



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

UOA D32

ART AND DESIGN:
HISTORY, THEORY AND PRACTICE



RESEARCHER

Sophia Lycouris

OUTPUT TITLE

Forms of Inhabitation

OUTPUT TYPE

Performance

DATE

27 April 2017 – 28 May 2017

FIG. 1

Sophia Lycouris, *Forms of Inhabitation*, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, May 2017.
Dancer: Helga Schram. Video still Sophia Lycouris.



Videos available at:

https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/1_qdlf6dz4

https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/1_t16a1nwm

https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/1_0z8h0j14

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.7488/1410e9a0-90cd-45ba-b6fe-806088f9d0b6>

01 / STATEMENT

Forms of Inhabitation is a three-monitor, site-specific video installation designed and produced by Sophia Lycouris for the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE).

It was installed in the Lower Temperate Glasshouse foyer and presented in the exhibition *After the Storm*, May 2017, which Lycouris curated on the invitation of the RBGE team.

The exhibition explored themes of resilience and recovery as part of a series of events organised by the RBGE in 2017–2018 in response to the impact of Cyclone Andrea that hit Scotland in 2012.

It comprised site-specific works by Lycouris, Kevin Dagg, Susanne Ramsenthaler and Mike Windle.

The video installation comprised three films of improvised dance, two of 19-minute duration and one of 9 minutes, featuring dancers Adam Hussain, Suzi Cunningham and Helga Schram.

It was accompanied by a one-off live performance event which took place during the opening night of the exhibition. Performer Mariola Albinowska and sound artist Clive Powell joined the three dancers for this event, which was livestreamed by filmmaker Iguácel Cuiral.

FIG. 2
Sophia Lycouris, *Forms of Inhabitation* performance, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, May 2017. Photo Aino Leskinen.



FIG. 3
Sophia Lycouris, *Forms of Inhabitation* performance, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, May 2017. Dancers: Adam Hussain and Helga Schram. Photo Aino Leskinen.



FIGS. 4-7
Sophia Lycouris, *Forms of Inhabitation* installation, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, May 2017. Photos Sophia Lycouris.



FIG. 8

Sophia Lycouris, *Forms of Inhabitation*
performance, Royal Botanic Garden
Edinburgh, May 2017. Dancer: Adam
Hussain. Photo Susanne Ramsenthaler.



02 / RESEARCH DIMENSIONS

The output was the outcome of a practice-based research into relations between rhythm, performance, the body and perception.

It built on Lycouris' longstanding research investigation into how rhythm can be used to generate finely tuned affective environments. Working across media, but with a consistently performative orientation, Lycouris explores rhythm as a complex phenomenon that manifests across a variety of materials and contexts and has the potential to transform the dynamics of perception.

Her site-specific works situated in everyday environments are produced in collaboration with improvising dancers. In *Forms of Inhabitation*, Lycouris instructed the dancers to 'inhabit' particular spaces, by creating connections between the 'inner' rhythms of their bodies and the existing rhythms of the spaces in which they performed.

By emphasising subtlety in these performative interventions – through a heightened sensitivity towards the material conditions of the performative environment – as well as respect and care towards the relationship between artist and audience, Lycouris' work imparts an ethical approach to site-specific composition.

Lycouris calls her method 'tuning-in' – a means of generating spaces of affinity and empathy between artwork, site and audience that reconfigures the affective qualities of the existing environment and the perceptual dynamics of its 'inhabitants'. In *Forms of Inhabitation*, the method of 'tuning-in' was employed as a mode of well-being with potent resonance with respect to its subject, Cyclone Andrea.



FIG. 9
Sophia Lycouris, *Forms of Inhabitation* performance,
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh,
May 2017. Dancer: Helga Schram.
Photo Susanne Ramsenthaler.

03 / ORIGINALITY



FIG. 10
Sophia Lycouris, *Forms of Inhabitation* performance,
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh,
May 2017. Dancer: Helga Schram.
Photo Aino Leskinen.

Lycouris' methods draw on contemporary somatics, a field within Western body-mind methods that developed in the second half of the 20th century, initially for therapeutic purposes, but later invested by dance artists and choreographers for its potential to enhance physical awareness and foreground the internal physical perceptions of the body.

Somatic practices have been used extensively through the 20th and 21st centuries to develop techniques of dance therapy and choreographic composition. To date, these practices have primarily informed approaches of care towards the performers' bodies.

Lycouris extends and brings new knowledge to this field by employing somatic practices to explore rhythmical connections between dancers and environments that are shared by audiences and performers. Thus the individual body becomes a platform for exploring the qualities of a space that traverse it and connect it to others.

In foregrounding the ethics of performance, *Forms of Inhabitation* revisits the radical interrogations of the relationships between art and life posed by Fluxus and other intermedia, performance and conceptual artists of the 1960s.

Departing from the intention to disrupt or subvert, which had characterised much of this earlier work, Lycouris foregrounds the central role of care for both performers and audience as a response to the conflicted, highly disruptive, post-conceptual, post-media and pervasively technological context of the 21st century.

FIGS. 11–12
Sophia Lycouris, *Forms of Inhabitation* installation, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, May 2017. Dancer: Helga Schram. Video stills Sophia Lycouris.





FIG. 13
Sophia Lycouris, *Forms of Inhabitation* performance, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, May 2017. Dancer: Helga Schram. Photo Aino Leskinen.

FIG. 14

Sophia Lycouris, *Forms of Inhabitation* performance, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, May 2017. Dancers: Suzi Cunningham and Adan Hussain. Photo Susanne Ramsenthaler.



04 / RIGOUR

Lycouris began by researching the structures, arrangements and qualities of different spaces in the Royal Botanic Gardens.

She created 'photographic notes' of these spaces, using photography to document different spatial arrangements and her experience of their affective qualities. This process was informed by her reading of the theory of 'affordance' developed by the American psychologist James Gibson – the question of what a space 'affords', what it renders possible within it.

In August 2016, Lycouris proceeded to work with the three dancers – Adam Hussain, Suzi Cunningham and Helga Schram – within the selected spaces and filmed their improvised movements on video, which she later edited into the three films for the video installation.

The edited footage and arrangement of the video installation monitors in the Glasshouse foyer were designed by Lycouris to 'inhabit' this space by relocating aspects of the bodily rhythms and subtly transforming the affective qualities of the space. The video piece was made for the foyer of the RGBS Glasshouse, and remained there for the entire period of the exhibition.

During the live performance, the dancers were instructed to travel from the garden locations, in which they had worked in 2016, towards the Glasshouse, and slowly retrieve and re-enact their bodily responses to the rhythmical qualities of these spaces. They were then asked to 'relocate' these rhythms within the interior of the Glasshouse. The more closeted space of the Glasshouse gave rise to smaller and more angular movements that had a 'compressing' effect on dancer's bodies. In addition, the dancer's movements were responsive to the proximity of other bodies (audience members) and plants, which brought a new narrative dimension to the movement.

The rigour of the process hinges on the way Lycouris invested the two key terms 'inhabit' and 'relocation', and set them into a dynamic relation.

The livestreaming of the performance brought a further layer of rhythmical relationships to the work.

The camerawoman, filmmaker Iguácel Cuiral, filmed the journey of the dancers from garden to Glasshouse, paying particular attention to the rhythm of their movements. This footage was screened live in the Glasshouse, offering the audience glimpses of this journey.

Once the dancers arrived in the Glasshouse, layers of the live, virtual (livestreamed) and previously recorded versions of their movements were brought together and superimposed into a hybrid composition of rhythms.

The videos were made to be viewed in relation to each other, so that when the viewer focuses on one, the other two remain within their peripheral vision.

They were also made to be viewed on old television studio monitors, with an aspect ratio of 4:3 (not 16:9), with the saturation at -100 to achieve a black & white effect.

The quality of the video was not important in the livestreams – instead, it was the 'liveness' of the material that mattered. That is, livestream was not used as a documentation method, but as a compositional device and performative element. The livestream was screened on a medium sized monitor in the Glasshouse.



FIGS. 15–17
Sophia Lycouris, *Forms of Inhabitation* installation, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, May 2017. Photos Sophia Lycouris.



05 / SIGNIFICANCE

FIG. 18

Sophia Lycouris, *Forms of Inhabitation* performance, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, May 2017. Photo Susanne Ramsenthaler.



Forms of Inhabitation contributes to established discourses and practices of dance and movement by introducing new modes of interaction between audience, performer and environment based on an expanded concept of rhythm.

Bringing contemporary performance to a general public audience within a popular setting, Lycouris affirms the potential of dance as a means of intervening and transforming the dynamics of perception at the threshold of art and non-art and bringing affective resonance to the memory of the event of a specific natural disaster.

The presentation of performance marked a new departure for the RBGS, which had previously confined art exhibitions to its designated gallery spaces. The success of the project with visitors prompted the RBGE to reflect on its approach and embrace site-specific work and live events in their spaces – for instance the introduction of a garden cinema and pianodrome in Summer 2017.

FIG. 19
Sophia Lycouris, *Forms of Inhabitation* performance,
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh,
May 2017. Dancer: Helga Schram.
Photo Susanne Ramsenthaler.



06 / APPENDIX

Documentation of video footage

Appendix 1
Video installation monitor 1
– film with dancer Adam Hussain.

<https://youtu.be/SZFT69o8npc>

Appendix 2
Video installation monitor 2
– film with dancer Helga Schram.

https://youtu.be/2ESpBSI9_Ek

Appendix 3
Video installation monitor 3
– film with dancer Suzi Cunningham.

<https://youtu.be/7mWxHv2xNZo>

Appendix 4
Archived video footage from performance livestream.

<https://youtu.be/KrMbMbkHz4>

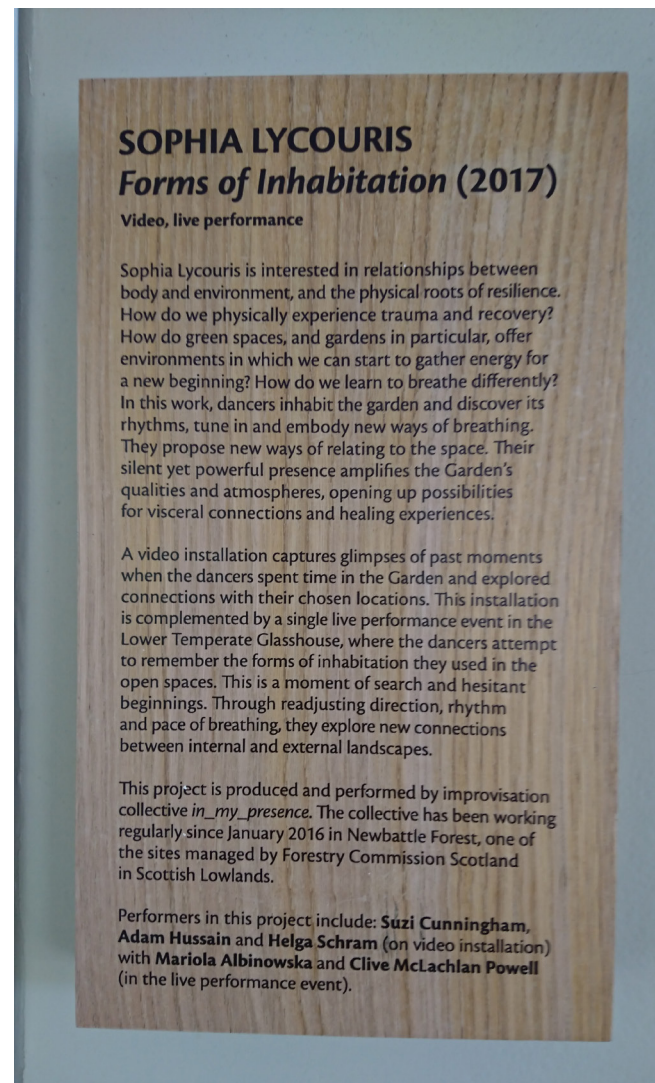


FIG. 20
Interpretation board, *Forms of Inhabitation*, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, May 2017.
Photo Sophia Lycouris.

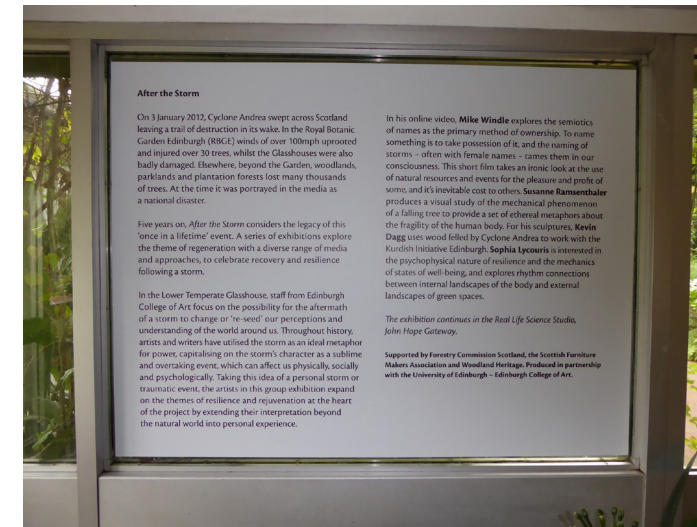


FIG. 21
Interpretation board, *Forms of Inhabitation*, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, May 2017.
Photo Sophia Lycouris.

FIG. 22
Poster, *After the Storm*, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, 28 April – 28 May 2017.





THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

ISBN: 978-1-83645-019-1
DOI: 10.2218/ED.9781836450191

All text in this portfolio is under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence. This means you are free to share and adapt this content provided you give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

All images in this portfolio are All Rights Reserved. This means the authors retain copyright over original work and it is not permitted to copy or redistribute these images.

May 2020

The University of Edinburgh
is a charitable body, registered
in Scotland, with registration
number SC005336.

www.eca.ed.ac.uk
