindgren, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Right: *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* – (left to right) Guide, Monika Kochwicz with Witness, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.



KNITTED COMPRESSIVE FINGER SLEEVES



Left: *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* – (left to right) Guide, Nadia Romerosa with Traveller, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Right: *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* –Traveller, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The knitted compressive finger sleeves (made by Lydia Hann and co-designed with Sally E Dean) are made of nylon knitting elastic, and lace-weight wool. The tactile experience is soft with a distinctly ribbed and gently bouncy compression where fingers and thumbs are enveloped by alternating bands of firm, smooth elastic and soft, delicate, dry wool. The ribbing creates targeted pressure points, and the combined material naturally moulds around the fingers and thumbs to maintain their, full mobility. The wool and nylon create a breathability, but also a slight warmth. The touch is similar to a supportive embrace at the ends of the fingers.



BALLOON-TIGHT RING TUBE



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Witnesses with Guide, Monika Kochowicz, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The Witnesses are dressed by their Guides in the Balloon-Tight Ring with Tube costume which creates the tactile experience of not only compression but also suspension around the mid-section of the body.

This costume consists of one tight (50 Denier, 91% Nylon and 9% Elastane), sixteen 10” Belbal latex balloons (100% biodegradable), and a one-meter-long tubular knitted nylon-elastane costume (with crinkle).

Tactilely, the tights offer a soft, smooth, somewhat silky texture.

Their elasticity and moderate thickness provide even, consistent compression, moulding to both the balloons and the wearer's body, while responding flexibly to movement. The semi-inflated balloons contribute a bouncy, springy resilience.



Balloon-Tight Rings: created by and photo by Sally E. Dean. 2022.

With 16 balloons inside the tight legs - made into two rings to wear around the waist - the wearer experiences a segmented, firm pressure combined with a light, floating embrace around the waist. The trapped air within the balloons and the tights' thicker fibers generate noticeable warmth. When moving, a faint, subtle 'creak' sound can be heard from the tights stretching over the balloons or a slightly muffled 'squish' from the balloons themselves.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Witness, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Worn over the Balloon-Tight Ring, the tube covers the body from the knees to below or above the shoulders. It adds a soft, smooth, and stretchy layer of compression, acting like a supple 'skin' over the internal, firm, segmented structure of the Balloon-Tight Ring. The tube stretches and molds to the body, subtly restraining movements while at the same time bringing awareness to them.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guide, Monika Kochowicz with Witness in Balloon-Tight Ring Tube Costume, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The tube's crinkled fabric creates a very fine, gentle, irregular texture against the skin and provides an additional layer of warmth. This outer layer seamlessly envelops the rest of the body in a soft, smooth, and gently compressive hug, connecting the sensation of the balloon rings to the wearer's entire form.

Witnesses are invited to change how they wear their costumes during the performance. Guides give them options such as resting their arms and head, either inside or outside. There is also the option to take off sections of the costume, such as the tube or the Balloon-Tight Ring. Interestingly, no one in any of the performances took the costume off, and many kept it on even during the feedback session afterwards.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Witness with Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

LYCRA HEAD COVERINGS



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guide, Manny Emslie with Traveller Amy Voris, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Together the Travellers and their Guides, in the small doorway by the entrance to the black box theatre, put on black, soft, thin, light (weightless), stretchy, and slightly cool see-through lycra head coverings to cover the face. The material softly glides over the face, and over time, the sensation of wearing might be experienced as 'barely-there', becoming a second-skin. The material conforms and drapes over the curves of the nose, cheeks, forehead, and chin, thus creating a subtle but continuous pressure. This creates an overall delicate compression of the head. The open-weave texture allows for airflow and small micromovements of the cloth when a participant breathes. Although the texture begins as

dry, it can change to slightly damp from perspiration. As one audience member describes: 'I loved that my face felt covered - it felt protected.' (Feedback from Audience One, 2022, KHiO)

The Guide's lycra head covering has a slightly different drape and wear of the material than the Traveller's. The Guide's head piece includes a small stick (25 cm long) inside of it that follows the pathway of the forehead and nose. This creates more space between the mouth and material but also stretches out the top of the material to allow easier vision.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guides, Kristina Gjems and Daniel Frikstad, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The Traveller's Lycra head covering is without a stick and has a loose piece of extra material just around the mouth that acts like a small short sleeve. This allows for more breathability and also gives the head covering slightly more movement.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Traveller Oda Olivia Øverbø Lindegård with Guide Kristina Gjems, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The Traveller's head covering serves not only as a tactile and somatic experience, but also as a slight reminder to close the eyes. But if the eyes open, the Traveller can see the surrounding Somatic Costume environment that is slightly altered by the filtering mesh screen material, which softens and distills the visual scene. Because the woven texture of the material can be slightly seen, its tactile sensation is reinforced.

The Lycra head coverings are also a safety agreement between Guide and Traveller. Before putting on the head piece, the Guide says, 'If at any point you no longer want to be part of the piece and would like to stop, please take off the headcovering. I will then take you to a place to sit from where you can witness the rest of the performance. Or, if needed, return you to the dressing room'.

ENTERING THE BLACK BOX THEATRE



Left: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guide, Leonie Cronin with Traveller, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Right: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guide, Leonie Cronin with Traveller, and Guide Lieu Le with Witness Charlotte Østergaard, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Witnesses and Travellers enter the Black Box Theatre space Stage 2 with eyes closed and with their Guides inviting them to both walk and experience the sound element of the space. Stage 2 has two different entrances – the Travellers enter from one door, the Witnesses enter from the other door. The Witnesses and their Guides, unlike the Travellers, are without head coverings. All enter dressed in costumes with compressive components.

Travellers and Witnesses enter with the Guides, one by one. All follow a repeated path in the space – walking clockwise, at all times, in either an inner circle or outer circle around the space. This supports the sense of being on a journey, but also supports a repetitive ritualistic element. It also is a practical element that allows easy and smooth transitions from one somatic Tactile station to the next. If Guides have slower Travellers, they can walk on the inside circle, faster Travellers on the outside circle. If one of the stations is full with Travellers, the Guides can continue on the clockwise ritualistic walk until the station becomes available. Thus, the order of the stations is kept, unless one of the Travellers prefers not to explore or enter it (which has never happened, but is optional).



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Guides, Nadia Romerosa, Manny Emslie and Lieu Le with Witnesses and Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

As Travellers make a performance journey through different Tactile stations, Witnesses have their own tactile and visual journey: Guides facilitate this by offering different tactile chairs (vibrating, rocking, stillness) and diverse visual perspectives (e.g., close-up, distant, peripheral) of the performance from various room locations.

THE SOMATIC COSTUME ENVIRONMENT



Top: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Somatic Costume Environment Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Bottom: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Scene 2, KHiO, 2021. Photo by Espen Tollefsen.

The heart of the Somatic Costume Environment is the Dripping Water and Hanging Pots Installation – 12 ceramic pots hanging at various heights (about an average of an arm's length above the head) that catch small drops of water, one by one, from water canisters (with off and on taps) that are located high above in the fly space of the theatre on the lighting bridges.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right), Guides Monika Kochowicz and Leonie Cronin with Witness, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Over the course of the performance, the ceramic pots are gradually filling with water. As they do, the sounds of the drips slowly change their tone – water meeting ceramic versus water meeting water. As the water drips into an empty pot, it creates a fuller, sharper, and percussive sound. As water begins to fill the ceramic pot, the 'plink' or 'plop' sound softens, with the pitch rising slightly with the rise of water.

The water canisters are more like an analog than a digital mechanism – the rhythm, frequency, and quality of the waterdrops being different each night and dependent upon the water canister and the manual turning on of the tap to each one.

The beginning entrance into the theatre, for both Witnesses and Travellers, includes walking clockwise in a circle, a couple of times, as mentioned above. This ongoing and repeated ritualistic walk is a way to connect the audience to their feet and body through walking, but also connects them to the Dripping Water and Hanging Pots Installation. For them, the sounds of the dripping water will change with their proximity.

In addition to the Dripping Water and Hanging Pots Installation, the Somatic Costume Environment also includes seven different Tactile Stations, mostly for the Travellers and a few for the Witnesses to touch and explore. The sounds from all Tactile Stations become part of the soundscape that ‘touches’ everyone.

Although the tactile element was the impetus for the performance and research process, the sound element became a critical and equal component in the process and a key element in the Somatic Costume Environment. This will be examined in detail later.

BASKETS OF LENTILS STATION



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Traveller, Marianne Skjeldal with Guide, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The first station includes two baskets of lentils next to sheepskin rugs to kneel or sit on. Here, Travellers are invited to touch and explore lentils with their hands, as their Guide supports through pouring, shaking, and twirling lentils inside the pots, which creates a percussive acoustic and ritualistic sound score.

The collective lentils are cool and fluid, as they are shifting, displacing and 'giving way' to the movement of the hands. The texture of the individual lentils is smooth and hard, slightly polished and slippery. But the texture of the collective mass of lentils can feel granular and bumpy, dense but loose, a subtle but uniform pressure as Travellers move their hands through.

The movement of lentils within the ceramic pots produces distinct sound qualities: when dropping, they create a sharp, dry, clattering 'rain' with a subtle pot resonance. Shaking them generates a continuous, dry, rattling 'grit', amplified by the pot's chamber. Finally, twirling the lentils inside the pot yields a smooth, continuous, often lower-pitched 'sanding' or 'whirling' sound from the sustained friction against the pot's ceramic surface.

WINTER COAT STATION



Top: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Katrine Kirsebom with Traveller Oda Olivia Øverbø Lindegård and Guide Kristina Gjems, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Bottom: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Traveller Oda Olivia Øverbø Lindegård with Guide Kristina Gjems, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The second station is a collection of heavy winter coats, with different tactile qualities, which are assembled in various ways over two wooden structures. Here, after a Traveller touches and explores the coats, the Guide invites them to choose one to wear. Once the coat is draped or worn on the body in some way, the Guide and Traveller again return to the ritualistic walk – a clockwise circle around the space.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right), Guide Leonie Cronin with Traveller and Traveller Amy Voris with Guide Manny Emslie, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The coats have varying tactile textures, but all are winter coats that are similar in the following ways: a heavy substantial drape; a slightly stiff and structured quality; and stitching and seams that feel robust to the touch. The wool coats have a slightly warmer and more fibrous feel than the cotton, polyester mixes, which are slightly cooler and a tad softer. The coats have a quiet presence until they are taken off next to the Lentil Walk, with their weight making a deep resonant 'thud'.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right), Guide Manny Emslie with Traveller Amy Voris, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

LENTIL WALK STATION



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right), Traveller with Guide Clare Ballard, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The third station, the Lentil Walk, features a long and deep wooden trough (built by Joel Correia) filled with lentils. As Travellers slowly enter the trough, it declines and their feet sink deeper into the lentils, rising towards their calves. Guides support Travellers by hand, gently leading them through a sea of lentils. About halfway, the trough inclines, gradually guiding feet up and out of the lentils to the Walk's edge. From there, Guides slowly assist Travellers in stepping down onto a soft, warm sheepskin rug, underneath it is the stable, flat surface of the floor - a strong tactile contrast.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guide, Monika Kochowicz with Witness and Traveller with Leonie Cronin, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Walking in the lentils creates a sinking sensation as the material yields to the Traveller's weight, alongside an instability as the lentils shift and flow around the feet. The dense, cool lentils provide a firm, slightly bumpy, and granular pressure that massages and awakens the feet, particularly around the toes and arches. This density also creates resistance, requiring the legs to push and stabilize against the material.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Traveller with Guide, Nadia Romerosa, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

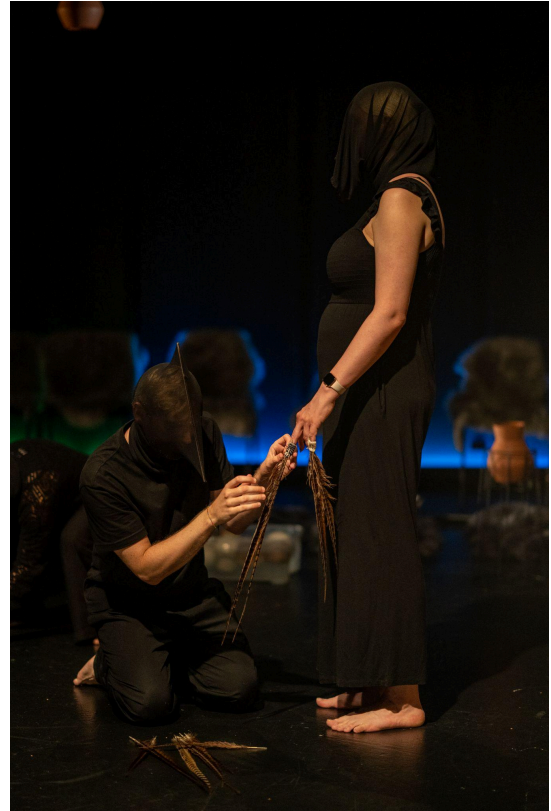
The Lentil Walk also generates a rich acoustic tapestry: a continuous, soft, crisp, almost 'brittle', dry 'grind' or 'crackle' from the moving lentils. This is punctuated by a deep, resonant 'crunch' and 'swish' with each footfall, all amplified by the wooden platform's resonance.

FEATHER FINGERS STATION



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guide with Traveller, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022.
Photo by Elin Osjord.

The fourth station introduces the costume of Feather Fingers. Guides begin by gently brushing the surfaces of the Travellers' bodies with 1.5-foot pheasant feathers, preparing them for wearing. The calamus of each feather is then woven into compressive finger and thumb sleeves. The feathers are positioned along the sides of the fingers and thumbs.



Above Three Photos: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guide, Daniel Frikstad with Traveller, Rachel Hann, Scene 2, KHIO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Once the feathers are on, Guides encourage Travellers to explore their own bodies by bringing the Travellers' hands to touch their own faces and then extend that exploration to the surrounding environment. The costume thus becomes an extension of their limbs. Many Travellers discover and interact with the Dripping Water & Hanging Pots Installation, now within their reach, using their newly augmented fingers.



Above: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guide, Simon Slidders with Traveller, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Left: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guide, Leonie Cronin with Traveller and Guide, Monika Kochowicz with Witness, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The feathers themselves are soft, yet subtly stiff and light. Their pressure against the skin is often so gentle that it is barely felt, especially when touching over clothing. Their temperature remains neutral or slightly warm. Primarily silent, the feathers only produce a very faint 'swoosh' when moved against the air.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Traveller Oda Olivia Øverbø Lindegård and Kristina Gjems, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

WATER STATION



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The fifth station houses the Water Station, where Guides first remove Travellers' feathers, often using wetting of the hands as a transition. This station features four buckets of slightly cool water, each offering individual tactile and auditory explorations and experiences.





Above: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Katrine Kirsebom, Guides and Witnesses with Ceramic Balls, Scene 2, KHIØ, 2022 and 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.



Above: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Katrine Kirsebom, Guides and Witnesses with Ceramic Balls, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022 and 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Two buckets contain ceramic balls (made by Birte M. Kittilsen), varying in size from a large grapefruit to a large orange, which are floating on the water like buoys. These glazed, smooth spheres feel wet and light when touched on top of the water, but surprisingly heavier when lifted. Many Travellers explore pushing them underwater, often surprised by their buoyancy as they swiftly rise to the surface. Some balls contain tiny ceramic pieces that rattle when shaken. They also make a sharp, crisp, slightly high-pitched sound that resonates like a slight 'ring' as they tap and bump each other when the water is stirred or the ceramic balls are touched and moved.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023.
Photos by Elin Osjord.

Another bucket holds a Tube Costume – a soft, meter-long Lycra cloth. As it absorbs water, it becomes heavy and sponge-like, creating a soundscape reminiscent of the sound of hand-washing laundry. Sounds include wet squishing and mushing, gurgling and bubbling when submerged, a soft wet scrunch or rub when squeezed, and a stronger ‘whoosh’ as a concentrated stream of water is expelled.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022.
Photo by Elin Osjord.

The final bucket features a large upside-down ceramic pot with a small hole at the top, inspired by the Japanese *suikinkutsu* (water koto cavern). Water drips onto the pot from an overhead water container, sometimes falling through the hole, creating a gentle splash and a bell-like ringing sound. A similar but more continuous resonant quality is achieved by gently and slowly pouring water onto the top of the pot. While primarily designed for its sound quality, the wet, hard ceramic surface also allows hands to glide over it, and some Travellers tactilely explore it by tapping it like a drum, curious about the sound resonating within.

Above the buckets are elevated water containers, dripping water that occasionally lands inside a bucket, but also sometimes splashes or touches the Traveller.

BROWN PAPER COSTUMES



*Give Them Wings & We Shall See
Their Faces – (top and bottom)
Katrine Kirsebom with Brown Paper
Costume, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023.
Photos by Elin Osjord.*

The centerpiece of the sixth station is the Brown Paper Costumes, constructed from Norwegian dekkpapir, which is a Norwegian term for a protective paper, such as masking or covering paper, used to shield surfaces from spills and damage during renovation. For the Brown Paper costumes it is twisted and woven with an elastic structure. Before Travellers interact with them, Katrine twirls and moves the costumes across the space, their rustling sound reminiscent of crackling fire.





Brown Paper Costumes – designed and made by Sally E. Dean with support in making from Lydia Hann, Sophie Cabrera, Amanda Vesthardt, Aina Piao and Alice Leah Davies. Photo by Sally E Dean, 2022

The brown paper is room temperature, slightly rough, fibrous, and dry. Its varying thickness and density from twisting give it a rope-like quality, with both soft crumples and tight edges. The elastic adds flexibility, allowing arms to enter, letting the costumes be worn like coats or capes.



Top photo: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guides, Manny Emslie and Ingunn Rimestad with Travellers, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Bottom Photo: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guides Manny Emslie with Traveller and Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.



Above photo: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Travellers and Guides, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

These relatively heavy and lengthy costumes trail behind the body on the floor - generating more rustling sounds as Travellers walk.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Guides, Nadia Romerosa, Manny Emslie, Ingunn Rimestad and Leonie Cronin with Travellers, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

After wearing and walking in the brown paper costumes, Guides slowly remove them and arrange them on the floor as nests for the Travellers to rest in. Beneath these nests, a simple wooden platform with transducers (created by Lee Berwick) serves as a headrest.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Travellers Oda Olivia Øverbø Lindegård and Lydia Hann, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Between the Travellers' heads and the platform are 'water pillows'—water bags lightly filled with warm water. These transducers vibrate a poem and sound score about a water droplet, audible only to the Travellers. Additional sheepskin rugs under the nests provide a soft, cushioned, and slightly warmer resting surface environment.



Water Bags – Carolina Rieckhof and Sally E. Dean. Photo by Sandra Arroniz Lacunza, 2022.

As Travellers rest and listen, their masks are slightly lifted from their mouths. Guides then gently place, rest, and move warm water bags along their bodies. These water bags have a squishy, pliable, and smooth texture with a slightly heavy weight. Filled to only one-third capacity, the internal movement of the water is clearly felt as it slowly sloshes, pours, and forms around the body. When moved, the water bags produce a slight 'squish' and 'slosh' from the internal water, alongside a 'crinkling/cracking' sound from the plastic itself.



Brown Paper Costumes – Kristina Gjems and Daniel Frikstad, Photo by Lydia Hann, 2022.

WATER BAG INSTALLATION



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The seventh station:

Water Bags hang in the air from bamboo and woven jute rope resembling suspended water-droplets. This mobile-like installation slightly moves, turns and rotates, with Katrine, and some of the Witnesses interacting with it during the performance.

A collection of these Water Bags also rest on the floor and are later carried and delivered by Katrine to the Witnesses to touch and hold.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Katrine Kirsebom and Guide Lieu Le, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

When touched, the Water Bags feel heavy and cold, their plastic texture is interwoven with the fuzzy, soft yet sturdy quality of jute. The bags are rippled, from the tightly bound container of woven rope. The sensations and sounds of the waterbags are similar to those described above in the Brown Paper Costume Station section, with one exception. The waterbags in the installation are full of water, making them heavier, and reducing the movement of water inside the bag. This creates a more resistant and slightly springy quality when touched - with an added density and less internal movement. This lessens the sound of moving water as well.

THE WITNESSES' SOMATIC CHAIRS



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces –Witness Christina Lindgren, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Witnesses, throughout the performance journey, are invited to sit in three different groups of Somatic chairs that offer different tactile experiences

One group of Somatic chairs features a wooden platform underneath, embedded with resonators. The sound maker, Lee Berwick, would activate these resonators on and off, vibrating not only the chairs, but also the feet of the audience – touching them with sound – awakening both the feet and the whole body. The sound score also served another purpose, called 'Absence-Presence', to awaken the sense of a 'presence' during an absence – when a Witness, sitting next to another Witness, would leave. How do we still somatically sense that someone is there, even if they have gone?

Another group of Somatic chairs are rocking chairs, which rock from side to side instead of forward and back. This was to somatically awaken the sides of the body serving three purposes.

Firstly, expanding our attention to the sides of the body can further support the expansion of our peripheral vision to encompass the breadth of the Somatic Costume environment, and help to balance the tendency for cortical 'looking'.

Secondly, the side-to-side movement of the rocking chair also encourages a more active engagement with the materials – the body must adjust and respond to the chair to remain balanced on it – activating our vestibular and proprioceptive systems.¹²

And thirdly, the rocking chair mimics the movement and simulates a feeling of potentially being on a boat in the water – which amplifies a way of being in the body that resonates with the strong water element in the Somatic Costume Environment.

The last group of chairs are 'silent' and 'still' - without movement or sound – to offer a counterpoint to the other somatic chair experiences.

KATRINE: THE CHOREOGRAPHER OF ATTENTION



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023.
Photo by Elin Osjord.

¹² Rocking side to side stimulates the horizontal semicircular canals in the vestibular system, dynamically engaging the lateral periphery and emphasizing a sense of lateral breadth and environmental scanning. Conversely, rocking forward and backward stimulates the anterior and posterior canals, dynamically engaging the depth-related periphery and emphasizing a sense of linear trajectory – the depth and direction of movement.

Beyond the Guides, Travellers, and Witnesses, a fourth crucial element in the performance is Katrine Kirsebom, one of the performers. Dressed in black and without a headcovering, she begins in the Black Box Theatre, acting as an 'in-the-moment' choreographer of attention. Katrine attends to every aspect of the experience: the Somatic Costume Environment, the Guides, the Travellers, and the Witnesses. Her performance is a structured improvisation, dynamically shaped by the audience's tactile, sound, and visual journey.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guides Clare Ballard and Daniel Frikstad with Travellers and Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Katrine serves as a bridge between the Travellers and Witnesses, moving fluidly and effortlessly between their worlds. She uses touch, sound, and her presence or absence within different areas of the Somatic Costume Environment to tactilely, auditorily, and visually frame and unify the piece. She also contributes to the movement and sound score by awakening various elements of the Somatic Costume Environment at specific moments.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

For instance from the outset, she supports and amplifies the ritual of attuning to water by pouring water at the Water Station. During the Feather Fingers Station, she enhances the experience by waving a large fan, creating a sensation of air touching the Travellers' bodies. At the Coat and Brown Paper Costume Stations, she assists with dressing, providing an extra hand and supportive presence during the process. In the finale, she gently pushes the pots from the Dripping Water and Hanging Pots Installation with a stick, creating a swinging landscape that gradually reduces the dripping sounds as drops fall onto the floor instead of into the ceramic pots.

THE ENDING PERFORMANCE JOURNEY



Left: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023.

Photo by Elin Osjord.

Right: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Witness Christina Lindgren, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023.

Photo by Elin Osjord.

While the Travellers rest in their nest of brown paper costumes with Guides offering waterbags 'massages', the Travellers are also resting in their Balloon-Tight Ring Tube costume. Katrine slowly walks, following the ritualistic circle around the space, carrying six heavy Water Bags hanging by ropes, over her shoulders. She offers each Witness a cold-Water Bag with woven rope to hold and touch, as if it were a sacred object.

Katrine continues a movement and sound score ritual with water, sitting next to a rectangular bucket filled with water and a submerged, wet Tube Costume. Similar to the bucket at the Water Station, Katrine slowly washes, squeezes and holds the tube as if washing and cleansing it while at the same time she attends closely to its subtle sound and movement components.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Next, she continues her journey by taking a long stick and gently pushing each ceramic hanging pot into a gentle swinging motion – rocking and swaying like a myriad of pendulums. As the pots begin swinging, one by one the dripping sounds mostly disappear, as the pots underneath them are no longer there to catch and amplify their drips.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Finally, Katrine concludes her ritual by gathering many of the coats, either placing them on the Lentil Walk or taking them with her, quietly stopping and kneeling beside the Basket of Lentils Station.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guides Manny Emslie & Leonie Cronin with Travellers in Brown Paper Costumes, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

As Katrine finishes, the sound score and poem titled 'Inside a Water Droplet' ends for the Travellers. Slowly, the Guides remove their Lycra Head Coverings followed by the Travellers. The Travellers are invited to open their eyes and see the 'Somatic Costume Environment' for the first time. The Witnesses see the faces of Guides and Travellers.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guides Ingunn Rimestad, Leonie Cronin, Lieu Le and Monika Kochowicz with Travellers, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Slowly, all of the Guides come together and gather the Brown Paper Costumes into a central area and attach all of them to a carabiner and rope. Two Guides pull the massive collection of Brown Paper Costumes into the air, raising it towards the hanging, swinging ceramic pots as if it were a giant mass of seaweed, framing and ending the ritual. All sit together in quietness with an occasional drip landing in a ceramic pot.



Photo: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guides Leonie Cronin and Monika Kochowicz, Witness Christina Lindgren and Guide Lieu Le, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.



Photo: Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Guides Leonie Cronin and Lieu Le with Witness Christina Lindgren, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The performance ends with Lee Berwick's meditation device that auto plays metal singing bowls – producing a deep, sustained hum enriched by complex overtones as it vibrates. This sound has a warm, ancient quality that slowly fades and can invite sustained attention and a sense of calm.

The Guides, Travellers, and Witnesses all became the 'audience' to the ending of the 'Somatic Costume Environment'.

SOMATIC ACT 31A:
Attending to Timing



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Lydia Hann, Daniel Frikstad, Oda Bredvold and Victor A. O. Pedersen, Scene 2, KHiO, 2021. Photo by Espen Tollefsen.

Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a sleeveless shirt, light trousers to move in, a heavy coat and a comfortable place to move and rest. This Somatic Act can be a solo, duet or group.

.....

*Begin dressed
in your sleeveless shirt
and light trousers,
standing on your feet.*

*Place your coat
on the ground
next to you.*

Close your eyes.

*Slowly, begin by dressing yourself in your coat
attending to the weight, the texture, the movement
of the material as
it touches,
slides over
and meets the terrain
of your body.*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*Now and then
noticing how the form
of the coat
follows and molds
around the surfaces
of your body...*

Allowing time...

*Once you are dressed
allow a moment to sense
that you are touching the coat
and the coat is touching you.*

Noticing your breathing...

*The movement of the inhale
The movement of the exhale*

And the slight pause and rest in between.

Allowing time...

*And then, in a moment,
on an exhale, quickly,
as fast as you can
while still sensing
a softening quality
in your body
removing the coat
and returning it to the floor.*

And pausing...

*Sensing the reverberations
of the change of timing and speed
in the bones, tissues, cells
of your body.*

Allowing time...

*When you are ready,
playing with dressing
and undressing
in your coat
exploring with how fast
or how slow your touch dance is*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

*How does the quality
of your relationship
to your coat
shift
with a change of timing
and pace?*

Allowing time...

*Finding your own transition
of resting or pausing.*

*Noticing your breath
and sensing the touch imprint
of your recent
tactile journey...*

SOMATIC ACT 31B: **Attending to Order**



Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a sleeveless shirt, light trousers to move in, a heavy coat, two feathers, a roll of masking tape and two yoga mats. If you do not have yoga mats, you can use towels or any other textured material that can form a 12-foot-long path.

This Somatic Act can be done as a duet or group.

.....

Begin dressed in your sleeveless shirt and light trousers. Next arrange the two yoga mats length-wise to form an approximately 12-foot-long path. Place, with care, the coat at one end of the path and the tape and feathers on the other end. Make sure the coat, tape, and feathers are beside the path (yoga mat), on the floor, and not on the path (mat).

In a moment, you will begin dressing at one end, beside the path, and then walking along the path with eyes closed. The texture of the yoga mat is intended to guide your feet. If you have socks and shoes on, please remove them - allowing your feet to sense the textures more clearly.

Your friend will support the dressing process on either end through touch. Their eyes will remain open. When undressing, you will lead the process and your friend can follow and support you. Ideally, it is best to keep your eyes closed, but if you need to open them at any point to support your dressing process or to keep yourself safe enough, please do.

*Start at the end of the path
with the heavy coat and
with your friend beside you.*

Close your eyes.

*Together
dress in the coat,
slowly, with your friend's support
sensing the texture
weight
movement
of the material
against your body.*

Allowing time...

*Once dressed,
your friend gently
guides and positions
your body
supporting your
first step
to enter
the path
walking
along the yoga mat path
wearing your coat
with eyes closed.*

*As you are walking
sensing the texture
under your feet
as a guide and support.*

*Your friend quietly
changes their position
to standing and waiting
for you
at the end of the path - by the tape and feathers.*

Keep the walking simple

*on your feet and
in a forward direction.*

*Sensing the weight and texture
of the coat surrounding
your body.*

*Sensing the presence
of your friend
that you are walking towards.*

Allowing time...

*Once you come
to the end of the path
your friend can place
one hand gently
on your shoulder.*

Pause...

*Sensing each other's touch
for a moment.*

*As you are ready
with eyes closed,
follow a journey of
shedding your coat
allowing it to return to the floor.*

*Follow your sense of timing
slowly or quickly
or moments of both*

*Allow a moment to sense
the reverberations of the touch journey.*

Allowing time...

*And then slowly,
your friend begins
dressing you in
two feathers
at the ends of both middle fingers
held in place with tape.*

Sensing this touch journey of material and skin.

Allowing time and spaciousness...

*When you are dressed
your friend gently
repositions your body
allowing you to
return to slowly walking
along the path
away from your heavy coat
and towards your original beginning place.*

*Your friend then
quietly
changes their position
to standing and waiting
at the other end of the path.*

*As you are walking
sensing the texture
under your feet
as a guide and support.*

*Keep the walking simple
on your feet and
in a forward direction.*

*Allow the touch of the fingers,
and the light weight of the feathers,
to open into a little bit of movement
along the arms
if you like...*

Notice the moments when you need to pause...

*Sensing the presence
of your friend
that is waiting for you.*

Allowing time...

*As you arrive at the end of the path,
your friend places
one hand gently
on your shoulder.*

Sensing each other's touch

for a moment.

Pause...

*As you are ready
with eyes closed,
shedding your feathers,
one at a time.*

*Follow your sense of timing
slowly or quickly, or both*

*Allow a moment
to sense the reverberations
of the touch journey.*

Allowing time...

And slowly open your eyes...

*Without speaking,
and with tenderness and care
return your coat
next to one end of the path
and the feathers and tape
at the other end.*

Pause...

Noticing your breathing...

*Sensing the material's presence
waiting for you.*

Allowing spaciousness...

And then

*Repeat the journey
but now, in the opposite order.*

*Start on the end with the feathers and tape,
with your friend
standing beside you.*

Close your eyes.

*Together, allow your friend
to dress you
in two feathers
at the ends of both middle fingers
held in place with tape.*

*Sensing this touch journey
of material and skin.*

Allowing time and spaciousness...

*Once dressed,
your friend gently
guides and positions
your body
supporting your
transitional step
to enter
the path
walking and
wearing your feathers
with eyes closed.*

*Sensing the texture
under your feet
as a guide and support.*

*Your friend quietly
changes their position
to standing and waiting
at the end of the path - by the heavy coat.*

*Keep the walking simple
on your feet and
in a forward direction
Allow the touch on the fingers,
and the light weight of the feathers,
to open into a little bit of movement,
along the arms, if you like.*

Notice the moments when you need to pause...

*Sensing the presence
of your friend
that is waiting for you.*

Allowing time...

*As you arrive at the end of the path,
your friend places
one hand gently
on your shoulder.*

*Sensing each other's touch
for a moment*

Pause...

*As you are ready
with eyes closed
shedding your feathers
one at a time.*

*Follow your sense of timing
slowly or quickly, or both, for example.*

*Allow a moment to sense
the reverberations
of the touch journey.*

Allowing time...

*With eyes closed, with the support
of your friend,
begin dressing in the coat
slowly
sensing its texture, weight, movement of the material against your body.*

Allowing time and spaciousness...

*Once dressed,
your friend gently
repositions your body,
guiding you to
return to slowly walking along the path,
away from the feathers,
and towards the other end
of the path
with eyes closed.*

*Sensing the texture
under your feet
as a guide and support.*

Your friend then,

*quietly,
changes their position
to standing and waiting
at the other end of the path.*

*Keep the walking simple
on your feet and
in a forward direction.*

*Sensing the weight and texture
of the coat surrounding
your body.*

*Sensing the presence
of your friend
that is waiting for you.*

Allowing time...

*As you arrive at the end of the path,
your friend can place
one hand gently
on your shoulder.*

*Sensing each other's touch
for a moment*

Pause...

*As you are ready
with eyes closed,
follow a journey of
shedding your coat -
allowing it to return to the floor.*

*Follow your sense of timing
slowly or quickly
Or moments of both*

*Allow a moment to sense
the reverberations of the touch journey.*

Allowing time...

And slowly, opening your eyes.

How does the order

*of touching and wearing
coat and feathers
shift your felt sense
and the quality
of your relationship
to the materials?*

*Allowing time to share
your experiences
with your friend.*

*And then,
changing roles
returning coat,
feathers and tape
with care
at each end
of the path.*



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Oda Bredvold and Daniel Frikstad, Scene 2, KHiO, 2021. Photo by Espen Tollefsen.

ARTISTIC METHODS

Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces explores choreographing attention through *Somatic Costumes*' touch in a group performative context within a Black Box Theatre. It applies and further develops key artistic methods from 'Part Two: The Somatic Costume Dressing Room'.

The following video above from the *Costume Agency Artistic Research Project* highlights these early developments in 2021.

METHOD 1:
ATTENDING TO BODIES – ATTENDING TO MATERIALS



Compressive Finger Sleeves – Sleeves made by Lydia Hann and co-designed with Sally E. Dean.
Photo by Molly Andrews, 2025.

As in *The Somatic Costume Dressing Room, Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* guides audiences to attend to their own bodies, the materials, costumes, and their meeting point. This process offers an antidote to our modern virtual society, where visual media often distracts from embodied sensing, and draws attention into cyberspace. Here, attention is guided towards embodiment, not for selling or marketing.

Somatically, materials are chosen to draw attention to specific body areas. For example, the Travellers first wear *Knitted Compressive Finger Sleeves*, created with and made by Lydia Hann. Made of lace-weight wool and nylon knitting elastic, these sleeves gently compress and keep warm the ends of six fingers (little, thumb, index). Choreographing attention to these fingers was intentional, informed by Jin Shin Jyutsu—a Japanese energy healing practice akin to acupressure for self-healing. This small costume powerfully demonstrates how materials influence, and impact through touch. Furthermore, these sleeves were designed as a practical component for attaching feathers later.

Because most of the Somatic Costumes and materials are experienced without visual input, this heightens the attending process: what material is this? Costumes and materials are discovered anew, opening the possibility of the ordinary becoming extraordinary. For example, lentils transform into portals for attending to ourselves, others, and the world, drawing attention to everyday 'things' and their profound impact when we take time to notice.

METHOD 2:

ATTENDING TO SIMPLICITY - LESS IS MORE



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Sally E. Dean, Lydia Hann, Victor A. O. Pedersen, Daniel Frikstad and Oda Bredvold, Scene 2, KHiO, 2021. Photo by Espen Tollefsen.

Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces returned to material simplicity, expanding the *Costume Agency Project's* research question to: 'What is material agency?'. We re-engaged with materials' essence during the performance-making process, asking, for instance, *what does water do?*

We explored Water-Bags and Water-Balloons through touch and movement, and listened to the sounds of a nearby waterfall and dripping water. We experienced walking through lentils and hearing their sounds in pots. This process allowed us to follow the materials' inherent desires to become specific forms, with costumes developing from explorations and participant interactions. Some materials remained as elements, while others evolved into distinct costume forms, highlighting the question: what form do the materials want to become through our relating process?

For example, the brown twisted paper, which was not initially a costume form in the 2021 *Costume Agency* video, evolved significantly. Researching its tactile qualities and sound, observing how people draped it, or noting the enjoyment of rustling it, and even building it into a giant nest-like resting place – all these interactions culminated in its final 2023 form. Similarly, although I initially envisioned a 'water costume', this did not materialise as a wearable form. Instead water became a vital element in the *Somatic Costume Environment* for touch and listening, with the dripping water installation becoming the heart of the piece.

Like in *The Somatic Costume Dressing Room*, *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* choreographs attention by introducing one material or costume at a time, with awareness of their tactile qualities both individually and in collaboration. This approach intentionally moves away from the social-cultural tendency to over-stimulate the nervous system with excessive information and sensorial inputs. We aim to balance the sensorial hierarchy by starting with touch, offering tactile experiences one at a time, often slowly, with transitions and rest. This allows participants to sense and reconnect with the essential touch impact materials have on bodies when worn.

This also performatively challenges the tendency to define 'costume' as a single, finished product existing prior to wearing. Instead, it expands the potential of costumes to be a collection of materials or pre-forms, whose existence comes alive through invited rituals of interaction—a 'costume' becoming the live meeting between audience and materials.

METHOD 3:
ATTENDING TO TOUCH PATTERNS



Compressive Finger Sleeves and Feather – Sleeves made by Lydia Hann and co-designed with Sally E. Dean. Photo by Sally E Dean, 2022.

One or a few materials can significantly impact the wearer. Deeper exploration of a material's touch allows for articulating and specifying a multitude of somatic and sensorial experiences.

Like in *The Somatic Costume Dressing Room*, the specificity of touch research applied in *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* further develops my third method of choreographing attention: 'Attending to Touch Patterns'. This method encompasses both 'Attending to Touch Patterns in Wearing' and 'Attending to Touch Patterns in Making'. Although the latter may have been implied in previous research, explicitly focusing on the 'making' aspect raises additional questions and categories.

For instance, key research questions in making the 'Feather Fingers' (the Compressive Sleeves with Feathers, created with Lydia Hann) covered categories mentioned for 'Attending to Touch Patterns in Wearing', such as, location, weight, pressure, texture, and movement. Despite their small visual appearance, these sleeves are tactilely dynamic, and involved over a year of development. Their creation process incorporated Method 1 (Attending to Bodies-Material Bodies), Method 2 (Attending to Simplicity), and Method 4 (Attending to Tactile Collaborations).

Other important discussion points, not directly listed in these categories but with tactile implications, included length, quantity, material type, air resistance, attachment methods, and practical retention (e.g., how to keep the costume secured without falling off). The costume's function throughout dressing, wearing, and moving is essential. For example, feather length affects perceived weight, and their orientation (front/back versus sideways) affects air resistance and influences movement.

In future work, I intend to further develop and clarify 'Attending to Touch Patterns in Making', focusing on specific design and making choices that have tactile implications. This shifts the focus to include the creation of the costume itself within the 'Attending to Touch Patterns' method.

For the *Feather Fingers*, our somatic aim was to create gentle compression and texture at the finger tips, with feathers extending the arms into space with a lightweight quality. The costume supported movement and environmental exploration while maintaining a clear, strong connection to the body.

‘Feather Fingers’ – Compressive Sleeves and Feathers: Tactile Insights from Wearing and Making

This section details the tactile experiences, reflections, and questions that emerged during the wearing and making of the *Feather Fingers*.

Materials:

- The choice of materials for the compressive sleeves was paramount. Pure wool became loose and didn't stay in place, although it was warm. A cotton-wool blend stayed better and was cooler but reduced compression.
- Ultimately, we chose nylon knitting elastic and lace-weight wool. The lightness and thinness of Lace-weight wool were essential; thicker wool added excess weight, compression, and limited movement.
- Nylon provided flexibility, helping the sleeve maintain its shape adding compression, and ensuring it stayed on the finger. The wool-nylon combination provides a slight warmth.

Texture:

- Lydia created a rib-like texture for the finger sleeves, producing a bumpy, less smooth feel . As Lydia described: ‘There's a 2x1 rib on the edge of the sleeve to give a good compression around the fingertip, the rest of the way down is alternating rows of yarn and elastic. The elastic is naturally tighter than the yarn rows [and] creates a rib-like texture from the different tensions of knit stitch’ (Hann, L., 2025).

Location of Finger Sleeve:

- The sleeve's placement affects both security and movement. Placing it over the knuckle offers more security, but restricts bending. For optimal movement and tactile feel, positioning it on or slightly above the knuckle is preferable.
- Crucially, the sleeve must cover the pad of the finger. If it rests below the pad (e.g., below the nail), compression is lost, as well as the connection from the fingertip to the feather. When the pad is covered, the fingertip tactilely extends and merges into the feather.

Location of Feathers:

- Front and back placement increases compression and allows the feather's end to be distinctly felt with movement. Lydia noted that it feels like it follows the 'bone of the fingers' and offers more feather control.
- Side placement provides a more neutral touch, reduces exaggerated compression from the sleeves, and minimizes interference from the feather's proximal end (although this

can be finger-specific, e.g., the thumb's base can poke more when oriented front-and-back).

- While side insertion was chosen for the performance, this decision is still in process and will be re-researched.
- Feather direction also matters: parallel to fingers created more air resistance (potentially increasing the 'flying' sensation by highlighting air interaction), while sideways created less.

Length of Finger Sleeve:

- Shorter sleeves lost feathers more quickly, while overly long sleeves covered knuckles, restricting finger movement.
- Due to varying finger sizes, Lydia created two lengths of sleeves (for longer and shorter fingers), allowing for selection during a Traveller's dressing process.

Pressure or Compression:

- Achieving a slight, balanced compression was key. Elastic ribbing at the sleeve top helped with retention but added compression at the fingertips.
- Sleeve width also varied compression. Lydia designed three different sleeve widths (for thumb, little finger, and middle fingers), tailored on average glove sizes. These widths could also be adapted for specific hand sizes (such as, using 'little finger' widths for small hands or 'thumb' widths for larger hands).
- The aim was that sleeve compression would not tactilely dominate, but rather equally support the tactile extension and connection to the feathers (Method 4: Attending to Tactile Collaborations).

Number & Weight of Feathers:

- We began with one feather per finger. In the final performance, we used two feathers per finger (on six fingers total: little finger, thumb, middle).
- Adding two feathers increased the weight, enhancing tactile presence. One feather felt too light, making it harder to sense, unless it interacted with the environment or was felt moving against the air.
- Lydia noted that more feathers per finger created a 'wing-like' sensation, while a single feather emphasized individual finger extension.

Length of Feathers:

- This requires further research. Shorter feathers seemed to draw attention to the fingertips, while longer feathers accentuated the feather's top and its movement. This also varied by finger and was affected by the number and position of feathers.

Attaching Feathers:

- Weaving the feather's proximal base two or three times into the sleeves created a stronger finger connection and a more secure feather.
- Inserting the feather from underneath (at the pad of the finger), then weaving it over, under, over, and finishing under at the base of the sleeve (two or three weaves), also supported the finger connection and ensured secure attachment.

Dressing/Undressing:

- Order and timing affect the experience. Lydia, for example, noted that wearing just two Feather Fingers on the outside of her hand, for a moment, awakened her sense of her outer arm.
- All Travellers wore the sleeves first, then received feathers. However, the transition of removing feathers depended on the individual Guide and Traveller's needs in that moment.

METHOD 4: ATTENDING TO TACTILE COLLABORATIONS



Somatic Costume Dressing Room Workshop – NOFOD Conference, Danish National School of Performing Arts, Copenhagen, 2022. Valentina Ceschi, Lorraine Smith and Sally E. Dean. Photos by Agnes Saaby Thomsen.

In *The Somatic Costume Dressing Room*, I discovered the method of contrasting two tactile qualities, exemplified by the *Balloon-Tight Ring with Tube* (compression and suspension). This approach and costume were not only applied to the Witnesses in the third *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* performance, but also further explored with the 'Feather Fingers' costume worn by the Travellers. Essentially, Method 4 shows how tactile inputs from different materials collaborate and interrelate.

The creation of the 'Feather Fingers' involved a delicate balance, a 'profound dance', between the sensation of compression from the sleeve and the lightness and extension offered by the feather. If sleeve compression were too strong, the feather's lightness and its extending quality would diminish or disappear. Conversely, if the feathers were too light (lacking sufficient quantity), their presence and weight would lessen, fading into the background. Our aim was to ensure these contrasting tactile qualities were not only equally present, but also that the costume components—the finger sleeves and feathers—merged, creating the experience of a single, integrated costume.

These tactile contrasts in both the 'Feather Fingers' and the 'Balloon-Tight Ring and Tube costume' directly supported Method 5 (see below), which focuses on guiding attention within the *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* performance. For instance, compression inherently draws attention to the body, while extension directs attention outward, into the environment. This was crucial for guiding the Travellers' attention to explore the environment and broaden their sense of touch beyond the body, without losing connection to their felt sense of materiality.

The 'Balloon-Tight Ring and Tube' costume similarly applied this principle: compression guides attention inward, towards the body, while suspension encourages attention upward and outward into space. The objective was to connect Witnesses with their bodily experience during witnessing, while simultaneously providing support to gently open their attention to the surrounding space and environment.

METHOD 5: GUIDING ATTENTION



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Victor A. O. Pedersen, Lydia Hann, Daniel Frikstad and Oda Bredvold, Scene 2, KHiO, 2021. Photo by Espen Tollefsen.

How do I design and choreograph in the absence of the visual? With this restriction, designing and choreographing shifts from creating visual forms to primarily guiding attention. This attention is guided sensorially, starting first with haptic touch—a comprehensive system that includes the kinesthetic, proprioceptive, vestibular, and interoception senses. This approach applies the sensorial order that develops embryologically, as the sense of touch and movement (via the vestibular nerve) develop around four weeks in utero.

Therefore, guiding attention involves directing inner and outer awareness. It utilizes somatic techniques, initially rooted in touch (and later incorporating other senses like sound), to ground bodies in materiality and facilitate spatial orientation in the absence of the visual.

This process is essential for cultivating a sense of safety and encouraging an ongoing dialogue between internal and external experiences.

Our approach follows Method 2: Attending to Simplicity, introducing materials and costumes mostly one at a time. This enables participants to focus on a single touch experience, preventing overstimulation and supporting the initial activation of the parasympathetic nervous system (Method 6), which is the starting point in the *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* performance.

We intentionally cultivate a dynamic interplay between receptive touch (for moments of rest and receiving) and active, haptic touch (fostering engagement and agency). To foster a way of being that emphasized their agency within the tactile experience, our audience members were intentionally named Travellers, embodying this approach. Their sensorial journey involves not only receiving touch from costumes and materials, but also actively engaging in movement and stillness, becoming agents in tactile exploration. Rituals like dressing and undressing, for example, directly activate this haptic engagement. This costume-invited agency extends beyond active movement, supporting the audience's agency in meaning-making, transforming the sensory experience as a gateway into individual poetic imagination and interpretation (further discussed in Method 8).

THE ROLES OF TOUCH AND SOUND IN GUIDING ATTENTION

GIVE THEM WINGS & WE SHALL SEE THEIR FACES: The Role of Sound Video



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Katrine Kirsebom, Scene 2, KHIØ, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

In *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces*, Method 5 was further developed by broadening how attention is guided, expanding from touch-based techniques to incorporate sound as a crucial element.

Touch serves as our proximal sense, intimately connecting us to our bodies and immediate surroundings. It opens attention to materiality and substance, providing immediate details about our body's state and direct contact and interactions with objects. For instance, the pressure of a chair informs us about our posture, and touching a mug reveals its unique texture. Through consistent tactile input, touch develops and maintains our body schema, helping to understand our physical form and position in space.

In contrast, sound acts as our distal sense, activating outer awareness and opening our attention to space. While it activates resonance inside the body through sound waves, sound primarily offers information about events and objects that are far away and often unseen. For example, hearing a dog bark allows us to locate it without sight, and the acoustics of a room can inform us of its size and materials. Whereas touch grounds us in the tangible present, sound extends our awareness into the broader environment, with both senses constantly integrating to form a comprehensive perception of ourselves and the world.

Sound as a Bridge: Connecting Senses and Experiences

Within the performance, sound specifically becomes a bridge between the senses of touch and vision. As an intermediary sense, sound acts as a scout, surveying the environment beyond our immediate reach. It provides crucial early warnings and spatial cues that allow us to orient our bodies (guided by touch and proprioception) and direct our gaze (vision) to further investigate. It is the medium through which the 'out there' begins to inform our 'here', smoothly transitioning between our most intimate (touch) and most expansive (vision) senses.

Beyond sensory integration, sound also bridges the experience between the Witnesses and Travellers, serving as a shared auditory experience they both equally encounter.

Practical Application in *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces*

The performance primarily utilizes acoustic-based sounds, creating a dynamic collection of localized sounds within different areas of the theatre. This includes sounds from costumes and costume elements, worn and touched by audience members. These sounds aid in spatial orientation and object identification, while also enhancing tactile sensations or creating expectations. For instance, the 'Brown Paper Costume' creates a strong rustling sound, like crisp autumn leaves. Travellers, after wearing and touching it, learn to recognize it from a distance through sound; some even hear the sound before touching it, generating a tactile expectation.

A key 'locating system' in the black box theatre was the Dripping Water & Hanging Pots Installation. The orientation of the pots, with their dripping water sounds, tempted the participants to sense their closeness: 'Where is it? Am I underneath it now?' (Feedback from Audience One, 2022, KHiO, Oslo).

In summary, *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* evolved into a profound exploration of guiding sensorial integration, starting from touch, profoundly supported by sound, and facilitating the beginning integration of vision.

Choreographing Attention: Order, Timing, and Location

In the *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* performance, Method 5: Guiding Attention was refined through developing a pre-selected order, timing, and location for tactile experiences. This more directorial approach intentionally choreographed audience attention within the sensory journey.

The Role of Order

The order in which materials are introduced, particularly for the Travellers, becomes essential. For example, attention is first drawn to their connection to their bodies, and the ground through weight (Winter Coat Station) and their feet (Lentil Walk Station), before bringing attention to the extension of the fingers and arms (Feather Fingers Station) into space and the environment. This progression—starting with the experience of weight and connection to the body and ground before connecting to space—is a somatic method I often utilize in my teaching practice (influenced by Body Mind Centering & Helen Poynor).

The sequencing also incorporated an intentional interplay between activating the parasympathetic versus the sympathetic nervous system, through 'awakening' and 'calming' tactile materials and experiences. For example, the grounding compression of finger sleeves or the comforting weight of the coats contrasts with the stimulating sensation of walking in lentils or the invigorating touch of cold water. This dynamic interplay between materials was carefully choreographed to guide the sensorial journey.

The Impact of Timing and Location

The timing and location of these touch experiences were equally critical in shaping the audience's journey and interpretations. These elements became powerful levers for guiding attention, as even subtle shifts could profoundly alter the narrative and meaning-making experience. For instance, consider how different the tactile, somatic, and symbolic journey would be if the sequence of stations for the Travellers were altered (e.g., ending with extending into space at the Feather Fingers Station versus resting in nests with water bags in the Brown Paper Costumes Station). The order guides Travellers towards different psychophysical states.

Transitions between experiences particularly highlight the significant impact of timing, order, and location. Undressing from any costume can be experienced as shedding 'a second skin'—a powerful transformation that, at its extremes, might feel like either a loss or a liberation. To emotionally support such transitional moments, we focus on supporting the sensory transition. For example, when Guides remove Travellers' Feather Fingers before entering the Water Station, Guides would first initiate a touch connection to water (gently touching hands with water or catching a droplet or touching the water buckets). Beginning the next tactile connection before fully losing the current one provides reassurance and practical grounding, guiding their attention towards the upcoming tactile experience and emphasizing the critical timing of these cues. Similarly, the speed of removing elements,

such as the feathers, was carefully considered; a quick removal could feel violent, like plucking, while a slow removal might evoke a gentle shedding.

Guides as Choreographers of Attention

This artistic research redefines the traditional role of the performer, moving beyond common notions of physical virtuosity and endurance. Instead, the focus is on a profound ability to 'attend to' the moment, where choice and responsive listening—both internal and external—become the core demonstrations of skill and the essence of performance.

Within this redefined framework, Guides were pivotal as 'in the moment' choreographers of attention. They shaped each audience member's individual journey, particularly supporting transitions between stations and materials. Their role demanded a distinct skill set, one that diverged from the skills traditionally associated with an actor or dancer focused on character or physical virtuosity and aesthetic form. Guides needed the ability to simultaneously attend to another, while remaining present to themselves, as well as maintaining acute awareness of the tactile, auditory, and visual aspects of the performance. This required professionals who already embodied the essence of 'guiding' in their work, possessing experience in dance/movement, improvisational training, strong Somatic Movement backgrounds, and a history of teaching.

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We also dedicated significantly more time in later performance rehearsals to practicing how to 'guide attention'. This practice incorporated techniques like Somatic Act 25, 'Guiding Attention', which teaches Guides to move within the dynamic interplay of when to lead and when to follow the audience. Our emphasis included cultivating awareness of oneself, the Traveller or Witness, and the 'third place' where their attentions meet—a space where guiding often happens on its own (for further detail, please refer to *Part Two: Somatic Costume Dressing Room, Method 5*). As a fundamental principle, we further emphasized and practiced, in detail, attending to *what* and *how* we follow, such as a Traveller's breathing or the Guide's own weight on their feet (for further detail, please refer to *Part One: Definitions & Context, Chapter 13: Attention/Attending*).

Central to this guidance was the intentional cultivation of a dynamic interplay between receptive touch, for moments of rest and receiving, and active, haptic touch, fostering engagement and agency. This responsive interaction was facilitated through touch and

non-verbal cues, but also through simple questions like, 'Would you like to stay or would you like to continue? Would you like to hold the coat, or wear it?' Guides adjusted the time spent at each 'touch material/costume station' based on the audience member's individual interest.

Practicing how and where we touched the audience was also an essential and deliberate part of our choreographic process. Initially, we experimented with guiding from behind by touching the shoulders and upper arms (please see picture above *Method 5: Guiding Attention*), but we discovered this created a sense of being directed, which limited the audience's agency. Through an iterative process of experimentation, we found that positioning the bodies side-by-side created a more intimate and equal relationship, fostering a sense of shared journey rather than more of a passive following. This side-by-side hand-to-hand contact proved to be the most effective method. The primary guiding touch involved supporting the audience at their right hand, arm, and elbow—with the Guide's lower arm underneath the audience's, allowing them to rest their weight. Simultaneously, the Guide's hand on top offered a sense of active engagement, allowing the audience to move and guide their arm and direction. This method also proved to be a powerful feedback loop: Guides could receive detailed, real-time information from the Traveller through subtle tactile cues, making it easier to listen and respond to their specific movements, needs, and desires.

Finally, a key choreographic choice emerged from our practice: we chose to guide the audience on the right side of their bodies. This positioned the Guide on the inside of our circular path and the Traveller on the outside. We found that the Guide on the inside had a natural advantage in navigating the Traveller. The physics of circular motion means the person on the outside must travel a greater distance at a faster pace, while the person on the inside can maintain a more deliberate, stable tempo. This allows the Guide to absorb any imbalance, providing a consistent and steady point of contact, which is critical for maintaining safety and trust throughout the process. This choreographic choice, cultivated through a long process of experimentation, ultimately redefined the relationship from one where physical direction was initiated by the Guide to one of shared collaboration and trust, where guiding arises from the 'third place' where their attentions meet.

Ultimately, the Guides supported the agency of the audience, and their tactile, auditory, and visual journey as a whole.

Navigating Pre-Design and Individual Response

While this pre-selected order, timing, and location were foundational to the choreographed experience, they inherently limited direct responsiveness to the audience's unique, individual touch patterns. The costumes were pre-designed, not tailored for a specific person. However, we incorporated some flexibility within this framework; for instance, Guides could adjust where coats were worn or touched on the body, depending on the Traveller's preference. This offered some options for how to wear or move within the materials.

Despite these limitations in fully customizing every tactile interaction, this approach demonstrates how attention can be choreographed with specificity through touch. It revealed the profound impact that shifting even a single element, such as order or timing, can have on the audience's meaning-making experience.

METHOD 6:
ACTIVATING THE PARASYMPATHETIC VS.
SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM



Somatic Costume Dressing Room Workshop – NOFOD Conference, Danish National School of Performing Arts, Copenhagen, 2022, Charlotte Østergaard. Photos by Agnes Saaby Thomsen.

While both nervous systems are engaged throughout the experience, we intentionally begin by dressing the Travellers and Witnesses in costumes that provide compression touch, which invites a parasympathetic response. This includes `Knitted Compressive Finger Sleeves` and `Lycra Head Coverings` for Travellers, and the `Balloon-Tight Ring with Tube` for Witnesses. My experience in *The Somatic Costume Dressing Room*, where many arrived overstimulated and extremely tired, directly informed this choice. The consistent need for compression touch observed in those sessions, including my own, was directly applied to the performance. This approach helped audience members to attend to themselves, then open to others and the environment.

METHOD 7:

AWARE-WEARING AND THE INVISIBLE COSTUME



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Witnesses Charlotte Østergaard and Christina Lindgren, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

The concept and practice of Aware-Wearing—bringing focused attention to the effects of costumes' touch on bodies—proved essential to the dressing process itself. I realized that without specifically inviting this somatic engagement, audiences' awareness of the costumes' presence and impact was significantly lessened. For example, in contrast to the third performance, the Balloon-Tight costume worn by Witnesses in the second performance was rarely discussed in feedback; it became just another consumable object. This diminished tactile sensing was particularly more common for Witnesses than for Travellers, given the consistent presence of a visual component in their experience.

However, when Guides specifically invited time to touch and sense the materials, the costume transformed. It became a living 'thing' to be with and respond to, amplifying its sacredness. All audience members, both Travellers and Witnesses, needed support and guidance in how to 'attend' to materials differently from our typical cultural norms. Thus, it was critical for Guides to lead them through this process, focusing intently on tactility, as the tactility of materiality requires specific guidance.

Such a somatic approach invites the audience 'to place themselves in the role of being inside the experience instead of outside the experience they observe' (Dean, 2020). Through this guided process, the audience, as wearers, integrated personal associations via the felt

sense of materiality, allowing their senses to be a gateway to feelings, imagination, and intimacy.

METHOD 8: COSTUMING THE SENSE OF THE REAL



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Guide Manny Emslie with Traveller Amy Voris, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Meaning-making is often viewed as a purely cognitive process, intellectually interpreting and labeling experiences. However, in *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces*, meaning emerged from the participant's direct, multi-sensorial engagement within the *Somatic Costume Environment*. *How is meaning made when the visual sense, typically dominant in performance, is partially or entirely absent?* This core question drove the development of Method 8.

This somatic and tactile approach invites the audience into 'the sense of the real' (Pallasmaa, 2012), where direct encounters with materiality—the palpable presence of substances—uniquely open our meaning-making processes. It emphasizes that imagination can be activated directly through the tactile and felt sense, even before conscious thought.

As one audience member insightfully observed, 'It was sensing into feeling before thinking' (Feedback from Audience Six, August 2022, KHiO, Oslo). This highlights a process where sensing, feeling, and imagining can unfold prior to cognitive analysis. Crucially, sensation, particularly touch, can directly evoke 'images' or felt impressions that are not solely visual, but can be multi-sensory, embodied, and/or emotionally resonant.

For instance, in the initial 2021 *Costume Agency* performance (where the audience consisted solely of Travellers and visuals were only introduced at the conclusion), participants often expressed surprise at how much larger they perceived the space to be with their eyes closed. One participant remarked, 'I felt like I was in a space that would expand – I had an association of being in a limitless space – like a tundra' (Feedback from Audience Two, August 2021, KHiO, Oslo). This contrast between the touch-based sensory experience and 'visual reality' upon opening their eyes proved highly intriguing, highlighting how meaning and spatial perception—and consequently the very sense of place—can be generated in the absence of traditional visual input.

As the tactile experience profoundly reshapes our perception of space and place, it also inherently alters our sense of time. The act of touch is notably slower than that of vision. Travellers, deeply immersed in the tactile experience often perceived their time within the performance as remarkably short and desired it to be longer. In stark contrast, Witnesses, primarily relying on visual input and often holding an expectation for sustained, dynamic attention, sometimes found the performance to be slow and wished for it to be shorter or faster. In the absence of the visual, our conceptual selves are gently disoriented, allowing for a re-knowing of the world through this primary sense.

The Process of Poetic Material-ity and Co-Created Meaning

This process of meaning-making, where touch meets material, constitutes Poetic Material-ity. Crucially, this approach shifts the very location of where meaning is created, moving it from a singular, choreographer-driven concept to an integrated process born from the dynamic relationship between audience, performers, materials, and the *Somatic Costume Environment* in the moment.

Drawing from Gaston Bachelard's notion that 'one cannot dream profoundly with objects. To dream profoundly, one must dream with substances' (1999, p. 22), this approach acknowledges that while the material, texture, weight, and form of a costume create a shared tactile 'Facts/Reality world' (Suryodarmo, 2012), these somatic experiences then open into unique subjective associations—the 'Fictions/Dream World' (Suryodarmo, 2012), or 'meaning effects' (Gumbrecht, 2004)—for each wearer or audience member. This inherent subjective response empowers the audience to become active agents in co-creating the 'story' or meaning, allowing meaning to be sensed and experienced pre-conceptually.

Costumes are therefore designed to touch the audience first through physical contact, then poetically. Elements like the 'Feather Fingers' costume demonstrate how direct tactile engagement (compression sleeves, inserted feathers) can extend limbs into space and transform the experience of one's own body and its connection to the world.

Costume as Somatic Environment

Costuming in this context expands beyond dressing bodies to 'costuming the environment' itself, forming a *Somatic Costume Environment*. As one participant said, 'You have costumed the space' (Feedback from Audience Three, 2021, KHiO, Oslo). Materials like brown paper not only clad the wearer, but also become integrated into nests and spatial installations. These simple costume forms, including feathers, lentils, and ceramic pots, actively build the environment, supporting meaning-making through both touch and sound.

Ultimately, this immersive performance invites the audience's agency in poetic meaning-making through their touch and sound sensations. As Travellers, they embark on both individual and collective journeys, with the presence and interactions of others, materials, and the Guides themselves contributing to a co-created meaning. Audience reflections powerfully illustrate how creativity and deeper self-awareness can arise from engaging directly with materiality and the senses:

- 'The sensation also evokes images. The images reflect where you come from. I was in the forest, by the creek' (Feedback from Audience Five, 2022, KHiO)
- 'Creativity that comes from the sensory' (Feedback from Audience Six, 2022, KHiO).
- Regarding nature associations: 'Walking in an arctic woodland close to the sea with birch trees' (Feedback from Audience Three, 2022, KHiO), 'It was spring. . . . I was close to the sea, the snow was melting, I was walking on the beach and then an avalanche came' (Feedback from Audience Four, 2022, KHiO), 'The things bring me outside to nature. Lake, forest and the wetland . . .in the marshland . . .that is where you have this dry and wet . . . the twigs and the branches' (Feedback from Audience One, 2022, KHiO).
- On new bodily awareness: 'It just makes me personally realise that I am not as in touch with my body as I could be. . . . And in particular, I mean, it's such little gestures, particularly when lentils are kind of hitting the tops of my feet, touching my feet. . . . I was fascinated by it' (Feedback from Audience Seven, 2022, KHiO).

SOMATIC ACT 32:
Attending to Clouds



Photo by Sally E Dean, Oslo, KHiO, 2021.

Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a day with moving clouds and a comfortable, quiet place to lie down, outside, to witness them. This Somatic Act can be experienced as a solo, duet or group.

.....

Begin resting, lying on your back.

Close your eyes.

*Sensing the support
of the ground
as the air gently
passes
over your skin.*

*Place the palm
of your hands
over your eyes*

*Allowing the weight
of the palm
to rest deeply
into the bones
of the face
softening any tension
arising in the shoulders,
arms, back
or even the jaw.*

*Allowing the breath
to flow in and out
of the nose
and mouth
as it sinks deeper
to massage the quiet
places
behind the eyes.*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready
gently bring the arms
to rest again
at your sides
allowing the weight
to settle
into the support
of the earth*

*As you sense
the weight
of the eyes
softly settle
into the support
of the back
of the skull*

Allowing time...

*Gradually,
allow the eyes to open
with a small amount of light
entering
at a time*

*The eyes receiving
and being nourished
by the sky
the colours
textures
movement
of clouds
passing
merging
shifting
transforming*

*a subtle dance
unfolding
moment
by moment.*

*Nothing to do to create
or imagine-
allowing each cloud
to journey through
touching the eyes
resting into
a soft yet
widening view.*

*Nothing to follow
only to be with
relaxing any holding
attending to your eyes
as if in a soft caress.*

*And when you are ready,
little by little
allow less light
to enter the eyes
until they close once again.*

*The eyes resting
sensing their weight
supported by the
back of the skull
as the earth
rises to meet
your body
in resting.*

Allowing time...

This begins a dance

*of opening and closing
the eyes
as we witness
and are touched by
the dance
of clouds.*

Allowing time...

THE WITNESS:
Integrating The Visual System



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Guide Monika Kochowicz, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023.
Photo by Elin Osjord.

While the Travellers' experiences revealed how meaning and spatial perception could be generated through the primacy of touch (as explored in Method 8: Costuming the Sense of the Real), this initial insight led to a crucial question:

What is it like to witness something designed not primarily for viewing, but for touch?

Introducing the Witness: Initial Process and Feedback

To investigate this, the Witness role was introduced in the second performance sharing in August 2022, for my mid-term presentation. Witnesses occupied a traditional audience position, seated on one side of the black box space's periphery, facing a singular direction. Their placement was chosen to optimize their 'visual' perspective. Situated near the Water Station, they experienced the water buckets up close—both tactilely and audibly—as Travellers and Katrine interacted with them, and they could also observe individual water drops landing. Sheepskin rugs were also placed by their feet and adjacent to the Water Station, inviting them to sit on the floor and rest.

In this second performance, while the Guides and Travellers continued to wear head coverings—a practice already established from the first performance for its tactile and somatic effect—a key new element was Katrine. I made a deliberate visual choice not to use a head covering for Katrine, making her face visible. This served as a visual contrast to the other covered participants and positioned her as the sole 'performing' face seen by the audience. Crucially, this choice also forged a visual connection with the Witnesses, who likewise remained without head coverings.

It was during this second performance that I became aware of the stronger visual implication of the existing head coverings (on the Guides and Travellers), a factor I subsequently chose to develop further. My intention was to de-emphasize the face, which is often symbolically linked to identity, in order to invite a witnessing less person-specific and more focused on the general movement and activities of a whole community-organism-ecosystem. The aim was to create a 'merged' visual element, where Guides and Travellers visually, at moments, blended into the materials and with each other. This was also achieved by requesting participants to wear black, with some flesh visible (e.g., bare arms), magnifying the body's tenderness and vulnerability against the black environment. This visual merging of materials, audience, and performers served as a continuation of my definitions of costume and the blurring of roles (performer, audience) within the immersive environment of the *Somatic Costume Dressing Room*.



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – (left to right) Traveller Oda Olivia Øverbø Lindegård and Guide Kristina Gjems, Scene 2, KHiO, 2022. Photo by Elin Osjord.

Experiments were conducted to tacitly invite Witnesses into the performance. They were dressed in the Balloon-Tight Ring costume, without the Tube, by Katrine in the Witness dressing room. Katrine then guided them to their chairs as part of the performance's opening. Lee Berwick further integrated the Witnesses' experience by creating a wooden platform with transducers underneath, placed beneath their chairs, which vibrated with sound at specific points. Towards the end, Katrine handed Witnesses with cold water bags wrapped in jute rope to hold.

Despite these tactile elements, some Witness feedback revealed a longing for more touch, with participants expressing 'jealousy' of the Travellers' tactile experiences. I also realized there was an absence of discussion regarding the Balloon-Tight Ring costume that they wore. In retrospect, insufficient Guides were available to support the dressing process and tend to the costumes, leading to many balloons deflating and losing their intended tactile impact. Putting on the Balloon-Tight Ring became more practical than sensorial.

Visually, some Witnesses reported feeling 'bored', falling asleep, or 'losing focus'. Intriguingly, one Witness who initially felt 'bored' later called me to report a somatic 'something' in her body after the performance, stating she did not want to check her phone as was her usual habit. Another Witness, however, found the visual, slow pace meditative, and expressed contentment in their role. The visual importance of Katrine, as the only 'performer' without a head covering, was also emphasised; Witnesses visually followed her as a key focal point. Furthermore, critical questions emerged: one Witness queried the choice of a traditional seated audience position, while another questioned the inclusion of the visual element at all, given my touch-based research essence.

Evolving the Witness's Experience: Tactile, Auditory and Visual Developments

In the third performance, I began to integrate and reflect more deeply on these crucial tactile and visual questions. Tactile refinements in the Witnesses' Dressing Room, costume, and process included assigning dedicated Guides (instead of Katrine), allowing more time for somatic engagement with materials and costumes, and offering optional adjustments for wearing the costume, fostering greater choice and active relationship. Guides also meticulously tended to the costumes each night to ensure maximum tactile impact (e.g., checking that the balloons were fully inflated). Furthermore, the Tube costume was reintroduced to the Balloon-Tight Ring, adding further compression. This resulted in a significant difference in Witnesses' reflections during feedback sessions; many chose not to remove their costume after the performance, continuing to wear it during the feedback session, with some even asking to 'take it home'.

Beyond the previous tactile elements, a rocking chair was introduced – rocking side-to-side rather than front-to-back – as another means of tactilely engaging Witnesses through movement, aiming to activate their vestibular system into a 'seeing' that facilitated more breath and peripheral awareness.

The critical role of the Guides' touch became evident. One-to-one attention, even if briefer than that given to Travellers, significantly shifted and settled the Witnesses' need for touch. Consequently, no one in the feedback sessions mentioned jealousy or a desire for more touch like the Travellers. Guides occasionally led Witnesses, with eyes both closed and open, through the Somatic Costume Environment, using the same gentle touch, beneath the arm, and elbow and hand, as the Travellers received.

Visually, in the third performance, my focus intuitively shifted from choreographing what Witnesses saw to exploring how they were seeing. This represented a further development of my choreography definition, now applied to visual attention: becoming aware not only of *what* we follow but of *how* we follow or attend with our eyes.

The rocking chair was one exploration of this 'how we see'. Additionally, by inviting Witnesses to close their eyes at times, I aimed to reconnect them with other sensory modes, particularly sound, which can expand listening and attention multi-directionally. Relaxing the eyes through closing them also encouraged a softening of the gaze. Witnesses were also invited into a more active relationship with seeing, with Guides suggesting they explore opening and closing their eyes independently, according to their own needs.

Finally, Witnesses began to experience the performance from varying distances (close, middle, far) and positions within the room, again shifting their visual perspective. This was facilitated by the Guides, who led them to different locations, and invited them to close and open their eyes at unexpected and surprising moments. For example, Witnesses were guided slowly towards a hanging water bag installation with eyes closed, then opened their eyes to view the water bag landscape just inches from their face, or they witnessed a Traveller exploring water ceramic balls up close. This integration drew the Witness 'inside' the performance and the Somatic Costume Environment, rather than keeping them on the periphery.

Beyond choreographing how Witnesses saw, I also attended to the classic visual elements—what was being 'looked at'. This was encouraged and supported by the visual world created by lighting designer Kaja Lund, who translated focus and brought life to the textures and tactile qualities of the environment through light, allowing me to 'see' the visual potential of the performance. Elin Osjord similarly captured this through her photography and videography.

This visual merging between materials, audience, and performers was somewhat diminished in the third performance when Witnesses and their Guides left the periphery to become part of the visual landscape, with their faces seen and in orange tube costumes. Katrine's visual prominence, previously dominant, lost some of its power. In future performances, I would reinstate black attire for participants and head coverings for all, to include the Witnesses, except Katrine.

Re-evaluating the Eyes: The Broader Implications of Witnessing



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Guide Monika Kochowicz with Witness, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023. Photo by Elin Osjord.

A strong parallel exists between the development and integration of the Witness role in the *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* performances (2021–2023) and the evolving integration of the visual component.

In the second performance a pivotal question arose from one Witness, who asked: 'Why are you having the visual as part of the piece at all, since your practice is touch-based and the essence of your research?'

My answer, rooted in somatic practice, values the integration, rather than separation, of the senses. This touch-based research reveals that beginning with other sensorial modes, like touch and sound, bridges re-entry into the visual mode anew, offering further re-integration. In our modern technological world, increasing demands on our visual systems continually challenge us. I believe it is crucial, and a future research focus, to find alternative ways of addressing 'modern eyes'. Starting with touch and other sensorial systems is one important approach.

Such a somatic approach invites the audience to place themselves in the role of being 'inside' the experience instead of 'outside' the experience they observe. It also prompts a key question: What would performance 'look like' if it emerged from the sense of touch and a way of attending based on *how* one sees, not just *what* one sees?

Given that many performative and research systems are visually based (Todd, 1937, Levin, 1993, Lehman, 2006, Ingold, 2011) and critical for communication, addressing the visual not solely based on 'what' we see but 'how' we see holds significant implications for what we choreograph – influencing the performances and costumes we create.

The challenge is not merely the cultural prioritization of the eyes, but the way we use them. Our fast-paced, screen-filled modern culture significantly alters this usage. The eyes organize and form the foundation of our bodily orientation and movements. Therefore, a different 'use' of the eyes will ultimately transform our way of being in the world, and what performance is and can be. Fundamentally, the eyes guide the body.

The Witness role initiated an attempt to create alternative ways of seeing – exploring 'how we see' and moving us away from current modern cultural patterns of 'what we see'. This shift will also reshape and redefine audience expectations. What might the choreography of attention 'look' like if we explore how we use our eyes in the future?

Modern visual culture often encourages patterns of attending characterized by rapid, often jerky eye movements (saccades), faster processing demands, and reduced sustained gazing. This can result in diminished peripheral awareness, a sense of 'tunnel vision', and a disconnection from other sensory input and bodily signals. This fixed, tense way of looking, which lacks the ability to 'soft focus', primarily activates the sympathetic nervous system, potentially contributing to stress, anxiety, and increased overall body tension.

Conversely, somatic practices can offer a 'modern eye remedy' by cultivating ways of attending to the eyes that support healthy visual function. These involve consciously relaxing eye muscles, expanding peripheral awareness, regularly shifting focus between near and far, and taking breaks to rest the eyes. Engaging in slow, deliberate eye movements activates the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting calm and integration. Practising viewing a natural landscape, such as clouds or the ocean, exemplifies this more holistic use of the eyes, encouraging relaxed, sustained gazing and improving flexible depth perception. This approach directly counters how modern screens can diminish our 'sense of the real', often acting more like portals than physical objects.

SOMATIC ACT 33: Touch of Lentils



Allow for at least 25 minutes.

You will need a pair of comfortable yet snug-fitting quarter or crew socks (mid calf) with ribbing at the top that rise at least 3 or 4 inches above the ankle. The socks need to be snug so that the lentils can make a firm enough touch contact with the feet. The sock material is ideally merino wool or high quality cotton with nylon and spandex blended in for structural integrity and flexibility.

You will also need a bag of approximately 600grams, or 24oz, of uncooked red or brown lentils and a pair of scissors.

This Somatic Act can be experienced as a solo, duet, or group.

.....

Begin by cutting a half an inch hole into the edge of the bag of lentils. Prepare your sock by folding the top of the sock ribbing down about an inch and opening the entrance of the sock with one hand. Pour 1/3 of the lentils into one sock. And then pour 1/3 of the lentils into the other sock.

Slowly place one foot inside the lentil sock and then the other. The lentils should rest underneath the bottom of each foot. Massage and move the lentils so that they are spread evenly underneath each foot.

Then, open the top of the sock around one of your feet and pour half of the remaining lentils on top of the foot. Repeat for the other foot. You will need to massage and move the lentils, so they are spread evenly on top of the feet.

*Then, once dressed in Lentil Socks,
finding your way
to your feet.*

*Closing your eyes.
Noticing your breathing...*

*Sensing the contact
that you are making
with the lentils
and the floor.*

*Gently begin shifting
your weight
from one foot
to another.*

*Noticing how your weight,
feet and lentils,
shift
with the gentle sway
of your movement...*

Allowing Time...

*How does this movement
travel up through the feet, legs,
pelvis, spine, and head?*

Allowing Time...

*As you are sensing your breath
allowing the movement to grow
into a walk
or some kind of movement
on your feet.*

*Slowly, gently,
opening your eyes
as your movement begins
to travel or expand
into the space around you.*

*Allowing the Lentil Socks
to take you somewhere
perhaps along the floor
or into or out of the floor.*

Following the Lentil Socks as a guide.

*Finding moments to pause
and rest
along the way.*

*Moments of movement
Moments of stillness.*

Allowing time...

*And then, a gentle invitation
to continue to wear the Lentil Socks,
while reading the next chapter.*

Allowing time...

And when you are ready,

*Undressing in them,
shedding one Lentil Sock
at a time.*

*Sometimes the lentils
enjoy sticking to the
bottom of the feet
or hiding between
the crevices of the toes
or even falling out of the socks
onto the floor.*

*You might even find
an unexpected lentil
later in the day.*

*After the socks
are removed*

*Allowing time to sense,
the imprint of their touch*

*On your feet
In stillness...*

*For a moment,
with eyes closed*

Allowing time...

*As you are ready
returning to your feet
integrating the
touch sensations
from the lentils
by walking or
moving on your feet
in gentle ways.*

Allowing time...

Note: The kind and size of lentil or bean you choose varies the tactile and somatic experience. Some of the options are: red lentils, brown lentils, puy lentils, mung beans and aduki beans. Puy lentils are slightly smaller in size than all the other beans with a rounder surface and have a slightly stronger exterior than brown and red lentils. Red lentils are slightly softer and decompose more easily with movement. The brown and red lentils slide over each other more easily and are slightly more slippery than puy lentils. Aduki and mung beans, with their bigger size and more coarse structure, will create more direct point contacts on the feet. Brown, red and puy lentils work more as a collective and create more of a general wash sensation than mung and aduki beans.)

CONCLUSION



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Nadia Romerosa with Traveller, Scene 2, KHiO, 2023.
Photo by Elin Osjord

Redefining Choreography: The Art of Attending

These reflections markedly expand my definition of choreography, clarifying how I envision creating future performances. At its core, choreography becomes a practice of

attending and forming through orienting. This approach draws inspiration from how nature orchestrates phenomena through multi-sensorial presence, a deep connection to place rather than abstract space, and a unique, expansive sense of time. This perspective directly builds upon earlier inquiries, resonating with Suryodarmo's concept of 'Nature Time' (please refer to *Part One: Definitions & Context, Chapter 6: Choreography*) and his practice of beginning from place, deeply engaging with the environment and landscape. This fundamental shift redefines and broadens the potential of what performance and choreography can be.

Central to this redefinition is a concept of attention that extends beyond intensity. While modern culture often engages with attention through intensity, whether in performance or meditation, the lack of such intensity in attending practices is less examined and/or explored.

My work raises a fundamental question: How do we attend to our sensorial experiences without needing to hold, pull, or exert our attention? How can we engage in an attending process as we would with a natural landscape—present, responsive, and free from forceful exertion? I have been cautious about labeling this 'meditative' due to the vast spectrum of meditation styles. Yet, there is a quality of being with performance as a natural landscape that mirrors the meditative experience I encountered in Suryodarmo's work, profoundly influenced by Javanese Sumarah meditation. This specific quality warrants deeper and further exploration.

If our eyes are accustomed to being pulled and attention taken or grabbed, how can we foster a different relationship with perception? I propose exploring an alternative way of creating performances that align with a different cultural value system concerning bodies, materials, attention, and sensorial systems. Our current expectations of what constitutes a 'good' performance often revolve around its ability to 'hold our attention', however, sustained undivided attention is not necessarily an integrated and healthy way of being with our bodies and systems. Such a fixed, tense way of looking, characterized by rapid eye movements and tunnel vision, can over-activate the sympathetic nervous system, contributing to stress and a disconnection from our other senses, our bodies, and the environment.

Future Artistic Direction: Cultivating Somatic Costume Landscapes

This research, deeply rooted in the foundational work of *The Somatic Costume Dressing Room* and profoundly informed by the inquiries raised through the Witness role, is invaluable in guiding my future artistic practice. My central exploration into the choreography of attention—especially through a touch-based approach, 'natural landscape attending', and in the absence of intensity—will continue to steer my artistic direction towards profoundly impacting performance and costume design. This journey ultimately seeks to awaken awareness of what is often perceived as 'missing', whether it be the subtle textures of our environment or a fuller sense of our own embodied selves. The emphasis on touch as a primary mode of engagement remains paramount, offering the very grounding from which other sensory experiences are integrated and re-evaluated.

Moving forward, I intend to continue creating and further developing 'Somatic Costume Environments', explicitly renaming them 'Somatic Costume Landscapes'. This change in terminology is a vital part of my practice, reflecting a commitment to fostering a counter-culture to our modern visual habits.

I understand the term environment as a more objective, abstract concept that often positions humans as separate from their surroundings. In contrast, I use landscape to signify a place that is shaped and perceived more through subjective, embodied experience—a place that is actively created by our presence, attention, and sensory engagement. This distinction is influenced by Tim Ingold's critique of the 'environment' as a container, as he instead proposes the 'taskscape' (2000, p. 195)—a landscape actively constituted by the dwelling activities and engagements of those who inhabit it.

In this context, a 'Somatic Costume Landscape' constitutes a form of Poetic Material-ity, as meaning is not pre-given but co-created dynamically through the shared actions and interactions, moment by moment, of all participants—Guides, Travellers, and Witnesses—as well as the materials and the site itself. This renaming, and its terminology, reflects my commitment to a practice that inherently engages all senses and cultivates a more embodied experience, fundamentally challenging the notion that a place is fixed and given, rather than a co-creation.

In these 'Landscapes', costume design transcends the conventional; it becomes a core choreographic practice that actively shapes the entire performance environment and the audience's attention. Costumes will not merely be worn; they will serve as immersive material systems that invite participants into new forms of embodied attention—through their texture, weight, form, and how they contribute to the auditory and subtle visual qualities of the place.

This involves designing costumes and guiding experiences that foster new ways of seeing, cultivating a softened and more expansive gaze, and encouraging flexible focus and peripheral awareness as a remedy for 'modern eyes'. These experiences, encompassing tactile, auditory, and emergent visual dimensions, are carefully facilitated by the somatic skill of Guides and an 'in-the-moment choreographer' (like Katrine), whose deep ability to 'guide multi-sensorial attention' is integral to shaping each individual's journey through the landscape.

By integrating these findings and methods into the creation of Somatic Costume Landscapes, my future performances will challenge the primacy of the visual, redefining what choreography is and can be by centering the body's felt experience and an inclusive, non-striving form of attention. This approach will ultimately offer alternative ways of being in the world, shifting audience expectations and the essence of performance itself.

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SOMATIC ACT 34:
Inside a Water Droplet



Photo by Sally E. Dean. Gorse Hill, Ireland, 2022

Allow for at least 30 minutes. You will need a comfortable place to rest, water and four large yet thin, soft plastic bags such as ziplock that can be sealed and are about 10.5 by 11 inches, gallon-size. Fill one large plastic bag halfway with warm water and seal by tying, taping, or ideally ziplocking. Place and enclose this plastic bag into another plastic bag and seal to prevent water leakage.

This Somatic Act can be done as a solo, a duet or in a group. If done as a duet or group, you can gently place waterbags on each other.

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Begin by lying down, placing one water bag under the head like a pillow. Gently place the other water bag on the center of the body (belly, chest area). You may also hold it with your hands. Throughout the audio, you are invited to touch and move the water bag to rest on different areas of the body that are easy to reach.

Can you step inside a water droplet?

*Can you allow it to hold you,
comfort you,
nourish you,
from all sides.*

*Can you rest here for a moment
and let the universe open from inside out.*

*We are all made of water
one drop at a time*

*each day – another drop
like a quiet pool.*

*Can you hear the water calling you
calling you home –*

*drop by drop
tear by tear
filling the oceans inside you*

*just
for
a moment.*



Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces – Victor A. O. Pedersen, Scene 2, KHIØ, 2021.
Photo by Lydia Hann.

INSIDE THE EXPERIENCE:
Reflections From Guides, Travellers and Witness



Photo by Sally E. Dean. Gorse Hill, Ireland, 2022

Below are writings by Sidsel Pape, Rachel Hann, Manny Emslie, Leonie Cronin and Amy Voris sharing their experiences and perspectives as a Traveller, Guide or Witness.

TRAVELLER:

Sidsel Pape

Dear Clare,

- A letter from 'Clare's Traveller'
- Experienced from the inside of *Work in Progress Performance - Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces* by PhD Research Fellow, Sally E. Dean, Saturday the 27th of August 2022 at 18 hrs.

As I take my shoes off in the wardrobe and two dressers put small socks on my fingers, Clare is already holding me in her sight. She is one of those beings I sometimes see at the sides of my vision, like a shadow with blurry outlines, nonetheless clearly present in endless kindness.

The sweet sensation of oxytocin tickles my insides, inviting me to lean in; there is a WE. I am a part of something organised and organic, a well of meaning. Everyone inside of this fluid organism knows what to do. And as one of those taken care of, my job is to let go.

Clare approaches me on her knees and tells me that she will be my guide, looking after me on this journey. It is already clear to me that she is, and will be my guard. Anyhow, she grounds out her message as a crystal, promises not to leave me.

When Clare pulls a nylon stocking over my head and a dark veil covers my eyes, I'm certain that she will stay close. Clare is my sight from then on, so that I can receive all that is to perceive. Then she takes my hand and leads me across a threshold made of steel.

Dripping sounds suggest a large space, the souls of my feet sense the limits. A sudden association: Is this waterboarding? No, nothing here is violent, all is warm and welcoming, even that which is wet and feels colder.

Patches of light enter through my veil, and pass. Warm air brushes my skin as fast, footsteps rush by. And then Clare, right there, nothing to fear. Her soft touch suggests directions which seem to spiral farther into the lull-full darkness.

Suddenly a white sheet of paper lights up my mind, words scribbled down prior to entering this world of void, takes me back to the wardrobe: Sensing, Belonging, two words on top two on the list, blue ink blurs on dissolving paper, just like memories.

Clare cradles the basin, makes waves in which all words rest in peace.

- *Hello! My feet are calling me in need of full attention. Clare's fingers whisper; be here! And then her voice in my ear whispers; explore!*

I, ever less known to me as me, becomes more brave, reaching daringly after scraping sounds, craving sensations, catching the end of somebody's tail...

There and then Clare puts her kind foot down, leads me one step up, into a pool of pearls in which to wade. My feet grab «feetfulls» of fleeting grains. Feet want more, but follow Clare faithfully into the sensuous landscapes that she keeps offering.

Clare kneels me down in a world of soft hair and crumbled fur, pieces of textile with holes fit for limbs. The I, previously known as me, dives right in, puts that skin on, wants to feel the weight of safe covers. And then recalls Clare; no need to hide in a pile of protection.

The I lifts the furry pieces using the entire length of her bones and body, holds the textiles tall, simply to feel the inevitable fall.

- Is it time to let go?, Clare suggests. The I drops the bundled burden and steps out of what traps. However, hangs on to that which was once a soft hare, the one piece of textile that most warms the heart. The hare travels with the I becomes the witness that will connect the worlds.

Clare gets the I down to the ground on top of a warm water pillow. On the I's permission she removes the veil. When opening the eyes, the I sees the silhouette of a snout. For a short while the I doesn't need to know what kind of animal it is, before it decides to call the it "me".

That which is me realises she has been inside some-body, and be-come out from a safe, spacious darkness, into the tight light, where naming is the game. Clare's sight and her invitation of exploration is the creation of new life, unknown.

Thank you Clare, and thank you Sally, for opening your creative container and inviting me to sense, safe enough.

- Sidsel Pape

TRAVELLER:

Rachel Hann

The proposal for scent as costume is part of my broader proposal for rethinking scenography beyond vision. Yet, this position is not unique to costume scenographics. Sally E. Dean's work is a case in point and was aptly investigated as part of Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces (2021). Dean argues that what she has branded, Somatic Costumes™, have the 'possibility of changing our body image and body schema, affecting not only how we move and experience our bodies, others, and the environment, but also what we create and how we perform' (Dean, 2014). Focused on material practices for engaging somatic awareness of bodily processes, there is a distinct alignment with my own approach to costume scenographics as irritating the body-assemblage. This was directly apparent as part of my own experience of Dean's work in Oslo.

I entered the space in a see-through head covering, but was invited to close my eyes if I wished. My feet were bare. With my eyes closed, I was led by a guide and with light touches on my shoulders. The guide gestured, via directional touches, for me to kneel onto a cushion in front of me. As my hands adjusted to the floor space, I felt what I would later discover to be a trough of lentils. I couldn't help but peek slightly with my eyes as I ran my fingers through the lentils. In what was only a glimpse, I realised a lot. First, that the lights were dimmed in the studio. Second, that while I had only put it on minutes before, I had forgotten about the see-through head covering that I was now peeking through. Third, that in opening my eyes I was, in fact, missing out. I was missing out on not looking, on allowing my sensory matrix to attune itself to not looking, to feeling the orientations of this place. Ironically, this momentary peek affirmed a cultural politics of art analysis that, I personally, was keen to challenge, but yet still found difficult to practise. The sensory complexity of my personal journey through Dean's Give Them Wings offers much on the crossover between costume scenographics and costume somatics. Beyond the peek (and now with my eyes firmly closed), there were several sensory adventures that my guide took me on: from traversing the studio at pace and learning to trust their light touches to keep me safe, to the various materialities that shifted my bodily attunement. At one point, I found a heavy coat jacket that I put on. At another, I stepped into the lentils trough and the guide gently sprinkled some on the tops of my bare feet. Lastly, I discovered a mound of paper chains that I looked to navigate and rest within. These bodily attunements to materialities were gentle yet unsettling, comfortable yet disorientating. It is these felt tensions that remain with me to this day. I continue to feel the costume somatics I experienced that day. The embodied, or more precisely somatic, legacy of my experience with Dean's installation is, I would argue, one of the main things at stake in the proposal for costume somatics. While not to underplay the presentism I experienced during the journey, the gestures I felt as the lentils rained upon the tops of my feet or when I put on that coat have remained part of my bodily memory. I can still feel them, especially on my feet. It has left me questioning how well I know my body and indeed the potential of my body to feel, in different ways and at different registers. I offer my own experience of Give Them Wings as a wayfinding exercise in asking what is at stake in acts of costuming. While I have suggested that costumes are

liminal practices of appearing otherwise, what if costuming extends to acts of feeling otherwise? Costume somatics undoubtedly, from my reading, speak to this intersection of feeling and costume. It offers new routes for thinking through the 'showing dressing' of costume as also a 'showing feeling': a methodology for reflecting on how feeling is produced, experienced, and practised. Moreover, if costume scenographics irritate learnt normativities of appearing, costume somatics irritate the normativities of feeling. This interrelationship between costume scenographics and costume somatics offers a number of fruitful avenues for future research that I have only begun to touch upon here.

In conclusion, I have offered this thought experiment on costume scenographics as a gesture towards approaching the multi-sensory and place-orientating traits of costume practice. If the primary criteria for judging costume shifts from what it 'looks like' to what it 'feels like', this journey has the potential to remap the political task of costume more broadly. Indeed, as with scenography, costume is often underwritten as a key tool of political discourse and dismissed as 'pretend play' or 'not serious'. As I have outlined in this chapter, costume can act as a critical tool in investigating the ways in which appearance is regulated, codified, and judged. My proposal for costume scenographics, based on my experiences at KHiO, is presented as a wayfinding lens for debating what costume does beyond an ocular-centric positionality. Inclusive of scent and somatics, placing and staging, costumes have latent atmospheric potentials in the same model of sound and lighting. In attempting to ask what costume does, it is also clear that costume acts as a critical lens for navigating the complex moral, political, and cultural frameworks that categorise bodies, humans and non-humans. Far from being a derivative art or 'mere' pretend play, costume is a technology for performing otherwise in an era when bodily determinism and the regulation of appearance is seemingly on the rise (Hann, 2023, pp. 210-211).

GUIDE:

Manny Emslie

I was a Guide.

Each person with whom I partnered could not see because they wore a light but dense black face covering, which ensured that all other senses had to be tuned in to and relied on. Given this, every partner was, of course, different: from some appearing early on to be comfortable with not being able to see and with being led, whilst others tentatively put one foot in front of the other, gradually building up to walking with a little more confidence. Those travellers who moved quickly and confidently, sometimes running in and through space, quite often resisted walking slowly and resting in stillness and vice versa! Some playfully explored different features of the environment for longer periods of time, others preferred shorter explorations. And then there were those who would vocalise what they were experiencing, while others barely uttered a word or released a sound. I perceived some to have felt liberated by being led and given time to dwell in sensorial and sensuous discovery, whilst others held back, ever so slightly.

I quickly learnt that the role of a guide requires intuition, kindness, empathy as well as being very clear with touch, with pausing and moving out of pauses, and with navigation to ensure that the traveller was at all times kept safe from harm while feeling cared for and guided with confidence and reassurance. However, it also became clear to me that my own voice and responding to my own impulses were worthy of exploration, so long as they did not compromise my partner or others, and that my explorations were a sensitive response to what was unfolding in a precise moment.

Connecting. Relating. Trusting.

Connection and trust were imperative - and this was established from the very first meeting with the traveller whom I was to guide. They had of course just experienced a silent outdoor walk. It was important therefore to find a balanced way of relating with them whilst not taking them out of their silent experience. On meeting them, I smiled and met their eyes with my own, slowly moved towards them, very quietly introduced myself and asked for their name. We shook hands: our first moment of touch. Instructions given from then on were efficient, but gently and quietly spoken, using their name on occasions. Speech was minimal.

There were moments of intimacy – me asking them to remove their shoes and socks. If they were not dressed in black clothes then I had a black T-shirt and a pair of black trousers to give them, by way of invitation from them, often I helped them to re-dress. I remember the tenderness of us sitting in silence while I dressed their finger and thumb tips in knitted coverings. Eventually, I led them to an antechamber where I instructed them on what would commence, gave guidance on putting on their face covering, while I too put on one, out of which I could see.

I took my partner's right elbow in the palm of my left hand while my other hand supported their right hand - delicate but specific pressure points of contact were established between us, breath breathing. A moment of stillness to adjust to this new way of being and of experiencing. And then I pulled a curtain to one side and as doing so I always intuited a flutter of vulnerability from my partner, a slight hesitation before they moved with me. It was a reminder of the fragility of human life as well as its preciousness. For that moment I am grateful.

With the rudder of their arm, I gently led my partner from their sense of a known world into a mysterious realm of darkness (for them), which echoed with dripping water being caught in suspended pottery jugs. An earthy musty smell lingered, maybe from a combination of water, clay, many lentils, and heaps of sculptured skirts made from long trails of twisted brown paper, which to me looked like floating tentacles.

What an honour. What a threshold to have crossed together ... such trust in each other, me the guide, them the guided, and yet they too were guiding me as I listened with my body to their pace and rhythm of walking, to what perhaps they needed in any given moment of time.

Slowly, slowly but with precision I guided them in to walking a circular pathway, again and again, while also being aware of others walking in the space: guides and travellers circling,

guides alert and aware of one another and of manoeuvring our own traveller away from another to avoid a human bump. Guides trusting in other guides and travellers trusting in guides. Others, both strangers and friends, witnessing at the periphery. Each one of us is involved in our own personal experience whilst simultaneously creating a shared world.

Early on if I perceived a partner's walking to be getting steadier, their breathing more regular, a release of tension in their shoulder, the arm or hand, their body less inclined to lean into mine then I would increase the pace, and a little later I would begin to slow down, slowing and slowing in to pausing. It was necessary to decelerate so that the traveller had an opportunity to intuit and physically feel that we were slowing into pausing. The very first pause for me as a guide was significant. It was an opportunity to offer my partner some time to tune into their bodymind and to anchor themselves into the new- found world. It also allowed time for them to be able to fully open their senses and to absorb all that they became aware of. All the while, I remained fully present with their arm and hand supported by mine which acted as a non-verbal signal of "I'm here for you", "I'm not going to leave you", in the hope that trust was ever more consolidated.

There was a particular drip of water that every now and again fell a few times from ceiling to floor, thus narrowly missing a pot which was positioned to catch the water. Having followed a circular pathway twice, I consciously guided my partner to finding stillness beneath this pot so that they would experience being taken by surprise by the coolness of water on the skin of the soles of their feet and, at some point, out of the stillness cool drops of water would land on their head, or face or hand. There was always a pleasant response: a smile, a laugh, a quiet gasp of Oh! Always, the body responsive: opening out with spine instinctively arching upwards and backwards, face leaning into something felt but not seen, something familiar.

Some partners would raise their arms and I would guide their hands to the suspended, damp, cool, singing ceramic pot. I always loved those moments of witnessing my partner's surprise, joy, curiosity, and, for some, wanting to engage further in tactile play – their first tentative embrace of the cool pot with my hands barely cupped around theirs, they beginning to turn the pot in their hands while feeling its texture, tracing its shape, and exploring its weight. A moment of excitement when they realised it was a vessel that could swing! The latter needing caution and gentle guidance from me ... a sensible response of safety comes first!

Perhaps their sense of touch was also being aligned with the consistent sound of falling droplets caught by ceramic pots? Sound, touch, and sensations triggering their imagination? Were they creating some sense, images, of the place they were experiencing moment by moment?

Those who released their touch from mine as they reached out for further haptic responses and sensory delight, I perceived to be moments of trust in themselves, in me and in the world in which we were creating and inhabiting. Inhibitions falling away with a childlike curiosity nudging its way further into the foreground. Wonderfully heart-warming were those experiences. There I was with someone I had met for the first time some twenty minutes ago, and I (and others witnessing) were privy to such deeply personal explorations. Their

inner and outer worlds merging and being expressed and shared in those given moments. What a privilege ... deeply humbling.

Touch, Sensing and Senses in the Guiding Process. Audience.

Included in the space was a couple of baskets; a wooden, low trough like structure, filled to its length and brim with orange lentils; oversized and multiple coats of different weights and textures were sewn together and draped over sturdy wooden clothes horses; plentiful and colourful ceramic balls, some shiny others roughly textured, bobbed in large tubs of water; waterlogged material was draped over tin buckets, four bundles of pheasant feathers stood upright in a ceramic jar, and in a corner piled at varying levels was movable sculptures of skirts and capes of very long, twisted brown paper tendrils. People sat at the outer edges, those witnessing, looking in while receiving and quietly responding, their bodies extended and distorted by flesh coloured, clinging dresses, and there was much more!

My role as a guide was to be pragmatic, always. I was to ensure that my partner was kept safe and free from harm, but we were in an interactive performance environment. I was a guide AND performer, both at once. I was there to introduce my partner to all that was on offer and to support and engage with their creative explorations, yes in a practical way, but also sympathetically, creatively, and performatively. And of course, there were specifics to follow that had been directed by the creator, Sally.

I guided a partner towards a large tub of bobbing ceramic balls above which was suspended a ceramic jar that was gradually filling with water. I was aware of a couple sitting very close to and in front of us. They were witnessing all that was emerging. I whispered in my partner's ear, "We are now going to move into sitting on the floor." On my part this was a delicate manoeuvre of spatially gauging the right amount of distance between my partner and the tub of water – too close to the tub and they wouldn't be able to bend in to sitting, too far away then I would have to get them to shuffle towards the tub!

Once seated, a pause to settle and then gently I lifted their hands and slowly draped them atop some of the balls, allowing them to feel the different textures and buoyancy, as well as a hint of their spherical shapes. Touch enabled them to compute that the objects were floating in water. Intentionally, my hands remained lightly in touch with the tops of theirs. I would apply a little bit of pressure and they always responded by curling their fingers around the balls and submerging them; water covered our hands, and then I would gently release the pressure of my hands and together we would return the balls to a buoyant state. I would always close my eyes, as we both played in darkness: a lilting, buoyant dance of skin, clay, and water. And then I gently released my hands so that my partner could find their own way of exploring and dancing with the water and spherical objects.

To my surprise, when I released my hands, one partner with gusto started clashing the balls in the water, and then swirled them around the tub, which created a vortex of spilling water with spheres striking and clanking against one another. They then pushed a few of the balls deep into the tub and instantaneously released them, they surged upwards bobbing energetically in the water! My partner then began clashing the balls, again!

At this point I was very nervous about the ceramic balls smashing into pieces. I was also aware of the couple sitting near to us, they were leaning in with interest and may be a little bit of amusement. So, at that point, internally I acknowledged that audience members were choosing to be part of that specific event, and I was gauging how I could guide my partner – and the couple – into a different way of experiencing the ceramic balls and water?

I did not want to interfere with my partner's way of exploring, it was obvious they were having a super time! So, with a smile, I began to create a dance of me dipping my hands, like diving birds, into the water while finding ways to buffer the balls from clashing together! I think our duet created contrasts in rhythms and dynamics – a storm intermittently being helped with becoming calmer! Thankfully, I sensed my partner was unaware of my concern. I really didn't want them to sense that what they were doing was 'wrong' – it wasn't – or that their explorations had to be stopped or controlled. This was their creative expression. This was their moment; they were fully and joyfully at one with water and clay. However, I sensed that this partner could go on playing like this for a long time, and that it would result, perhaps, in smashed ceramics. Pragmatism had to meet artistry, whilst also being sensitive to my partner's creative process and expression.

I submerged my hands into the water, fingers and thumbs treading the water until I happened upon my partner's hands. Through touch stillness came to be. Below the water, I cupped my partner's hands and placed into one a ceramic ball and with their other hand I guided it to cover the ball. Gently I guided their hands slowly out of the water. Another pause – giving us time to listen to and feel water falling from hands and ball, noticing air meeting cool damp hands, that the ball is no longer buoyant, so its weight and material are experienced differently. It too needs to be cared for, held gently.

I slide one of my partner's hands over the ball encouraging it to stroke the ball so that its textures can be explored and acknowledged. I let go of their hands, and mine finds the water. I cup it and pour it a few times in different ways over the skin of my partner's hands as they caress and turn the ball. I then deliberately take the ball from them and replace it with a different ball of a different texture. I gently sway, tilt and turn their hands encouraging a dialogue to arise, a dance that could not be without one touching the other.

There are many ways to be in relation to. This became ever so apparent to me as different materials were happened upon. Each discovery and scrutiny were unique to each traveller. Yes, to me allowing for and supporting self-exploration and expression. Yes, to me not interfering with, or hindering my partner's process and practice of inquiry, but how, at times, could I gently guide my partner into different ways of being with the materials? How might I encourage other senses to awaken? I too was part of my partner's practice as they were to mine, as we were to other guides and travellers, and audience to us and us to them.

Reciprocation

There were times when I too listened deeply to my own inner creative voice, to my urges of wanting to engage in playfulness, of the times when I could move and dance and delight in a felt experience, and when I could respond to guiding and engaging with the responses of my partner. I felt those engagements were obvious offerings to the audience, whether they caught them or not, did not matter. In those moments, there was an intention to share, to

communicate on many levels and to widen out my awareness beyond traveller, material and being a guide.

I remember guiding one of my partners into the trough of lentils. They stopped and began to pad their feet, treading the lentils. Whilst still maintaining contact with them, holding their hand, I spontaneously responded by echoing their treading movements and their changing rhythms. A different partner while in the lentil trough began to swivel their feet and body, which created a crunching sound. I too swivelled my feet, and my body spontaneously responded to the crunching sounds. This very same partner stood still for a moment in the trough, intuitively I leaned into them and whispered, "Would you like to go to the floor? Play a little more?" They responded with an eager "Yes, please!"

I guided them to the floor of the trough of brimming lentils, they sunk their hands deep into them. They were on all fours, like a proud animal, their heels were peeking out of the lentils. I scooped up as many lentils as I could with both hands. First my left arm slowly lengthened upwards. I turned my head to look at my clenched hand, which was held aloft but positioned above one of their heels. I slowly released the lentils. They fell, and with my eyes I followed the downward flow of lentils, lit with warm hues they were jewel-like. Stunning. They found both heels and fell upon them. It was as if they knew my intention. Some were sticking to the skin of their heels. Could they feel some lentils attached to their heels? While kneeling on one knee, I slowly, deliberately lunged towards the head of my partner, spaces of my hips opening, my right arm unfurling and then it was fully outstretched. I could feel the sharp edges, of the otherwise smooth lentils, in my moist hand. I released the remaining lentils and they cascaded and delicately pattered parts of their head and face, some remained stuck to my palm. Their heels and my palm were tattooed with lentils. There were several clusters of bright orange lentils also caught on areas of our black clothing. We were bejewelled.

A fellow solo dancer/mover comes over to join us. She fills a ceramic jar with lentils and holds it high, forward of her body, she begins to swirl them, they make a delightful ongoing sssssssshuh, sssssssshuh, sssssssshuh sound. She then poured the lentils in front of my partner, and they continued to sound and whisper. My partner responded with her body. I respond to sound, to the sight of a stream of lentils and to my partners movements. The soloist drifted away. My partner came to stillness and I leaned in and whispered, "Would you like to continue or move on?" She whispered, "Move on."

GUIDE:

Leonie Cronin

My overarching experience of being a Guide performer in Sally Dean's immersive performance was one of heightened awareness. Not just of my own body but of the person I was leading as well. I felt a big responsibility of being a navigator through the portal of Give

Them Wings, to lead the travellers to experience their own inner expanse in the beautifully curated somatic room that Sally had created.

I was aware of how the practical directions for when we first met our travellers, required a different sensibility to explaining the needs for their journey and then again for entering the room and once in the room.

I thought I could guide it all the same way, but I realised each part needed a different sense of clarity, perhaps it was a need for a transition from the outer world to the inner one.

Each step required more trust for them to fully settle into the experience.

- *Practical Instructions on what to do with shoes, bags and coats. Taking off their outer garments, settling and welcoming them was the first step needing clear words and a direct system – i.e Your protective outer things go here and there.*
- *Asking the travellers to write down an intention required a gentler approach so they could begin with a personal emotional thought. The ritual of writing and placing the words into water to dissolve on the disappearing paper gave the intention of reverence. How we asked gave rise to much debate in the workshop, which I found interesting; how responsible are we for emotions that arise from asking them to introspect?*
- *How we ask someone to follow us is important as a sense of trust begins. The one on one experience intensifies this trust and then as the eye covers are put on they enter the dark space being led without their vision. The touch between the navigator and the traveller here was amplified, we explored how to hold, how to steer and it seemed so powerful that the minimalist amount of touch was needed.*
- *I felt the walking into the space and around the space helped the co dependence of the guide and the navigator to create a sense of safety both physically, rhythmically being led to calm any thoughts of uncertainty that might have led to confusion or anxiety. This was a point to understand the pace and how much touch or guidance your person needed and for them to begin to relax with the language of your body and steering.*

As I took them through the sensory points of Lentils, Coats, Feathers, Ceramics, Sheepskins, Water, Paper cloaks the sounds of the space and the materials become louder.

As the sense of seeing had been taken away the other senses became more heightened, touch, sound, smell were all amplified. I felt the need to be empathetic, porous to the travellers' experience yet to hold space to listen, it was interesting to learn how to enhance their experience but not project what I thought they should be feeling or my own experience on to them. I learned how to know when to step in to offer more interaction with the sensory points and when to step back to allow the fullness of their own experience. I found it more useful to use the minimal amount of words in the quietest of voices.

There was also the need to be completely focused on the traveller but also being aware of how other guides, travellers and observers were moving around the room.

It felt like a dance between directing and sharing, offering and suggesting, completing a task or exploring a sensation.

There were moments when the Travellers might accidentally touch each other through the space that stood out to me. One time two of the travellers' hand feathers collided creating a sense of resistance or a sense of another being in the space, they paused and played with this sensation. Another time hands touched in the bowls of water - that being the first sensory meeting of them rather than seeing them first. Some people were open to the continual new sensations from the touch and others recoiled slightly. Some wanted to go faster and others slower.

The ending with lying on the paper cloaks and placing the warm water bottles on their bodies while they listened to the poem felt like an offering of rest, a grounding experience to bring the experience to settle in the body. With the finale of the rest of the paper cloaks lifted into space a final reflection point was offered to transition the travellers back to seeing and to understand the room they had just travelled around through their bodies. Many of them sat and reflected, I was interested to see how their nervous systems had experienced new sensations and their bodies had responded by giving feedback, they had become aware of how tired or calm they were or how the new sensations in their bodies felt.

Give Them Wings was a beautiful journey, sensing new expanses of the body to open the creativeness of the mind. Using sensation to create a playful, intimate, soulful encounter. I felt the deepness of Sally's research coming together in a profound immersive experience.

Bravo!

Léonie x

WITNESS:

Amy Voris

from the perspective of the Witness – Amy Voris

*swathed
my insides yield their substance
to the touch which meets me*

*having entered the cavern
I go deeper inside myself*

*breath slowing down
as it meets the gentle compression
of the membrane*

*all around me
there is sound of dripping and stirring and pouring
a presence from above falling
granulation cascades*

*the solidness of the ground beneath me
gently stroked by the wetness
in the air*

*women are progressing
through the space
hand in hand
side by side
tending to material encounters
with careful intelligent contact*

*the space is brewing
all around and up and down*

*a steady stream of passages
across and through*

*something is at work
where does it begin and end it's
hard to tell*

*the suggestion of flight
suspended and landing
upended
substances becoming themselves and
something else
the unknown seeps across my body*

*the travellers are on their way
through a material maze*

*I am an organism of organs
all at once feeling my form and bearing witness
to a delicate process of re-forming*

*a subtle stirring in my tissues
emotion brewing
time passing here is tenderizing me
to an emergent flow
beyond
and within*

PERFORMANCE CREDITS

Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces

Performance Credits for 2022

Direction:	<i>Sally E. Dean</i>
Supervisors:	<i>Christina Lindgren (1st) & Joan Davis (2nd)</i>
Rehearsal Support:	<i>Amy Voris</i>
Costume Designers:	<i>Sally E. Dean, Lydia Hann, Sandra Arroniz Lacunza and Carolina Rieckhof</i>
Costume Makers:	<i>Sally E. Dean, Lydia Hann, Sandra Arroniz Lacunza, Carolina Rieckhof, Sophie Cabrera, Amanda Vesthardt, Aina Piao and Alice Leah Davies.</i>
Choreography:	<i>In collaboration with the materials, performers and audiences.</i>
Performers:	<i>Leonie Cronin, Manny Emslie, Katrine Kirsebom, Monika Kochowicz, Lieu Le, Ingunn Rimestad, Nadia Romerosa</i>
Lighting Designer:	<i>Kaja Glenne Lund</i>
Hosts:	<i>Liv Kristin Holmberg & Christina Lindgren</i>
Sound Maker:	<i>Lee Berwick (Sound chairs, Sound nest & bells)</i>
Scenographic Elements:	<i>In collaboration with Joel Correia (Lentil Walk), Rieckhof & Lacunza (Waterbags), Birte M. Kittilsen (Keramiske flytene lydkuler), Leonie Cronin (Cowrie shells), John Dean/Julio Morataya (Rocking chairs)</i>
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Photo by Sally E. Dean. Akerselva River, Oslo, Norway, 2022

EPILOGUE

*Our together tears become
our golden river of light
a path leading us towards connection
one step at a time.*

*Footsteps that are heard, listened to, valued
the sound resonating
supported by our own feet
each a rhythm, a voice
that comes from
the meeting of foot with ground
Connecting us to what is underneath all things
all of life
a pulse that can sustain us
even during times of profound despair and loneliness.*

*We are walking together
A forest of women
Limbs and roots branching in all directions
without fighting
but by leaning on each other*

*Standing up and through darkness
Clothed in solidarity
Uniting through laughter*

Listen...

Listen...

*We are coming
We are marching
We are shouting
We are crying
We are singing
We are dancing
We are here.*

Leaving trails - imprints - for other women to follow (Dean, 2023, pp. 145-146)

APPENDIX

Tactile Vocabulary for Describing Sensation

This vocabulary is organized into core categories to help people articulate their touch experiences with any material, including fabrics, objects, food, and natural elements. This list was organized and partially generated with the support of AI (Google, 2025).

Texture

Texture refers to the actual physical surface of an item.

Smooth: A surface free of bumps or irregularities.

Silky: A soft, smooth, and luxurious texture similar to silk.

Slick: A very smooth and slippery surface, often with a sheen.

Waxy: A slick, slightly sticky, and smooth texture like wax.

Rough: A coarse or uneven surface.

Gritty: Containing small, hard particles, like sand.

Prickly: A sharp, pointed texture that can cause a tingling sensation.

Bumpy: A surface with raised areas or bumps.

Jagged: Having a rough, uneven surface with sharp projections.

Soft: A texture that yields easily to pressure.

Velvety: A dense, soft, and smooth texture, like velvet.

Downy: A soft, fine, and fuzzy texture, like down feathers.

Fluffy: Light, soft, and airy in texture.

Spongy: Soft and easily compressed, like a sponge.

Hard: A texture that is not easily yielding to pressure.

Crisp: A firm, dry, and clean texture that often breaks easily.

Stiff: A texture that resists bending or folding.

Solid: A dense, firm, and unyielding texture.

Rigid: Unable to be bent or forced out of shape.

Other Textures:

Fuzzy: Covered with a soft, fine layer of hair or fibers.

Hairy: Covered with noticeable, sometimes coarse, hair.

Woolly: A soft, thick, and fuzzy texture, like wool.

Porous: A texture with small holes or gaps that allow air or liquid to pass through.

Pressure & Weight

This category describes how an item feels in terms of its weight and the pressure it exerts on the body:

Weight:

Light: A feeling of minimal weight.

Heavy: A feeling of substantial weight, often grounding.

Weightless: A complete absence of weight, as if floating.

Pressure:

Tight: A sensation of being held closely or compressed.

Loose: A feeling of freedom and non-restriction.

Taut: A sensation of being stretched tight.

Compressive: A feeling of sustained, inward pressure.

Firm: A solid, stable sensation that provides support.

Yielding: A sensation that gives way easily under pressure.

Resilient: The quality of springing back into shape after pressure is released.

Pliant: Easily bent, flexible, or supple.

Moisture & Adhesion

This section describes qualities related to wetness, stickiness, and slipperiness:

Wet: Saturated with liquid.

Damp: Slightly wet.

Moist: Slightly wet, often in a pleasant way.

Soggy: Very wet and soft, almost saturated.

Adhesive: Tending to stick or cling.

Sticky: Tending to adhere or cling to a surface, often causing resistance.

Gooney: Soft, sticky, and often viscous.

Slimy: Having a wet, slippery, and sometimes unpleasant texture.

Slippery:

Slippery: Difficult to hold or stand on because it is smooth, wet, or oily.

Temperature

This category describes the feeling of warmth or coolness:

Warmth:

Warm: Giving off a small amount of heat.

Hot: Having a high temperature.

Toasty: Pleasantly or comfortably warm.

Tepid: Lukewarm; neither hot nor cold.

Coolness:

Cool: Moderately or pleasantly cold.

Cold: Having a low temperature.

Icy: Extremely cold.

Movement & Dynamic Sensation

These describe how a material moves and the sensations it creates on the skin:

Movement:

Billowy: Swelling outwards, creating a full and airy shape.

Cascading: Falling or flowing downwards in a continuous way.

Clingy: Adhering closely to the body.

Drapey: Having a soft, fluid quality that allows it to hang loosely in graceful folds.

Flowing: Moving smoothly and continuously, often in a relaxed way.

Fluid: Resembling a liquid in its smooth, continuous movement.

Swishy: Making a soft, rustling sound as it moves.

Stretchy: Able to be stretched or extended.

Snug: Fitting closely and comfortably.

Springy: Bouncing back quickly to its original shape.

Giving: Yielding to pressure or movement, providing ease.

Compressive: Tightly holding or squeezing the body.

Rubbery: Having the feel or quality of rubber; flexible and springy.

Sensations on the Skin:

Friction & Texture:

Draggy: Resisting movement with a sense of friction.

Frictional: Causing friction or resistance against the skin.

Scratchy: Causing a rough, irritating sensation.

Rubbing: Creating friction against the skin, often in a repetitive way.

Irritation & Prickling:

Itchy: An uncomfortable sensation that makes you want to scratch.

Prickly: Having a sharp, tingling feeling, as if from tiny needles.

Tingly: A slight stinging or ticklish sensation.

Crawly: Causing a sensation of something crawling on the skin.

Other Sensations:

Cooling: Producing a cooling sensation against the skin.

Numb: Lacking physical sensation.

Vibrating: A rapid and continuous shaking sensation.

Pulsing: Beating or throbbing in a rhythmic way.

Soothing: Providing a calming or comforting sensation.

Silken: A comforting, friction-free feel on the skin.

Creepy: Causing a sensation of unease or disgust, often due to a texture or sensation.

Somatic Costume™: Designing from Touch

Designing a Somatic Costume from a Somatic Instigator through Touch

Choose ONE *somatic instigator* to design a costume from the list below. Design on your own body or with other bodies. Designing can include using clothing, materials found at home, or objects.

In the design process, explore different materials, creating more than one prototype. Photograph, video and reflect upon the process.

Create a summary to include no more than one A4 size page of written reflections/drawings/photographs of your findings, and up to 5 short videos (no more than 3 minutes each). The summary can include the main steps in your process.

Somatic Instigators:

Design/make a costume that through its touch brings you specific awareness to one of the following:

- Volume of the feet
- Volume of the torso
- Space between the legs
- Space around the neck between the shoulders and face
- Length and wildness of the arms
- Softening and lengthening of the jaw
- Articulation of the spine between each vertebra
- Articulation of the muscles of the face
- Connection between the front and the back of the heart
- Connection of the bladder to the bottoms of the feet
- Connection between the sit bones and the heels
- Connection between the fingers/toes and the organs the belly
- Extension of the tailbone in space
- Extension of the ribs in space
- Lightness of the shoulder blades
- Weight of the pelvis

It is also possible to create your own somatic instigator. Somatic Instigators aim to bring a specific kinesthetic awareness through the costume's touch and include some of the following: quality, orientation/direction, space, movement, relationship, volume, weight, dynamic, musicality and more.

Be aware of the tendency to create a Somatic Costume that fixes the form of the body in one position as opposed to giving the body a direction or orientation. For example, in order to open the shoulders, one could create a costume that does this through tying the arms around the back. The arms and shoulders become fixed in one form. The other option is to support the direction of the shoulders to drop downwards and open out to the sides through placing simple hanging chimes on the hands or fingers – the weight and the extension of the chimes create a natural length and opening in the shoulders, especially while walking and in movement.

A somatic approach challenges the tendency for us to approach bodies as static forms as well as challenges us to support a kinesthetic awareness in the body not necessarily at the place of its origin (e.g., a costume is made for the hands that supports the opening of the shoulders).

Important Tips:

How can we design from touch when the visual dominates? Sometimes we are easily fooled by the visual effect and mistakenly think it is a touch effect. Here are some strategies in the process:

- 1) Give yourself time to arrive in your own body through touch. For example, you can give yourself compression touch or listen to one of the opening Somatic Acts.
- 2) Give yourself time to touch materials.
- 3) Explore the materials and your body together in different positions (standing, lying, sitting) and movement during all stages of the design process.
- 4) Reflect (in movement, drawing, writing) on the impact on your bodies throughout the process.
- 5) Close your eyes.
- 6) Play with taking the costume off, and notice the experience of your body afterwards. Sometimes, the experience of taking off a costume can leave a strong tactile response and give us insight into its effect.
- 7) Have another person wear your prototype and ask how they experience their body in it.
- 8) Design the opposite awareness for reflection - for example, if I were designing to bring awareness to the heavy weight of the pelvis, it can be helpful to design a prototype costume bringing awareness to the lightness of the pelvis and then compare the two.

Or if I am designing to experience the connection between the sit bones and the heels, then I could design with contrasting materials, or a different connection (e.g., the heels to the pelvis).

SOMATIC ACTS CATALOGUE

QUICK REFERENCE INFORMATION

For easy navigation, a concise guide is provided next to each Somatic Act, detailing:

Duration: Estimated time

Participants: Number of people needed (S: Solo, D: Duet, G: Group; all possible options listed)

Materials: Specific objects or props (e.g., coat, 3 potatoes)

Setting: Recommended environment (e.g., comfortable place to lie down)

Somatic Act 1: Touch of Our Water Bodies

Duration: 25 minutes

Participants: D, Possible S

Materials: None

Setting: Comfortable place to sit & rest



Somatic Act 2a: Touch of Breath

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: None

Setting: Comfortable place to rest on floor



Somatic Act 2b: Attending to Movement & Stillness

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: None

Setting: Comfortable place to rest on floor



Somatic Act 3a: Touch of Shoes

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Pair of shoes

Setting: Comfortable place to move



Somatic Act 3b: Touch of Invisible Shoes

Duration: 20 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Pair of shoes

Setting: Comfortable place to move



Somatic Act 3c: Touch of Shoes: Character

Duration: 20 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Pair of shoes

Setting: Comfortable place to move



Somatic Act 3d: Touch of Shoes: Contrasting Tactilities

Duration: 60-120 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: 2 pairs of shoes (different tactilities)



Somatic Act 3e: Touch of Somebody Else's Shoes

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Pair of shoes, pair of somebody else's shoes

Setting: Comfortable place to move



Somatic Act 4: Touch of Stagen

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Stagen

Setting: Comfortable place to move (walk, sit, lie...)



Somatic Act 5: Touch of Materials

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: 1 soft, light warm item (e.g. fur); 2 solid heavy, cool items (e.g. large potatoes)

Setting: Comfortable place to sit or lie



Somatic Act 6a: Attending to Nature

Duration: 60 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Comfortable walking shoes

Setting: Forest or nature with clear walking paths



Somatic Act 6b: Attending to Crow & Ant

Duration: 15 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: None

Setting: Comfortable place to sit outside in nature



Somatic Act 7: Touch of Spine

Duration: 45 minutes

Participants: D, G, Possible S

Materials: Sturdy, comfortable chair, stool, or ball

Setting: Relaxing place to sit with feet on floor



Somatic Act 8: Aware-Wearing

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Long-sleeved shirt, trousers, socks, shoes

Setting: Comfortable place to sit



Somatic Act 9: Touch of Place

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Comfortable clothes, heavy coat

Setting: Dynamic indoor or outdoor place with boundaries and objects



Somatic Act 10: Attending to Eyes

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Comfortable clothes

Setting: Quiet place in nature for sitting & moving



Somatic Act 11: Attending to Sensing into Feeling

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Comfortable, loose clothing and one 'personal & emotional' article

Setting: Comfortable place to move



Somatic Act 12a: Attending to Skin & Touch Direction

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: D, G

Materials: Blanket; loose, sleeveless T-shirt and shorts

Setting: Comfortable place to lie, sit, stand



Somatic Act 12b: Touch of Skin & Clothing

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: D, G

Materials: Comfortable loose trousers, long-sleeved shirt

Setting: Comfortable place to lie.



Somatic Act 13a: Attending & Following Body

Duration: 45 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Comfortable clothes

Setting: Clear place to move



Somatic Act 13b: Attending & Following Costume

Duration: 45 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Comfortable clothes with one 'tactile' everyday garment

Setting: Clear place to move and lie



Somatic Act 14: Touch of Poetics

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Trousers, shirt, scarf to include a zipper, pocket, button

Setting: Comfortable place to move and rest



Somatic Act 15: Touch of Sound & Home

Duration: 15 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Comfortable clothing

Setting: Comfortable indoor or outdoor place to sit



Somatic Act 16: An Invitation into a Somatic Costume Dressing Ritual

Duration: 60 minutes

Participants: D

Materials: Comfortable clothes, clothes from personal wardrobe

Setting: Clear place at home, near wardrobe, to dress & move



Somatic Act 17: Touching & Moving Attention

Duration: 20 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Jacket

Setting: Comfortable place to move & rest



Somatic Act 18: Touch of Balloon

Duration: 25 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Balloon, cotton close-fitting spandex T-shirt

Setting: Comfortable place to move & rest



Somatic Act 19: Making the Balloon-Tight Ring

Duration: 25 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: 16 latex balloons, 1 long tight

Setting: Comfortable place to sit



Somatic Act 20: Wearing & Moving in Balloon-Tight Ring

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Balloon-Tight Ring (See Somatic Act 19)

Setting: Comfortable place to move and rest



Somatic Act 21: Undressing: Balloon-Tight Ring

Duration: 20 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Balloon-Tight Ring

Setting: Comfortable place to move and rest



Somatic Act 22: Resting with Balloon-Tight Ring

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Balloon-Tight Ring

Setting: Comfortable place to move & rest



Somatic Act 23: Attending to Touch Patterns

Duration: 60 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Wardrobe of clothes with different textures & weights

Setting: Comfortable place to sit & stand



Somatic Act 24: Attending to Tactile Collaborations

Duration: 45 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Wardrobe of clothes with different textures and weights

Setting: Comfortable place to sit or stand



Somatic Act 25: Guiding Attention

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: D, G

Materials: Comfortable clothes, possibly bare feet

Setting: Room with clear floor to move on



Somatic Act 26: Calming vs. Activating Touch

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Comfortable clothes

Setting: Comfortable place to sit & stand



Somatic Act 27: Touch of Invisible Costume

Duration: 20 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: 3 winter heavy coats (to be tied around waist)

Setting: Comfortable place to move & rest.



Somatic Act 28: Attending to Facts into Fictions

Duration: 25 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Shoe and audio recording device

Setting: Comfortable sitting position



**Somatic Act 29: An Invitation into Give Them Wings & We Shall
See Their Faces, Performance Ritual.**

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Bowl of water, one 3 x 3 inch square of water soluble paper, a pen

Setting: Quiet place to sit



Somatic Act 30a: Touch of Compressive Finger Sleeves

Duration: 45 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: 5 Compressive Finger Sleeves

Setting: Comfortable place to sit, move and rest



Somatic Act 30b: Attending to Tactile Finger Collaborations

Duration: 60 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: 5 Compressive Finger Sleeves

Setting: Comfortable place to sit, move and rest



Somatic Act 31a: Attending to Timing

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Sleeveless shirt, light trousers, heavy coat

Setting: Comfortable place to move & rest



Somatic Act 31b: Attending to Order

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: D, G

Materials: Shirt, light trousers, heavy coat, 2 feathers, masking tape, 2 yoga mats
(or textured material for 12 foot path)

Setting: Clear space for walking path on floor



Somatic Act 32: Attending to Clouds

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Comfortable clothes

Setting: Moving cloud day, quiet place to lay outside



Somatic Act 33: Touch of Lentils

Duration: 25 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: Comfortable snug-fitting quarter socks (mid calf), ribbing at top; 600 g (24 oz) of
uncooked red or brown lentils; scissors

Setting: Place to sit and stand



Somatic Act 34: Inside a Water Droplet

Duration: 30 minutes

Participants: S, D, G

Materials: 4 large, thin plastic bags (e.g., ziplock) to seal (10.5 x 11 inches),
gallon size with water

Setting: Comfortable place to lie & rest



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DRESSING THE BOOK — THE STAGEN A JAVANESE WRAP

Please refer to **Somatic Act 4 Touch of Stagen** for further pictures of this process.

1. Place the book on your lap, backside up. Attach the circular velcro on the end of the Stagen to the adhesive near the book's spine. Attach it so you can wrap in a clockwise direction.
2. Begin wrapping. Pass the Stagen over the spine to the front of the book and then around to the back again.
3. Continue wrapping around the book's waist. To create a smooth and firm wrap, gently tug the Stagen just before turning each corner. Your hands can also check the smoothness of the wrap after each completed circle..
4. Continue wrapping until you have about 20 cm of the Stagen left. Give a final tug and then tuck the material into the wrap at the front of the book, next to the book's skin, sliding it down toward the feet of the book.



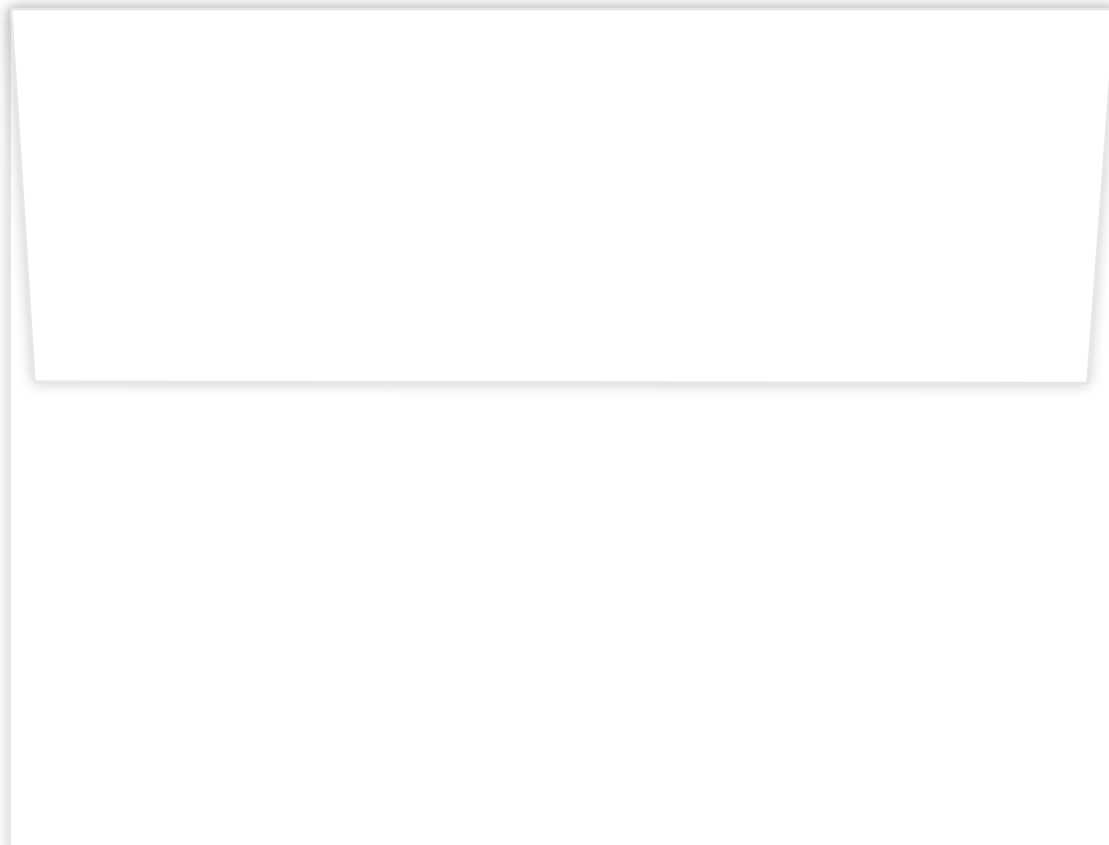
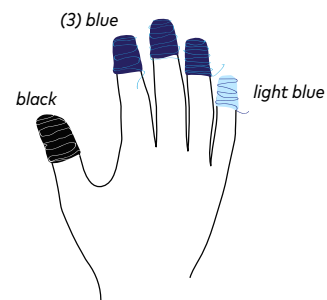
Drawing by Molly Andrews

WATER SOLUBLE PAPER

For use with **Somatic Act 29 An Invitation into Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces, Performance Ritual**.

TOUCH OF COMPRESSIVE FINGER SLEEVE

For use with **Somatic Act 30a: Touch of Compressive Finger Sleeves** and **Somatic Act 30b Attending to Tactile Finger Collaborations**.





FRONT AND BACK COVER

Photographer: Elin Osjord.

Performers: Kristina Gjems
and Sally E. Dean.

THE SOMATIC COSTUME DRESSING ROOM: CHOREOGRAPHING ATTENTION THROUGH TOUCH AND THE POETIC

A PhD that redefines performance through the somatic politics of touch and attention.

In an era grappling with profound disconnection and global crises, this PhD thesis offers a hopeful counter-narrative, proposing that our very modes of perception are powerful political agents. Through a unique somatic, touch-based artistic research, it redefines choreography as the **art of attending**, moving beyond traditional visual dominance to cultivate a deeper, multi-sensorial engagement.

Structured in three parts, this PhD thesis traces a journey from **Context & Definitions** to *The Somatic Costume Dressing Room*, and finally to the performance of *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces*. Born out of the COVID-19 pandemic, *The Somatic Costume Dressing Room* serves as a core methodology—a haptic-focused process where costumes are co-designed in the moment based on the wearer's arising psychophysical needs.

The final performance, *Give Them Wings & We Shall See Their Faces*, introduces Travellers (guided by touch with eyes closed) and Witnesses (engaging visually). Their experiences reveal how the primacy of touch reshapes our sense of time, place, and meaning-making through **Poetic Material-ity**. This approach challenges ocularcentrism, offering a **modern eye remedy** by integrating vision anew through tactile and auditory foundations.

Woven throughout the entire thesis are **Somatic Acts**, poetic, embodied invitations for the reader. These acts are more than just exercises; they are integral to the research, bridging theory and practice with sensory experience to make the book a **participatory, felt journey**.

Ultimately, this research advocates for a quiet yet profound political act: using somatic practice and costume to cultivate a more holistic way of being in the world. Costume, in this context, transcends mere adornment; it becomes a core choreographic practice, a 'Somatic Costume Landscape' that fosters intimacy, agency, and embodied connection. It offers a vital path to resilience and resistance, redefining what performance can be by returning to the body's felt experience and a non-striving form of attention.

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