Up, down and amongst: perceptions and productions of space in vertical dance practices

by

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Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

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Abstract

Vertical dance is a new and collaborative form of dance that typically utilises rock climbing equipment to suspend dancers against a range of vertical surfaces in public spaces. Its effects are to alter familiar systems we use to orientate ourselves in space and to produce or change social spaces. My pedagogical practice (2002 – the present day) and a portfolio of choreographic outputs (created and performed between 2009 and 2015) are of primary importance in my investigation into how I perceive space when dancing on a tilted floor and how this vertical stage and its location in social space influences my choreographic practice. The thesis begins with a manifesto for vertical dance that condenses the central arguments into a set of instructions. There follows a categorization of the form using prototype theory (Wittgenstein, 1953; Rosch, 1978; Lakoff, 1987) applied to a set of vertical dance case studies from the 1970s to the present day. I discuss how the specific spatial parameters of vertical dance affect how a dancer orientates herself on a vertical floor, and how a choreographer on the ground communicates with a dancer on a wall above, drawing on spatial theories in dance and cognitive linguistics (Laban, 1966; Levinson et al., 2002 and Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Lefebvre’s (1974) work on the production of social space as an intersecting triad of spatial practice, representation of space and representational spaces, and recent site-specific discourse (Kwon, (2004), Kester (2004)), (e.g. Kaye (2001), Hunter et al. (2015), Pearson (2010), Kloetzel and Pavlik (2009)) are used to analyse how space is produced and changed, and how the built environment is reminded of nature through the vertical dancing body at diverse locations such as Belfast City Hall, Welsh Government offices, a WW2 German submarine station in France and Guildford Cathedral.
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Introduction

Manifesto for Vertical Dance

LOOK UP!

Take a deep breath…
Choose a wall to dance on
Share your vision with people …make it happen
use rock climbing or industrial access equipment to keep you safe

LOOK DOWN

at where you started
Is someone watching you?
Talk to them
Come back and do this again…and again…and again
Look for other vertical dance floors and invite people to join you
Join the movement to inhabit vertical space

experience the world from a different perspective
produce new social spaces
use your body to remind the built environment about nature

LOOK UP!

Manifestos are calls to arms, statements that aim to change the status quo with a
vision for a new future. According to Cull and Daddario, ‘the contemporary manifesto
surfaces where performance, philosophy and politics collide’ (2013: 3). This
manifesto for vertical dance is intended to be an invitation and a set of (very basic)
instructions to vertical dance aspirants to occupy the vertical spaces around us. It is
a performative instruction, with physical directions about where to look and what to
do, with practical hints about how to do it (speak to people, use appropriate
equipment and repeat the process). The emphasis on repetition is important in
order to embed the changes in spatial perception sought, an issue underlined by
Maurya Wickstrom in her discussion of the duration of the Occupy movement (in Cull
and Daddario, 2013: 39). She asks what happens to political action when the
‘material space’ of that action disappears, when the protestors are moved on. The answer comes in the form of future aspiration that achieves concrete presence because it is lived in the present: it puts in a ‘daily appearance’ and is there again’ (Wickstrom in Cull and Daddario, 2013: 48). Thus, this manifesto asks the dancer to reappear, re-manifest her acts in public spaces, with others, in order to effect lasting changes in social space.

The manifesto’s philosophical aim is to change perceptions of social and architectural space through the actions of the body. Politically, this manifesto asks people to talk to each other in order to make the apparently impossible (walking on walls) achievable through negotiation. It is a manifesto that necessitates vertical dancers ‘to embody its movement’ (Cull and Daddario, 2013:18). The manifesto for vertical dance ascribes to ‘twenty-first century socialism’ proposed by the Freee [sic] art collective, the goal of which is

full human development…built with the people in which, as they transform their circumstances, they transform themselves and the roles they can occupy ... it is produced actively and collectively through innovative practices.

Harnecker in Cull and Daddario, 2013: 80.

The regular occupation of vertical public spaces by vertical dancers requires collaboration with the guardians of those spaces and with the publics that use them. This means that the occupation is the result of a delicate network of agreements between a range of people that sanction this apparently purposeless activity because they share a vision that it is worthwhile. The worthiness of the activity lies in the real and repeated manifestation of an apparently impossible action: to dance
on walls, releasing the disruptive power of the physical body over the functional plans of architecture, and in a celebration of a re-emergence of nature, through the body, amongst the built environment.

**What is Vertical Dance?**

Vertical dance is an emerging performance practice that takes places off the ground, most commonly, but not exclusively, in public spaces. It is a hybrid form that appropriates equipment designed to be used by rock climbers and/or industrial access workers and uses it to suspend dancers against walls. These walls are then used as dance floors, which gives rise to new physical techniques and perceptions of space for dancers. Exploring these new physical techniques with specific reference to how the dancer orientates herself spatially on a tilted floor is a central research focus of this project.

Vertical dance (although not referred to as such at the time) first emerged out of the postmodern dance movement of the 1960s and 1970s in North America in response to a questioning of dance as an art form, alongside the development of aerial dance, which was concurrently moving towards a dance aesthetic and away from a circus aesthetic (Bernasconi and Smith, 2008; Smith, 2013). In Europe, the first manifestations of vertical dance emerged from collaborations between rock climbers and dancers in France and street performance work in Spain in the 1980s. These first steps led to the emergence of artists and companies specializing in vertical dance in the 1990s in North America, UK, mainland Europe, Australia and South America, alongside other companies which include vertical dance elements in their ground-based or aerial dance work. The practice has developed exponentially since
its inception: in the late 1960s and 1970s there were a handful of practitioners, in the 1980s this grew to twenty and the 1990s saw the total number rise to thirty. Currently there are an estimated fifty-six practitioners or companies practicing vertical dance around the world (see Appendix Two). The proliferation of the practice of vertical dance, alongside my own practice of and research into the form since 2002, leads to another central research focus of this project: categorizing and contextualizing the practice.

Vertical dance’s tendency to occupy public spaces calls into question conventional performance practices in theatre institutions, giving rise to new ways for the public to engage with dance. This is a characteristic it shares with site-specific practices which emerged in the same period (see Kwon, 2004; Kaye, 2000; Hunter, 2010; Suderberg, 2000, Wilkie, 2004) and new debates in the field of public art and socially engaged art practices (see Kester, 2004; Lacy (ed.) 1995). Reference to the site-specific debate permeates the thesis. Examining how vertical dance occupies social spaces, producing new spaces and/or changing existing spaces (Lefebvre, 1974), is another central research focus of this project.

**Practice as research**

The methodological framework of this project presents practice in the form of choreographic works made in a professional context, some associated training and rehearsal regimes and reflection on and analysis of that practice through specific theoretical lenses. Seven vertical dance choreographic works, created between 2009 and 2014 (with the last performances of the final work in 2017) form the body of work submitted in the portfolio, which can be viewed via the portfolio links in Chapters
Two, Four and Five. The portfolios contain a mixture of visual, film and textual
documentation of the works. All seven works have been viewed at least once by
public audiences ranging between 30 – 2000 in number. Three were commissioned
works and two were funded by Arts Council Wales. The written exegesis explains
some of the creative processes undertaken in the making of the works, with
illustrative examples provided in the portfolios. The main research thrust of the
thesis is to examine these works sequentially and collectively to understand what
new insights I have derived about the dancer’s and choreographer’s and teacher’s
spatial orientation through doing and watching vertical dance, how the form is
categorized, what its historical context is, and how it produces and/or changes
space.

Melissa Trimmingham distinguishes between artistic practice and research when she
writes that an artistic product or insight does not in itself consist in a research
outcome, the knowledge gained through the practice must be translated ‘into
analytical language, using metaphor, analogy, images, generously attempting to
share with others the insights and understanding they have reached through their
practice’ (2002:55). Whilst I agree that not all artistic products constitute research
outcomes, I find her focus on translation of the practice into words rather too narrow
and prefer an approach that articulates insights derived from research processes
that intertwine theory and practice iteratively. Another approach is represented in
the work of Brad Haseman, who favours a ‘practice-led’ approach in which
alternative modes of ‘reporting research’ are recognized (in various media and in the
written word) as valid in themselves (2007: 147). According to Haseman,
‘practitioner researchers do not merely “think” their way through or out of a problem,
but rather they “practice” to a resolution’ (2007, p. 147). In this project, I have thought and done and done thinking and doing all at the same time. This is evident in Chapter Two, when I capture the experience of standing up lying down, performed over many years, through drawings, writing from a performer perspective and applying ideas from dance (Laban, 1966), cognitive science (Levinson et al., 2002) and cognitive linguistics (Lakoff, 1980).

Although aspects of my working process are thoughtful, as in full of thought, the works submitted here were not designed specifically to test research questions, following a research through practice model which is likely to originate in a clearly articulated statement of aims, methods and outputs (Adams, 2013:4). As Haseman notes in his ‘A Manifesto for Performance Research’, many artist researchers ‘do not commence a research project with a sense of “a problem”. Indeed, they may be led by what is best described as “an enthusiasm of practice”: something which is exciting, something which may be unruly…” (2006:3). Instead of this more linear process, artists give an account of an iterative process. Thus I, as a professional artist, observe myself simultaneously undertaking a doctoral project, and have allowed my work and my study to interrogate each other, to sit alongside each other, each permeating the other. The nature of creating new choreography is typically reflexive, involving cognitive processes of planning, rehearsing, revising, researching as well as serendipitous or intuitive moments of clarity, improvisatory answers to knotty questions and quick-fire responses in challenging situations. The back and forth relationship between theory and practice within the creative process (choreographing and writing) is therefore sometimes difficult to fully articulate or
represent. In her discussion of the relation of theory and practice, performance studies scholar Susan Melrose explains this as the contingent register of performance-making, which the expert performance-maker grabs at, when it appears, but cannot call into being; progressively weaves it in to her or his expertly-mastered performance macro- and micro-logics, such that the two together are self-transforming.

2002:15

What I understand from Melrose’s statement is that these moments of serendipitous insight, which emerge in a 'contingent register of performance-making' do not disappear, but somehow resurface as part of the 'expert knowledge' of the practitioner, moving from intuitive instants of clarity to cognitive methods of working. It is this accretion of practice that this research project seeks to capture, not to present a set of methods, or a 'how to guide' for producing vertical dance, but to understand what sort of thing vertical dance is, how it alters senses of spatial orientation and how it produces and changes social space by using my practice as the object of study.

This project broadly follows the practice as research model used by the UK’s Research Excellence Framework (REF) which requires a written exegesis and/or a portfolio of the creative work to establish its ‘research dimensions’ where they are not immediately obvious from the work itself (Adams, 2013:4). Therefore, in this context, the written exegesis, combined with the portfolio presented here articulates the research dimensions of my vertical dance practice. Although the context of research for the REF differs somewhat from the doctoral context, the guidance offered by Adams is relevant and useful. In providing evidence of the research dimensions of research as practice, he suggests addressing the following: ‘status and origin, issues and contexts, process/method, approaches and
outcomes…dissemination, authorship…' (2013:7). All these aspects are identified throughout both the written element and the portfolio. Fly Butterfly (Chapter Four) is, for example, explained as originating from a commission with a specific brief, the issues and context, processes, methods and approaches of the project are discussed in Chapter Four and the outcome and dissemination (performance) and authorship of diverse elements is documented in the portfolio.

**Why categorise vertical dance?**

Part of my process in articulating my practitioner expertise has involved an evolving process of consciously defining or categorizing my practice as vertical dance. Categorization is fundamental to how we understand the world around us (Lakoff, 1987:5), therefore it makes sense to try to categorize an emerging practice so that we may understand its character better, as well as share our understanding of it. The shared properties inherent in a category promote shared understanding of a practice between practitioners operating within and beyond the category. My purpose is not to fix the category for all time, but to propose properties and boundaries that allow me to measure the shape of it better, and how it relates to the practice of others. Rather than employing a classical ‘set’ theory of classification, developed in mathematics by Georg Cantor between 1874 and 1897 (Enderton and Stoll, n.d.), in which all members of a category share at least one common property (Lakoff, 1987:5), I employ prototype theory which emerged from Ludwig Wittgenstein’s ideas about family resemblance, centrality and membership gradience (1953). In contrast to classical set theory, in which members of one set of objects do not share any properties with objects in another set, he observed that members of categories do not all have one thing in common, and used the analogy of games to articulate this,
asserting that ‘you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that’ (1953:31). The category of games includes board games, card games, sports, the game of life, and so on. There is no one property that unites all these different sorts of games but there are similarities. Wittgenstein referred to these similarities between members of a category as ‘family resemblances’ (1953:32). Vertical dance borrows equipment from rock climbing, shares affinities with aerial dance and is generally a collaborative activity, which suggest that it will not fit easily into a hermetically sealed category as proposed in set theory.

Wittgenstein also asserted that membership of categories operates around the idea of a central ‘best example’ of the category, around which the position of other members is graded between centre and category boundary, and that some categories ‘have degrees of membership and no clear boundaries’ (in Lakoff, 1987:12). The idea of porous boundaries between categories was later developed by mathematician and computer scientist Lotfi Zadeh, who outlined a theory of ‘fuzzy sets’: ‘a class of objects with a continuum of grades of membership’ (1965:338). As an example, he cites the class of animals, which clearly includes horses, dogs and cats, and excludes houses, toilets and glasses. However, creatures such as starfish and bacteria have an ‘ambiguous’ status in the class of animals (1965:338). In Chapter One I have used this idea to show that the category vertical dance has a porous or ‘fuzzy’ boundary with aerial dance and other categories, such as rock climbing and site-specific performance). Cognitive psychologist, Eleanor Rosch (1978), developed Wittgenstein’s ideas into ‘prototype theory’, used to explain language, cognition and the functioning of the brain. I am using this theory
somewhat in reverse to help me deepen my understanding of vertical dance by formulating a category based on my own knowledge. Rosch states that ‘most, if not all, categories do not have clear-cut boundaries’ (1978:10), and our understanding of how categories are distinguished is based on clearest cases of the category, or ‘prototypes’ rather than the boundaries around the category (1978:11). In Chapter one I propose a prototype of vertical dance with specific identified properties which I then deploy to analyse historical examples of vertical dance from the perspective of my own developing practice in order later to investigate the position of that practice in the vertical dance category in Chapters Four and Five.

**Historical contextual research and case studies**

The purpose and benefit of the categorization exercise outlined above was immediately obvious in outlining a history of vertical dance in Chapter One. The prototype provided a yardstick by which I could identify vertical dance examples and calibrate their position within the category, or on the boundaries of the category. Scholarly material on vertical dance is limited due to the newness of the form, however three recent publications in the field of aerial dance have been very useful. Bernasconi and Smith’s (2008) book, *Aerial Dance*, includes short written pieces by some of the leading North American practitioners: Terry Sendgraff, Stephanie Evanitsky, Jo Kreiter, Brenda Angiel (South American) and Amelia Rudolph. Kloetzel and Pavlik’s volume, *Site Dance* (2009), includes extended interviews with and articles by Joanna Haigood and Jo Kreiter, also North American. The final publication is *Extérieur Danse* by Clidière and Morant, which examines dance in public space, mostly in France, and includes short sections on the work of Antoine le Menestrel and Fabrice Guillot (2009:56-58). Smith’s 2013 article on the aesthetics of
aerial dance and aerial circus briefly considers the work of Project Bandaloop and provides some interesting reflections on the tilted floor in vertical dance.

The majority of my historical research has therefore been undertaken through internet searches. I have looked at company websites, news articles and reviews and YouTube videos. One of the most useful resources has been Wanda Moretti’s Vertical Dance Network blog, on which she lists the websites of any vertical dance company who contact her. This proved an excellent signposting source to the range of companies and artists doing vertical dance around the world. Without the internet, this element of the research would have been very limited, indeed, when I began to search for examples of vertical dance on the internet in 2002, I found only a handful of examples. A limitation of internet resources is the purpose for which they are designed: company websites are designed to sell the latest show, and often the information I am seeking, such as dates of performances, archives of practice and so on, are at best, incomplete. Videos posted on the internet usually present a partial picture of an artist’s work: they are usually edited, often with fast cuts, and tend to be shorter than the full-length work. I would have liked to have seen more live performances, but the geographical spread of the companies made this difficult. I have seen the work of the following companies live: Il Posto, Aeriosa, Gravity and Levity, Cie Retouramont, Nikky Smedley, Wired Aerial Theatre, Oeff Oeff, Fidget Feet, De la Guarda, Trisha Brown (in reconstruction), Streb and Histeria Nova.

Chapter One also looks at six case studies in which work by vertical dance artists are examined in more detail to unpick some of the salient properties in relation to the category of vertical dance. Trisha Brown’s *Man Walking down the side of a building*
(1970) is explicitly designed to alter the spatial perception of the observer. Evanitsky’s work with Multigravitational Aerodance Group occupies the fuzzy boundary of the category, using objects to support the dancers. Kreiter paints a mural on the performance wall and suspends objects as well as dancers in Mission Wall Dances (2002). Fuerzabruta’s Wayra (2003-) employs fabric walls and walls which collapse in intense immersive rave events. Moretti’s 2012 choreography, Far Vuoto (Make Void), interprets the architecture of a building and uses it metaphorically in the choreography, and blurs the boundary between real life and performance by staging a rescue of the performer. Two works by Gravity and Levity, Why? (2005) and Shift (2008) reveal the choreographic opportunities derived from working with stable, unstable and fractured or fragmented vertical floors.

**Altered Spatial Perception**

One of the most significant themes of this research is the spatial experience of the vertical dancer, as this is where the practice most obviously and most radically deviates from ground-based dance forms and where the vertical dancer is obliged to develop techniques and understandings to fulfil the requirements of the art. In Chapter Two I focus in detail on how the dancer orientates herself in space when dancing on a vertical floor, drawing on three theories of spatial orientation. I have chosen to work from Rudolph Laban’s extended study of space in and beyond the field of dance as it is the most comprehensive and pervasive analysis available. His (1966) work on the cross of axes, developed to explain the orientation of the dancer in notation scores is compared with cognitive linguist Stephen Levinson et al.’s (2002) article on how language affects spatial reasoning. The three frames of reference developed in the latter, and Laban’s three crosses of axes are compared
and applied to my experience as vertical dancer in a work called *Descent of the Angel* (2009). This analysis leads to the conclusion that the dancer mainly uses a relative or ego-centric (body cross of axes) frame of reference to orientate herself, but that she overlays this with a constant or intrinsic frame of reference, using fixed points in space (the sky, the audience, the wall) as a second set of orientational information. Language used by the choreographer to direct the dancers from the ground is discussed, for example, regular instructions such as right, left are found to be confusing, particularly when the dancer is in an inverted position.

The second part of Chapter Two employs George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s theories of metaphor to make metaphorical statements about vertical dance, and to open up a more general discussion of the spatial effects of the vertical floor on a dancer’s orientation. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have an experiential approach to their analysis of metaphor which is eminently suitable for the study of dance. Theories of metaphor, which are a striking part of human language, and the conceptualization of space in particular, go back to classical antiquity (Hills, 2011). How metaphor works is still a matter of dispute. I refer in this thesis both to Lakoff’s theory of metaphor which derives from cognitive linguistics and to Levinson’s which is based more in the pragmatic tradition. Lakoff theorizes spatial metaphor as a fundamental category. The experience of space provides a framework for thought, for metaphorical language. This predicts that for the dancer it is important to experience the disorientation of vertical dance before attempting to cognize it and to verbalize it. My experience of developing vertical dance and of training dancers supports this model. Levinson et al (2002) demonstrate that verbalization of space in metaphor also shapes understanding and orientation. Although this leaves open
many questions about the relationship between language and cognition the findings of both approaches demonstrate that experience is required to overcome established perspectives. Whether new verbalizations without experiencing vertical dance would be sufficient to change perspectives is an open question. Lakoff and Johnson define metaphor as ‘understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another’ (1980:5) which speaks loudly to issues of spatial orientation in vertical dance because it allows the choreographer and the dancer to imagine, for example, that the wall is a dance floor. It has also proved to be an effective framework for me to analyse my choreographic work in Chapter Five, where, for example, a building is imagined to be a ship in a storm.

**Producing and changing space**

Chapter Three introduces the philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre’s (1974) ideas about the production of space. In my research, I began by looking at writing about space in site-specific work in visual art and theatre. I was initially entirely seduced by writing and practice informed by ideas of place presented by Tacita Dean and Jeremy Millar in their eponymously titled publication *Place* (2005), Lippard’s concerns with the local (1998) and Pearson and Shanks archaeological approach (2001), which led me to Edward S. Casey’s philosophical history of place, *The Fate of Place* (1997). In all of this writing there was an almost nostalgic sense of place as a palimpsest, where cultural spatial practice accretes like geological layers, the examination of which produces meaning in specific locations. What was missing was an attention to the socio-political aspects of a wider concept of space and a focus on the possibility of forward movement and change. Kaye’s work pointed me in the direction of de Certeau and his analysis of the practice of everyday
life (1984), with a strong focus on the distinction between place and space. His assertion that ‘space is practiced place’ (1984: 117/118) puts an emphasis on human movement and action in and through places (which remain stable and immoveable, dead) to create space, which he sees as full of action and being. Whilst the focus on action and practice seemed relevant, too much emphasis was placed on making distinctions between notions of place and space, which I found unproductive. Two essays by geographers in Alan Read’s edited collection Architecturally Speaking (2000), one by Edward Soja (13 – 30), the other by Doreen Massey (40 – 62), along with the monographs Thirdspace (Soja, 1996) and For Space (Massey, 2005) revealed to me the importance and widespread influence of Lefebvre’s application of Marxist ideas of production to the analysis of space. The idea that social space is produced seemed to me to be the most relevant theory in relation to the effects and functions of vertical dance in public spaces.

Introducing Lefebvre’s ideas about space expands the focus out further from the experience of the dancer and the observer, in Chapter Two, to the environment in which the dance takes place, to ascertain the accretion of previous spatial production at a site of vertical dance. Lefebvre’s ideas about space grew out of his Marxist/communist politics and his work as a sociologist, most notably developed in The Right to the City (1968). His Marxist outlook led him to develop his theory of space around the concept of how it is produced, a thoroughly Marxist strategy. Lefebvre’s project is to construct a unified theory of space which unites the conceived, perceived and lived aspects of space, for social benefit. He sees the origins of the social production of social space as located at the point where significant human settlement has taken place in nature. This focus on the lived
experience of space is echoed by New Zealand choreographer, Carol Brown, writing about her site-specific practice, when she critiques a fixed western understanding of site as primarily architectural and underlines the importance of attending to the ‘cultural, historical and spiritual associations’ of places (2015:200). In Chapters Four and Five, I trace the beginning of the production of social space of the two locations of the performance work, Belfast, Northern Ireland and Caernarfon, North Wales, back to a point where significant human settlement occurred. In Belfast, this was the creation of a small town in the early 1600s at the ford of the River Farsett; in Caernarfon, this is the building of a fort by the occupying Romans in AD 80.

Lefebvre’s idea that space can be ‘decoded’ is a driver for my analysis of the works in Chapters Four and Five, in which I dissect my choreography in relation to the architectural, historical and social aspects of the space to determine new meanings and connections latent in the performance work. Lefebvre asserts the need to recover the ‘total’ body as the interpreter and unifier of space, and writes that dance is a perfect medium for this process of recovery (1974:205). Answering this rallying call to dance, I chart the mobilization of the bodies not just of the dancers, and my choreographing self, but of all the gate-keepers to the spaces in which we perform, who have had the vision, desire and the energy to ensure that vertical dance has a space in the urban landscape. Lefebvre states that any new production of space creates a differential space which accentuates difference where perhaps it has been erased by abstract homogenous urban planning (1974:52). As vertical dance occupies these spaces it re-inserts nature, via the living body of the dancer, back into the urban landscape. These dancers practice a ‘relational art’ (Bourriard, 1998) which highlights human interaction and social context in which ‘the role of artworks is
no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living
and models of action within the existing real’ (1998:13). Consistent and repeated
occupation of social space by vertical dancers can lead to normalization of the
activity, prompting questions about what happens once space has been changed.
My response echoes that of Wickstrom regarding the Occupy movement: the change
must be iterative, it must be repeated, again… and again… and again… and again… embedded
in our lived experience, lest we forget… (Wickstrom in Cull and Daddario, 2013: 48)

In his consideration of the decoding of social space, Lefebvre analyses material
objects in space relevant to vertical dance practice: monuments, buildings, walls and
windows. Each of these is discussed with reference to my practice and returned to
in Chapters Four and Five. For example, Lefebvre’s concept of the transitional
nature of windows which provide a means to enter and leave an interior space
modifies the property of the vertical dance prototype established in Chapter One,
which requires a solid wall. Choreographers can choose to highlight the transitional
properties of windows (see Off the Wall (2010) and Pobl Dre (2012), Chapters Four
and Five) or ignore them (Moretti’s Far Vuoto (2012), Chapter One).

Ideas about the circulation of vertical dance as a product in social space are
discussed in relation to Marxist theory that requires that to enter the marketplace, a
product must erase all signs and marks of production. Vertical dance is commonly
rehearsed and performed outdoors by bodies who are simultaneously the means of
production and the product, marked by their production processes in the precise
moment of production. This effect, along with the site-specificity of much vertical
dance work, means that it enters the commercial marketplace in unconventional
I propose that vertical dance occupies a ‘social interstice…’ term used by Marx to describe trading communities that elude the capitalist economic context by being removed from the law of profit’ (Bourriard, 1998: 16). My vertical dance activities create little or no surplus value, performances occur free of charge in public spaces, disrupting common patterns of everyday life and the activities encourage human interaction. These aspects of the vertical dance I practice, similar to those operating in most site-specific performances, separate it from conventional theatre-going, offering ‘other trading possibilities’ which, nonetheless ‘fit[s] more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system’ (Bourriard, 1998:16). My vision of vertical dance is that it is not a commodity that is bought and sold, rather it emerges as a social practice of repeated collaboration, shared visions and negotiation. These ideas are picked up again in the discussion of the circulation of Gwymon 2 (2014) to different locations, in Chapter Five.

**Presentation of the Portfolio**

This written part of the thesis is organised in five chapters linked to the portfolio which is accessible via internet links inserted into Chapters Two, Four and Five. The portfolio is a series of seven online Prezi presentations which contain films and images of rehearsals and performances of the choreographed works as well as texts relating to them. The portfolio documents, and the written exegesis refers to it. In order to cross-reference it is advisable to open the portfolio for each relevant chapter and keep it open whilst reading the chapter. In deciding how to represent my practice I first considered creating a DVD, which I rejected as outdated and cumbersome, and lacking an online presence. Having decided that the portfolio should be available on the internet, I considered creating a website, which I rejected
as awkward and monolithic. The Prezi presentation was finally chosen in order to represent each work as a discrete event and because I found it a very visual, straightforward and satisfying way to document my work. Each work is available online, providing easy access and the Prezi format allows non-linear navigation alongside the text and the insertion of different types of (film, still imagery, text).

The visual documentation of live performance is problematic as it can never reproduce the live event and the resulting documentation is mediated by the camera’s ‘eye’ and the choices made by the photographer or film-maker, shaping the watcher’s experience of the choreography. Films of live performance exist as artefacts in their own right and their creators provide a commentary on the live event in their framing and editing choices. Furthermore, the filmed documentation of performance adds another layer of expense to what is often a limited budget and in many cases, I have had limited input into the filmed products of my work. The best documentary film in the portfolio, in my opinion, is that created by Joanna Wright of Ynghlwm (2011). She is a documentary film-maker and has brought her strong sensibility and high level of editing skills to her record of the event, incorporating footage of the audience, which situates the performance in the space very effectively. Other films document process effectively, such as those in the Fly Butterfly (2009) and Off the Wall (2010) presentations.

Still imagery captures a moment in time from a live event. The ‘static figure’, insofar as it is realisable, can only ever be a representation of movement, as the dance photograph represents the dance as artefact. This artefact is itself a ‘conjunction in movement’ (Massey, 2005, p137) at the very least of the finger of the photographer,
the shutter of the camera, the movement of the dancing body and the slow motion of
the ground upon which all stand. I have used this in the portfolio to represent
movement that I want to discuss in the written exegesis, for example the operation of
metaphor in Gwymon (2013). I have used composition of visual images to portray
particular ideas, for example, the opening slide of Fly Butterfly (2009) juxtaposes a
dancer looking down with audience members looking up. The background
photographs of the presentations have been chosen to present a wider contextual
image of the work, for example, a view of the Cathedral in Descent of the Angel
(2009) and a view of the Dock in Gwymon (2013), or of the thematic content of the
work, in Ynghlwm (2011). I have also used photographic imagery to document
process, for example developing costume (Gwymon, 2013) and objects (Pobl Dre,
2012) and of climbers to reveal choreographic inspiration (Ynghlwm, 2011). I have
also included some text in the presentations to reveal choreographic research
(Ynghlwm, 2011) and collaborations with other artists, such as the writing of
storyteller Fiona Collins in response to the ideas in Gwymon (2013).

Structural Outline
The first chapter establishes a prototype and category of vertical dance, drawing on
prototype theory (Wittgenstein, 1953; Rosch, 1978; Lakoff, 1987). This is then
applied as a tool in briefly charting the history of vertical dance and the examination
of six case studies. Some of the properties of the prototype, such as altered spatial
perception and the wall as a floor are interrogated further in Chapter Two, drawing
on theories of spatial orientation in dance (Laban, 1966) and cognitive linguistics
(Levinson et al., 2002). The topic is then extended to see how theories of metaphor
(Lakoff and Johnson, 1987) enhance understanding, perception and communication
in vertical dance practice, with reference to *Descent of the Angel* (2009) and teaching practice, both of which are documented in the portfolio.

Chapter Three zooms out to consider the environment of vertical dance through the lens of theories of the production of space (Lefebvre, 1974) to determine how social space is produced and how vertical dance produces, and perhaps changes social space. Lefebvre’s notion of the origin of social space as the first significant human settlement in nature, and its production over time are established as important in the decoding of the social space in which vertical dance takes place. The social significance and functions of monuments, buildings, walls and windows is considered in relation to vertical dance which subverts habitual practices, by dancing on walls and falling out of windows. The idea that the dancing body is the means to unify conception, perception and lived experience of space is proposed.

The ideas developed in Chapter Three are applied to three vertical dance works made in Belfast analysed in Chapter Four. The history of the social production of space in Belfast is traced to establish the context of the work and what new productions of space were affected by the vertical dance practice. A similar process is employed in Chapter Five to three works created in the same place in Caernarfon with the addition of a deeper consideration of the metaphorical aspects of the choreography, referring back to the ideas of Lakoff and Johnson (1987) discussed in Chapter Two. Chapter Five ends with a consideration of the creation of a modified version of *Gwymon* which enabled it to circulate to different locations.
The conclusion returns to the original starting point of the research, my desire to comprehend a new spatial sensibility thrown up by my practice. I outline the findings and new insights gained through the application of the three main research foci – categorisation, spatial orientation and the production of space – to the practice of vertical dance. Finally, I return to the condensed ideas held in the manifesto for vertical dance to assert the opportunities to collectively produce new social spaces by inhabiting urban vertical spaces and reminding the built environment about nature, through the actions of our bodies.
Chapter One
Categorising and Contextualising Vertical Dance

Introduction

Vertical dance has an as yet unwritten history, a set of routes through which it has traced a way of being in the world. My research has shown me that artists working in this form are diverse, but they share some common goals, which are enshrined in the manifesto. These include the use of the vertical space of (but not exclusively) urban environments, suspending dancing bodies against vertical surfaces using climbing equipment, collaboration, negotiation, repetition of activities and a desire to challenge spatial perception. In this chapter I begin by establishing a category called ‘vertical dance’ in more detail, outlining a central prototypical ‘best example’ drawing on the work of Lakoff on categorization (1987:7). The limits of the category are discussed in relation to Wittgenstein’s concepts of membership gradiance (in Lakoff, 1987:13) to determine whether the category of vertical dance has porous or solid boundaries, particularly in relation to aerial dance, but also in relation to related practices of site-specific performance and rock climbing. The category and prototype are then tested against a series of vertical dance case studies to understand the contexts in which the practice has developed. The prototype and categorization then provide a framework for analysing my practice in Chapters Four and Five.

What is the category of vertical dance?

I have observed that vertical dance is an activity that has a range of manifestations both in my own practice, and that of others, some of which bear similarities to other
activities which take place off the ground. These will be examined later in the chapter. Categories are important for organizing the way we think about the world. They allow us to conceptualize similar things, ideas and actions and bracket them together as sharing specific qualities, and are fundamental to our ability to function as cognitive beings (Lakoff, 1987: 6). It is therefore important to my practice to explain exactly what I think the category of vertical dance includes, and what it excludes.

In Women, Fire and Dangerous Things (1987), Lakoff examines how we use categories and explains how the pioneering cognitive psychologist Eleanor Rosch, building on Wittgenstein’s ideas of family resemblance, centrality and gradience (1987:13), observed flaws in the ‘classical’ methods and theories of classification, which assume that all members of a category share the same properties and that categorization is a function that is not affected by the person doing the categorizing (1987:7). This ‘classical’ view works in tandem with a view of reason as ‘disembodied manipulation of abstract symbols’, suggesting that meaning exists in the world independent of ‘the peculiarities of the human mind and body’ (1987:8). Rosch addressed the first problem – that which says that all members of a category share the same properties – by proposing that categories are organized radially, with a ‘best example’, or prototype of the category at the centre; this is known as ‘prototype theory’. To understand the vertical dance category then, it is important to outline the properties of a central ‘best example’ of vertical dance.

According to Lakoff, Rosch also observed that specific human capacities, such as movement, perception, knowledge acquisition and communication have a role to
play in how we categorize (1987:7). Lakoff’s approach to prototype theory follows Rosch, proposing that ‘human categorization is essentially a matter of both human experience and imagination’ including perception, action or movement, culture and metaphor, metonymy, and mental imagery’ (1987:8). It follows that the construction of the category of vertical dance, and what is framed as the ‘best example’ of the category is contingent on my experience and knowledge, and the context in and purposes for which the category is created: to understand my practice better.

**Prototype of vertical dance**

The first four properties of prototypical vertical dance are those related to the dance itself: climbing equipment, suspended dancers, wall used as a floor and dance movement. I will discuss these before moving on to discuss a further six properties, which relate to the environment of practice. Each property is highlighted in bold type throughout the chapter.

My development of vertical dance has involved dance movement practices on a range of vertical surfaces (for example walls, ropes, balconies, windows and trees), employing rock climbing equipment and techniques. In my experience, the suspension of dancers for vertical dance activity requires three basic elements of **rock climbing equipment**: rope, harness and positioning device (commonly a grigri or rig). Therefore, not only is climbing apparatus necessary, it is these specific elements that are required for prototypical vertical dance. I have excluded

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1. Both these devices have a locking function which allows the dancer (or climber) to position themselves in suspension. Grigris are used extensively in climbing practice as belay devices. Rigs derive from industrial access, and are more robust and have a more reliable locking function that grigris.
ascending devices as these are generally used functionally to attain height, rather than choreographically. An exception is one of my works, *Fly Butterfly* (2010), discussed in Chapter Four, where ascenders are used within the choreography.

Introduction of further equipment, such as pulleys, changes the movement and choreographic possibilities substantially, as will be observed in the case studies, and discussed further in Chapters Four and Five.

The equipment is necessary to **suspend** the dancer’s body, which is the second property of the best example of vertical dance. Activities where the performers are not suspended (such as ground based dance or free running/parkour\(^2\)), or where the dancer suspends her own body (climbing and aerial dance) are not prototypical.

The third property is a **wall**, which is the most common surface on which vertical dance has been practiced to date, thus it makes sense that this should be a prototypical property. Walls with windows which are used choreographically to pass through the wall, or fractured walls, or other objects ‘pretending’ to be walls (for example, ropes, planks of wood or poles) are not prototypical. Examples of ‘non-walls’ will be discussed later in this chapter, and will also feature in analysis of my own work in Chapters Four and Five.

Finally, the last of the four main properties is **dance**, probably the most difficult to differentiate given the diversity of dance practices. It is worth looking at how aerial

\(^2\) Free running, or parkour, is a ‘non-competitive physical discipline of training to move freely over and through any terrain using only the abilities of the body, principally through running, jumping, climbing and quadrupedal movement’ practiced mainly in urban environments. (Parkour UK, n.d.)
dancers differentiate dance from circus and I will return to this later when I consider the boundaries of the vertical dance category.

The six further properties I have identified refer to the wider environment in which vertical dance is practiced and the results or implications of the first four aspects on the choreography. These are: the use of public space (for rehearsal and performance), choreography of descent, altered spatial perception (dancers, choreographers and teachers), changes to performance conventions, modified habitual patterns of behaviour/movement (dancers and public) and collaboration.

Use of public space
In my experience, vertical dance is typically practiced in public spaces, most commonly on the exterior walls of urban buildings. It takes place off the ground, against architectural or other surfaces, which crucially provide a tilted ‘floor’ for dancing on. Prototypical vertical dance employs site-specific choreographic approaches which include developing an awareness of the location through research, collaboration with the community of the site and developing choreography in which the place is explicitly part of the artistic output. Crucially, these spaces are public, in the sense that anyone has free access to them and therefore audiences for rehearsals and performances can be made up of people who have come specially to see a performance and people who have accidentally come across the activity. Another important property is that training and rehearsals as well as performances take place in public spaces. This means that the public can witness the creative process and the mistakes and revisions that occur as part of a rehearsal process,
and ask questions and contribute points of view on what they see. In this way, the unfamiliar sight of people dancing on vertical surfaces repeatedly can be ‘normalised’, de-mystified and absorbed into everyday life. Vertical dance is sometimes performed in theatres, which are not spaces to which the public usually has free access, and therefore these examples fall outside of the prototypical spaces I am identifying here. The later discussion of other practitioners in the form will reveal that much excellent vertical dance work takes place in theatres, and whilst it may be categorized as vertical dance, it cannot occupy a central position within my particular category construction.

**Choreography of descent**

The limited equipment used in prototypical vertical dance – ropes, harnesses and positioning devices – enforces the downward direction of travel of the choreography. Choreography of ascent, used in *Fly Butterfly* (2009) and *Ynghlwm* (2011) discussed in Chapters Four and Five respectively, employs extra devices, ascenders and pulleys respectively. The choreography in *Gwymon 2* (2014) and *Descent of the Angel* (2009), discussed in Chapters Five and Two respectively, are both prototypical examples of vertical dance in which descent became part of the narrative of the choreography. In the former, the dancers metaphorically descended from a ship to the seabed, and in the latter the dancer represents the descent of the golden angel on top of the cathedral on which she dances. Whilst the choreography might not explicitly reference the narrative aspects of the downward trajectory, it is ever-present as a structural spatial framework within which the dance operates in real, physical space.
Altered spatial perception

The techniques I have employed to create vertical dance require dancers to imagine that they can stand on and dance on a vertical floor. This requires shifts in perception of spatial orientation which will be discussed in depth in Chapter Two. In the case of my prototypical vertical dance activity, the spectator will generally, but not always, watch from below, echoing the ocular experience of the climber’s partner, the belayer. Looking up can become uncomfortable over a sustained period, but is often mitigated by providing options for audience members to sit or lie on the ground. Watching positions are of course dependent on available space, and audiences may also observe from above, the side or even from inside the building against which the dancer is suspended. From my experience of watching vertical dance, changes to the spatial perception of observers are evident in three ways.

The first is that people are seen to tilt their heads, mirroring the horizontal standing position of the dancers in order to re-orientate the dancer so they appear to be standing vertical. This is an instinctive reaction, which I myself experience regularly when teaching and choreographing. The second change, I have observed to habitual spatial perception is that the vertical dimension, often ignored in everyday life, is highlighted. Our eyes are habitually directed in the horizontal plane. Looking up means we expand our horizons and experience the physical benefit of opening the chest and lifting the diaphragm, and perhaps taking a deep breath. This is developed further in Chapter Two, where the metaphorical statement ‘happy is up’ is considered in relation to watching vertical dance. A third way in which perception of

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3 A belayer is a climber’s partner. Whilst the climber ascends, the belayer controls the rope through a belay device so that if the climber were to fall, the belayer will catch the fall.
space is altered for me as an observer is in changes to the functional possibilities of material reality: walls become floors and buildings can be danced upon.

**Changes to performance conventions**

Performance conventions have been challenged over the past fifty years through the emergence and proliferation of diverse site-specific practices across the arts (see for example, Kwon, 2004; Pearson and Shanks, 2001; Pearson, 2010; Kaye, 2000; Kloetzel and Pavlik, 2009; Hunter, 2010; Lacy, 1995; Kester, 2004). In terms of dance performance, dominant modes of production have been (and still are) centred around the theatre building and its associated networks of distribution. Dance work for theatre is commonly created in a closed studio, with perhaps a controlled ‘work in progress showing’ prior to public performance. In contrast, prototypical vertical dance stages rehearsals in public. This means that the work is constantly ‘on show’ as it is developed, allowing access to and potentially demystifying the creative process for anyone who is interested in taking the time to watch. Vertical dance performances are usually free of charge, specifically because they take place in public space to which the public has the right to free access. There is therefore no need for a box office or ticketing system. Other theatre conventions may also be disrupted: there may be no seats, the audience may need to move to get the best view, theatrical lighting may be minimal or not present, environmental sounds such as traffic, birds, people talking, may mix with the sound score of the performance, and there will probably be no backstage or foyer area. The result is that vertical dance choreographers often construct their own new set of performance conventions to fit the space. These might include choosing positions for people to gather safely and circulate through space, providing seats or blankets, devising systems for
relaying information to guide public who may be confused by the disruption to habitual theatre patterns.

**Modified habitual patterns of behaviour/movement (dancer and public)**

The habitual movement and spatial pathways of the public may be altered both during rehearsal and performance. New pathways emerge as the space below the vertical dancers is ‘cordoned off’ for safety reasons and the public perhaps move further away from the wall of rehearsal/performance to see what is going on. During rehearsals and performances in the foyer of Galeri (see Chapter Five), everyday patterns of circulation through this public space were modified as areas of the space were occupied by the vertical dance activities. As we have seen above, habitual gazes directed in a horizontal plane can be raised perhaps causing changes in physical, perceptual, and rhythmic patterns of everyday life. These small disruptions to everyday life are similar to those staged in street performance and practices that take place in public space. In site-specific choreographer Susanne Thomas’ *Boxed* (2006) for example, an impromptu audience gathered around a shop window on Oxford Street to watch a dancer performing behind the glass. The street temporarily became a site for watching performance and the presence of the audience partially blocked the pavement, forcing people to choose whether to stop and watch or to walk around the gathered assembly. These small disruptions of everyday life represent ‘tiny revolutions in the common urban and semi-urban life’ (Bourriard, 1998:17) typical of art which operates interstitially within the larger economic system (Bourriard, 1998:16).
The concept of the vertical floor, the equipment and the suspension of the dancer all contribute to a radical modification of habitual patterns of movement for the dancer. The rope to which the dancer is attached enforces specific and limited pathways. The vertical floor bisects space and limits travel in certain directions, for example, without the use of additional equipment, the dancer cannot ascend and if she faces the side, she cannot move to her left or right. In contrast, she is afforded a greater range of aerial movement (contingent on the length of the rope) which allows her to perform acrobatic movement with relative ease.

**Collaboration**

Dancing in unusual spaces often requires complex negotiations to gain permission from the gatekeepers of the space, for example, building managers, health and safety advisers, construction company representatives, engineers, councillors and artistic programmers. The choreography can therefore be seen to be collaboratively constructed with a range of constituents and the building itself. As we will see in the creation of *Gwymon* (2013) discussed in Chapter Five, this may extend to programmers choosing thematic material and taking roles in the creative process. In this way, vertical dance becomes a collective activity, in which the choreographer shares creative agency not just with artistic collaborators, but with a range of bodies connected to a site.

**Prototypical Vertical Dance Statement**

In summary, prototypical vertical dance

Uses rock climbing equipment (ropes, harnesses (front pick-up) and positioning devices) to
Suspend dancers who
Use a solid wall as a floor for
Performing and rehearsing dance movement in
Public spaces, which leads to
Choreography of descent
Altered perception (dancers and public)
Changes to performance conventions
Modified habitual patterns of behaviour/movement (dancers and public) and
Collaboration

**Boundaries of the Category of Vertical Dance**

What happens when vertical dance does not conform to the above prototype? I offer this prototype not as a value judgement, rather as an example of the most common characteristics of the form, constructed from my own practice and observation of others. Lakoff (1987) outlines themes of categorization as they have developed through time, the most relevant of which, for this project, is Wittgenstein’s notion of ‘family resemblances’, which asserts that members of a category need not all share all properties of the prototype (1953:32). In the case of the vertical dance category, practices in which all ten of the properties cannot be identified occupy a more peripheral position within the category. Again, the positions of centre and periphery do not indicate importance, or relative quality, they are merely positions within the space of the category. *Gwymon* (2013) and *Descent of the Angel* (2009), display all ten properties and are therefore prototypical members of the category and occupy the central position. All the other works in the portfolio are not prototypical and occupy more peripheral positions. Lakoff explains this phenomenon as ‘centrality
Wittgenstein observed that categories may have blurred boundaries (1953: 34), an idea that has been developed into ‘fuzzy set theory’ in mathematics by Zadeh (1965). Whilst the mathematical application is not relevant here, the notion that categories may have ‘fuzzy’ boundaries is significant to ascertaining the nature of the boundaries of the vertical dance category. As an example, consider *Omnibus*, a work I made in 2016 (not included in the portfolio) which employed all the properties of prototypical vertical dance, but also included aerial dance apparatus (hoop, trapeze, rope and silks), dancers ascending, and non-solid walls. Two observations emerge from attempts to categorise this work. The first concerns how the vertical dance category operates when performances exhibit prototypical and additional properties. Are these works central or peripheral? The second problem is the nature of the items that are used in *Omnibus*: aerial dance apparatus, which suggests that the work bridges two categories, vertical and aerial dance and that the boundary between these categories is blurred.
**Fuzzy boundaries between vertical and aerial dance**

Writing in the field of aerial dance has already focused attention on the differences between aerial dance and aerial circus (Bernasconi and Smith (2008) and Smith (2013) and between site-specific and aerial dance (Croushorn, n.d.), but to date there has been no attempt to differentiate vertical and aerial dance. When I began practising vertical dance in 2002, the terms aerial and vertical were used interchangeably. For example, Amelia Rudolph, director of Project Bandaloop, called her work aerial dance in an interview with USA Today in 2001 (in Thomas), but in 2008 she differentiated the terms:

...what distinguishes aerial and vertical dance from the circus arts is the intention that drives the work...In aerial dance the goal is not to build acts with feats that emphasize strength and daring but to build dances that conjure images, evoke feelings, delve into ideas and themes, and focus on the abstract pattern of movement for its own sake or in the service of expressing something.

in Bernasconi and Smith:58

In this statement, Rudolph separates vertical and aerial dance into two distinct categories, but she acknowledges that they share the property of dance aesthetics, which distinguishes both from aerial circus. Sonya Smith comments that the term aerial dance is often employed as an umbrella term encompassing all aerial acts including vertical dance (2013:1). I argue against the idea that aerial dance is a container for vertical dance, in my view, they exist as separate categories with blurred, or fuzzy boundaries.

Terry Sendgraff defines aerial dance as ‘a movement art form…that utilizes suspended apparatus for performance in the air’ (2008:37). In this statement, she points to a key divergence between aerial and vertical dance: what as opposed to who is suspended and how (Smith, 2013:3). The aerial dancer suspends herself
from a suspended apparatus, whereas the vertical dancer is suspended by a rope and a harness, giving rise to highly differentiated movement and choreographic outcomes, one of which is that vertical dancers are afforded much more upper body freedom.

In her discussion on the aesthetics of aerial dance, Smith (2013) states that there is a tendency to focus on dancing on the floor to transition onto the equipment. She notes that the ‘vertical dance’s relocation of, and reliance on the floor in the vertical plane is a twist in this understanding of the use of the floor’ (2013:5). The aerial dancer goes up and down from the ground; the vertical dancer returns to a vertical floor via a horizontal pathway. Smith states that aerial dance focuses on transitions, often from the floor onto apparatus (2013:3). Vertical dance choreographers, in contrast, rarely choreograph from the floor upwards, they are much more likely to descend from a high point such as a roof or a window, or ascend before the start of a performance. Thus, aerial dance incorporates ascent and descent in contrast to prototypical vertical dance which has a downward trajectory. Muscular effort in aerial dance is concentrated in the upper body, whereas a vertical dancer maintains consistent and sustained abdominal effort to balance her body on a wall. Aerial dancers employ an array of equipment which produce a divergence of techniques whereas vertical dancers use only a harness, rope and positioning device (according to my categorization). Although vertical dance choreographers deploy their limited equipment in diverse and often ingenious ways, the equipment imposes a particular regime and range of movement.
Venetian vertical dance choreographer, Wanda Moretti, comments that ‘the dancer’s perception of their body is deconstructed. She must reconstruct everything she knows in the horizontal plane in the vertical plane⁴ using other senses, other muscles, and of course this changes the gestures’ (in Lawrence and Moretti, 2006b:21). According to aerial dancer Robert Davison,

Suspended, there is no up or down…despite the fact that we fly, float, and soar we are exquisitely aware of our weight and the muscular tension of holding on to the bar – whether with a hand, a knee, the hips, or two ankles.

in Bernasconi and Smith, 2008:43

Comparing these descriptions of the experience of doing vertical (Moretti, 2006b)) and aerial (Davidson, 2008) dance reveals that both highlight a sense of spatial disorientation, however the latter contrasts this with the muscular effort required to maintain a suspended body.

Despite the differences outlined above, the two forms share the property of dance, but the content, style, technique and performance of the dance diverges. It can be said therefore that the categories of vertical and aerial dance are quite different even though they share the property of dance and they both inhabit aerial space. The aerial space for prototypical vertical dance is more prescribed; it predominantly takes place in public and uses existing architectures, whereas aerial dance will occur wherever a suspension point for apparatus can be achieved. The contingent

⁴ Note that the ‘vertical’ in vertical dance refers to the orientation of the wall, or ‘vertical floor’, not the position of the dancer’s body, which, more often than not, is horizontal to the ground.
relationships between vertical dance, equipment and public space reflect concerns in related forms such as site-specific practices and rock climbing.

**Vertical dance and site-specific performance**

I have chosen to explore the boundaries between vertical dance and site-specific performance as this has had a fundamental influence on my development and understanding of my practice, particularly in relation to the occupation and use of public space and the changes to performance conventions. Site-specific practices have been debated at length in the visual arts (Kwon, 2004; Kester, 2004; Lacy, 1995 and Lippard, 1997) and in theatre (Pearson, 2010; Pearson and Shanks, 2001; Birch and Tompkins, 2012; Lavender, 2016; Alston, 2016; Kaye, 2000) and have begun to receive attention in dance studies with recent publications of edited collections of essays (Kloetzel and Pavlik, 2009 and Hunter (ed.), 2010). It is not my intention here to survey this large body of work, but rather to pull out three themes that are relevant the present discussion of the boundaries of the category vertical dance. In short, these are: first, public space and the importance of the space around the art work and the demand for the presence of the spectator to complete the work; second, concern with the social impact of art and collaborative practices, and last, moving apparently immovable works.

Site-specific art is generally agreed to have emerged from minimalist sculpture in the late 1960s and early 1970s as artists placed emphasis on the space around the art work, and explicitly required the presence of the spectator to complete the work (Kwon, 2004, Kaye, 2000). A major shift occurred in relation to the status and understanding of art work: meaning was no longer perceived to be located in the
object of art (placed there by the artist to be decoded by a critic), but was now intimately tied to its location and to the person viewing it. Thus, sculptor Richard Serra declared that ‘to move the work is to destroy the work’ (in Kaye, 2000:2), in response to the proposed relocation of his sculpture *Tilted Arc* (as a result of public complaints) claiming that not just the work, but the meaning of the work was removed (see Kaye, 2000:2 and Kwon, 2004:71). *Tilted Arc* (1981-89), consisted of a massive ‘wall’ across Federal Plaza in New York, obstructing the most efficient pathway for pedestrians. In this way, public patterns of behaviour in the everyday were changed by the sculpture’s presence. The public were forced to confront and negotiate the sculpture, which they ultimately rejected, precipitating its removal in 1989. A similar, but less extreme modification of everyday public behaviour occurs during rehearsals and performance of vertical dance. Cordoning off areas below the dancers causes minor modifications to public passages through space and the presence of dancers on walls, if noticed, lifts the public gaze. Serra’s avowed artistic aim is to deliberately counter-act what he perceives to be the utilitarian nature of urban design and architecture by inserting something that restructures ‘conceptually and perceptually the organization of the site’ (in Kwon, 2004:73) in order to resist being ‘read as an affirmation of questionable ideologies and political power’ (in Kwon, 2004:75). Likewise, the presence of a vertical dancer’s body on the wall of a building can be seen to restructure the conceptual and perceptual organisation of the site, but this is accomplished not by inserting a new object into public space, forming an obstacle but by re-assigning or extending the use of existing space: a wall becomes a dance floor. Furthermore, vertical dance occupies space temporarily (sometimes repeatedly) and therefore does not create permanent obstructions to public pathways.
Serra’s approach critiques the institutional frameworks in which it is framed as a resistance to the corporate, institutional placing of public art in public spaces. New genre public art (Lacy, 1995), on the other hand, sees the role of the artist as a socially responsible agent of change for the good. In her essay ‘Public Constructions’, Patricia C. Phillips asserts that ‘public art needs to be more a modest, transitional, revisable, and sustained activity in communities’ (in Lacy, 1995:69). What she proposes, and I concur, is ‘collective exploration’ of the ‘instrumentality of art’ (Phillips, 1995:69). This concern is echoed in the work of choreographer Rosemary Lee, who often works with large groups of mainly non-dancers and expresses a concern with examining and sharing the nature of existence, of being, through the medium of dance. In a video interview about her 2009 work, Common Ground, she talks about her decision to use the main floor space rather than the stage, in order to re-inscribe a ‘civic space’ as a space ‘where you can soar, where you can fly… where you can find the sublime in your own bodies’ (The Guardian, 2009). The work I have been undertaking, rehearsing and performing vertical dance in public space, has an underlying aim to carve out a space within the urban environment in which vertical dance can be practiced, witnessed and experienced on a regular basis, in collaboration with the gate-keepers of those spaces. In the introduction to their book, Site Dance, Kloetzel and Pavlik refer to this collaborative, process oriented approach to choreography as ‘attending to place’, requiring a ‘sustained commitment’ to ‘art-making and the community-place interaction’ (2009:7). In this way, the unfamiliar sight of dancers using a wall as a floor becomes more familiar and the public are encouraged to stop and look up for a moment, or longer, for free. We have danced on the exterior walls of Venue Cymru in Llandudno for four years and during this time we have held public workshops,
established a youth group, rehearsed and performed. It is my hope that our regular dancing presence in an initially surprising place, the wall of a council-run theatre, by the box office, reveals a collaborative relationship with the institution that has sanctioned this activity and signals that making art work in public is possible, and sustainable.

The final parallel I wish to draw between site-specific work and vertical dance concerns issues surrounding the un-hinging of the work from its site of creation. This is a subject debated at length by Miwon Kwon (2004) and connects to a primary or originary notion of site as a physical place which cannot be ‘re-placed’. Kwon juxtaposes site-oriented work with what she terms the ‘nomadic’ modernist art work, displayed in different galleries around the world (similar to the touring theatre or dance productions) apparently maintaining its meaning regardless of its environment of display. She observes a recent tendency in site practice of relocating site-specific art works away from their original sites of creation, with a consequent expansion beyond the concrete, fixed locational notion of site to that of a discursive field incorporating community, history and ideas, that may only have a virtual existence (2004). She envisions this un-hinging of site as having potentially ‘liberating effects, displacing the strictures of place-bound identities with the fluidity of a migratory model’ (2004:165) whilst at the same time being ‘symptomatic of the dynamics of de-territorialization, as theorised in urban spatial discourse’ (2004: 157). She refers specifically to the work of Lucy Lippard who asserts that our identities are closely tied to our sense of place and to nature, and that the rapid growth of capitalism and urbanisation has contributed to a loss of a sense of identity. (2004: 158). The relevance here is in relation to the moving of the vertical dance work Gwymon 2 (see
Chapter Five) and the potential un-hinging of the meaning of the work in relation to its connection to its original site, its specific relationship to nature and the community from which it evolved, with attendant questions regarding my assertion that vertical dance operates as an interstitial practice within the main global capitalist market.

Vertical dance and rock climbing

I have stated above that a key property of prototypical vertical dance is the use of rock climbing equipment, specifically, rope, harness and positioning devices. It is therefore germane to consider the boundaries between climbing and vertical dance. Rock climbing uses this equipment as a safety net, not for the suspension of bodies, except where those bodies fall and need to be rescued by their equipment. The idea of the vertical floor for standing on does not transfer directly to rock climbing as the climber seeks to distribute her weight on small horizontal surfaces (ledges, edges and footholds), except in more extreme situations on overhanging surfaces, when the climber will often use vertical footholds for balance. It is in this more extreme arena that spatial perception is most altered in climbing; when climbing on vertical rock the body is largely maintained in a familiar relation to gravity: upright. Climbing on overhangs or roofs requires a horizontal body position, changing habitual frames of spatial perception. The use of the body in rock climbing bears more similarities with aerial dance in that the climber suspends the weight of her own body from her arms. A climber does not generally aspire to perform dance movement, although there have been allusions to climbing as dance in climbing literature. Climbers increasingly rehearse difficult climbs, a practice known as red-pointing, or head-pointing (in the case of traditional climbing) prior to ‘performing’ a ‘clean’ ascent, in which they do not weight the equipment at all during the climb. Whilst rock climbing
is usually undertaken in remote locations, climbers often film their activities and post them on social media networks to be consumed by a wider public. Additionally, the rise of competitive climbing means that public performance has become a more important feature of the practice. Thus, climbing, rather than changing existing performance conventions, is now beginning to introduce these. Probably the biggest divergences between climbing and vertical dance are that climbing is inherently a choreography of ascent rather than descent and outdoor climbing does not require permissions from the owners of the land, it is generally tolerated and the associated risks are accepted as a personal choice to be managed by the climbers themselves.

Whilst my own work emerged organically out of my interest in blending my climbing practice and my interest in site-specific debates with my dance practice, over time I have become aware of different artists working in similar, and different ways, and of a new, hybrid category of dance emerging. I will now proceed to consider the work of some of these artists through the lens of the category and prototypes I have developed to gain some insight into how these practices have emerged, diverged and overlapped over dispersed geographical locations times.

**Where was I?**

My first experience of vertical dance was watching *Rock*, a one-off performance for Spring Loaded Dance Festival in 1993, choreographed by Nikki Smedley in the climbing gym of the Sobell Sports Centre in London. Smedley worked with climbers and dancers and incorporated belaying and climbing as well as suspended movement. I had just started climbing myself and was inspired by the possibilities of bringing dance and climbing together in performance. It was another nine years
before I acted upon this impulse, but during this time I continued climbing. Smedley never made another vertical dance work, signalling the somewhat haphazard development of vertical dance, ranging between one-off, often seminal explorations to in-depth practices developed over many years. It has been part of my development of the field to create coherence out of the field and personal encounters are inevitably the real starting points.

Where did it start?
As I have outlined in the Introduction, there is very little scholarly work on vertical dance. There is reason to believe that the initial desire to explore the suspended dancing body arose in 1959, when seminal postmodern dancers gathered for Anna Halprin’s six-week workshop in Marin County, California. Halprin encouraged them to work with the choreographic idea of ‘task’, ‘such as sweeping with a broom – an ordinary action…performed s if you were not performing, but off alone somewhere, sweeping up (Brown in Livet, 1978:44). One of these dancers was Trisha Brown, whose work I consider in greater depth below. Halprin herself experimented with suspending dancers in Exposizione (1963), created collaboratively for the Venice Biennale. A huge cargo net was suspended forty feet high across the proscenium of the Venice Opera House. Halprin set the dancers the task to ‘penetrate the entire auditorium’, carrying huge bundles of random objects, such as car tires (Worth and Poyner, 2004:15); their journey included traversing the cargo net above the heads of the audience. Her intent was to disrupt the theatre environment and create an intense experience for performers and audience and to explore ‘the nature of the encounter between performers and audience’ (Halprin, 1995:93). Whilst the suspension of dancers was only a part of her vision, it is worth noting that she was
interested in disrupting conventional spatial configurations within architecture and ‘challenging the audiences’ habitual association’ (Worth and Poyner, 2004:13), both of which are primary concerns of the postmodern period and many site-specific and vertical dance artists.

**Trisha Brown alters spatial perception**

Some years after her experience with Halprin, Brown went on to create a series of works referred to as ‘equipment pieces’ (Livet, 1978:51) in New York, where she experimented with using apparatus to alter the viewer’s perception of the body in space, a prototypical property of vertical dance. The exploration of everyday movement was a major preoccupation for the postmodern dancers at Judson Church in New York in the 1960s and 1970s, and Brown was at the forefront of explorations on vertical planes. I witnessed a selection of reconstructions of her equipment pieces – *Planes* (1968), *Floor of the Forest* (1969) and *Walking on the Wall* (1971) - when they were restaged at the Barbican in London in May 2011. For *Planes* (1968), Brown built a wall with holes in it, which the dancers could climb on. She then projected a film of aerial footage onto the wall. She said of the work, ‘the audience’s perception was altered. The back wall of the stage became like the floor of the auditorium’ (Brown in Livet, 1978:515). The work clearly displays the prototypical property of altering spatial perception, but it is not a prototypical work because the dancers suspend themselves, as in aerial dance or climbing, and,

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5 Italian/American dancer and choreographer Simone Forti created a work called Slant Board in 1961, in which dancers moved up and down a board at a 45-degree angle to the ground using knotted ropes. She also studied with Anna Halprin and was exploring the ‘interface of sculpture and performance’ (Weingartner, 2014). After this she concentrated on assisting her husband, performance artist Robert Whitman and when she returned to her own work, her innovative early explorations had become ‘established tropes’, explaining the lack of recognition she has earned (Weingartner, 2014).
ironically for an ‘equipment piece’, there is no equipment involved. The choreographic trajectory is lateral rather than downwards and the work is staged in galleries and theatres, not in public space. There are limited changes to performance conventions however the habitual movement of the dancer is modified by climbing. The wall is pierced with holes, which means it is not solid. Brown worked with collaborators on the film and music, but I think it is unlikely that she rehearsed in a public space. *Planes* (1968) is therefore a work occupying the blurred boundary of the vertical dance/aerial dance/climbing categories.

*Floor of the Forest* (1969), her second equipment piece, involved a horizontal climbing frame constructed from ropes threaded with clothes. The dancers travelled above the heads of the audience (in the original version), using the clothes as their support, like harnesses, effectively dressing and undressing as they progressed.\(^6\) Brown’s concern with altering spatial perception is articulated when she describes her intention to present ‘a normally vertical activity performed horizontally and reshaped by the vertical pull of gravity’ (1978:51). Prototypically, in the work the dancers are intermittently suspended as they move through the suspended clothing, which is transformed into harnesses as it is occupied by the dancers. There was no wall and no prototypical equipment (beyond the use of clothing as harnesses) and the trajectory of the movement was horizontal. The work Brown made in this period were concerned with performing everyday actions as ‘naturally’ as possible in new orientations which placed those actions out of the ordinary, altering the spatial perception of the viewer. Her staging of *Floor of the Forest* in 1969 above a

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\(^6\) An interesting re-emergence of the use of clothing as ‘harness’ to support the dancer may be seen in Angie Hiesl’s and Roland Kaiser’s 2011 collaborative work, *Dressing the City and my head is a Shirt* in the streets of Cologne: [https://vimeo.com/39887465](https://vimeo.com/39887465).
rummage sale explicitly gave the audience the choice of looking up, at the dancers, or engaging in buying and selling clothes, changing established performance conventions by offering choice (1978:54). *Floor of the Forest* (1969), like *Planes* (1968) displays the property of altering spatial perception as the most salient prototypical feature, as well as a transitory relationship with the suspended body, again placing the work on the blurred boundary with aerial dance and/or climbing.

The work that is most often cited by vertical dancers as the pioneering of vertical dance is the eponymous *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970). A man walks, as naturally as possible, suspended in a harness facing the ground, down the wall of a building. This work continues Brown’s interest (perhaps rooted in Halprin’s workshop in 1959) in making the unnatural seem utterly natural, to alter audience perception (and presumably that of the performer). On the surface, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970) appears to occupy a central position in the vertical dance category: the dancer is suspended against a wall that is used as a floor, performing a choreography of descent in public space. However, the attachment point of the rope to the harness is at the rear, and the limited dance content of the work (walking) appear to deflect the work from a central position. This raises the problem of classifying dance. Brown and her postmodern contemporaries radically questioned the constitution of dance by framing everyday movement and tasks as dance, so given this context, it is possible to classify walking as dance. *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970) is a work very close to the centre of the category, almost prototypical.
Where did it start again?

The teaching and choreography of modern dance choreographer Alwin Nikolais in New York was influential in the development of three aerial and vertical dance practitioners in North America: Stephanie Evanitsky, Batya Zamir and Terry Sendgraff. Nikolais himself only made one ‘aerial’ work, *Sorcerer* (1960), cited by Bernasconi and Smith as an early instance where a dancer was suspended using rope and harness, yet they do not classify it as aerial dance as the ‘aerial work [was] in service to an idea or image that the choreographer want[ed] to convey’ rather than as ‘an exploration of the genre of aerial dance in and of itself’ (2008:5). This observation reveals that Bernasconi and Smiths’ concept of aerial dance includes a practice to be developed over time, not a singular exploration by a ground-based choreographer undertaken to explore a particular idea. These singular instances of aerial, or vertical dance work can however be very influential on the development of the form, acting as catalysts for explorations by others. Nikolais’ work was characterized by choreographic use of objects and forms, often transforming the bodies of the dancers and creating abstract worlds, and Sendgraff, Zamir and Evanitsky all developed aerial work with objects, structures, equipment and apparatus. Sendgraff invented the ‘low-flying trapeze’, now a major new discipline in aerial dance and was very influential in the development of vertical dancers in the San Francisco Bay area. Zamir collaborated with her husband, using his sculptural work to suspend her body, and Evanitsky established Multigraviational Aerodance Group (MAG).
Evanitsky and MAG on the fuzzy boundary with the ground all around

At the same time as Trisha Brown was creating equipment pieces, Stephanie Evanitsky, also in New York, was experimenting with suspending objects in the air for dancers to climb on, and be suspended by, pursuing a desire to explore ‘space and time’ to give ‘birth to a new way of moving’ rather than emphasise acrobatic skill (Evanitsky in Bernasconi and Smith, 2008:32), suggesting a shift in focus from the physical to the conceptual, which is shared by Brown. MAG’s work was collective – they did not use the names of individuals – and, like Brown’s Floor of the Forest (1969), featured the dancers moving between climbing and suspending their bodies, balanced on suspended props, such as tyre inner tubes (ibid. 2008:34). Evanitsky explains that the world of conventional aerial disciplines can be perceived as ‘fragile’ as it provides little support for the performer (ibid. 2008:34). By rigging a range of supports in a space (for example ropes, tyre inner tubes), MAG explored the ‘in-between moment’, the transition between supports for the body in the air ‘to exist outside this “normal” framework’ of aerial dance (ibid. 2008:34). This preoccupation with the ‘in-between’ and being outside a normal framework of aerial dance suggest that she perceived her work as hovering between (on the fuzzy boundary) between vertical and aerial dance, between being supported and self-supporting. There is no wall in this work, but there are multiple surfaces, horizontal and vertical on which the dancers can gain purchase. The movement was presented as dance, but critics struggled to accept it as such. It was performed in theatres, not public spaces, and the trajectory of the choreography was mostly lateral. There is little or no discernible change to spatial perception, but the habitual movement patterns of the dancers/aerialists was substantially modified by the constructed performance environment. This is an example of a blurred aerial/vertical boundary dance.
Evanitsky notes the importance of ‘listening’ to the movement of a swinging object in order to flow ‘in space and time’ and reveal the ‘infrastructure of the motion’ (ibid. 2008:35). This focus on sensing the flow of movement in collaboration with the motion of suspended objects is a very similar approach to that of the dancer suspended in a harness. She says that in her work the dancer has ‘more ground’ not less. ‘You are always attached to a gripping point and the audience sees it…In other dance performances, the audience never perceives the floor as a gripping point’ (in Bernasconi and Smith, 2008:15). It is very pertinent to vertical dance that she uses the notion of floor, or ground, as a metaphor for gaining balance and stability in an unusual relationship to gravity. As she says, ‘you have ground all around you’ (ibid. 2008:15).  

Over on the West Coast

Two San Francisco-based choreographers, Joanna Haigood and Jo Kreiter, make aerial and vertical dance work that is largely site-specific. This means that their work is rooted in the sites in which it is performed, and often involves extended research into the site’s social, cultural and political history. Furthermore, it is unlikely that these works would ever by transported to other sites, an issue I discuss in relation to my work, Gwymon (2013), in Chapter Five. The third, Amelia Rudolph, is most recognized for her ‘epic’ body of work that is performed on a range of high rise buildings around the world: her main body of work is probably the most prototypical of all the vertical dance examples investigated here.

7 The work of MAG was not accepted by critics as serious dance work, and Evanitsky gave up in 1976. A couple of members of the group continued but the company was finally dissolved in 1986.
Kreiter's occupations of spaces of conflict

Kreiter says she ‘thrive[s] at the intersection of social justice and acrobatic spectacle’ (company website). She sees

art as a catalyst for change…and create[s] off the ground, site-specific dances … where the artistic process is in service of a larger political goal. [Site dance] impacts because it unfolds at the very place where a conflict lives… the site holds a quandary in its “hands”, or in the bricks or I-beams or concrete walls. Sometimes a site holds the possibility of celebration as well.

Flyaway Productions Company website

The concern with changing social space through performance is a theme at the heart of this thesis and my practice. Unlike Kreiter, for me this is not an explicit political mission, but an underlying, hopeful ambition, one which I discuss in relation to my practice in Belfast in Chapter Four in particular. Kreiter shares Evanitsky’s concern with presenting women as powerful and works exclusively with women. Whilst Haigood’s work is concerned with uncovering and representing layers of hidden or marginal histories, often connected to issues of race, Kreiter has a more explicitly feminist, activist approach, connecting to recent events. She acknowledges Haigood’s influence on her work (she has performed regularly in Haigood’s work) and distinguishes her own work as being about ‘bringing an audience to the exact place where an issue, conflict, or need lives’ (in Kloetzel and Pavlik, 2009:239), an idea that resonates with my 2009 work, Fly Butterfly (see Chapter Four) where the audience were brought to the previously fortified centre of Belfast.

One of her major works, which she describes as her signature work (ibid. 2009:243), Mission Wall Dances (2002), was staged in public space, at the site of an arson attack. The performances took place on a wall with a mural depicting the original
building on fire with balconies and windows with people looking out – the mural was painted for the project, and left behind afterwards, leaving a significant physical change in the space; a memorial to the event. Kreiter fixed ‘fake’ doors and fire exits to the wall to create a sense of three dimensions and the dancers worked with these structures. The work features a duet between a suspended dancer and a suspended steel umbrella with no panels, set to a sound score of water, overlaid with recorded testimonies of the people who had lived through the arson attack and subsequent displacement. The dancer hanging on the useless umbrella creates a powerful image of the fragility of human life in the face of catastrophe, a body hanging in space, with slender support.

The mixture here of aerial rigged equipment and suspended dancer diminishes the dancing aspect of aerial circus to create a poetic image in which the specific suspended objects are loaded with meaning. The dancer is supported by the harness, but the support is somewhat simultaneously assisted and undermined by the suspended apparatus which provides unstable support. In a duet in which two female dancers run on a wall as if it were a floor, alongside a suspended ladder, which they are ‘carrying’, like firefighters rushing to put out a fire, the orientation of the dancers on the vertical wall, coping with the swinging ladder, combine, using altered spatial perception, to emphasize the unstable, fragile nature of life. This work incorporates elements of aerial dance, where dancers suspend their own weight, suggesting this work is a hybrid of vertical and aerial dance. It is not clear from the video, whether Kreiter only employs a choreography of descent. This work not only changed performance conventions and modified habitual patterns of behaviour, it
produced and changed social space significantly (Lefebvre, 1974), a concept to be
developed further in Chapter Three.

Amelia Rudolph/Project Bandaloop

My notion of a wall operating as a floor, suspended dancers and choreography of
descent as defining features of vertical dance is most obviously demonstrated by
Project Bandaloop, who state that they use ‘intricate choreography and climbing
technology to turn the dance floor on its side’ (Bandaloop, 1991). Bandaloop are
probably one of the ‘best examples’ of the vertical dance category in the sense that
they conform to all the properties of the prototype in most (but not all) of their work.
Director of the company, Amelia Rudolph’s trajectory into vertical dance echoes my
own in that, like me, she brought her movement experience into dialogue with her
climbing practice and claims that ‘climbing began to feel expressive’ (in Bernasconi
and Smith, 2008:56). Again, like me, her early experiments were conducted working
with climbers and dancer in a rock climbing gym. She spent seven years performing
in Terry Sendgraff’s aerial choreography for Dance Brigade’s Revolutionary
Nutcracker Sweetie (performed annually from 1987 – 1997). In addition, Rudolph
saw a performance by Haigood in the early 1990s, who incorporated aerial
sequences into her site-specific work. Rudolph describes her own approach to
vertical dance as a combination of ‘contemporary dance movement, rock climbing,
contact improvisation, and release technique’, and she distinguishes it from other
aerial dance because it has ‘no circus-based influence’ and is performed in a ‘wide
range of locations’ (in Bernasconi and Smith, 2008: 57).
Rudolph founded Project Bandaloop in 1991 and the company has produced work of epic proportions, mostly performed on skyscrapers, but also on the colossal rock faces in Yosemite Park. The work is significant to my understanding of how vertical dance can alter the viewer’s spatial perception as it has been described as ‘perspective-bending’. In relation to spectacle, Rudolph says ‘I like dance that evokes rather than tells, that burns an image on your deep imagination more that it thrills your senses’ (in Bernasconi and Smith, 2008:58). The company appears to make work that can be fairly easily transported to different locations as the same works (undoubtedly reworked to fit new spaces) appear on different buildings all over the world. The issue of moving site-specific works, referred to earlier in this chapter, is one I will return to in Chapter Five, when I discuss my own work, *Gwymon* (2013), which was performed in several locations. It is clear that Project Bandaloop perform in very public spaces, and it follows that they must conduct some rehearsals in public too, changing performance conventions and modifying habitual patterns of behaviour: the public must look up.

**What’s going on over here?**

There is reason to believe that vertical dance in Europe arose in the 1980s from a marriage between dance and climbing practices in France, around 1986, when sportsman turned dancer Bruno Dizien, and Laura de Nercy, a dancer who had worked with Alwin Nikolais in New York, began to dance and climb together. The result was referred to as ‘danse escalade’, or dance climbing. They formed the first company to work in this genre, Roc in Lichen, and their first, and arguably most notable work, *Le Creux Poplité* (1987), was performed on a bathroom structure installed half way up a 500-metre towering rock face in the Verdon Gorge. Critic
Jennifer Dunning wrote of a reprise of the work in New York in 1990, that the ‘bathroom' was on its side, to be viewed through its roof, altering spatial perception, and ‘the dancers move up and around a 17-foot high vertical “floor” of gleaming white tile’, wearing no harnesses (New York Times, 1990). In the original performance, the structure took 10 days to install on the rock face, and then de Nercy and Dizien were lowered down and performed a climbing duet in the suspended space (they were not themselves suspended), filmed by helicopter. It is unclear from the information available if there was a live audience for the performance in the Verdon Gorge, and indeed, where they were situated. Two dancers who worked with Roc in Lichen, Fabrice Guillot and Antoine le Menestral, both climbers, went on to create companies that are still performing today: Compagnie Retouramont and Les Lezards Bleus respectively. Le Menestral is an extraordinary maverick hybrid artist/climber. He started his company in 1992 and works mainly as a solo artist.

**Compagnie Retouramont**

Like Roc in Lichen, Compagnie Retouramont was born out of a collaboration between rock climber Fabrice Guillot and dancer Genevieve Mazin. Guillot is currently sole artistic director of the company, developing his own very specific focus on working in the ‘void', often between buildings. He creates objects/structures for the dancers to engage with in the void and uses rope and bungee (elastic ropes which allow the dancer to ‘bounce’) in his choreography. The piece I particularly want to focus on is *Vide Accordé*, made in 2006, which I saw in Albert Square in Manchester in 2010. This work, which influenced my use of ‘rope as wall’ in my 2011 work, *Ynghlwm* (see Chapter Five), uses rope as the thin, precarious bendy
‘floor’ for the dancers. Guillot constructed a web of ropes suspended between two buildings, creating a central rigging point (just from rope), from which three dancers are suspended using prototypical equipment (harness, rope and positioning device). The whole form is fixed, but mobile; there is no solidity or stasis and the dancers are contained within the form and swing between the lines of ropes, teeter along them and clutch them in their hands. The aim of the work appears to be to highlight and draw attention to void space between buildings by filling it with an impermanent, delicate, web-like structure, occupied by three dancers. This work is not performed on existing architecture, but inserts a new architecture which makes a connection across the void, filling the previously empty space with an impossible world of possibility, altering perception of ‘empty’ space. An element of the basic equipment required for vertical dance – rope - is amplified and its creative potential celebrated by Guillot, providing a very delicate and flexible series of rope ‘floors’ at different angles on which the suspended dancers attempt to gain purchase above the heads of the public, in the heart of a city. Performance conventions are changed, the habitual behaviour of the dancers is modified by the structure they inhabit, and the gaze of the public is directed upwards to a space normally filled only by the sky. The dancers descend to the ground at the end of the work, conforming to the prototypical vertical dance choreography of descent.

Il Posto/Wanda Moretti

Moretti is a seminal vertical dance artist based in Venice, Italy, who founded her company, Il Posto, in 1994. She has focused almost exclusively on vertical dance on the exterior walls of mainly historic buildings, on which her dancers seem completely at ease, as if they were standing on the earth, not on a vertical surface.
She has developed her own specific method of training for vertical dance, called ‘vertical suspension training for dancers’ from a combination of stretch band training, yoga and pilates. The training uses some of the vertical dance equipment, for example, ascenders and slings attached to ropes and focuses on developing core stability in unstable conditions, exactly what is required from the vertical dancer. I first met Moretti in 2007 and have been training with her and using her techniques ever since. She employs Laban space theories in her choreographic work and is entirely self-taught in the discipline of vertical dance. She learnt to rig her own suspension systems for dancers from Alpine guides and still does most of her own rigging. Her work is detailed, intimate and spectacular all at once. The ability of the dancers to appear to be dancing in a normal relation to gravity, sometimes in high heels, whilst being tipped through ninety degrees, presents a challenge to everyday spatial perception that creates the spectacular, yet intensely intimate moments in her choreography. Moretti has been very influential in my development as a vertical dance artist. She is quite secretive about her choreographic process, but recently I learnt that she works alone on movement sequences before sharing them with her dancers. She has her own rehearsal and training space in Forte Marghera, the old fort built to protect Venice, and also uses the Fire Fighters training tower in Mestre, which seems like a purpose-built vertical dance training facility, seven stories high and three windows across, built of wood, allowing egress onto the walls at every level. Moretti recently told me that she often rehearses alone there, under the watchful gaze of the firefighters. Her other rehearsal venue is the curved walls of the exterior of a church equipped for climbing in the vacated industrial area of Marghera, on the mainland opposite Venice. Moretti has clearly developed strong collaborative partnerships with the communities of the church and the firefighters, allowing her to
insert her vertical dance practice into the everyday fabric of their activities, a necessity for choreographers in the form in order to have access to training facilities and to create the conditions of performance in rehearsal that allow the dancers to become familiar with performing in public space.

Most, but not all, of Moretti’s choreography can be described as prototypical vertical dance, like that of Project Bandaloop; the difference between the two lies mostly in the scale and aesthetic of the buildings on which they perform, which is driven in part by the architecture of their respective countries, but also in the character of the movement vocabulary. Italy is full of historic architecture and bell towers; North America is full of modern skyscrapers, often glass fronted. Morettii has focused consistently on developing choreographic work that uses the wall as a floor since 1994, and her dancers look more and more comfortable in their tilted world as the years pass. I will now focus on a specific work which reveals her architectural sensibility in a staging of a ‘rescue’ choreography.

Wanda Moretti’s architectural sensibility and staging rescue

Far Vuoto (Make Void), which I watched on film, was choreographed by Moretti in 2012 for the Venice International Performance Art Week, and performed by Simone Forlani on the Palazzo Bembo’s façade. My interest in the work here is twofold: to look at how the choreography and the dancer negotiate the architectural space and to consider the implications of staging a rescue of the protagonist dancer by a real firefighter as part of the choreography.
The space is closed and narrow. The audience watch from below, and the performance is also filmed from inside, through stained glass windows. The solo dancer, in sombre dress, emerges from above, over the edge of the building and descends to stand on the wall with a window below and to her right. She is a solitary figure, apparently immersed in her own world, despite her very public position. She stretches her arms and then retracts them, reaching then yielding. Her hands grasp at something, her eyes search as if for something missing. She shrugs a shoulder and circles her head, catlike. She descends lower so that the window is directly to her right, initiating a small lateral pendulum. Her leg reaches across the window to the other side, measuring the space. She jumps very precisely over the window aperture several times, avoiding the void it offers. The window represents to me an inner world the dancer does not wish to enter. She descends some more and her movements become bigger, she jumps and almost disappears from the camera frame before returning. She inverts and stumbles, she is no longer in perfect balance, but tumbling as if buffeted by a turbulent slow-motion wind. She stands, but her legs buckle. She reaches, stretching as if she is trying to capture something that is vanishing and pull it in towards her. This feels like a dance of grief and loss. She has lost the ability to stand on the wall and floats as if suspended in water, her eyes closed. A firefighter emerges from the roof and descends to her. He performs a full and real rescue, descending with her and gently placing her head on the ground, where she remains, unmoving. The audience applauds.

The very precise measuring of the space by the dancer so that she can ‘avoid the void’ is an example of how a vertical dance choreographer creates work for the available space, using the architectural features, in this case, a window, to create
tension – will the dancer step through the window? What will happen if she does? Furthermore, in my reading of the work, the window represents a gateway to an inner world, which the dancer avoids, preferring to remain in the social realm, on the exterior of the building. Moretti seems to deconstruct the carefully established technique of vertical dance as the work progresses so that the dancer loses her capacity to ‘stand on the wall’, she becomes disorientated; a powerful symbol when we have already seen how capable she is at the outset. The ‘rescue’ element of the work prompts a host of questions about the connections between real life and performance, different sorts of vertical labour (dancing and firefighting) and a collaborative partnership between dancer, musician and firefighter, guided by the choreographer. Moretti told me that some members of the audience believed the dancer was really being rescued, blurring the lines between real life and performance and highlighting the potential dangers of both vertical dance and firefighting as occupations. The partnership between solo saxophonist below, firefighter on the roof and dancer needing rescue created a poetic tension in the space. The involvement of a firefighter from the station where Moretti often rehearses and trains underlines the depth of the collaborative relationship (a key aspect of the prototype) between the fire service and the vertical dance practiced by Moretti in Venice.

**Lindsey Butcher’s fractured and unstable floors**

Lindsey Butcher is an aerial, vertical and ground-based dancer with a breadth and depth of experience which she applies across and between these fields of practice. She trained at London Contemporary Dance School and then joined Extemporary Dance Theatre, where she first discovered aerial dance. She proceeded to train in
aerial dance techniques with a company called Ra-Ra Zoo Circus Theatre. Butcher has always worked as a freelance dancer and her work with Scarabeus and Momentary Fusion companies introduced her to vertical dance and working in harnesses in the early 2000s. She founded her own company, Gravity and Levity, in 2003. On her company website, Butcher states that her company’s work is founded on a genuine fascination to explore the range of movement, dynamic and suspension gained whilst working at improbable angles, or when the dancer’s familiar relationship to the floor, weight and gravity was substantially changed.

(Gravity and Levity, 2017)

This statement uses the words ‘suspension’ and ‘dancers’, attesting to her interest in creating unfamiliar situations for dancers, especially with regards to their habitual use of weight, the floor and the pull of gravity. These concerns are prototypical of vertical dance and contribute to the modification of dancers’ habitual movement patterns and altering of spatial perception. Most of Gravity and Levity’s shows have taken place in theatres, which is not a prototypical vertical dance environment. I will now consider two works, Why? (2005) and Shift (2008).

Gravity and Levity’s first company show, which toured to theatres, comprised a set of six pieces, three of which were live (the others were films). One of these was an apparently prototypical vertical dance work called Why? (2005), choreographed by Fin Walker for Butcher and male dancer Lee Clayden. It was performed on a portable wall with which the company toured. The wall was used as a floor and the choreography descended. I saw the work twice, once inside a theatre, and once and once at the Royal Opera House, where the wall was sited outside, in Covent Garden. These were two very different watching experiences. The work has an intensity
which for me was slightly dissipated by the everydayness of the outdoor location. The watching area was cordoned off for the paying audience, creating a slightly uncomfortable sense of us and them with the general public. The movement material and energy of this work is very distinct and individual, created by a choreographer (Walker) with no previous experience of the form. There is an economy of choreography which is refreshing. Little of the distinctive lateral pendulum movement of vertical dance is employed, and in the section I examined the performers inhabit separate spaces, lit by vertical shafts of light. The choreography juxtaposes expectant stillness with fast, explosive movement and multiple, complex acrobatic rotations. The critics reaction to the work is similar to that of Dunning to Le Creux Poplité (1987) cited earlier: ‘you feel as if you’re watching them from above rather than the side’ (Roy, 2005) and ‘at times I felt I was watching the action from above like a Busby Berkeley movie and that the actors were not suspended but performing on the floor’ (Strapp, 2005 quoted on Gravity and Levity website). These comments all attest to the spatial disorientation experienced when watching these works.

After seeing the company’s first production, I had the privilege of being a participant observer in the early stages of the creation process of the company’s second work, Shift (2008), with Butcher and designer Mish Weaver. I was able to observe and try out some of the design propositions, including flying planks of wood, tiny ‘dance floors’ tethered in space and counterbalance.\(^8\) This experience, along with my observation of Cie Retouramont’s Vide Accordé (2006) opened my eyes to the

\(^8\) Counterbalance systems use a rope passing thought an overhead pulley to connect two dancers, enabling them to exchange weight in a seesaw motion.
possibility that a vertical dance floor need not be the solid walls of buildings, and led to my exploration of counterbalance in *Ynghlwm* (2011), explored in depth in Chapter Five.

**De la Guarda/Fuerzabruta and soft, collapsing and moving walls**

I want to finish by considering the vertical dance practice of Argentinian company De la Guarda, later to become Fuerzabruta (although there is some confusion over the name of the latter, whether it is the name of the company or of a show). De la Guarda formed in 1993, and developed an immersive style of event with their performance *Villa Villa*, which toured internationally, and which I experienced in 1999 at the Roundhouse in London. The company transformed the inside of the theatre space into an environment which became like a rave, or festival. They used a range of harness connections: front, back and high on the back, as well as elaborate rigging systems. The vertical dance vocabulary was quite simple, consisting mainly of running and moving around in the harness whilst being swung through the air.

Fuerzabruta emerged under the direction of one of the founder members of De la Guarda, Diqui James, when De la Guarda company members went their separate ways in 2002 (Moss, 2006). James created an epic eponymous show which was later entitled *Wayra* and has since been touring the world. The show uses many of the devices employed in De la Guarda’s *Villa Villa*, but on a much bigger scale. They make use of billowing suspended light fabric ‘walls’ upon which the suspended dancers get very little purchase, creating a dreamlike quality. The central male character runs throughout the show on a moving walkway which changes speeds. He is suspended from above, with the attachment point high on his back. The floor
on which runs is horizontal, but moving and the man is only suspended occasionally. In another section, there are two suspended rotating double-sided ‘walls’ fitted with handles. On either side of each wall is a suspended dancer, trying to hold onto the wall as it rotates faster and more erratically. Eventually these ‘walls’, which look like they are made of a flimsy, shiny fabric, come loose from their frames and the dancers lose any sense of a solid ground on which to stand. What is significant for me here, in relation to the category of vertical dance, is the preoccupation with a sense of walls as floors or surfaces on which to gain purchase, and in the case of Fuerzabruta, as precarious, shifting, unpredictable planes in space. The walls literally shift, shatter and crumple around the dancers, undermining any perception that a wall is a solid object. This performance is not held in public space, but it does change theatre going conventions by demanding that audiences move around the space during the rave-like performance, and crucially, that they look up.

Concluding thoughts

The desire to reframe the body in space is echoed in the work of many vertical dance choreographers, myself included. Wanda Moretti’s detailed and specific training of vertical dancers to develop their core muscles (and which I use in my practice), aims to create the image that the dancers are completely at home on a tilted floor, echoing Brown’s aim to present ‘a natural activity under the stress of an unnatural setting’ (1978:51). This aim is echoed in Canadian company, Aeriosa’s mission statement to ‘reveal unusual perspectives of human existence in natural social and built environments’ (company website). Argentinian artist, Brenda Angiel, whose work is usually staged in theatres, states that aerial dance ‘creates a spatial illusion that calls for the spectator’s perception process and allow him to transcend
his static vision, giving place to a new point of view’ (company website). To summarise, Brown’s concerns with altering spatial perception of the viewer and releasing the spectator form a specific object to be viewed – as in the darkened theatre – and offering viewing choice (as in Floor of the Forest (1969)), are, in my mind, fundamental aspects of my own practice and of the vertical dance form.

The case studies presented in this chapter reveal that there are some possible omissions to the vertical dance prototype, such as the notion of spectacle (mentioned in relation to the work of Project Bandaloop and Fuerzabruta), the effects of weight (raised by Butcher) and the pendulum movement typical of vertical dance. Vertical dance can be characterised as a spectacular activity in the sense that it presents dancing bodies in extraordinary positions in space. However, spectacle is a more complex issue that I have chosen not to focus on here, as Debord’s (1967) situationist account has in some respect given spectacle a bad name by aligning it with a consumerist society and a growing mass media such that any activity that ‘shocks’ quotidian life is branded as empty and superficial, sucking in the masses with its power to seduce and pacify. Vertical dance works in contradiction to this formulation of spectacle through the repetition of its actions in public space in training, rehearsal and performance, revealing its methods and marks of production and producing social space.

The equipment used in vertical dance supports the dancer’s weight, changing the dancer’s habitual relationship with gravity. Similarly, the prototypical vertical dance set up, a single point fixed rope, creates the pendulum ‘wall running’ effect rejected by choreography Walker in making Why? (2005). I argue that these two traits of
vertical dance are inherent movement propositions offered by the equipment used, and are therefore implied properties of the prototype. As we have seen in the case studies of *Why?* (2005) and *Far Vuoto* (2012), a choreographer may choose not to employ all the movement possibilities available, creating a dramatic tension out of the surplus space and motion that is not explored. The prototype I am presenting is not a formula for making vertical dance, nor is it a measure of the quality or importance of examples, despite Rosch’s reference to ‘best example’ (1987). It is rather presented as a tool with which I develop my own understanding of my vertical dance practice and how it relates to that of other practitioners in the field and beyond. The fuzzy, or porous boundary of the category is an exciting area of exploration for many choreographers, including myself.

This chapter has defined the fundamental properties and characteristics of vertical dance indicated in the manifesto: choose a wall to dance on in public space, share your vision, use climbing equipment, experience the world from different perspectives and repeat the activity to change habitual patterns of behaviour to produce new social spaces. The focus on case studies and the consideration of the path traced by vertical dance since the 1960s reveals the relation of vertical dance to its close relatives, aerial dance, site-specific performance and climbing. The next chapter focuses in detail on one aspect of the manifesto, the effects of dancing on vertical surfaces on the dancer’s experience of and orientation in space, communication between ground and wall and the use of metaphor to assist and understand spatial orientation, using the first work in the portfolio, *Descent of the Angel* (2009) as a case study.
Chapter Two: Understanding the vertical dancer's space

https://prezi.com/db2irux2ouer/descent-of-the-angel/

The first part of the title of the thesis, ‘Up, down and amongst’ signals the focus of this chapter, which delves deeper into the manifesto’s calls to the dancer to experience the world from a different perspective, and to communicate that experience with others. The directions ‘up’ and ‘down’ signal the vertical dimension along which the dancer (up on the wall looking down) and watcher (on the ground looking up) exchange glances. ‘Amongst’ refers to the embodied experience, in the moment, of both watche and dancer as they try to understand the space of vertical dance. Through repetition, this sensory information becomes expert embodied knowledge (Melrose, 2002), particularly for the dancer, but also for the choreographer or pedagogue as she develops her ability to communicate from ground to wall.

Understanding the vertical dancer’s space is a significant part of the development of the practice. It affects how a dancer is trained and how a dancer prepares for and carries out a performance. It is also a significant part of choreographing a vertical dance piece. I have drawn on three theories of space to develop and articulate my understanding of the space of the vertical dancer. Laban’s fundamental concepts of body orientation in his development of dance notation (in Hutchinson Guest (2005)), have provided me with a useful set of ideas with which to articulate how the dancer orientates herself in a tilted world. Here I will compare and extend this understanding by referring to the psycholinguistic models discussed by Levinson et al. (2002) in their analysis of space in language and cognition, arguing that language use in the process of training and performance plays a critical role. Finally, Lakoff
and Johnson’s (1980) theory of metaphor served to help me understand the imaginative landscape of vertical dance, grounded in my experience as a vertical dance performer and choreographer. The performance *Descent of the Angel* (2009) will be used here as a case study. One way to access my experience as a performer and to articulate it for the purposes of training and speaking about my work has been to narrativize my memories of being in a vertical dance space. These narratives are inserted here in italics and hence denote sections of writing that describe my own performance experience.

**Spatial confusion**

The mode of suspension, a rope attached to a waist harness, takes some getting used to. Once off the ground, the entire force of gravity is applied to the waist of the harness, which causes extreme discomfort. Deep abdominal muscles quiver and shake as I try to ‘stand’ horizontally. As I turn to my right, the harness shifts and chafes the skin around my waist. Struggling to control the swing of the rope I collide with the wall gracelessly. My head, indeed my whole body seeks to return to verticality. My movement desires are constantly thwarted by the disobedient rope, which enforces its own choreographic regime with attendant rules of time and space. Simple spatial coordinates such as up, down, forwards and backwards are confounded; I am literally upset.

The initial spatial confusion I experience is a confusion that needs attention in order for me to gain any sense of aesthetic pleasure and relative comfort. During training, the dancer subdues everyday spatial coordinates in favour of the new tilted ones. Wyoming University vertical dance scholar Margaret Wilson confirms this in her statement:
When first introduced to vertical dance there is a period of accommodation and acclimation. The dancer must develop trust in their bodies, the rigging, and the equipment as they adapt to working in this novel environment. Still subject to the effects of gravity, the dancer now must rediscover a new means of articulation, balance, and propulsion with no point of contact on the ground.

In Lawrence and Wilson, 2013

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the wall becomes a floor in the prototypical category of vertical dance. One strategy to accommodate the body is to ‘find the floor’ on the wall and reorient, developing new muscles in the process, which in turn contribute to easing the pain of the position and heightening creative and artistic potential. Revisiting Moretti’s comment ‘the dancer’s perception of the body in space is deconstructed. She must reconstruct everything she knows in the horizontal plane in the vertical plane using other senses, other muscles, and of course this changes the gestures’ (in Lawrence and Moretti 2006b: 21), it is clear that the vertical dancer measures the space afresh. The spatial confusion, which can be at once disturbing, painful, enervating and delightful, thus recedes with rehearsal and practice and increasing familiarity - doing again… and again… and again - as the dancer acquires the skills to achieve reorientation.

Like A. Square, the protagonist in mathematician Abbott’s *Flatland: A romance of many dimensions* (Abbott 1992 [1884]), who travelled from a two-dimensional flat world to a world of three dimensions, the vertical dancer needs to spend time in the tilted world to understand it and to locate herself. A. Square was confounded by the possibility of the existence of another dimension (height) because he couldn’t see it; the more time he spent in a three-dimensional world, the more he was persuaded of its existence, but he could only ‘apprehend it by faith’ (Abbott 1992: viii). Likewise,
the vertical dancer’s world is initially incomprehensible. Familiar directions are confounded and complicated by the 90-degree tilt. As the dancer goes over the edge of a building, slipping from roof to wall, what was above is now ahead, what was below is now behind. As she steps onto the tilted floor, the new up is away from the building, the new down is inside the building; its occupants are perceived as being ‘underground’. Right and left stay the same, until the dancer turns to face the right. At this point, up and down remain constant (away from and into the building), but front and back, formally up and down, become right and left respectively, and right and left become down and up, respectively. And yet the dancer is still acutely aware of everyday spatial references: the sky is still above, the ground below. In this way, vertical dance facilitates, indeed relies upon, a co-existence of conflicting spatial frames of reference in the dancer’s consciousness. This spatial disorientation can affect audiences too when they watch performances of vertical dance from below. They may lie on the ground to ease a crick in the neck caused by having to look up. Others turn their heads sideways, mirroring the dancer’s orientation.

In performance, further confusion abounds: as the prototype discussed in Chapter One has established, theatrical conventions too are disrupted. First, the work is framed as a performance mainly by the start and finish of the musical score; there is no dimming of the lights or raising of the curtain as there might be in a conventional theatre. Equally, there is probably no fixed designated viewing area. This means that the borders marking the performance event and everyday space are blurred, for the performer as well as the audience member. The dancer includes her perception of the landscape in her performance: hills, houses, people. Second, the dancer is above the spectators, as a surveyor of landscape and of the audience within it,
although, as we have seen, her perception of this position depends on the orientation of her body. Finally, spectators may also view the performance from very close up (from inside the building in some cases) and from far away (accidental viewers); the dancer senses and returns the gazes of these, often unseen eyes that look at her from near, middle and far distances.

**Spatial reorientation**

Hutchinson Guest outlines three different forms of spatial referencing used in Labanotation for dance (2005: 369). In the so-called ‘constant cross of axes’, the vertical direction (understood as the line of gravity) and the frontal direction (the horizontal axis in a specifically identified direction often referred to as ‘the front’) and the lateral direction (right and left) are constant as they refer to the dimensions of a standard proscenium arch stage from the point of view of a performer who is looking towards the audience. In the ‘standard cross of axes’, the vertical is again constant, but the forwards direction alters as the performer turns to face different directions, affecting right and left directions. Finally, the ‘body cross of axes’ locates all directions in relation to the position of the body, so that if the performer is lying down face up, forwards is the sky and upwards is a direction parallel to the earth’s surface emanating from the crown of the dancer’s head (Hutchinson Guest 2005: 369).

Although Labanotation used to notate dance performance is generally oriented to the context of the proscenium arch stage and therefore uses the constant cross of axes as the standard Frame of Spatial Reference (FSR), it can be adapted for use in different dance settings by using different frameworks of orientation. The process of adaptation has been part of my development of the form of site-specific vertical
dance practice. It is not, however, a simple case of reorientation to the surface of the wall. In my experience, the vertical dancer’s spatial frame of reference is largely egocentric but is also contingent on the specific movement she is performing, which means that it is likely that Laban’s constant and standard cross of axes are referred to sequentially or simultaneously. For example, when the dancer is upside-down from the spectator’s point of view, that is, with the crown of her head pointing toward the ground, it is the downward relationship between the ground and the crown of her head that is the most palpable as she is acutely aware that the ground is below her (standard cross of axis). She will be aware of the position of the audience (constant cross of axes), and may sometimes orientate herself accordingly. However, right and left directions need to be established according to the body cross of axes, which might be the opposite to those of the choreographer watching from the ground, causing potential problems with communication between ground and wall. When she faces the side, to combat the urge to return to verticality, she perceives the horizon to be the upward coordinate (body cross of axis). In this orientation, she senses the audience, who perceive themselves to be below her, as diagonally above her. Thus, her elevated situation in height turns out, in certain positions and according to particular frames of reference, to be one of depth. In his psychological history of mountaineering, Robert Macfarlane states that to gain height is a basic human instinct and related to goodness and that the ‘sensory experience of altitude is a bliss which isn’t competitive, but contemplative’ (Macfarlane 2003: 143). This desire is expressed in language through words such as superior, excel and sublime. Depth, on the other hand, tends to be expressed as lowly, inferior or base (2003:141). We may say therefore that conventional narratives of power associated with height can be confounded by the circumstances of vertical dance (enabled by
the equipment used) and the specific spatial frame of reference applied. I will return to metaphorical aspects of spatial orientation later in the chapter.

Macfarlane draws attention to the motivation for climbing and moving over vertical surfaces and the significance of cultural attitudes towards space. Like Macfarlane, Levinson et al. argue for a culturally specific understanding of space. The language we use to refer to the spatial domain restructures thought and ‘underlying cognition’ rather than reflecting a ‘universal conceptual base’ (2002:156). Whilst we might think that our conceptual understanding of space is universally, naturally and biologically given, studies have shown that much cross-cultural variation is evident (Levinson et al. 2002: 156). Different cultures conceive of space and talk about it in different ways, for example, there are some languages with no way to describe notions of left, right, front and back; instead cardinal, or absolute directions, such as north, south, east and west are used. Frames of spatial reference (FSR) employ fundamental coordinate systems with diverse origins and principles.

Within this cultural variation, Levinson et al. (2002) describe three over-arching frames of spatial reference: relative, intrinsic and absolute. The relative frame of reference, most prevalent in Western culture, is egocentric and anthropomorphic in that it uses, like Laban’s body cross of axes, the cross section of planes in the human body for orientation. The intrinsic frame of reference is object centred, describing object relations in space, for example, the ball is in front of the chair. Finally, the absolute frame of reference is fixed, using cardinal directions for orientation, and is not pervasively or commonly used in everyday western culture. Neurophysiologist Alain Berthoz (2000) has described spatial awareness as both
egocentric, based on the body, and allocentric, based on external space. While
there are individual variations for which (and when) each strategy is used, both body-
centered and space-centered awareness are necessary in vertical dance, as in
ground-based orientation; but what I’m driving at here, is that the egocentric FSR is
more dominant when dancing on a vertical floor than when dancing on a horizontal
ground.

It is easy to map Laban’s body cross of axes to the relative frame of reference and
tempting to map the standard to the intrinsic and the constant to the absolute frames
of reference. However, as Levinson et al (2002: 173) point out, the absolute system
is based on universally fixed positions (for example, north, south, east, west),
whereas Laban’s constant cross of axes is based on an agreed ‘front’, in a given
space, irrespective of absolute directions, and the standard cross of axes, upon the
facing of the dancer in an upright position. Levinson et al discuss fixed frames of
reference for specified spaces, for example a map of a library, and define these as
‘orientation-free intrinsic arrays’. The proscenium stage of a theatre, with a clearly
defined front – facing the audience – employs a constant cross of axes (Laban) and
an ‘orientation-free intrinsic array’ (Levinson et al, 2002).

If we think of using Laban’s standard cross of axes in a dynamic context from the
point of view of ground-based dance it would need to shift between relative and
intrinsic, or in Laban’s terms, between body and standard or constant. Whilst the
dancer is upright, my experience tells me that she would be likely to use the
standard cross of axes – the front of her body defines her coordinates. If she lies
down face up, according to the standard cross of axes, front is no longer the
direction her body is facing (towards the sky). In this instance, it is likely that the dancer would orientate herself either according to her own body, or according to what has been established as the ‘front’ of the room (or the audience in the theatre). On the other hand, the vertical dancer in the same horizontal position (standing on the wall), would probably find the standard and constant cross of axes impossible to comprehend as both assume an upright body resisting the pull of gravity. Once the body is prone and suspended, it becomes very difficult to determine left, right, front or back directions except in relation to the position of the body itself. I would suggest that the most useful and constant frame of spatial reference for the vertical dancer is the relative, or body cross of axes, but that this is modified and tempered by more everyday references, such as the position of the audience and other objects in space which provide ‘anchor’ points.

If the vertical dancer only orientates herself according to her own body, she will find it difficult to anchor herself in the real world, and this is where she will overlay other, intrinsic (Levinson et al., 2002) frames of reference (often using fixed objects in space), as she becomes familiar with the environment. Having argued that the orientation of the vertical dancer needs to involve a shifting frame of reference, it makes sense to discuss a specific dance situation. Let us consider the position of the vertical dancer on the tower of Guildford Cathedral, head down, facing out from the wall of the Cathedral. To achieve a healthy alignment of the body and not put strain on her spine, and perhaps to counteract fear of being upside-down, the dancer uses the relative FSR or body cross of axes – namely, the direction of the crown of the head is perceived to be up - to orientate herself both conceptually and physically. Concomitantly, her eyes reveal that she is not upright; she can see the world upside
down. Her purposefully conceived spatial orientation (acquired through vertical
dance training) and her received visual imagery from the point of view of her body in
space are diametrically opposed.

**Communication between ground and wall**

I would like now to move from focusing on the dancer’s orientation to concentrate on
communication between people on the ground and people on the wall. Levinson’s
question - what comes first, cognition or language? (1996: 356) is significant for
communicating tasks in vertical dance, for example the instruction ‘stand on the wall’
implies a person is expected to stand on top of a wall. An experienced vertical
dancer interprets this instruction from her own egocentric position and stands
horizontally on the vertical surface of the wall. The option of standing on top of a
wall is not available to her as she is suspended against the wall, so over time, the
instruction acquires a new meaning. What this means for vertical dancers seeking to
communicate with each other about movement from different spatial subject
positions, is that conceptual information embedded in language needs to be
translated and refined into language that makes sense to both parties. This
language is emergent and this means that dancers and choreographers explore a
range of methods to communicate spatial information in the absence of
preconceived models. Levinson does not say anything about these gaps in
language and how they are filled. In my experience, language is not always the
answer, touch is a very effective way to impart information if the dancer on the wall is
within reach. In summary, my research demonstrates that in the specific case of
vertical dance, where a common language is emerging, language and other means
of communication, such as touch, and visual demonstration are likely to precede
cognitive understanding.

Over fifteen years of developing vertical dance practice, I have observed that the language used to convey ideas to students and to dancers can have either a positive impact on their performance and understanding of movement or it might totally confuse them. The spoken prompts I use might be imagistic: ‘imagine the sky is above your head’, or landmark based: ‘look at the tree’ or orientational: ‘crown of the head to the ground’. I have found that the directions up, down, right, left, front, back are not useful in teaching or directing dancers for the obvious reason that if I am on the ground, I may not share the dancers’ frame of spatial reference. Additionally, it is my belief that we choose our spatial frame of reference individually rather than collectively (unless we have agreed collectively in advance to think of our movement in a specific way), so even if two dancers are doing the same thing at the same time, they may conceive of it differently in spatial terms. It follows that there is a reciprocal relationship between developing somatic and spatial awareness and using language to communicate to others or to provide clarification for oneself. Language is just one of the forms of knowledge acquisition, sensory learning through touch, hearing and sight as well as imaginative play or improvisation are very, if not more important.

Finally, a word about landmarks, which are generally used to navigate without instruments in a landscape, and which I have found to be very useful in developing vertical dance and conveying information to dancers from the ground. I believe this is because of their fixed position in space, they provide locators, or anchors for dancers seeking something to orientate themselves by. To say to a dancer, ‘look at the mountains’ as they jump away from a wall provides a clear objective based on a
shared intrinsic FSR rather than saying ‘look up’, which can be interpreted in different ways depending on the individual FSR. To conclude, in my experience, communication in vertical dance uses a mixture of relative and intrinsic FSRs in non-linguistic and linguistic cognitive modes, in which landmarks play an important role. In developing my own understanding of my orientation in space as a dancer, an interplay of Laban’s cross of axes have become habitual ways for me to think about how I orient myself. Verbalisations of spatial position and orientation are not the only way in which language has interacted with my vertical dance practice. Metaphor has been an important way to think about vertical dance. I have engaged with the ideas in Lakoff and Johnson's seminal work *Metaphors we live by* (1980), both in looking at how existing metaphors relate or not to vertical dance and at new metaphors that vertical dance can create. Here I will discuss some of the existing metaphors I have come across in my own learning about vertical dance and then I will look at metaphor as a field for creativity, considering what new metaphors might be created to develop understanding of vertical dance.

**Concepts and Metaphors**

George Lakoff is professor of linguistics, who is best known for his idea that our lives are significantly influenced by the central metaphors we use to explain complex phenomena. Mark Johnson is a philosopher known for his contributions to embodied philosophy, cognitive science and cognitive linguistics. Collaboratively they wrote *Metaphors we live by* (1980), in which they outline a theory of experientialism, based on conceptual and metaphorical understandings of experience. They juxtapose this theory with what they understand as an objectivist ‘myth’ of understanding the world based on concepts of absolute truth on the one hand, and the subjectivist ‘myth’ of
the primacy of individual experience on the other. They propose a third way, an experientialist ‘myth’ through which we seek to understand the way we forge meaning from our experience of the world. This theory relies on concepts, metaphors, and metaphorical structures in a systemized way, which they outline. It foregrounds experience and explicitly rejects notions of absolute truth and inherent meaning residing in objects and in language, irrespective of human interaction.

For Lakoff and Johnson, ‘truth is relative to our conceptual system’ and is ‘grounded in’ and ‘tested by’ individual and collective experience (1980: 193). Thus, a statement may be considered true when it fits with our understanding of a specific situation. This contradicts the objectivist model which says there is an absolute truth outside of human experience. Furthermore, in contrast to objectivists, who claim there exist universal truths, Lakoff and Johnson say there is no ‘whole truth’, only partial truth, as the conceptual framework we apply to a situation will privilege some aspects and hide others (1980: 180). Their critique of objectivism is extensive compared to their critique of subjectivism, reflecting the enduring history and dominance of the former, starting with Plato and continuing in prevailing systems of power to the present day.

What is revolutionary and persuasive about their account for me, is the attention paid to experience and context as formative in our understanding of, and ability to function in the world, through constant and interactive exchange with our physical environment and society. There is possibly a conflict between Lakoff and Johnson and Levinson et al but this is at the level of understanding the relationship between language and cognition. My work in vertical dance has the potential to contribute to
this debate if it is set into a more experimental context. For this study and the
development of vertical dance the two approaches together provide a vocabulary to
delineate form and training as social practice while they also point towards possible
future research projects.

Lakoff and Johnson define metaphor as ‘understanding and experiencing one kind of
thing in terms of another’ (1980:5) and they observe that metaphor is used
pervasively in the human conceptual system and that ‘the system is fundamentally
metaphorical in character’ (1980b: 195). The system contains metaphorical and
non-metaphorical concepts, which are those which are experienced directly. Both
metaphorical and non-metaphorical concepts are divided into three general types:
orientational, ontological and structural.

Orientational metaphors use non-metaphorical linear directions in space to orientate
concepts giving rise to common metaphors such as UP IS HAPPY revealed in the
statement: ‘I’m in high spirits’. These metaphors, particularly the vertical axis ones,
are particularly relevant to vertical dance as we have seen in the earlier discussion
on frames of reference and cross of axes. Metaphorical concepts are explicitly
based in experience (1980:19), so when we say, for example, UP IS HAPPY, it is
based on the physical observation that happiness is a feeling of elation, a lightness,
which can be accompanied by jumping for joy. This correlation between metaphor
and physical experience can give rise to a supposition that metaphorical concepts
could be considered as universally understood and therefore have inherent meaning
in and of themselves. Although Lakoff and Johnson admit they know little about the
experiential bases for metaphors, their statement, ‘we feel that no metaphor can ever
be comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential base’ (their italics, 1980: 19) reveals their deep commitment to this aspect.

Vertical dance is a field of experience in which metaphorical statements become more visible. In the process of developing work, I and my fellow dancers have had the opportunity to play and in a sense to ‘test’ metaphorical meaning. Therefore, it could be said that vertical dance reveals the operation of metaphor in concrete ways. For example, vertical dance reveals that UP IS HAPPY is true by observing the smiles on the faces of dancers and members of the public alike as they watch each other. In the case of the dancers, happy is being up, in the case of the public, happy is looking up. The situation is not quite so straightforward however: the dancers look down at the people on the ground happily, not sadly. Dancers are habituated through training to express emotions which go against the natural tendency, whereas the public are looking up, which physiologically opens the chest and shoulders, making space for breathing, which promotes well-being, and consequently, happiness. Another example is jumping for joy to express UP IS HAPPY. A vertical dancer will jump horizontally away from the wall so UP IS HAPPY up becomes BEHIND IS HAPPY (the dancer jumps backwards away from the wall). The watcher looking up sees a dancer jumping horizontally for joy. Do they replace the horizontal with the vertical conceptually? We can infer at least that vertical dance may bend orientational metaphors to express its purpose or intention.

Metaphorical concepts are defined in terms of non-metaphorical concepts, which give rise to what Lakoff and Johnson call ‘entailments’. All metaphors must be comprehended from their experiential basis. The verticality concept is understood in
divergent ways according to what concept it is paired with metaphorically. The UP IS HAPPY metaphor relies on an emotional basis, whereas the UP IS MORE metaphor relies on seeing something increase in height as it increases in quantity. UP IS CONTROL, reflects an increase in physical dominance with height, reflected in the hierarchical structure of most institutions and businesses and the winners podium at the Olympics. Apparent inconsistencies may arise in different metaphorical applications of the up/down orientation which can only be explained through the experiential basis of the metaphors. For example, DOWN IS KNOWN and UP IS UNKNOWN metaphors would seem to be at odds with UP IS HAPPY/DOWN IS SAD metaphors. But the explanation for this is that happy, as we have seen is up because it relates to an erect stature and a feeling of levity, whereas unknown is up is a based on a sense that things are up in the air, not tethered to the ground, where we can grasp them and know them. This idea can be extended to vertical dance as a practice that is up in the air, initially unknown to the dancer and probably unknown and strange to the watcher. But through regular practice and watching, it can become known, the tilted ground is naturalised so the dancer successfully completes the illusion of standing on a vertical floor by believing that the ground is beneath her feet. People watching become accustomed to the new frames of spatial reference and learn to interpret their codes. The question then is does the DOWN IS KNOWN metaphor continue to hold true when down has shifted onto a horizontal axis? Does vertical dance need to establish a whole new system of orientational metaphors, or does the practice bend, disrupt and play with the existing systems? This is one of the complicated relocation of orientation concepts and metaphors that vertical dance requires of the dancer and the observer. Some simple diagrams might help…
Standing on walls in life in the world of vertical dance

Sitting on walls in real life in the world of vertical dance
Ontological metaphors project a substance or entity onto a concept that does not inherently possess that status. For example, THE WALL IS A FLOOR, is a statement where the wall is being given the status of a floor. Metaphorical concepts give rise to entailments, which are statements or metaphors arising from the original metaphor. Thus, THE WALL IS A FLOOR gives rise to the following entailments: the floor is vertical, vertical surfaces are for standing on and standing is a horizontal activity.

Some concepts are abstract, such as love, emotion and time, and we use concrete concepts to describe them metaphorically, such as TIME IS A PENDULUM. The effect of describing time as a pendulum is to present only a partial picture of time, which hides other aspects of the concept of time which might be important in other contexts, to other people, such as TIME IS A JOURNEY. This is where Lakoff and Johnson’s insistence on truth being partial is revealed. A metaphorical structure of understanding can only ever give us a partial meaning or truth of a concept. If we
were to try and think of every aspect of time, something would always be hidden and the different metaphorical descriptions of time would present inconsistencies with each other: time that moves backward and forward like pendulum cannot also move consistently forwards like a journey. According to Lakoff and Johnson, abstract concepts ‘are defined by clusters of metaphors’, each of which ‘gives a partial definition’ (1980b: 200), and indeed, ‘each metaphor hides more than it highlights’ (1980b: 201). In terms of vertical dance, TIME IS A PENDULUM turns out to have some truth: dancers on the end of ropes swing back and forth across a wall. It is also true that time is a journey: the dance may start on the roof of a building and end on the floor. Both truths highlight one aspect of time in vertical dance and hide at least one other aspect.

Finally, structural metaphors replace one kind of experience or activity with another, for example, in vertical dance lying down is standing up. This example describes the movement of lying down horizontally as the motion of standing up. The metaphor is useful for the vertical dancer whose feet are positioned on a vertical wall, which she is asked to imagine is a floor via the ontological metaphor, THE WALL IS A FLOOR. The lying down activity aligns with an orientational metaphor: CONSCIOUS IS UP/UNCONSCIOUS IS DOWN (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 15). To offer the impression of lying down in vertical dance requires considerable strength and control, and in no way, mirrors the relaxation of an unconscious body supported by a horizontal floor. Thus, the structural metaphor LYING DOWN IS STANDING UP disrupts the common orientational concepts of up/down and entails the ontological metaphor, THE WALL IS A FLOOR which, in turn, inherently contains the orientational concepts up/down through the wall/floor concepts. The orientational
metaphor UNCONSCIOUS IS DOWN requires the dancer to work physically in the opposite direction to the metaphor to successfully achieve the effect. Consider the effort required by the dancer to achieve the effect of a limp body in Moretti’s *Far Vuoto* (2012), the fifth case study in Chapter One.

**New metaphors for vertical dance**

*I visit Guildford Cathedral and follow the steeplejack up a dizzying spiral staircase passing huge bells hanging in the tower void. We arrive, panting, to be greeted by an enormous golden angel turning gently in the breeze. A symbol of guardianship, simultaneously labouring as a weather vane and a mobile phone mast, the angel enjoys a 360-degree view of the surrounding town and countryside, and, guided by the wind, her extended fingers point to signal the cardinal directions of North, South, East and West. We are about to extend her functions; she is to become the support for a dancer. Slings are attached to her base, connected by carabiners to ropes, tied in a figure of eight. Ropes triangulate to form a rigging point for the dancer. A rope is thrown over the west face of the tower. I connect to the rope via a positioning device (grigri) attached to the front of a waist harness and commence my descent (which has been sanctioned by the Dean of the Cathedral).*

So far, we have looked at how conventional metaphors (those which structure our everyday conceptual understanding of culture) are stretched, relocated and sometimes rejected by vertical dance. Lakoff and Johnson state that outside conventional metaphors, imaginative and creative metaphors ‘are capable of giving us a new understanding of our experience’ (1980: 139). These are newly created metaphors, with accompanying entailments, which may or may not be metaphorical
and which highlight some aspects of experience and hide others. Metaphorical entailment is a concept developed by Johnson and Lakoff to refer to the ways in which metaphor gives rise to meaning through deductions about the relationship between the metaphor and its referent (1980:93). Thus, journey as a metaphor for experience can entail something about a varying landscape. Below is a new metaphorical statement about vertical dance using complex coherence across metaphors (1980:97) which I will discuss in terms of some possible metaphorical entailments:

VERTICAL DANCE IS A CREATIVE NEGOTIATION OF SUSPENDED BODIES MOVING ON VERTICAL SURFACES

VERTICAL DANCE IS A CREATIVE NEGOTIATION is a structural metaphor, one activity: vertical dance, is replaced by another: negotiation. This metaphor gives rise to at least the following metaphorical entailments based on negotiation, suspended bodies and vertical surfaces:

1 Vertical dance develops collaborative partnerships through negotiations with guardians of buildings (for example, caretakers, artistic and executive directors, health and safety officers, government and local council officers, insurers, engineers and architects, dancers, riggers, composers, costume designers).

2 Vertical dance requires patience, understanding, explanation and compromise to arrive at successful vertical dance outcomes of negotiations. Thus, it follows that

3 Vertical dance is strategic and persuasive (ontological metaphor where vertical dance is an entity)
4 Vertical dance is creative and artistic (ontological metaphor) and it follows that

5 Vertical dance requires physical and choreographic skills specific to moving on vertical surfaces therefore

6 Vertical dance requires vertical surfaces, e.g. walls, trees, rock faces and

7 Vertical dance requires equipment to suspend dancers so they can move on vertical surfaces and

8 Vertical dance requires rigging expertise and knowledge about vertical spaces

According to Lakoff and Johnson, these metaphorical entailments may give rise to further entailments, resulting in ‘a large and coherent network of entailments, which may…either fit or not fit’ with our experience (1980:140). They talk of ‘reverberations’ (1980) through this network which, in the context of vertical dance, either ring true to our present and past experiences or not. This is because of the incomplete status of a metaphor: it is always partial, highlighting some aspects of the concept and hiding others. In this case, the metaphor highlights the collaborative, active and logistical aspects of vertical dance and masks emotional and sensory aspects, such as fear, joy, pain and pleasure. Consider now a description of the moment I tip over the edge of the building.

Balancing on the edge of the roof of Guildford Cathedral, I (as the angel) nervously contemplate the moment of going over the edge, stepping into the unknown, trusting equipment and embodied knowledges, hoping my rope won’t fray and my body will remember what to do. Tracing the horizon with my finger I conduct a survey of the landscape: hill drops to the busy A3, beyond, patterns of streets and houses. In the foreground, and below, people sitting on the ground in the sunshine which also
shines off the roof. The wind flaps urgently. Turning inwards, toward the building, I lean back, still pointing, slipping from vertical to horizontal, committed now to an altered reality, to standing up while lying down. The excess rope whips past. The angel begins her descent.

I now propose two metaphorical statements arising from this passage:

ROPE IS UMBILICAL CORD
BUILDING IS MOTHER

These are personification metaphors, as they project humanness onto inanimate objects (Lakoff and Johnson 1980a:33). I have created them to express the comfort and confidence I need to feel in my connection to the building and the rope which simultaneously support my life and my desire to perform on the exterior of a building. They give rise to the following entailments:

The rope is a lifeline (umbilical cord supports life)
The rope has a life of its own (it can be both supportive and dangerous)
The building cares for me (like a mother)
The building must be respected (like a mother)

This smaller network of entailments forms the basis of my belief that the vertical dance world which I inhabit is a safe place in which support is provided (by the building and the rope) within certain rules and boundaries. They connect with the VERTICAL DANCE IS A CREATIVE NEGOTIATION metaphor through the idea of collaboration. The rope has a life of its own is a reminder that collaboration with the
building and rope is needed to avoid harm, in an extreme example: rope strangles dancer. The rules of dancing on the building are set in advance by the guardians of the building, such as: avoid the anti-pigeon netting which covers the vents, it is expensive to replace, and do not perform sacrilegious acts. These rules call for artistic compromise in the space available for dancing and in the images presented in the choreography.

Lakoff and Johnson call these idiosyncratic metaphors, uninteresting to them as they do not interact systematically with other metaphors in common language usage (1980: 54). They go as far as to say these metaphors are ‘dead’ (1980: 55), because they are not ‘metaphors we live by’. These metaphors are however very useful in grounding my experience as a vertical dancer, in assisting me to conquer a fear of height and in helping me trust technical equipment. As they are new metaphors they may eventually become metaphors we live by in the world of vertical dance, part of the conceptual system of vertical dance, or they may be ignored as only useful to me.

Here is a further description of my experience of dancing on the cathedral.

_I wrap the building with my body, leaving invisible physical graffiti on its walls. I inscribe my presence on the fabric of the building. By embracing the wall, I get as close as I can to the boundary. I sense myself as being ‘in the breach’, ‘having a foot in both camps’. I hang in the divide, physically and politically. My acts are at once personal and public, personal statements in a public space. I ask: Who owns the exterior of public buildings? Who dictates the way we engage with them?_
This passage creates another set of metaphors and some entailments:

**VERTICAL DANCE IS GRAFFITI**
Vertical dance is a form of writing/art
Vertical dance is expressive
Vertical dance makes statements

**BUILDING IS A LOVER** (I wrap the building with my body/embrace the wall)
The Building cares for the vertical dancer
The Wall and the vertical dancer have a relationship

**BUILDING IS A CONTAINER** (with boundaries)
The Building separates inside and outside
The Building has walls which contain something
The walls separate the institution and everyday life

The intimate relationship between dancer and building described in this set of metaphors and entailments, which has grown out of my embodied experience, points to new ways in which the body can humanise the urban environment, reminding it (as the Manifesto for Vertical Dance demands), and us, of an increasingly banished natural world.

**Concluding thoughts on the space of the vertical dancer**
Applying concepts and theories arising in disciplines specializing in the study of language and thought to the domain of vertical dance is potentially dangerous. I may make assumptions, misunderstand concepts, some concepts may not be
applicable, transferable or relevant. What is encouraging is that Levinson et al., Lakoff and Johnson all ground their theory in experience, and Lakoff and Johnson are very clear that they are experts in the fields of language and cognition, not in fields of practice such as dance. Starting in familiar territory with the work of Laban in dance notation revealed the possibility that a vertical dancer is continually switching between and/or simultaneously using different frames of spatial reference as she navigates the technical requirements of the dance and the physical realities of situation in space.

While Laban’s system is developed to notate dance movement, Levinson et al. seek to understand how spatial awareness is translated into linguistic systems and to prove that language, in some cases, precedes cognition. They distinguish three general frames of spatial reference, relative, intrinsic and absolute. Comparison between cross of axes and Levinson et al.’s frames of spatial reference reveals that there is no use of the absolute frame of reference in Laban’s system, nor indeed, in my experience of vertical dance. This is probably due to the prevalent usage of the relative and intrinsic frames in Western culture (Levinson et al., 2002: 179) in which Laban operated. The constant cross of axes appears to align itself with an absolute system, but is, in fact, what Levinson et al. call an ‘orientation-free intrinsic array’ (173). This concept will be useful later when I discuss diverse performance environments, where objects can be used as landmarks to orientate the dancer. The discussion of frames of spatial reference revealed that directional language cues (up/down/right/left/front/back) in a teaching or choreographic context are unhelpful and confusing, whereas images, landmarks and non-linguistic guidance in the form of gesture, touch or mimicry is more effective.
The metaphorical systems outlined by Lakoff and Johnson provided a framework for exploring how metaphors are made visible and creatively extended in a vertical dance context. The truth of a conventional metaphor may be called into question by vertical dance. It follows, perhaps, that vertical dance might usefully develop its own network of metaphors and entailments that suit its purposes and complement the language and other non-linguistic forms of communication of spatial orientation. The new metaphors for vertical dance that I have created above are suggestive and personally useful in extending my understanding of the practice. I have used some of these ideas in my teaching and choreographic practice, but not in a systemized way. I would resist a systematic approach to testing the usefulness of these metaphors. Instead I would rather allow them to emerge in daily usage and observe which of them are taken up by dancers and students.

This chapter has explored in detail the tilted world of the vertical dancer, how it is initially experienced and the strategies used orientate the body and to communicate between different subject positions in the vertical dimension. Examining metaphor exposed the different spatial experiences of and linguistic interpretations of dancers on the wall, and watchers on the ground, problematizing commands such as ‘stand on the wall’, or ‘jump off the wall’. Finally, the creation of new metaphors for vertical dance revealed how as a dancer, I have developed intimate relationships with inanimate objects: rope and building, projecting on to them human capacities such supporting life (umbilical cord) and caring (as a mother). This rapprochement between nature and the urban environment through the dancing body is extended in the next chapter which examines the production of social space.
Henri Lefebvre proclaims that ‘to change life…we must first change space’ (1974:190). This statement puts the importance of space at the heart of the transformation of society for the benefit of the citizen, which is the underlying and revolutionary purpose of his lifetime of research. This chapter focuses on the power of vertical dance to produce and change social space, enshrined in the manifesto’s call to ‘join the movement to inhabit vertical space…to produce new social spaces and to use your body to remind the built environment about nature’. Lefebvre had a specific role in mind for music and dance that came out of his analysis of contemporary social space as frozen or rigid and in the service of capital in a way that deadens social life (1974:205). Whilst this was a product of the times in which he was writing, I wish to argue that vertical dance has a significant if small contribution to make to the transformation of social space, and therefore to changing lives for the better. Vertical dance does not change physical space in any substantial material way (by erecting buildings for example), but I argue that it does have the capacity to alter patterns of behaviour, change our perceptions of the space around us, and the space contained within our bodies, and thus broaden conceptions of the functions and operations of those spaces.

These perceptual and conceptual shifts, indicated in the Manifesto for Vertical Dance, are evident in shared visions and negotiated permissions to use walls as dance floors, in creative processes witnessed in public space and in dancers who can successfully orientate their bodies on a vertical ‘floor’. I believe that these shifts
are potentially beneficial to those who come into contact with vertical dance for many reasons. They reveal that people working in the institutions around us (cathedrals, libraries, city halls, arts centres) have the vision to validate, and the power to implement alternative uses for the buildings in which they work. The public encounter social space as a creative space. Dancers, choreographers and teachers are challenged to find and apply new spatial frames of reference to orientate their bodies in space and to communicate these amongst themselves and with interested members of the public. The rebellious bodies that allow vertical dance to exist thus include the gatekeepers of the buildings (health and safety officers, building managers, engineers and architects) who have the vision and the energy to say ‘yes’ to our activities, the dancers who take a step off the roof, trusting their equipment, the riggers who calculate the dynamic loads on equipment and rigging points and the arts programmers who might undertake complex negotiations and contribute artistic ideas. In many instances, vertical dance infiltrates the consciousness of people who encounter it, it fires their imaginations and persuades them that they would like to fight to make it happen.

In this chapter I discuss aspects of the spatial theory developed by the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre and explain why I think his work is relevant to my practice, understanding and analysis of vertical dance. This exposition of ideas will serve to inform and underpin later analyses of my practice in Chapters Four and Five and makes a link between them and Chapter Two, in which I have looked at the space of the body, in relation to orientation (Laban, 1966 and Levinson, 1996 and 2002) and Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) theories of metaphor. Lefebvre’s attention to lived experience in social space makes it extremely relevant to my practice. In addition,
he focuses on the built environment, which is the domain of vertical dance, and the social production of space drawing on Marxist theories of production. He lived and worked in the French provinces as well as in cities, and this breadth of experience is brought to bear in his analysis of space and is pertinent to the locations of my practice in the decentralized provinces of the British Isles.

Lefebvre's project is to seek a unified theory of space, which encompasses three aspects: spatial practice (perceived), representations of space (conceived) and representational space (lived). The unified theory is expressed in the seminal work *The Production of Space* (1974) but useful aspects of it for my work can also be found elsewhere such as in the first of his works, which arguably laid the foundations for urban and rural sociology, sociolinguistics, and the sociology of everyday life: *Le Droit a la Ville* (1968), in which he expounded his views on citizens' rights. Lefebvre’s ideas about the social production of space can, of course, be seen more generally as a source for the development of site-specific dance practices which seek to enter spaces which are not traditionally associated with dance. What I shall seek to do here is to make the links with vertical dance more explicit. In some respects, the question will be about what space is, its ontology. In others, it will be about the question posed by dance practice, what does it tell us about what we know about space, its epistemology.

**Conceptual triad of Space**

Lefebvre proposes three interconnected ways to understand and analyse space (1974: 33): spatial practice, representations of space and representational space.
**Spatial Practice** is governed by what we perceive and the body is used to decipher space according to established social codes and conventions. In vertical dance, as we have seen in Chapter two, this means that the body must have knowledge and training to navigate vertical spaces successfully (according to the prototype of vertical dance established in chapter one). Conceptualization of spatial practice always follows lived experience. Lefebvre rightly proclaims that humans must be allowed to ‘enjoy and modify’ space, but they also need to pass tests to enter spaces that are ‘special preserves’ (1974:35). Spaces which incorporate elements of risk, such as walls to be danced on, fall into the category of ‘special preserve’; before the proposed activity can take place, it is likely that permission will be required to gain access the roof of a building. There follows a process of gaining permission, negotiated using method statements, risk assessments, assurances of technical knowledge and physical expertise and, of course, proof of insurance cover. Each new vertical dance proposition develops and refines the negotiation tools and increases confidence in abilities to safely achieve successful outcomes, thus spatial practices (dancing and negotiating dancing) are perpetually enriched by conceptualizations of previous experience. Hence the call to ‘do this again…and again…and again’ (Manifesto for Vertical Dance).

**Representations of Space** are abstract conceptual processes often resulting from and in dialogue with spatial practice, as the example of negotiation for vertical dance space above shows. They include plans, designs, maps and sign systems which may or may not result in material objects in social space, such as buildings. The paperwork prepared to gain permissions for vertical dance, which may or may not result in a performance, exists in the realm of representations of space. In vertical
dance, choreographic order, which has its own systems of signs and conceptual planning methods, is imposed on existing representations of space (buildings), which are the dominant material productions of architects and urban planners in social space. Vertical dance choreographers conceive of new, fleeting representations of space to overlay on top of, and in response to, existing material representations of space. Like graffiti, the choreography may express new points of view during its passage across architectural surfaces, generating new meanings within those spaces, not least of which the metaphorical concept that THE WALL IS A FLOOR.

**Representational Space** is the space of art, of directly lived experience, it is ‘dominated and passively experienced space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate’ (1974:39). The act of dancing on walls appropriates those spaces and changes their function. Representational space ‘overlays physical space’ (by dancing), ‘making symbolic use of its objects’ (walls and buildings). It has sources in history, is alive and implies time. Its products are symbolic works. (Lefebvre, 1974:42).

What is between these three forms of space and how and when do they interconnect in vertical dance practice? Lefebvre suggests, and I agree with him, that the body may be the way to unify these realms of space, if unification is what is desired. The purpose of unification, according to Lefebvre, is ultimately to improve our lives in social space, wherein separations such as body and mind, subject and state, cause unequal power relations in society. Lefebvre’s project is not to homogenize through unity, but to connect and retain individuality and difference (1974:46). The vertical dancer’s body, as shown in chapter two, has the capacity to simultaneously conceive
of and apply (through social practice) lived relations to space to produce new or changed social spaces.

**The nature of space and the space of nature**

To change space, we need to have some idea of what we mean by the 'space' that is to be altered. Although it may seem far removed from the practicalities of weight and movement in space, inevitably the question arises as to the idea of space ‘in itself’ (1974:169). Turning the body upside down prompts the question how does space come into being the right way up, and where does it come from originally? Is it the work of God, or some other higher being as was assumed by the enlightenment philosophers such as Spinoza and Leibniz? Is it simply Nature, before humans arrived? Does nature occupy space, or is nature de facto space? When I am choreographing space or just looking out of my window at my garden, with mountains beyond, am I viewing, organizing, changing space itself, or the things that occupy space?

Lefebvre is critical of philosophers who have taken the Newtonian idea of *absolute space* as a given. He agrees with Leibniz’s idea that to be discernible by us, space must be ‘occupied’ (in Lefebvre, 1974: 170). We cannot conceive of a space without things in it. This is not to prove, however, that spaces do not exist without occupation, rather that we cannot perceive them. We need to be present in a space to perceive it, or we need to have some proof of space through some human action (photograph, film, postcard) to conceive of it. Lefebvre hence takes the phenomenological view that abstract space, if it exists, is not accessible, and returns again and again to the idea of nature as the original space for us from which social
space emerges. For example, he says that there are spaces such as cathedrals that have been ‘confiscated from nature’ (1974:49). To dance on a cathedral, then, is to dance on a confiscated space, and so perhaps to change it to a different nature.

**Infinite space and time**

The language of the philosophical debate about space constantly edges onto the terrain of dance, specifically vertical dance with its questions about up and down and the orientation of the body. What if there is no origin? Space and time are infinite. There is no beginning and no end. Nietzsche comments that there is no means of orientation in ‘infinite time and infinite space…there is nothing to hold on to, humanity must somehow stand upright – therein lies the immense task of the artist’ (in Lefebvre 1974:181). He could be talking about a first experience of vertical dance, of spatial confusion, the sense that there are no anchors, or fixed points by which to orientate the body. Standing upright (lying down) is a challenge and the sense of vertigo created by being suspended off the ground is palpable. The possibility of space as infinite is more evident in a rural location where the landscape opens out; which is the case in North Wales and in Belfast, where the mountainous landscape and/or the sea are always a backdrop to the town or city. Urban environments are full of borders and boundaries which parcel up space into areas within the limits of the town or city, containing space. The vertical dancer in an urban location has the capacity to point to the infiniteness of space with her gesturing limbs, which in turn lends amplitude to her movement. She offers the possibility of spatial extensions in an environment of closure revealing that ‘innumerable directions radiate from the centre of our body and its kinesphere into infinite space’ (Laban, 1966:17).
Empty space is a container to be filled

The idea of “occupied” space implies that some space is not occupied, i.e. it is available. Are these places yet to be discovered? Or are they ‘empty’ spaces? The idea of occupying space connotes the metaphor that space is a container for occupation; if it is available, it is ready to receive content, therefore it is empty. It is tempting to see this as the concept of absolute space, but in fact, as Lefebvre and Doreen Massey, a human geographer who has written extensively on space and the social dimension of space, point out, our experience is not of ‘a flat surface across which we walk’, but rather of a dimension ‘cutting across a myriad of stories’ (2013). In this way, the idea of empty space is left behind, and the analysis begins with material and social space. Empty space exists only in the social sphere as an abstract idea. Material space is never empty but the stories that organize it and give it meaning can conceive of it as empty or full, significant or meaningless. What Massey is pointing to, like Lefebvre before her, is the idea of space as social.

Space is a ubiquitous term applied across all disciplines, often denoting a ‘world’, for example literary space, architectural space, art space, mental space and so on. Lefebvre’s method to uncover the ‘truth of space’ (1974:9) is to bring together prevailing theories in diverse fields to establish a ‘unitary theory’ of space, which he divides into 3 areas: Physical (Nature); Mental (Logical, formal, abstract) and Social (1974:11). Referring to the change in the understanding of space that came with the Theory of Relativity at the beginning of the twentieth century, energy is the way in which space becomes material: ‘physical space has no ‘reality’ without the energy that is deployed within it’ (Lefebvre, 1974:13).
Space is divided and must be unified

Dance is a dynamic interplay between mental and physical space. Lefebvre captures some of this position in his critique of the prevailing philosophical emphasis on the mental realm of space, subsuming its social and physical aspects which he expresses in this metaphor:

…from time to time some intrepid funambulist will set off to cross the void [between mental and physical/social spaces], giving a great show and sending a delightful shudder through the onlookers.

(1974:6)

A vertical dancer could be regarded as a real, live version of Lefebvre’s image of a tightrope walker. Her dynamic action connects these spheres of space, driven by specific mental images of space, simultaneously creating pictures in the minds, and sensory reactions in the bodies of onlookers. Lefebvre searches for a starting point from which to build his bridge across the chasm between social/lived and mental/conceived spaces (1974:15). He rejects philosophy as too absolute, literature as too prevalent and diverse, architecture as having too many preconceived notions of space and science as too specialized. He chooses the concepts of production and the act of producing, emanating from Marxism, around which to construct his argument. These concepts, derived from a critique of capitalism, capture creative acts as they take place in, and transform social space, activities fundamental to making vertical dance.

Using the container metaphor as a contrast to his project, he writes: ‘to speak of “producing space” sounds bizarre, so great is the sway still held by the idea that empty space is prior to whatever ends up filling it’ (1974:15). His own consciousness
of the oddity of this perspective is testimony to its novelty. He wishes to develop not a discourse of space, but to ‘expose the actual production of space and the modalities of their genesis together within a single theory’ (1974:16). Like Levinson, discussed in Chapter Two (2002:162), he asks: ‘does language…. precede, accompany or follow social space?’ (1974:17). In this revolution, he changes the nature of questions asked of space in all kinds of disciplines. He asks how a space can be ‘decoded’. He emphasizes the ‘dialectical’ character of spatial codes and therefore many of his formulations appear as dualisms, such as social/mental; high/low; right/left from which he extrapolates a ‘third’ position, in a thesis/antithesis/synthesis mode of analysis. And in the idea of the production of space there is also the possibility of its deconstruction, in the idea of coding there is also decoding and recoding. There is also choreographed, danced space that can be re-choreographed.

Time is written into the fabric of space

If space is produced, then it follows that this is an iterative process, occurring over time, and that previous modes of production will be evident and instrumental, to differing degrees, in new productions of space. Lefebvre sees this iterative process beginning with early human agrarian societies, who inscribed their pathways across nature, as absolute space, through to the present day, with the gradual disappearance of nature through the proliferation of production, and construction of social spaces. This raises interesting questions for the production of space in vertical dance, such as how might the accretions of the spatial past influence the making and interpreting of new choreography, and how might the body re-insert nature into the built environment?
Lefebvre looks back perhaps a little nostalgically on the period between sixteenth and nineteenth centuries in which he perceives that there was a common ‘language’ of space shared between all areas of society – townspeople, rural dwellers, authorities and artists – which enabled space to be ‘read’ and constructed (1974:7). This language was based on the laws of perspective and a formal organization of towns around a centre/periphery model. The lure of this epoch in the development of urban space is perhaps the order and stability it promises. The state organizes the spatial configuration of social life, including official and religious buildings, and the populace fits into a hierarchical jigsaw, wherein social space was produced by the people but managed and owned by higher classes. Lefebvre calls this is historical space, in which religion and state are intertwined, using each other to support their positions of power (1974:48). The extent to which this ‘historical’ conception of space is still evident in the places in which vertical dance is practiced, and indeed within vertical dance choreography and the orientation of the body will be examined in my analyses of dances on Belfast City Hall and on the Ulster Museum in Chapter Four.

Changes in historical space occurred relatively slowly until the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century when accelerated growth of production gave rise to new social and political realities which in turn gave rise to new, abstract spaces. Marx’s theory of capital proclaimed a new revolutionary time which marched forward driven by the forces of production (Lefebvre, 1974:22). In second half of twentieth century, Lefebvre suggests that Hegelian space has returned with state control, which ‘flattens out the social and cultural spheres’, neutralizes difference and imposes
sameness (1974:23). His critique of space is hence an attack on a particular form of social organization – capitalism – which subordinates the organization of space to the production of capital, destroying functional social spaces in the process.

Lefebvre’s project is hence to point to the possibility of changing socially produced space and to develop methods to reveal history as a productive process in which we pass from ‘one mode of production to another’ with the marks of social production left on and in the space (1974:46). In terms of this project the questions for my vertical dance practice are about the social spaces in which it takes place. What is the history of this space I am dancing through? What marks does my vertical dance leave? In its reorientation of the body can it, and does it revolutionize that space? Each mode of production creates a new space, therefore, the shift from one mode to another produces a new space. The shift from standing on the ground, to standing on walls produces new spaces and provokes new ways for the human body to perceive and engage with space.

The questions for my vertical dance practice are therefore not only about space but also about time as it is written into the fabric of space. Welsh site-specific theatre practitioner and scholar, Mike Pearson, writes that our passage through space ‘constantly mark[s] our material surroundings’, leaving ‘authentic traces of the performance of everyday life itself’ (2010:43). A forensic approach to reading spaces in which vertical dance has taken place uncovers the passage of dancers’ feet, hands, backs over the space revealing where these traces ‘accumulate’ over time (Pearson, 2010:42). The filthy handrails of Galeri’s exterior balconies were ‘cleaned’ by the dancing bodies during the rehearsals and performance of Gwymon
in 2013 (see Chapter Five). A close examination of the edge of the roof of Venue Cymru shows residual marks left by rigging systems set up repeatedly over the passage of three years. Pearson argues that archaeology, which reconstructs the past ‘from surviving material culture’ (1994:134) provides an approach for the recovery of ephemeral performance activities which do not grow from dramatic texts. This approach is also choreographic and interpretative, as Thomas explains in his commentary on Pearson’s proposition:

The continuous use and reuse of locations bestows meaning upon them, affecting the way in which they are experienced. This has partly to do with the configuration of the space, and partly to do with what one brings to the place: an attunement, an awareness of the place’s historicity. The place is ‘read’ and thereby interpreted in the same way as the performance. Indeed, the reading of the place is a part of the setting of performance, as much for the performer as for the watcher. By a mirror-play, each site gathers its surroundings, in association and connotation. Places are reworked by playing upon and transforming past associations and meanings.

(1994:143)

This ‘attunement’ to the iterative spatial practice of a location will be discussed in the production of and changes to space in the vertical dance practices discussed in Chapters Four and Five. Massey (2013) makes a distinction between history as the study of time, which is successional, and geography as the study of space, which is simultaneous. She notes that because of the simultaneous character of space, it is where we meet the ‘other’ and build social relations, and therefore its study is crucial to understanding how we can live together successfully, and how we would like our worlds to develop. It is through space that we understand and build our social relations with each other and in so doing, build social space (2013). It is important to remember, however, that social space is the outcome of process over time and the passage of time is written on the surfaces of spaces (Lefebvre, 1974:110). Thus, the
Manifesto for Vertical Dance calls for us to return and repeat our actions, and talk to people about what we are doing in order to consolidate changes to social spaces.

**Social space**

In preparing a space for a choreographed performance questions arise about its significance to its specific community. These can determine what can and cannot be done with, in, and through the space. What is the origin of social space? How is it produced? Can the body produce space (Lefebvre, 1974:170)? The insight that can be drawn from Lefebvre and the many writers who have developed the implications of his work (Soja, 1996, 2010; Massey, 2005) is that social space is not an empty space filled with socialization, just as the space of work is not a void filled with labour (Lefebvre, 1974:191). Social space develops over time, it gradually accretes the marks, traces and gestures of the ‘lived experiences’ of the ‘social subjects’ who produce it (ibid., 1974:190). The space of labour is likewise constructed through ‘(repetitive) gestures and (serial) actions of productive labour’ (ibid., 1974:191), it is produced by the body. Vertical dance is likewise an activity which produces social space through its productive labour, using repetitive action to perfect its danced ‘products’ even if these products apparently disappear the moment after they appear and therefore are less clearly marked as products in the commercial sense. Or, in the Marxist sense, the bodies that produce vertical dance products can be seen as more clearly marked as they exhibit their productive labour in the moment of production. This overt exhibition of productive labour poses problems for entry into the marketplace because exact reproducibility is impossible: the repetitive actions of a vertical dancer are never exactly reproduced from one moment to the next; they
are subject to fluctuations of the body as a living organism. This argument will be continued in Chapter Five in the analysis of Gwymon 2 (2014) ‘on tour’.

Gestures of spatial practice produce spaces of representation (buildings and other existing material structures) in which further gestures (lived experience of representational space) are deployed, generating social space. The gestures of labour construct objects in space, and other gestures, such as those of vertical dance, convey meaning in space. Lefebvre argues that the productive gestures of human labour have become less and less visible in social space due to techniques and materials of mass production. In contrast, the gestures of labour which produce vertical dance are on show in the moment of production (as outlined above), but like modern construction techniques, leave behind little trace of their presence. Gestures can be at a micro or a macro level (1974: 213). Like ground-based dance, vertical dance choreography consists in stylized symbolic gestures organized in patterns and sequences, repeated through rehearsal to become habitual in performance. It could be argued that vertical dance produces different spaces by occupying existing social spaces afresh, whereas theatre dance occupies a familiar space (the theatre) with its attendant established conventions. It is incumbent on vertical dance to design its choreographic occupation of each new space by paying special attention to the physical geometry and textures of the space and the accretion of spatial practice over time in a way that is not required of theatre dance. Furthermore, vertical dance choreographers also design the manner in which the public encounter the space in performance, which often results in the use of new pathways, occupation of new spaces and new behaviours and physicalities (looking up). In this way, the space is a partner in the generation of the gestures of the public and the dancers (see
Chapter Five discussion of *Gwymon 1*). The material and architectural aspects of the space dictate the suspension system of vertical dance which provides spectacular images of freedom of movement, contradicted by the spatial limitations imposed by the equipment.

Lefebvre states that the ways and tracks of early human interaction with space ‘belong to the anthropological stage of social reality’, a stage of ‘demarcation and orientation’ (1974: 192). As I have shown in Chapter One, vertical dance is in this early stage of finding its way through the new vertical world that it inhabits. This is true in the sense that it is seeking to navigate a specific new terrain. It is false in the sense that these territories are situated in complex twenty-first century social spaces which have accreted social action over extended time periods. Like layers of sedimentary rock laid down over long periods of time, a cross section of social space through time would reveal how each layer provided the bedrock for the next layer, never completely eradicating the past. Like palimpsests, a concept which has appeared in the work of many scholars writing about space and art in recent years (see for example, Turner, 2004; Pearson and Shanks, 2001; Huyssen, 2003), ‘social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another’ (Lefebvre, 1974:86). Analysis of a fragment of social space in which vertical dance takes place can disclose a host of hidden social relationships, and this will be developed in Chapters Four and Five.

**Spatial body**

Lefebvre’s concept of the ‘spatial body’, which he describes as a two-sided ‘machine…run by massive supplies of energy (from alimentary and metabolic
sources)’ and at same time ‘by refined and minute energies (sense data)’ (1974:195) is in itself an empty vessel. His machine metaphor explains at a basic level how energy is gathered and expended by the spatial body, but it doesn’t attend to the complexity of how that energy dispersal manifests itself in human movement. Jean Newlove has similarly referred to the body as an ‘engine’ running on the rhythm of breathing and circulation of blood in her explication of Laban’s theories of space (1993:53). She talks about how the body displaces space in its every action - no matter how large or small – as it moves through space, and as motion occurs within the space of the body (1993:52). In my vertical dance practice, I have considered how Laban’s analysis of the ‘dynamosphere’, which recognizes that ‘movements can be executed with differing degrees of inner participation and with greater or lesser intensity’ (1966:27). He analyses the relationship between pathways of limbs in space within their kinesphere (straight/roundabout), the weight with which they are performed (light/strong) and time taken (quick/slow) to perform these movements, to create a series of dynamic qualities arising from specific combinations of spatial trajectory, relation to gravity and speed of movement. For example, ‘slashing’ is a quick, strong and roundabout movement (1966:34), and ‘gliding’ is a slow, light and straight movement (1966:33). In contrast to Lefebvre’s empty metaphor, Laban’s system allows for detailed and concrete analysis of the complex ways in which the vertical dancer’s ‘body as machine’ expends energy in space, testing, trying out, enacting, undermining, placing and replacing theories of space.

The vertical dance body as ‘machine’ draws upon both ‘massive reserves’ and ‘sense data’, the former released through muscular effort, the latter, through constant shifts of perception and control of the body through the sensory organs, nerve
pathways and the brain, which Moretti’s training system mentioned in Chapter One develops. Lefebvre’s application of his dialectic method, which in most cases produces new insights, in the case of the spatial body leaves a gap for the nuances of the in-between space into which the vertical dancer steps with her expert body. Her embodied knowledge of Laban’s principles of effort, allows her to release (and store) massive reserves of energy explosively, or gently, with sustained or staccato use of time, bound or free flow, direct or indirect spatial patterns, and unlimited combinations thereof. Aerial rotations (or somersaults) for example, require an explosive release of energy at the start, followed by a sustained use of time and ability to hold a body position in the air, which is underpinned by a web of sense data which keep the body attuned to its spatial orientation. Without this underpinning web, the dancer would lose control and potentially crash into the wall.

In contrast, some sections of choreography keep the massive reserves contained, and use only the sense data to receive and emit limited amounts of energy, which give rise to more refined and controlled movement. This is evident in the ‘sleeping’ section of *Gywmon 2* (Chapter Five), where the dancers have their eyes closed and move as if in a dream state, feeling their way around a wall that is imagined as a vertical bed. In the absence of visual data to guide their movements, their limbs become extra-sensitive probes reaching, feeling, sensing the space for information to assist their balance. Lefebvre’s notion of ‘sense data’ is a constant and complex, finely tuned presence in the vertical dancer’s body, which stabilizes her activities in the tilted world.
In thinking through vertical dance practice in terms of the production of space it is clear that the body itself can be divided into different modes of production: occupying, moving through and thinking about space. Lefebvre writes that ‘long before the analysing, separating intellect, long before formed knowledge, there was an intelligence of the body’ (1974:174). That is to say, the experience gained through the body is prior to the conceptualization of that experience and the formulation of knowledge. This is, like the production of space, an iterative process in which the body continually moves and thinks about movement in a circular exchange, accruing new techniques, approaches and knowledge that can be deployed and redeployed in space. By proclaiming the body as preceding thought, Lefebvre ignores the back and forth processes by which knowledge of the body, through the body and about the body accrue. The vertical dancer, as an expert practitioner, ‘progressively weaves’ ‘sense data’ ‘in to her or his expertly-mastered performance macro- and micro-logics, such that the two together are self-transforming’ (Melrose, 2002:15).

In the process of developing ways to think about vertical dance, the spatial body does not become social by being ‘inserted into some pre-existing world’ (1974:199); it produces and reproduces space and perceives that process, displacing space as it proceeds through space (Newlove, 1993:52). Perception of left and right, up and down exist within the body, but this perception must be projected onto objects to achieve spatial orientation, which in everyday life, presupposes a horizontal ground. As we have seen in Chapter Two, the vertical dancer produces space from a vertical floor, and her spatial body repetitively reproduces gestures in that space until they become habitual. The interaction between the body and objects produces new space
and spatial orientation. It makes sense here then to consider different objects and bodies and the artistry of producing space through vertical dance.

**Rebellious body**

Lefebvre characterises the social body as broken up by the proliferation of images representing the body in the media, the study and treatment of it in Western medical science and the systematic breakdown of human movement to improve industrial productivity developed through Taylorism, all of which reduce it to its functional or non-functional parts. In order to recover the ‘total’ body from the circuit of production and reproduction, Lefebvre calls for ‘an uprising of the body…against the signs of the non-body’ (1974:201). This rebellion is to be mobilized not by a return to nature, but through a recovery of ‘lived experience’ (1974:201), in which the body must be an active agent. Laban and F.C. Lawrence’s analysis of the repetitive movement of production line workers in the UK in the early 1940s attempted to match people with physical tasks according to physical affinities and to restore balance in bodies treated as physical machines, and is an example of an activity that strived to recover ‘lived experience’ (Digital Dance Archive, n.d.). I have attempted to understand the production of vertical dance, in particular evolutionary aspects such as rehearsals in public and the impossibility of exact repetition, as countering the circuit of production, however, as will be seen in Chapter Five, the pull to enter the marketplace is very strong, and can result in radical reworking of choreography. The need for specialized training suggests that the rebellious body of the vertical dancer is not

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9 Developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor in his study, *Scientific Management: the early sociology of management and organizations* (1911/1947), Taylorism/scientific management is a system which analyses the worker in order to increase productivity by improving labour efficiency for the benefit of capitalism.
accessible to everyone, and yet there has been great uptake for ‘taster’ events in which members of the general public can gain lived experience, albeit briefly, of standing on walls.

The realm of social space prohibits certain actions in favour of others, it is a strictly regulated arena which disciplines and directs the actions and behaviour of the public. It is a space which often says ‘no’ to bodies which seek affirmative answers to their desires for lived experience. According to Marx, such an affirmation requires ‘turning the world on its head’ (in Lefebvre:1974:201), a project to which vertical dance is eminently qualified! For example, our bodies, with perseverance, can be persuasive and bring forth new allowances in social space. As we have seen in the exploration of metaphors for vertical dance in Chapter two, and proclaimed in invitation to ‘share your vision with people’ in the Manifesto for Vertical Dance, gaining permission to dance on the walls of buildings can be a complex process which includes negotiation, explanation and compromise. The performance of *Fly Butterfly* (2009) on Belfast City Hall (see Chapter Four), represented a metaphorical opening of arms to the public to enter a social space, which for many years was highly restricted and militarily regulated. Vertical dance as unauthorized protest (the climbing of structures to place banners for example) has the benefit of creating high profile moments of expression which then dissipate. What I am talking about here, and in the Manifesto for Vertical Dance, is authorized vertical dance which has the potential to produce long-lasting, perhaps more subtle and nuanced effects in social spaces, which alongside the more radical, often protest-oriented vertical actions undertaken by organisations such as Greenpeace, Fathers for Justice, and individuals such as French extreme urban climber Alain Robert and the illegal artistic acts of tightrope
walker Philippe Petit\textsuperscript{10}, contributes to changes in society, but in a less spectacular, exclamatory and punctuated manner. The authorization of an activity which at first sight might appear illegal, permeates social life in significant and meaningful ways drawing together a network of interested parties who have played various parts in the creation of a new spatial practice. These parties have colluded and collaborated in the collective subversion of spatial practice through vertical dance, which demonstrates that someone, somewhere has said ‘yes’ to the proposition of bodies occupying vertical spaces. And yet, over time, what is unfamiliar to begin with, becomes familiar and part of everyday life; seeing dancers standing on the walls of city buildings, and the activity of looking up, is normalized. Vertical dance, as an interstitial practice (Bourriard, 1998), has developed an idiosyncratic model of existence, that through repetition, has been accepted and tolerated by, and eventually integrated into the hegemonic structures that govern our everyday lives, changing habitual attitudes to spatial practice along the way.

Lefebvre names music and dance as activities that have the capacity to ‘restore the total body’ (1974:205). His explanation of how this might be possible is fairly limited (not surprisingly, he is not a dance or music practitioner), yet he seems almost to be throwing down a gauntlet to those in the worlds of music and dance to pick the job of restoring wholeness to a body he sees as fragmented. He sees this restoration as occurring primarily through rhythm, and specifically a recovery of cyclical patterns in

\textsuperscript{10} See for example 2013 ascent of the Shard in London by all female team from Greenpeace to protest against oil and gas drilling in the Arctic, Fathers for Justice show reel issued in 2011 promoting their stunts to raise awareness of father’s rights, Alain Robert’s autobiography (2008) discussing his solo climbing of the highest buildings in the world, sometimes in order to place a protest banner, and Petit’s 1974 tightrope walk between the Twin towers in New York, as an artistic act, immortalised in the 2008 film \textit{Man on Wire}. 
time. Social practice (work, travel, etc.) has seen the dominance of linear over cyclical rhythms and spatial forms and Lefebvre sees a necessity for a rebalancing these.

**Buildings and Monuments**

Lefebvre argues that monuments provide focal points where social practice and building convene, but as these disappear, a social vacuum is left which is often filled by violence. City Hall, at the centre of Belfast, which provides the setting for the work discussed in Chapter Four, is an example of a monumental focal point where social practice was replaced by ‘a ring of steel’ to attempt to quell trouble and enforce peace. Buildings, on the other hand, ‘have functions, forms and structures, but they do not integrate the formal, functional and structural ‘moments’ of social practice’ (1974: 223). Lefebvre now constructs dialectics between buildings (everyday life) and monuments (festival), ‘merely perceived’ and ‘lived experience’, and products and works, which like his machine metaphor for the spatial body, leave vacant lot between two edifices (building and monument) which I discuss further in the next Chapter. Monuments are defined by their function: Belfast City Hall is a seat of civic governance; Guildford Cathedral is a site for religious worship; National Library of Wales is a repository for Welsh history and Base Sousmarine in St Nazaire is an ex-Nazi submarine base. All these have hosted my vertical dance performances and in the following chapters I will discuss the relationship between the buildings or monuments and the works. Monuments embody symbols and signs and meaning, organized into a ‘monumental whole’ (1974: 224). The body becomes a property of this monumental space which operates at 3 levels: lived experience, perception (construction of socio-political meanings) and conceived (where
knowledge is disseminated in a way which constructs bodies as subjects). I will discuss in the coming chapters what happens when bodies want to dance on the walls of these monuments, referring to a constant to and fro between these levels of monumental space. Lefebvre talks of monuments as portals into ‘poetic worlds’, whereas buildings are prosaic (1974:227). In my work, it becomes apparent that two processes (derived from psychoanalysis and linguistics) operate in these spaces: displacement, through metonymy and contiguity, and condensation, via metaphor, similarity and substitution. Social space is ‘condensed in monumental space’ (1974:225) and functions to underpin society by intensifying and reinforcing the hierarchical structures of power. Horizontal links in social space are overlaid with the vertical superstructure of government and religion. Objects removed from everyday space gain metaphorical significance, for example a vase becomes holy.

Lefebvre sees buildings as prosaic places, suggesting they lack imagination or originality, wherein social relationships are ‘brutally condensed’ (1974:227). Unlike monuments, they are functional, designed to service, control and disperse social production and labour in social space for economic gain. Amenities, such as leisure facilities, are clearly demarcated in space, as are factories, schools, bus stations and places of work. Links are made, or imposed, on social space, which is ‘determined economically by capital, determined socially by the bourgeoisie, and ruled politically by the state’ (1974:227). Buildings are often the province of urban planners and governmental departments rather than architects, although the dialectic affords a range of relations between monuments and buildings. I am prompted to ask where the domestic home figures in Lefebvre’s dialectic of monument/building. He refers to the home as a structure that is part of an urban planning scheme, but provides no
detail about the individual ways in which we construct our homes as private and social spaces. This will be relevant in discussions of *Off the Wall* (2010) and *Pobl Dre* (2012), in Chapters Four and Five, which focus on the relationship of private and public spaces, highlighted by window orifices in walls. The buildings I will discuss in the following chapters are arts centres situated within a civic system of amenities, which also have a foot in the monumental camp, being designated places for arts activities. These are Galeri, in Caernarfon and Venue Cymru in Llandudno.

**Walls**

Visible material boundaries in space, for example walls, are critical for the practice of vertical dance. They also suggest ‘separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity’ (Lefebvre, 1974:87). This ambiguity is highlighted by vertical dance; dancers are a conduit between overlapping social spaces – inside and outside. The dancers, as biological entities have permeable boundaries (mouth, nose, anus, etc.) whereas in social space ‘closures tend to become absolute’ (ibid.: 176). Lefebvre’s discussion of the politics of bourgeois space can be made more palpable through the encounter between the soft biological permeable body of the dancer and the solid, hard structures of property. Boundaries signal divisions of property, inside and outside are demarcated with walls, frontiers between territories and countries are marked by fences and guards, depending on the relationship between the territories in question. To some extent, vertical dance emphasizes these barriers by dancing on them. The passage of the dancers’ feet on the wall of an institution draws attention to the solidness of the barrier, so solid that it can withstand the wrecking ball actions of dancers landing from horizontal jumps, and indeed, the dancer is grateful for this solidity. Alternatively, as we have seen in the
case studies in Chapter One, choreographers may construct walls that are soft, that dissolve and fracture or are unstable.

Walls of buildings are transformed, temporarily, into vertical stages, raised up from the ground; performance spaces are transferred from the dark internal space of the theatre auditorium into the light of day; from a bounded, contained, institutional space into the fabric of public space. Conventional dramatic traditions are exposed: the exclusive internal space of Western theatre is opened out. No practice challenges the fourth wall as radically as vertical dance, removing not only the three walls but also tipping the floor. These vertical stages are not framed by proscenium arches; their edges are less pronounced, where the surface disappears around a corner vaguely indicates the end of the dancing space. These stages are not clearly separated from daily life, not pushed into the domain of artistic genius, rather they exist in the everyday, so that performing dance is part of the performance of daily life, to be witnessed for free or ignored by anyone passing. There are no special effects, no blackout, no lighting (except the light of the sun), no designated place to watch from, no protection from the weather, no filtering out of the sounds of the city. There is no indication that dancing on the walls of buildings is special or out of the ordinary, except in how it effects the dancer’s body, and consequently the viewer’s body. Out of this field of negatives, the lived experience of the body is re-inserted into everyday life in a way which changes spatial perception without framing the body as spectacular in theatrical terms (using lighting, set, a specified space), much like Brown’s Man Walking down the side of a Building (1970) (see Chapter One). Clearly, some vertical dance performances take place at night and use lighting and projection to frame the space of the dance, but this has not been a common practice
in my work. Prototypical vertical dance operates in a similar way to some site-specific performance and postmodern dance practices, amongst others, in that it defamiliarises the everyday, within the everyday.

Refusal to frame the performance space as extraordinary renders the dancers more human, less spectacular and more approachable. Although their bodies are out of reach, glances, words and gestures can be exchanged, encounters which connect two worlds on two different planes. This ordinariness, I would argue, exaggerates the extraordinariness of the activity of dancing on a vertical wall. There is no need for special effects.

**Windows**

Vertical dance can highlight the inside and outside realms hidden by the walls of a building where the walls have windows, especially where they are human sized. Walls become permeable via the window orifices so that inside and outside spaces interpenetrate. Dancers can disappear and reappear at different windows. They can fall out of windows, watch each other and the audience through windows. Unlike biological entities, including humans, which develop insides and outsides as they evolve, but always maintain gateways between inside and outside, orifices and pores that permit transit between both, Lefebvre considers that barriers in the social realm tend to restrict passage (1974:176). Examples are the walls and fences around private property and frontier walls between states and countries; these are designed to separate and special dispensation may be required to pass between. Belfast, discussed in Chapter Four, is a city in which walls and fences have been used to create barriers to contain violence and enforce peace. The human penetration of
walls through windows therefore takes on a metaphorical and a social significance which Moretti pointed out when I asked her how she would describe the relationship between her work and the places in which she performs.

I would say it is a social one, in the sense that it has the same characteristics as a public work, in the middle of the street, in front of everyone. During the creation of the performance there exists an intrusion upon the building, we enter and exit from all parts….it is like weaving a thread inside and out, to link but also to invade. I remember once in Genova, we set-up chords [ropes] in the apartment of a very kind family, directly in their kitchen. While we were rehearsing they continued to have lunch and every now and then one of them came out to salute the women on the wall and to ask if they needed anything or if they wanted something to eat! I love finding myself in those situations.

(email interview, 2006)

In Chapters Four and Five I will develop this discussion in relation to two vertical dance pieces, *Off the Wall* (2010) and *Pobl Dre* (2012), where windows, real and fake, were salient features of the works. Windows are transitional objects, having two orientations, inside and outside, and permitting movement inwards and outwards. Windows are framed differently on the outside to the inside; one side is exposed to weather conditions and the other frames the outside world. Windows permit walls to become permeable, to allow a relation between one world (the inner) and another (the outer) or between one side and another. Windows are thus ‘transitional, symbolic, functional’ objects (Lefebvre, 1974: 206). The transitional use of windows in vertical dance choreography is not prototypical because it breaks the continuity of the vertical dance floor and changes the spatial possibilities available. Moretti’s work, *Far Vuoto* (2012), discussed in Chapter One, deliberately avoids using the available window, creating a dramatic tension both in the choreography and in the relationship to the prototype.
Occupation of Space

According to Lefebvre, we can only recover natural, sensory spaces, representational spaces, through revolt (1974:50), by disturbing common forms of social practice. Vertical dance has this rebellious capacity in the way it challenges habitual usages of space (by walking on walls), inserting performance into everyday life and opening up creative processes to public scrutiny. Furthermore, the occupation of the vertical surfaces of built environments by dancers highlights the human body as ‘natural’, interrupting habitual patterns and forms of spatial practice. The solid, unnatural exterior surfaces of buildings are thus afforded a natural, sensory aspect by the dancers’ interaction with them. Spaces of power (town halls, cathedrals, government buildings) subjugate lived experience to a set of rules and regulations; they preordain usage of space, with little room for creative action and agency on the part of the citizen (except through demonstration, or practices like parkour, or little subversions such as crossing roads at non-designated places). These spaces can harbour a hidden nostalgia for the past and regret for the disappearance of nature, which vertical dance bodies can recapture. Abstract spaces of modernity erase difference, they promote homogeneity, so it follows that any spaces emerging from them would accentuate difference, would be ‘differential spaces’ (Lefebvre, 1974:52). These differential spaces that vertical dance produces provide a way to restore unity to social practice, which is broken up by abstract space, and functions upon apparent consensus with users of the space to govern behaviour (for example, habitual pathways through space created through navigation of the built environment). Systems for pedestrians to cross roads for example, are often not efficient for the pedestrian but efficient for the circulation of cars. Our social practice – walking – is constantly disrupted by urban spatial planning that is based
on the idea that cars need to circulate freely and this affects the pathways we choose to take through space. Consensus in this example is effectively enforced on the pedestrian by the urban planner. Vertical dance, like parkour or skateboarding, displays alternative ways to navigate and engage creatively with urban space, but to avoid arrest, these activities must be sanctioned, in order they may be practiced ‘again…and again…and again’, to ‘remind the built environment about nature’ (Manifesto for Vertical Dance).

My vertical dance practice has taken place in smaller towns and cities in the British Isles. Belfast, which is discussed in Chapter Four, is still a relatively small city, which wears its recent violent history on its sleeves. Caernarfon is a town which exudes a more distant history of domination, evident in its city walls and enormous castle. Llandudno, on the other hand, is a faded Victorian seaside town. The dancers have ‘occupied’ these spaces, and in some cases, continue to occupy them. We are ‘squatters’ at Venue Cymru in Llandudno now, but our first appearance on the roof of the building in 2012 involved lengthy negotiations and was watched very carefully by an army of council officials in high visibility vests. Now they just open the access door to the roof and let us get on with it. This shows that in some sense, our activities have been to some extent ‘normalised’ in this locality. This occupation of vertical spaces in North Wales is subtle, but has not gone unnoticed; I often meet

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11 Historic buildings, such as the Castles in Conwy and Caernarfon which are part of the tourist trail and preserved by Cadw (the Welsh version of English Heritage) have not granted permission to dance on their walls despite several attempts over the past three years. The reasons are largely due to perceived damage that might be caused to the building and the setting of a precedent for others. It is interesting to note that these are the buildings, known as ‘the iron ring’, were built by Charles I of England to subjugate the Welsh and as such have a history of defensive and prohibitory spatial practice, which they have not completely shed.
people for the first time who ask me if I am the lady who dangles off buildings. North Wales has a history of uprising and rebellion, for example, the battles of the Welsh princes of the house of Gwynedd to be independent from English rule in the 13th century, and the 1900 - 1903 strike at Penrhyn Slate Quarry, one of the longest in the history of British labour disputes. Perhaps the idea of vertical dance as rebellious occupation has captured the imagination of people in the region. As well as standing up for their rights, the slate quarriers of North Wales were forward thinking and great believers in education; Bangor University was originally built using very small donations from the quarry workers wishing to build a future for their children. This is an example of a subtle revolution, creating a real and powerful legacy for the future. Lefebvre claims that to be effective, revolution must not just change politics, but it must change space and in so doing, affect everyday life (1974:54). The imposing Main Arts building of Bangor University attests to such a change in space and in the everyday lives of the people of Gwynedd. I do not pretend that vertical dance will change space in such a significant way, but I believe that the images it creates can inspire participants in the dance, gatekeepers of space and citizens to view space as something we, as citizens, have the power to change by using our bodies in ways that disrupt the everyday, within the everyday. Repetitive occupation of the everyday by vertical dance strengthens these images and increases our influence and potential to change social space (Wickstrom in Cull and Daddario, 2013: 48).

Circulation of vertical dance works/products in social space

In order for a product to enter social space as a product, all traces of productive activity need to be erased from it. This is another aspect in which vertical dance
(and indeed all live performance) cannot be viewed as a standard commercial product in the Marxist sense. The body which produces the product is ever-present. The touring theatre circuit functions to some extent within the rules of the circulation of products in that works that can be reproduced more or less the same in each location, and theatres are built to specifications to facilitate this transfer. The prototype of vertical dance that I am discussing here (outlined in Chapter One), uses non-designated spaces of performance, so each reiteration in a new place usually requires major adjustments to the work and each new location evokes new meanings. Both dance and vertical dance need to function in the marketplace to survive economically, but the impossibility of erasure of the body means that performance work will never fully function as a product until the human body is replaced by a robot!

The question of the circulation of artistic products in relation to site-specific work is interrogated by Miwon Kwon (2004) in relation to the visual arts. She critiques the adoption of a ‘nomadic’ circulation of art works called ‘site-specific’, proposing that the ‘re-siting’ of place-based works disturbs the notion of site as a singular location (2004:3). She suggests instead that the term ‘site’ is now discursively employed to refer to communities, ‘generic’ (Smith, 2002:11) types of sites (for examples train stations, or billboards) and even ideas. Part of the motivation for artists to attempt to move their work is financial and aspirational; local, singular works generate limited income and attention. Referring to Lefebvre, Kwon proposes that the ‘nomadic’ work of art is a product of modernism and capital which seeks to create homogeneity and erase difference (2004:157) and the only way to produce new spaces is to accentuate difference (Lefebvre 1974:52). The question then arises: does the un-
hinging of a work from its original site of production water down its meaning which has been developed in conjunction with the place of generation? How does the relocating of a vertical dance work affect the production of and changing of social space? Does dislocation and relocation require special attunements to new spaces to accentuate difference required to produce new space? These are questions I will return to in Chapter Five in relation to the ‘touring’ of Gwymon (2014) to a range of different sites.

Lefebvre’s distinction between a ‘work’ and a ‘product’ (1974: 73), is pertinent to the way vertical dance works circulate, or don’t, in the marketplace, which I shall expand on in Chapter Five. A work is characterized, amongst other attributes, as creative, individual and irreproducible, whereas a product is made, produced, has exchange value and can be reproduced. We have already seen in Chapter One that works made in specific sites respond to those places in specific ways; they are moulded by, and structured for those spaces and their meaning lies in the relationship constructed between place and art work. And yet, site-specific dance works such as Susanne Thomas’ Trainstation (1998), are made for a specific type of site, namely the train station of the title of the work and the themes explored (greetings and farewells, particular behaviours observed in stations, as well as tongue in cheek references through costume – platform shoes) emerge from the site. Yet these are themes that transfer easily to other train stations, enabling Thomas to retain the original meanings embedded therein as these are tied to human experience of train stations, not just to the physical space. In relation to Thomas’ work, sculptor Serra’s comment that ‘to remove the work is to destroy the work’ (in Kwon, 2004:12) therefore seems untrue. Indeed, Phil Smith (2002), performance maker with the
company Wrights and Sites, has suggested that site-specific performance can be considered along a continuum from performance in a theatre building to the work which is in and of the site in which it is created. Somewhere in between is work which is located in a site relevant to the ideas being explored (‘site-sympathetic’) and work which tours to a range of similar sites (‘site-generic’) (Smith, 2002: 11). The idea of ‘touring’ site-specific work is clearly complex and requires careful consideration by choreographer when adapting the work in order retain or re-focus the original meaning when the work is displaced and replaced.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the rise of industrialization and the science of political economy (1974:80) gave rise to reductionism and positivism. Products ceased to reveal their ‘productive activity’ and became ‘fetishized’ along with ‘the circuits they established in space’ (1974:81). Marx retrieved the lost signs of production by revealing the systems of production operating in capitalist society (1974:82). According to Marxist critique, in capitalism objects/products must be disconnected from their conditions of production in order that they can circulate freely in the market. This means, for art and performance, that the space in which original works were produced and the spaces in which they conventionally circulate in recent history (white box galleries and black box theatres) must be devoid of meaning, they are ‘empty’, to be filled temporarily with the meaning contained in arts objects placed therein, which themselves are independent of any context. As we have seen already in Chapter One, the minimalist sculpture movement, begun in 1960s North America critiqued the idea of art works ‘out of context’, by requiring the presence of the viewer to complete the art work and by an insistence on location as part of the meaning-making process (see Kwon, 2004; Kaye, 2000; Lacy et al., 1995), and this critique of
modern art was echoed in the work of postmodern dancers such as Trisha Brown. *Gwymon* (2014), one of the vertical dance works I discuss in Chapter Five, was performed in various locations and its relation to its original and subsequent locations will be analysed in the context of Lefebvre’s idea that objects can never be completely severed from either their context of production nor their use, and space is not a ‘passive receptacle’. He proposes instead, a continuum of space where ‘the more a space partakes of nature, the less it enters into the social relations of production’ (1974:83). *Gwymon* (2014, Chapter Five) has a natural theme, the sea, does this mean that it is inherently less of a commercial product, despite its circulation in the market? Or is it a question of the specific relationships it forges with each new space it inhabits?

In Marxist theory, production is comprised of social labour, relations and mode of production (1974:89). Lefebvre wants to apply this principle to space to reveal the structural, systemic rules that govern our understanding of space and the ‘social relationships embedded in it’, the interconnectedness of ownership, social practice and organization of labour (1974:90). Lefebvre asks whether art works become products with exchange values (1974:74). The works I am discussing here were all presented free of charge to the public, and were funded by arts councils or commissioned by festivals or venues, usually derived from public subsidy. This means that there is minimal financial profit to be gained from the activity. Therefore, there is virtually no surplus value in practising this kind of vertical dance. Reworking a work so that it can enter the marketplace erases much of the site-specificity and runs the risk of losing the integrity of the original in favour of remaking it for a generic kind of space. Dance works do not slip easily into the category of commercial
products, they cannot ever be reproduced exactly ‘the same’ because the performing body is different from one moment to the next. Performance vanishes, it is not a product that you can own, but it can be sold in the marketplace. It can tour to many theatres, designed to receive theatrical productions, and there it can be reproduced. Vertical dance is trickier – it involves much more protracted negotiations to discover where it might be reproduced, how, with whose permission, with what assessments of risk and what changes must be made to the work for it to fit the new space (see Chapter Five for my analysis of the re-siting of Gwymon (2014)).

According to Lefebvre, products have erased all traces of the labour which went into producing them to enter the circulation of products in the market; to enter social space. Vertical dance practice and rehearsal very often takes place in public, so the productive labour is visible, it is revealed. It is already present in social space before it becomes a ‘product’, if that is what it becomes. This is a significant difference between my vertical dance practice and choreographic practices which produce touring theatre shows to be presented in theatres. These ‘products’ are not normally revealed to the public until they are finished; the labour of creation (the improvisation, the directing process, the mistakes, the sections edited out, the repetitions) rarely see the light of day, they are left in the rehearsal room. In my creative process, all these efforts are potentially accessible should someone wish to watch us rehearsing. In actual fact, only parts of the creative process are glimpsed as people pass by, and possibly stop and watch for a few minutes. The vertical dance practice I am discussing here evolves in public/social space, so the concept of a finished product is less demarcated than in more conventional choreographic practices. There is an opening of labour and production processes to and within
social space. In addition, nature is almost always visible from within the towns of North Wales, as a backdrop to urban life, providing a foil to the social relations of production (see above). Site-specific choreography often evolves in a similar way, and vertical dance practice bears more resemblance to these practices than to ‘theatrical’ choreographic processes of production.

One might then ask what kind of capital vertical dance produces. Richard Florida developed a ‘bohemian index’ which ‘counted the number of artists, writers and performers in a city’ (Malanga, 2004), arguing that cities that attract this demographic (as well as ‘creative class workers’\textsuperscript{12}), experience increased economic growth. Of course, vertical dancers can be characterised as being part of the ‘creative class’ of workers who contribute to the economic growth of a city by increasing its ‘cool’ index as a place to live; by dancing on walls, everyday life is potentially enhanced in a particular location subsequently attracting investment. Malanga however, critiques Florida saying that he made a ‘dubious’ connection between the creative class index and economic growth, and that cities in North America that responded to his ideas have not actually seen economic growth (2004). If Florida’s theory is flawed, there is no direct correlation between ‘creative class’ and economic growth, and the work undertaken by vertical dancers is no different from any other physical labour. My argument about vertical dance is that it produces non-reproducible products that circulate with difficulty in the conventional market (the theatre touring circuit).

Therefore, vertical dance has constructed its own methods for addressing these

\textsuperscript{12} ‘Creative class’ workers are characterized by Florida as knowledge workers, including ‘scientists, engineers, professors’ and others, who ‘combine...the bourgeois work ethic with bohemian culture’ (Malanga, 2004). Florida developed his ideas in a volume entitled \textit{The Rise of the Creative Class} (2002).
issues (modifying and changing its works (not products) on an individual basis, rehearsing in public, providing free performances) in order to operate in the marketplace and these interstitial (Bourriard, 1998) methods are tolerated and accepted in the marketplace.

**Places as products or works**

Can the locations of vertical dance performances in Caernarfon, Llandudno, Cardiff, Newport, St Nazaire and Belfast (see Chapters Four and Five) be considered as products, or works? To recap: Lefebvre characterizes a work as creative, individual, irreproducible, whereas a product is made, produced, has exchange value and is reproducible. Lefebvre asks if Venice is a work or a product, or both? He suggests that if towns grow organically they are more like works than products (1974:76). According to him, products are planned in advance - garden cities like Milton Keynes, might be considered products, perfect utopian cities to be filled, like containers, with inhabitants - whereas Venice was 'built by collective will and collective thought… and by the productive forces of the period' (1974:76). Lefebvre contends that Venice is both product and work, but the dialectical relationship between the two is softer (1974:77). Repetitious space, such as airports and supermarkets are produced by repetitious gestures; they are reproducible and exchangeable, as products they occupy space and circulate within their spheres. These are spaces that have been referred to as non-places by anthropologist Marc Augé (1995). Vertical dance has intervened in these 'non-places': Moretti’s vertical dancers occupied the exterior of a car park in La Defense area of Paris (2008) as part of a project to reclaim social space, and Haigood’s *Departure and Arrival* (2007) occupied in the International terminal of San Francisco Airport for four days. Both
works had a mission to insert the body into a functional space, or, to use Augé’s (1995) term, a non-place. A work, as opposed to a product, ‘occupies space’ and ‘engenders and fashions it’, but both are subtly connected. (Lefebvre, 1974:77). In the vertical dance examples above, it can be said that the choreographers ‘work’ occupies spaces that might be considered products, and in doing so, they enter into a dialectical relation with it, engendering and fashioning new meanings. It will be productive to consider vertical dance performances and their contexts in relation to the dialectical work/product framework to identify whether dance and context share a similar or conflicting work/product ethos, and what new insights might be derived from the dialectical relationships therein.

**Concluding thoughts**

How can the production of social space by vertical dance activity be revealed? The physical marking of material space by vertical dance is not evident when the dancers are gone; unlike path-makers, we try very hard not to leave footprints on the walls on which we dance. The key to navigating vertical dance space does not lie in reading the space itself (via signs and symbols of navigation), but in the development of specialized skills and techniques and the use of equipment. The imprint on social space is however traceable. Performances and rehearsals etch images in the minds of onlookers, who may also generate film and photographic images which circulate on social media. These memories and reproductions of vertical dance reveal the production of new spaces, providing evidence, for example, that walls can be danced on. As traces left in the wake of vertical dance performances (and rehearsals), they contribute to the meanings attached to particular places: a fragment of space in WW2 Nazi submarine base in Northern France became a vertical stage for dancers.
(see Chapter Five), upon which a new narrative (that of women’s relationships with the sea) was danced over the brutal, crumbling concrete relic of German occupation. One violent occupation overlaid with a softer, gentler presence.

According to Lefebvre, semiology studies the early marking of natural space. In early civilisations, landmarks and cairns were built to guide travellers along paths which did not radically transform space (Lefebvre, 1974: 141). In contrast, ‘natural’ space has all but disappeared in modern urban contexts, so a semiological reading of space as if it were a book in which the movement of humans is written on the pages of the land in a coherent manner no longer makes sense. Lefebvre contends that social space is more like a ‘rough draft’, with statements, scrubblings out, notes in the margins and contradictions. Similarly, the public rehearsal spaces of vertical dance are akin to scrapbooks, or journals which can be decoded by the choreographer, the dancers or the casual onlooker. Space also ‘commands bodies’ (Lefebvre, 1974:143): it tells us how to behave, what directions to take, what is prohibited and what is allowed. The particular space of vertical dance is regulated by the equipment which governs movement, rhythm and orientation of the body. ‘Reading’, decoding, recoding and dancing are all iterative processes of producing space, again... and again...and again. Vertical dance is produced to be experienced by dancers, other participants and onlookers in rehearsal, workshops and performance, then captured and frozen in time on film, wherein it enters the marketplace as a commodity (albeit one that has exchange value only in the sense that it may generate interest leading to future projects). The specific ways that it produces social space differently to the dominant modes of dance production and the social
significance of these processes of production for society in general are the main questions of this thesis.

Analysis of social spaces produced by my vertical dance practices will be undertaken in the next two chapters. Aspects for consideration include some of the following: the relationships of centre/periphery, assembly points, architectural and geometric forms and styles, function, accumulation (historical accretions), pathways of habit and power relations. These analyses are to be undertaken from the point of view of my dancing body and my choreographic body, with the purpose of developing my understanding of how vertical dance produces social space, and of what benefit that might be to society. Chapter Four looks at three works made in different sites in Belfast and considers in detail how they fit into the social production of space over time and what they contribute in terms of the production of new social spaces. Spaces of nature submerged by the growth of the urban environment in the city of Belfast have recently been recovered by local artists; their efforts are considered in relation to how vertical dance inserts the human body in the built environment as a reminder of nature.
Chapter Four
Changing perceptions of social space in Belfast

Introduction

This chapter focuses on three works I created from 2009 – 2011 in Belfast in collaboration with The Beat Initiative and Circus Bone Idle: Fly Butterfly (2009), Off the Wall (2010) and Life is a Carnival (2011). These vertical dance works were made possible by the people from Belfast looking up, choosing a wall to dance on, sharing their vision of a changed social space with me and together we made it happen, consequently providing inspiration for the creation of the Manifesto for Vertical Dance). I did not perform in these works, which provided me with the opportunity to examine them ‘from the outside’, both as the choreographer and as an outsider coming into Belfast to undertake these projects. Building on Lefebvre’s triadic theory of the production of social space (1974: 33-42), I will analyse the ‘successive stratified and tangled networks’ of each social space of vertical dance production (Lefebvre, 1974:403) to assess what space was produced by vertical dance in Belfast, and what, if any, changes to these spaces might have been effected. The chapter will begin with a brief description of the history of spatial practice in the settlement and urbanisation of Belfast City, applying Lefebvre’s (1974) theories on the production of space, to gain some understanding of how time is written into the fabric of space of Belfast, including a consideration how nature is present or hidden in the area. Thereafter I consider key existing representations of space relevant to my vertical dance practice in Belfast, for example, walls, buildings and restricted areas, before discussing examples of how citizens of Belfast have produced representational spaces in the City through practices such as marching, parading, mural painting and community arts.
I will then describe and analyse the production of space in each choreographic work in turn, in relation to some of the themes which emerged from Chapter Three. In *Fly Butterfly* (2009), I will focus on concepts of time written into the fabric of the space, the disappearance of nature, rebellious bodies occupying and moving through civic space, walls and boundaries and monumental space. In my discussion of *Off the Wall* (2010) I will examine an ‘in-between’ space, the relationship of outside and inside and use of windows as transitional objects (Lefebvre, 1974: 206). Finally, *Life is a Carnival* (2011) will be analysed as a contained, monumental and architectural space, connecting inside and outside spaces and extending into ideas of parade and assembly.

**Brief History of the production of social space in Belfast**

I want to decipher some of the elements of the production of social space (Lefebvre, 1974:38) in the history of Belfast to reveal the iterative spatial practice leading to and providing the context for interpreting the vertical dance projects described later in this chapter. The first significant settlement which would become Belfast began in 1613, with the building of a castle by the Anglo Normans near the place of a contested ford of the River Farsett, which gave rise to the name of the future city, Béal Feirsde, roughly translated as “approach to the sandy crossing”. Prior to this, the north-east region of Ireland was as an agrarian society, wherein natural space is changed by ‘practical activity’ which ‘writes upon nature, albeit in a scrawling hand’ (Lefebvre, 1974: 117). This period is described by Bardon and Burnett as ‘a cockpit of conflict between the Gaelic lords and the Anglo-Normans’ and an ‘influx of Scottish marauders’ (1996:2). The town was established by the Anglo Normans and the land belonged to the Chichester family, whose name appears on the street which now
runs east, away from Donegall Square, the site of City Hall and the location of the performance of *Fly Butterfly* (2009). Religious, political and socio-economic tensions existed between the English protestants and the Scottish Presbyterian settlers, exacerbated by the Catholics living in the outlying Ulster areas (Bardon and Burnett, 1996:5). Despite an increase in prosperity, the town remained small in the seventeenth century, with two prominent buildings, the parish church and the castle, and five streets. The town’s main street, High Street, followed the river Farsett (now hidden underground), which ran down the centre of the street, from the old castle (now only evident in street names), down to the dock. The power in Belfast lay with the ‘Corporation’, run by the Chichester family, who had been responsible for the original charter of Belfast.

In 1685, James I, a Catholic, acceded to the English throne and in 1688 the number of burgesses (representatives to parliament) was increased to 35, half of whom were Catholics from outside Belfast. Shortly afterwards, the Protestant William of Orange challenged for the English throne, and the citizens of Belfast pledged their allegiance. In 1689, King James I’s army attacked Belfast and the citizens surrendered, but the Williamites forced the Jacobites out of Belfast soon after and the old charters were restored. King William was welcomed in Belfast and celebratory bonfires burned throughout the city, a tradition that continues amongst loyalist groups to this day.

Between 1700 and 1800 the population of Belfast grew from 2,500 to 20,000. The early part of the century was focused on the linen trade which took place primarily in people’s homes. This was superseded by cotton, rope-making and ship-building
industries in the latter half of the century. The town continued to grow in the nineteenth century and numerous civic and artistic buildings were constructed, including the Ulster Museum in 1833, which is of significance in the later discussion of the vertical dance work *Life is a Carnival* (2011). In the Victorian era, the city experienced ‘a golden era’; the ship-building industry was booming and in 1862 the Harland and Wolff shipyard opened, which formed the backdrop for our rehearsals for *Fly Butterfly* (2009) and where the ill-fated Titanic was built. City status was granted to Belfast in 1988, leading to the construction of most of its civic buildings, such as City Hall, where *Fly Butterfly* was staged, which opened in 1906.

In 1920, under the Government of Ireland Act 1920, Ireland was partitioned into Protestant-dominated Northern Ireland and the Catholic-dominated South. This act was precipitated by conflict and sectarian violence, framed against the background of the larger Irish War of Independence, a guerrilla war between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the British security forces in Ireland between 1919 and 1921, culminating in the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921 and the creation of the Irish Free State a year later. The city suffered mass unemployment in the 1920s and 1930s, but the engineering and ship-building industries became essential in the Second World War, which provided employment but in turn made Belfast a target for intensive German bombing raids. Unemployment rose again in the latter half of the twentieth century and the traditional industries declined, whilst service industries of government, education and retail developed, alongside a new aircraft building industry.
Large demonstrations by Catholics in the 1960s, who perhaps experienced the worst housing conditions led to the period called ‘The Troubles’. This period was characterized by violence in the streets, the building of ‘peace’ walls to separate Unionist and Loyalist communities, check points, armoured vehicles, restricted areas, armed police and military and the regular sound of helicopters over the city streets. From 1951 there was a migration out of the city to suburban space, largely in response to the troubles and the city lost over 200,000 inhabitants (Plöger, 2007:16), The peace walls in Belfast have a dual function, to keep the peace and to separate and segregate. They have also provided surfaces on which to express sectarian feelings through the painting of murals. Understanding the local symbolic status of walls is crucially relevant to the creation of vertical dance in the city. How might the function of walls in Belfast be reframed by dancing on them? How might the crossing of previous divides (the hidden rivers) in a spirit of carnival celebration recapture hidden nature and cement a purpose to seek unity in a space which has been divided? Could the occupation of the land around City Hall by the public create community cohesion on a contested site, amongst the monuments of past power?

The disappearance of nature

Lefebvre’s insistence on nature as the origin of the production of social space (1974:49) requires a brief look back the origins of settlement that led to the City of Belfast. Belfast as consolidated settlement, has its origins in the early seventeenth century, and was built on low-lying land, prone to flooding, made up of sand and shingle. Nature may now be almost invisible within the city itself, but it is never far away, as can be seen in the effects of the unstable ground underfoot which are visible in the leaning Albert Clock in Belfast (Bardon and Burnett, 1996:1). The bricks
for the buildings came from the local clay, so this is another way in which nature transformed is present in the city. The city is surrounded by a semi-circle of hills, which frame the buildings. The Botanical Gardens, on which site Ulster Museum stands, preserve a managed ‘nature’ in the city. Belfast has three rivers, the Lagan, the Farsett and the Blackstaff. The Lagan is narrower now, land has been reclaimed and the channel has been deepened to allow the passage of larger ships. The latter two rivers are no longer visible, they were culverted underground during the nineteenth century as the city grew. The Farsett, which runs under Castle Street and the High Street into the Lagan, gave the city its name and the High Street its curving shape (Stewart, 2013), is now hidden beneath the feet of the citizens. The Blackstaff now runs under City Hall, under Chichester Street and then into the Lagan.

There have been recent local efforts to bring the ‘lost’ rivers into the consciousness of citizens. Mapper Garrett Carr notes that the rivers are ‘rising in the culture of the city, seeping up through concrete and reminding us to remember them’ (2010). In a project called Resounding Rivers¹³, sound artist Matt Green created soundscapes of the underground rivers at locations along their routes in Belfast. Tinderbox Theatre’s 2010 production of Jimmy McAleavy’s play The Sign of the Whale, set in 1977 is evocatively described by Carr:

“It’s like fucking Venice except nobody’s letting on!” says Dermy … In this drama … the water flowing under Belfast operate[s] as contrast to violence on the streets. Dermy finds a map of Belfast’s forgotten rivers and sets off to follow their routes. During one monologue, he becomes enraptured by the possibilities of free water rolling under the troubled city, unpolluted. “You can feel it rushing along. Overcoming obstacles. Clearing the arteries. Flushing the streets, a man could say … All the clots and the shit and the impasses. The sticking points and the standoffs and the stumbling blocks … and … yes, the bodies”. (2010)

¹³ a collaboration between PLACE, the Architecture and Built Environment Centre for Northern Ireland and sound artist Matt Green.
The relevance of this desire to recapture the lost rivers to the *Fly Butterfly* (2009) project lies in the desire to retrieve nature in the city, to remind the built environment about nature (*Manifesto for Vertical Dance*). *Fly Butterfly* (2009) does this in three main ways. First, the use of the caterpillar/butterfly image as a metaphor for the rebirth of the city centre. Second, the pathway of parade, fronted by a long caterpillar puppet, which snakes its way down Royal Avenue, itself a symbol of nature, articulated by human bodies, which begins at a site which references the lost waterways in its name: Bank Street. Finally, the populating of the City Hall site with people, on the ground and on the walls of the building, breathing a more natural life into a site in which people had been rigidly policed and disciplined.

*Fly Butterfly* (2009)

https://prezi.com/1sc5yzwkjrcej/fly-butterfly/

**Context**

In 2009, I was commissioned by the Beat Initiative to undertake a vertical dance project in Belfast. I had never been to Belfast before but the name of the city was linked in my memory with news reports of IRA bombing campaigns in the 1970s – 1990s. Apart from this knowledge, at the time I was ignorant of the city, its people and the socio-political history of Northern Ireland. Despite the apparent cessation of the Troubles in 1998, I had a strong sense that the English may still not be particularly welcome amongst some communities in Northern Ireland, so it was with some trepidation that I agreed to the commission: ‘a choice between daring and timidity’ (Blair, 1998). The *Fly Butterfly* event took place 11 years after the signing of the Good Friday agreement (1998) which marked the end of the thirty-year period of extreme violence in Northern Ireland known as ‘the Troubles’, the end of direct
rule from London and the establishment of a power-sharing government in Northern Ireland. Despite the Troubles being declared over, the following years were not problem-free, indeed the new parliament was suspended four times during this period and direct rule from London was re-imposed from 2002 – 2007.

My commission brief was to create ‘a spectacular aerial dance performance to mark the reopening of Belfast City Hall.’ Entitled *Fly Butterfly*, the event was to be a spectacle that pictures the re-emergence of a newly renovated Belfast City Hall: a public event in the city-centre streets and City Hall grounds, involving hundreds of community participants with arts and sports performers. The Butterfly represents emergence, renaissance, transformation – and flight, or ‘liftoff’, to the future: a future with Belfast being a shared space for all.

The Beat Initiative publicity, 2009

The project marked the launch of Beat’s Liftoff project for the Legacy Trust UK “Connections” programme to build a lasting legacy in the lead up to and the wake of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Northern Ireland Legacy Trust UK programme

aspires to reach out to and connect with disparate cultural elements, connecting cultures and inspiring excellence across and between art and sport, prioritising engagement and forming new partnerships with all communities in Northern Ireland (2014)

The Olympic Games ethos is to be a ‘catalyst for change in a host city with the potential to create far more than just good memories once the final medals have been awarded’ (Olympic Legacy document, 2013). The International Olympic Committee divides types of legacy into five categories: ‘sporting, social, environmental, urban and economic – and can be in tangible or intangible form’
(IOC, 2012). Whilst they do not mention the arts specifically, in the case of The Beat Initiative project, these legacies were tangible (acquisition of new skills) and intangible (increased sense of social connection and urban pride). These ambitions recognize and harness the ‘intelligence of the body’ (Lefebvre, 1974: 174) in the process of bringing about social change.

The project was also funded by Belfast City Council, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the European Regional Development Fund under the Peace III programme. It is relevant to consider in more detail the priorities of EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland (2007 – 2013) - to reconcile communities and contribute to a shared society (n.d.) - as these indicate the socio-political context and driving aims behind the work I was commissioned to choreograph. The Peace III programme had four themes: ‘to build positive relations at the local level, to acknowledge the past, to create shared public spaces, to develop key institutional capacity for a shared society’ and was focused on developing projects instigated by community groups, such as The Beat Initiative (SEUPB, n.d.). The underlying aspirations for the project were very ambitious and wide-ranging, including producing high quality artistic work (Arts Council), ‘inspiring excellence between and across art and sport’ (Legacy Trust) and contributing to the Peace process in the region (SEUPB, n.d.).

At the time of producing the choreography I was not fully aware of the complex legacy expectations of the project as The Beat Initiative had already developed the narratives that had successfully achieved this network of funding, and along with Circus Bone Idle, had chosen me to deliver the vertical dance aspect, the legacy of
which was to be training and skills in vertical dance for local performers. This much was evident. As the project developed, I understood more of the specific socio-political significance for the people of Belfast of the project. The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Naomi Long, speaking to the Belfast Telegraph, said: ‘our programme of public celebrations is in keeping with the ethos of ‘a City Hall for All’, encouraging everyone to feel and enjoy ownership of this magnificent building’ (in O'Hara, 2009). The Mayor’s statement and the brief from the Beat both reveal an underlying belief that the perception of a place can be changed through human action, and specifically, in this case, cultural activity. The presence of dancers on the exterior of the City Hall building goes some way to proclaiming that citizens can claim ownership of this space, for short period of real time, but perhaps for much longer in the memories of the citizens.

This brief was therefore a tall order, presenting some challenges. The first and perhaps most frightening challenge was to navigate the social, cultural and political significance of the event as an outsider. The event took place in the centre of Belfast, an area in which public access had been restricted and strictly controlled. According to Andrew Molloy on his blog (2013), the centre of Belfast became a cultural void during the years of the troubles and beyond. In the 1980s and 1990s a ‘ring of steel’ was established around the city centre.

Beginning with informal military checkpoints on major routes, security measures intensified over the 1980s and citizens who wanted to access central Belfast were made to queue up to pass through turnstiles in ten-foot high steel walls, only being granted access once they had been frisked by military personnel.

Molloy, 2013
As Molloy puts it, ‘the city centre was owned by someone else, be they military or paramilitary’ (2013). He further points out that the centre of Belfast is devoid of any memorials of the troubles and atrocities committed there, in stark contrast to the memorialization of important historical figures in the grounds of City Hall (I will discuss this in relation to monumental space later in the chapter). In addition, many residents of Belfast left the city in the period of the troubles so the population of the city diminished so that it is presently less (280,892 in the 2011 census) than it was in 1901 (349,000).

Molloy’s comments are echoed by punk music promoter, Hooley, talking about Belfast in 1978, who said: ‘There was a ring of steel around the city centre, it meant that the only people you saw at night in the city centre were the police, the army and punks’ (BBC News website, 2008). In his 1992 article in the Independent newspaper, McKittrick commented that ‘Belfast security measures were accepted as normal: People in Belfast have become accustomed to police checks and the “ring of steel” which protects the city’s commercial heart.’ How could a such a social normalisation of a fortified city be challenged by the activities of Beat Carnival and the associated vertical dance performance? How does the Manifesto for Vertical Dance call to produce a new social space reflect this ambition?

Training the dancers
The project took place during three separate trips to Belfast during which I trained a group of semi-professional circus performers with no experience of vertical dance. There were two important collaborators who facilitated the project, Flora Herberich (one of the performers), and John Quinn (carnival set builder/welder for the Beat
Initiative). Both were members of local circus company, Circus Bone Idle, who were Beat Initiative partners for the Liftoff project. Flora Herberich took charge of the communication between myself and the Beat Initiative and organized and ran rehearsals whilst I was not in Belfast. Without Flora and John Quinn, the project would have been extremely difficult and of a significantly poorer quality. The initial visit (August 2009) was a series of training workshops to introduce local performers to techniques of vertical dance. The advertisement stated that the workshops were ‘open to anyone with a good level of fitness. Prior experience in climbing, circus, gymnastics, acrobatics or dance is desirable but not essential’ (Beat Initiative, 2009).

From the first workshops, which took place in a warehouse in the shipbuilding area of Belfast, Flora and I identified eight performers, with a range of backgrounds spanning acting, dance, professional and amateur circus, who went on to participate in the performance. To some extent the participants selected themselves based on availability and interest, but all had a good level of general fitness. A group of gymnasts (Rathgael Gymnastics) had attended the workshops but did not continue with the project as they were already programmed to perform gymnastics on the day of the event, just before, and below, the vertical dance performance.

During the second trip (September 2009), I developed the choreography. The second visit was for four days and we worked in the same docklands location, overlooked by the huge and iconic ‘Samson and Goliath’ Harland and Wolff dockyard cranes (see portfolio). John Quinn employed his welding skills gained when he worked in the dockyards to create rigging points for suspending the dancers both in the rehearsal space and on City Hall, thus connecting different spaces of labour in the city (see portfolio film one). The walls of the rehearsal space were covered with
protrusions limiting our ability to practice pendulum movement. Quinn was a crucial artistic collaborator who was also responsible for constructing a huge butterfly with wings that opened mechanically, which looked like it had just landed on City Hall, and an enormous articulated caterpillar operated by a small army of people, which led the parade through the streets (see portfolio).

The final trip was for a week (October 2009) and included the performance. I devised a very simple choreographic structure based on my assessment of the abilities of the participants that I hoped would rise to the expectations of the brief. I assessed the abilities of the participants during the initial two rehearsal periods by setting technical tasks; the more accomplished and experienced circus performers proved to be quicker at transferring their skills to the vertical dance environment. From this assessment, I divided the team of eight performers into two groups: 4 more ambitious and competent ‘daring’ practitioners and 4 less confident and ‘timid’ performers. The performance was approximately 10 minutes long. The ‘timid’ group performed in large butterfly costumes on the parapets. These dancers were attached by ropes to the back of their harnesses to a scaffolding bar fixed behind the stone parapets. They leaned out from the building, in opposition to the mechanical butterfly between them; a very challenging position which required them to be very brave to overcome sensations of vertigo. Their movement consisted of slow and gentle arm movements and swaying.

The other four performers were split into two groups: the two women descended from the roof performing improvised movement around the theme of emerging from a chrysalis. They performed no lateral movement as they were descending columns
amongst some very elaborate architecture. Simultaneously, the two men ascended from the ground in caterpillar costumes. Half way up, the caterpillars shed their costumes to reveal butterfly wings. All four then performed synchronised sequences of movement using lateral pendulum and big aerial movement, including runs, turns and somersaults. In this way, the choreography built to a ‘spectacular’ climax. My comments in an interview for the Beat Initiative reveal my thoughts about the project at the time:

I was asked by the Beat to contribute to the opening ceremony of City Hall, and it is a real honour, but also quite a challenge. Of course, I think it is an excellent idea to mark the occasion with some vertical dance as it really highlights the building and literally places bodies on the building, which could be seen as a metaphor for the building opening its arms to all. City Hall is a very ornate building, so the challenge has been to fit the dance around its columns and ledges and curlies. In this sense, the architecture has been a partner in the structuring of the dance and the kind of movement that can be performed at different points. Because the building is so architecturally complex, the challenge is to work with this; to complement the building rather than get lost on it!

in O'Lynn (2009)

Access to the performance area on the roof was a further challenge: a ‘tightrope’ walk along the main ridge of the slate roof and then a walk down a makeshift wooden ladder over the slates on the rake (see portfolio). We were under strict instructions not to damage the restored slates on the roof. The vertical dance performance was programmed to happen at the end of a parade through Belfast finishing at the City Hall where the public would watch from the grass in front of the building.

Rebellious Bodies parading

The route of the Fly Butterfly carnival parade is worth spending some time considering because it passed by and crossed some very significant hidden
historical sites and features of nature, both relevant to understanding how social space has been produced in Belfast and how space has been confiscated from nature. (Lefebvre, 1974: 49). It started at Bank Square, turned into Royal Avenue at Castle Square and continued down to Donegall Square, the site of City Hall. Bank Square refers by name to the submerged rivers of the city, and as the parade turned right into Royal Avenue it crossed the underground Farsett River. At this moment, it simultaneously passed the former site of the Grand Central Hotel on the left (now the Castle Court Shopping Centre), which in its heyday housed Sir Winston Churchill, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. It closed in 1971 and was subsequently occupied by the British Army as barracks from 1970s to early 1980s, somewhat ironically using the Bridal Suite as their operational base (Graham, 2007). On their left, as they faced down Royal Avenue, the parade performers passed the site of the old castle, indicated only by the street names: Castle Place and Castle Lane. As they reached the end of Royal Avenue, they crossed the invisible River Blackstock, passed through the now invisible ‘ring of steel’ and entered the grounds of City Hall, which is the former site of the White Linenhall Building. I watched the parade from the roof of City Hall, unaware at the time of the historical significance of the space through which they moved. Uncovering this layering of spatial practice later, prompted by Lefebvre’s ideas of decoding social space (1974), has increased my understanding of the social, cultural and political significance of the event in which I was a small part. Looking back, I wonder what, if anything I would have done differently had I known this history.
Walls and a divided City

‘Belfast is a highly divided city’ according to Plöger’s report for the Belfast Interface Project (2007), which exists to research the interface areas and encourage projects which foster ‘safe, common, civic space for all’ (Goldie and Ruddy, 2010: 8). The population of the city is split quite evenly between Catholic/Unionist and Protestant/Loyalist and the segregation of these communities was intensified in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the violence, resulting in more barriers, or ‘peace walls’ being erected to keep them apart. Plöger notes that since the beginning of The Troubles, 17 miles of ‘peace lines’ have been erected, often closed at night to keep the divided communities safe (2007:14). Where these peace lines divide communities, they are called ‘interfaces’ (of which there were 25 in 2005) and often result in ‘blighted areas’ characterized by empty boarded-up homes and waste land (Plöger, 2007:15). Therefore, in Belfast, a wall is a potent symbol of separation between ‘us’ and ‘them’, with a dual function to keep the peace, suggesting ‘separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity’ (Lefebvre, 1974:87). In the most contested segregated areas, walls represent ‘absolute closures’ (Lefebvre, 1974: 174), and are often sites of political expression with murals expressing political views of the paramilitary groups on both sides of the divide painted onto their surfaces, some of these have now been replaced with images that present more unifying images, pointing the hope that these boundaries become more permeable. Similar barriers, described as ‘fortress architecture’ and ‘defensible space’ also protect the commercial ‘heart’ of the city, which became a no-go area at the height of The Troubles (Coaffee, 2004). A ‘ring of steel’ was eventually erected comprising high metal gates (Jarman, 1993) policed by the security forces.
Vertical dance was therefore moving into an established social and cultural practice in which walls were imbued with a narrative of separation and protection, with an explicit intention to use these walls differently and thereby perhaps change perceptions of the function and symbolism of walls. Walls will always separate, that is their physical function, but dancing on walls as vertical floors metaphorically subverts the vertical division, suggesting that a wall is solid ground on which to stand. Occupying the walls of City Hall, the dancers enjoyed ownership of the building for themselves, and on behalf of the citizens watching. This is borne out by Belfast born dancer Sarah MacKeever’s comment that she had a ‘great sense of pride and ownership of the building and performance’ (email correspondence, 2017). Their dancing creates a fleeting metaphorical mural of the Mayor’s vision of ‘City Hall for all’ (Long, in O’Hara, 2009).

**Monumental Space**

Belfast City Hall is a monumental space, a place where social function and building convene. As Lefebvre notes, when these spaces disappear, a social vacuum is left often filled with violence (1974: 223). In the case of The Troubles, when the site was surrounded by a ‘ring of steel’ to protect it, it became less accessible to the public so its social function was diminished. The monumental building marks the centre of Belfast, was built under the supervision of architect Sir Alfred Brumwell Thomas, and opened in 1906. City Hall sits on the site of the White Linenhall building, signalling a change from industry to governance as the centrepiece of the City. It is now a grade A listed building and in 2009 it was coming to the end of a £10.5 million, 90-week renovation and restoration programme which included the ‘upgrading of existing roof covering’ (Graham website, n.d.). Permission to use the building needed to be
granted by the City Council, and to be agreed with the building contractors, who were concerned not to be accused of any damage we might cause with our activities. This was a lengthy process and most of the negotiation was carried out by the Beat Initiative, but Simon Edwards (rigger) and I, made a site visit and submitted risk assessments and method statements of the rigging proposed. Final permission was not granted until the day before the event, when a group comprising a structural engineer and council and contractor’s health and safety officers visited the roof to inspect the rigging. They asked Simon if what he was doing was safe, he replied ‘yes’ and to our great relief, they agreed that the performance could go ahead (the rehearsals were already in progress). Being part of The Beat Initiative team helped to assuage my anxieties and the images of Descent of the Angel (2009) on Guildford Cathedral proved that what we proposed was possible. Models and examples of previous successful practice on iconic buildings proved to be valuable assets in the negotiation and validation of vertical dance activities and enable the practice to grow through repetition.

The land around City Hall contains many statues commemorating past Lord Mayors, the Titanic and an enormous centrepiece memorial to Queen Victoria, all signs and symbols of ownership, governance and the Crown, gathered into a ‘monumental whole’ (Lefebvre, 1974: 224). As Molloy remarks (2013), there is a marked absence of any reference to the 1,527 deaths in Belfast during The Troubles (Murray, 2006: 225). Perhaps it is too soon, and too contentious to consider how the memory of the victims of this very recent period of violence could be acknowledged. Indeed, as Plöger notes of the efforts at regeneration in the city centre, ‘possibly the biggest achievement was to turn the city centre into a ‘neutral space’, stripped of any ethno-
religious meaning and labelled as neutral for all the inhabitants of the city’ (2007:22). The presence of hundreds of people gathered on such a contested site in a spirit of celebration of renewal and rebirth (the re-opening of City Hall after the regeneration project and the symbols of butterflies emerging from caterpillars provided by The Beat Initiative) is surely a sign of hope for a more peaceful future in the region. The ‘lived experience’ created on this site on that day serves as a fleeting physical memorial to the Troubles in the absence of a more concrete edifice.

*Off the Wall* (2010)

https://prezi.com/1ofhtrcaldn3/off-the-wall/

**Context**

In discussing the second work created in Belfast, I want to consider the building, ‘in-between’, or ‘blighted’ space, and the relationship of outside and inside in relation to the use of windows as ‘transitional, symbolic, functional’ objects (Lefebvre, 1974: 206). *Off the Wall* (2010) was commissioned by Circus Bone Idle, who were funded by Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The project was designed to develop the skills of the performers who had taken part in *Fly Butterfly* (2009) and to assist them with the production of a show that developed their creative ideas, utilizing these new skills. Flora Herberich was again the producer on behalf of Circus Bone Idle and my main point of contact. She organized the permissions to use the building that was to be the stage for the event. The project was organized in two parts: the first, training with myself and with circus practitioner, Laura Tikka. The second was the creation period and performance, which consisted of a week working on the outside of the building (see portfolio film of training and performance).
There were 6 performers who came with some very clear starting points for the work, both in terms of ideas and movement already created, and music choices, all of which was pre-recorded (unlike *Fly Butterfly*), and played through speakers. The music was very diverse, ranging from Blondie’s ‘Hanging on the Telephone’, to music by the Italian gypsy band Camilocromo, to the Wurzels’ *Tractor Song*. One song, ‘Revelry’ by Kings of Leon, was sung live, alongside an unexpected siren from the street. There was a strong focus on theatricality and the use of props, which came from the participants, and which subsequently provided inspiration for my 2012 work *Pobl Dre* (see Chapter Five). From these starting points, we collectively developed a 30-minute work that stitched the different elements together in a sort of Cabaret/sketch show, presented in a very unusual location with none of the usual cabaret context: no lights, no bar, no tables and no chairs for the audience. The artistic process for *Off the Wall* was collaborative and collective unlike *Fly Butterfly* (2009), in which I was clearly the choreographer, trainer and director. The project at Belfast City Hall had given the group of performers enough skills in vertical dance to enable them to create their own imaginative pictures of the sort of work they could create within the form. My role shifted to that of facilitator of their creative ideas, collaborating with them on realizing their concepts and trying to draw those diverse elements into a cohesive whole. North American authors Kloetzel and Pavlik note that ‘site choreographers can achieve significant transformations in a community’ (2009: 5) and they talk about notions of ‘attending’, ‘tending’, and ‘drawing attention to places through choreography’ (2009: 6). This second phase of work with the Belfast vertical dance group was organized and funded by the group (rather than The Beat Initiative), indicating that they had gained sufficient confidence and had the desire to create another opportunity to develop their skills and artistic vision in this
field. I attended to their ideas, and tended to the staging of those ideas on a specific building and helped them to draw attention to this specific place through collaboratively produced choreography.

**Description of the work**

Hillas Smith welcomes the audience from the roof of the building, before performing a handstand on the edge of the building. The windows below him open and four female dancers emerge with umbrellas to perform a tightly choreographed sequence. As the quartet descend, Smith ascends a ladder from the ground for a comic solo in wellington boots and a flat cap. There follows a slapstick ‘gangster’ duet by Rachael Lindsey and Natasha Wilton, who ‘fall’ out of the windows like bumbling robbers leaving a heist. Their ‘loot’ is under one of their hats, and is lost when one of them pulls off the other’s hat. Revenge for the loss of the loot is meted out with a shooting; their index and middle fingers are painted black to symbolize guns. In a bizarre interlude, Flora Herberich appears on the roof, upside down and is slowly lowered all the way to the ground. Meanwhile, Sarah MacKeever, seated with legs crossed and carrying a telephone, is lowered out of a window and travels diagonally across the wall. She performs a solo on the curved left-hand end of the building to Blondie’s ‘Hanging on the Telephone’, using an architectural feature to arrest the pendulum, providing pauses which echo the stop/start of a phone conversation. In Apple Tango, two ropes are rigged from the same point. Herberich emerges from a window eating an apple, which she drops. Smith catches it, and there follows a playful exchange between ground and air as the apple is thrown and caught several times. He ascends and they perform a duet is based on acrobalance skills that Herberich and Smith have developed as circus performers on the
ground. Next, Devanney appears out of a window and sings, after which she is joined by Herberich and Smith for a final unison pendulum section.

The Building

The building, Crescent Arts Centre in Belfast, although a less prominent structure than City Hall, also has a history which plays a role in this site-specific work. A Victorian era listed building on University Road, it was built in 1873 for the Ladies’ Collegiate School, founded and run by Margaret Byers, an advocate and pioneer for womens’ education. It was one of the first schools for girls in the country. In recognition of the good work, Queen Victoria commanded that it be renamed Victoria College in her royal jubilee year, 1887 (linking to the statue of Queen Victoria at City Hall). In 1972 the College relocated and the building fell into disrepair and was also threatened by a planned ring road. It was then re-opened as a youth and community arts centre, housing many community organizations, including Belfast Community Circus (Crescent Arts Centre website, n.d.). In the 1980s the Centre was almost closed due to electrical failure and a ‘Save the Crescent’ campaign was started and debated and defended by Lord Hylton in the House of Lords with these words:

My Lords, concerning the Crescent Arts Centre, the Minister may like to know that I have written to his colleague, Mr. Needham, with a copy to Dr. Mawhinney, and I hope that between the department, the Belfast City Council and the Arts Council a solution for the continuity of the centre in its present building can be worked out.

1987: 194

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14 When asked if learning vertical dance change his perception of his body’s relationship with space, Smith commented: ‘one of my strongest memories of wall dancing is feeling like tumbling with gravity turned right down’ (email correspondence, 2017).
The Crescent building’s social history marks it variously as a site of education recognized by royalty, an unoccupied building, then a place for the community, almost lost and regained through the efforts of the community, supported by the House of Lords. Unlike Lefebvre’s view of buildings as ‘determined economically by capital, determined socially by the bourgeoisie, and ruled politically by the state’ (1974:227), the Crescent appears to have established a deep connection with the community who use it who have shouted loud to save it, and whose voices have been heard in Parliament. Far from being a ‘prosaic’ and functional place, designed for service (Lefebvre, 1974:227), the history of the Crescent suggests that it is really a place of the people, for the people, reflecting the aspiration of Mayor to present ‘a City Hall for All’ on its re-opening a year earlier. Lefebvre does not talk about this kind of building, his dialectic thinking instead sets the architectural monument against the building which is the production of urban planners. The Crescent is perhaps an example of a ‘lived space’ which has proven its worthiness of support through the collective labour of its community, existing somewhere between the monument and the building. Off the Wall (2010) marked the opening of the building after an extensive renovation project. As with City Hall, the hand-over of the building from the contractors complicated our negotiations regarding access. In addition, the roof had been resurfaced, and we were requested to take care not to damage it. This was the second time I experienced working on a building in the process of a hand-over following building work (the first was on Belfast City Hall). I have learnt that the relationship between the construction company and building users is very fragile during the period leading up to the final signing over of the building. The construction company is worried about any damage that is caused in this period that they may be deemed liable for. The highly unusual proposition of creating a vertical
dance during this volatile period requires careful negotiation and persuasion, skills I was developing fast, as well as a great deal of faith on the part of the builders and those in charge of the building.

The architecture of The Crescent Arts Centre was very different to that of City Hall (see portfolio). The walls were plain, and allowed for much more ample movement. In addition, windows presented a means by which the performers could emerge onto the wall, linking the inside and the outside of the building. The watching position for the audience was an uncared for vacant lot next to the building (see portfolio), reminiscent of the ‘blighted spaces’ identified by the Belfast Interface Project which include unused pieces of land (2011:9). There was nowhere to sit, the ground was rough and uneven and there was rubbish underfoot. The building was on a busy road with many passers-by who would stop to talk to us during rehearsals. As an opening event, this was very different to City Hall which was a central, highly organised, hierarchical and monumental space. Unlike the crowds at City Hall who gathered amongst the monuments under the watchful eye of Queen Victoria, the Off the Wall audience stood in the vacant lot, viewing the side of the building as a vertical stage, being asked to collude in the metaphor that A WALL IS A FLOOR for dancing on. The show invited them to imagine a cabaret environment in this improbable and quite uncomfortable situation, next to a busy road, sounds from which sometimes interrupted the show: during a quiet section, one of the performers acknowledged the interruption of her song by the siren of a passing ambulance. In this way, a cabaret-style performance was inserted into the fabric of everyday life, without the usual signals that frame a performance as a cabaret. The audience were being asked to engage imaginatively and metaphorically with the performance ‘as if’
(Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 5) it was taking place at night, under lights, to imagine they were seated at tables drinking cocktails and the sounds they were hearing were only those of the entertainment on offer. The juxtaposition of this proposition with the everyday must have been an absurd experience for the audience, calling into question habitual assumptions about performance based on lived experience.

This was a very different audience experience to the conventional theatre visit. The performance was inserted into the fabric of the bustling city, squeezed down the side of a building, not as a deliberate political statement, but as a result of convenience and logistics: this was the best wall for dancing on and provided a safe (if unusual) place for the audience to stand (the front of the building, which might be the more obvious place to stage an opening event, gave way onto a busy street). The abandoned site where the audience stood, a vacant lot accumulating rubbish and weeds, resembles many sites in cities around the world. Architectural scholar and artist Lebbeus Woods describes these as ‘left-over’ or ‘abandoned’ spaces. He continues: ‘They wait in darkness and silence, “free” of content, poised for some re-occupation’ (in Read, 2000:201). He calls these spaces ‘freespace’ characterised by ‘resistance to use in normal terms…spaces of strangeness, challenge, potential’ (ibid:201). Belfast is full of similar ‘blighted’ spaces which have arisen around interfaces as a result of The Troubles, and new efforts are being made to reclaim and refigure these no-go areas as shared spaces (Goldie and Ruddy, 2010). The occupation of this space by the audience refigured it as a space in which to experience performance; and the performers reloaded it with the content of the performance.
It is disingenuous to consider a space free of content; the arts centre certainly has a history that we have already visited briefly, and undoubtedly the vacant lot has a history even if it is not immediately visible. The point is to point to the potential of these apparently abandoned spaces and to envision the ‘strange, transformative unknown…within the terrain of the familiar’ (Woods in Read, 2000:202). By applying Woods’ concepts and strategies to Off the Wall (2010) we can see various ways in which ‘strangeness’ was manifest. First, the use of the walls of the building as a ‘floor’ to walk on, the action of falling out of windows and the occupation of the roof, in particular the welcoming of the audience and performance of a handstand on the edge of the roof. Second, the incongruous incorporation of everyday objects in the choreography: umbrellas, hats, money, fingers painted to look like guns and telephones. Third, the orientation of the performers’ bodies shifted through 90 degrees whilst apparently dancing normally. Fourth, the use of an episodic cabaret style structure to the work, a form with specific expectations (indoor club location, technical aspects such as lighting, decadent luxury, possible consumption of alcohol), which are disrupted and dislocated. Fifth, the use of a patchwork of music representing a range of styles and eras counterpointing the sounds of the street. All this contributed to an invitation to an audience to ‘experience the world from a different perspective’ and to ‘produce new social spaces’ (Manifesto for Vertical Dance).

Windows

Various ways of accessing the ‘vertical stage’ were explored: descent from the roof, from the windows, diagonal traverse, ascent from the ground and counterbalance. The access via the windows was from the offices on the second floor. The staff
working in the offices were just getting used to the newly opened space and were very helpful and accommodating about us disrupting their work space to climb on their desks to get out of the windows. This might have been different had we been disrupting them in a well-established work space, and this was one benefit of being part of the handover interval.

The windows of the building provided an element of depth by suggesting an interior world behind the exteriors walls, that disgorged performers telling different stories about themselves: gangsters, a woman chatting on the phone, a love affair commencing… Thus, the building, the arts centre, became a container of imaginative journeys, of creative possibilities and opportunities. Its open windows became a powerful metaphor for openness and communication in social space. As Doreen Massey notes, social spaces in and through which we live ‘do not only consist of physical things…They consist also of those less tangible spaces we construct out of social interaction’ (in Read, 2000:49). Leaning out of a window to pass the time of day creates a link from inside to outside; falling out of the window onto the wall underlines the drama of this link and underlines the transitional nature of windows as objects (Lefebvre, 1974: 206). Using these windows to access the wall created a sense of world away from or ‘off the wall’ which diverges from the prototypical model of vertical dance, where a wall is a wall, and nothing else.
**Life is a Carnival (2011)**

https://prezi.com/o7n3u39exnuc/life-is-a-carnival/

**Context**

Like *Fly Butterfly* (2009), *Life is a Carnival* (2011) was commissioned by Beat Carnival to be the culmination of their carnival event and I worked with some of the same performers from the two previous performances in Belfast. There were however some significant differences between the two events. First, civic visibility: the *Fly Butterfly* (2009) carnival parade went through the streets in the centre of the city; *Life is a Carnival* (2011) was contained within the Botanic Gardens. Second, whilst the building, Ulster Museum, is iconic, like City Hall, in this instance we performed on the back of the building, invisible from the street, and the architecture was post-war brutalist\(^{15}\) rather than the Baroque Revival of City Hall. Third, I was less directed in terms of the content of the work in the latter work, which enabled me to develop my own themes in response to the building, its form and content. Fourth, logistical circumstances meant that I functioned as director and rigger for the latter project, thus it was an extremely challenging experience, physically and conceptually (I ran back and forth between the roof and the ground several times a day).

Although the rehearsal period was very short, we had an entire week to work on the building as opposed to the two days afforded us at Belfast City Hall. All of the performers had some experience of previous productions so were more skilled and able to work faster.

\(^{15}\) The street side of Ulster Museum is in neo-classical architectural style, built in 1929. The side that we used, which is the ‘back end’ of the museum, faces the Botanic Gardens and was added in 1972, designed by architects Francis Pym and Paddy Lawson and consists of block-like simple concrete forms which contrast starkly with the elaborate classical original (Hickey, Irish Architectural Archive, 2016).
**Description of the work**

After making an initial reconnaissance visit to the building, I constructed a storyboard for the performance around a simple narrative. The choice of a narrative as opposed to a more abstract approach has benefits in terms of explaining the choreography to the performers, enabling them to give a more committed performance which in turn may be easier for an audience to digest in a festival context. This approach was used effectively by film director Danny Boyle for the opening ceremony for the 2012 Olympics, structured around a narrative of the Industrial Revolution. Ulster Museum is a Natural History Museum, full of preserved animals. My storyline was based on the idea that the stewards of the museum were animals disguised as humans; I imagined that the static/dead objects being observed in the museum came to life. The choreography was in two parts, reflecting the architecture of the museum. In the first section, performers who resembled the museum officials patrolled the exterior walls with clipboards, reflecting outwards the activities and labour of those who take care of the building inside. In this way, a connection was made between the function of the building, emphasised by the brutalist architecture (where the exterior suggests the layout of the interior galleries), and the choreography, bringing the interior activities onto the exterior of the building. The relationship of interior and exterior in this work was metaphorical, unlike *Off the Wall* (2010), where the windows provided real transitional objects to connect the two worlds. The use of the architecture of the building as metaphorical choreographic inspiration resembles my approach in making *Descent of the Angel* (2009), in which I imagined myself as representing the sculpture of the golden angel on top of Guildford Cathedral descending from the roof (see Chapter One).
Half way through the choreography the performers removed their outer layers to reveal animal print cat-suits. This ‘striptease’ coincided with a change in music from a band to Carnival drummers, and the choreography became larger and more animalistic. The dancers on the right-hand wall performed a ‘cat ballet’ in which they used the rope as if it were a tail. The movement was larger than life, with the dancers clawing the air and lunging at each other. On the left-hand wall, I staged a chase between a ‘zebra’ and a ‘tiger’ and a comic Tarzan and Jane dance. The work transformed from the cool order of a museum full of dead stuffed animals, turned inside out and policed by uniformed stewards, to the hot chaos of a jungle, where the dead exhibits came to life. The clash of costumes, human/animal, official/carnivalesque echoes the clash of architectures which might be seen to operate as a metaphor for the clash of cultures, nationality and religion in Northern Ireland.

Like the choreography, Ulster Museum is a building in two parts. The original building, designed by James Cumming Wynnes, was built in Classical style and opened 1929. A new wing was added in 1972, designed by Frances Pym, in a modern brutalist architectural style with huge featureless, rectilinear concrete blocks which seems to crash against the original, making the viewer work hard to join the two sections of the building. The former is ornate, like Belfast City Hall, the latter is stark and modern, and solidly monumental. The clash of the two architectural styles seem to echo the clash of culture, nationality and religion in the City of Belfast. The former was built long before The Troubles, the latter, just after they began. The term ‘brutalist’ describes the walls of the new wing very effectively, and the symbolism of the harsh, solid concrete walls in a former ‘fortress’ city is palpable and emphasizes
the comparative softness and vulnerability of the dancers’ bodies. On the other hand, the concrete blocks provide splendid surfaces on which to perform vertical dance, the solidity inspires confidence in the dancers and the big open surfaces with no architectural features to negotiate provide opportunities for expansive pendulum movement; a vertical dancer’s dream. On the other hand, this vertical dance carnival ‘parade’, raised high above the audiences’ heads, was spatially constrained by the ropes that tethered the dancers allowing them only to move back and forth rather than to progress along a line toward a goal as in a conventional parade. The ascents and descents marked alternate pathways, but were again short and constrained.

This work had the shortest total rehearsal period of the works examined in this chapter: one week, spent on the building itself. The building was very wide and I decided to use the entire width. There was a recessed wall in the centre of the building, in which a large puppet on a swinging trapeze was displayed (created by Quinn specially for the event), separating the two walls we used for performance. Access to the roofs of the two areas was different, making it impossible for performers to perform on both walls. As a result, I decided to have three performers on the left-hand wall and three on the right. In order to access the left-hand wall, the performers had to climb over a wall against which were placed ladders. It was not possible to descend from the roof, so all the performers had to ascend the ropes from the access points on the first floor and this became part of the choreography. An exception was the descent of Colin from the roof of the left-hand roof, face down. The right-hand side of the building had an overhanging wall, with a void which the
performers had to negotiate during their ascent. We placed ladders over the void to aid their ascent.

During the week of rehearsals, I functioned as choreographer, director and rigger. This was largely due to budgetary constraints, and presented logistical challenges as it entailed moving between the roof, the first-floor balcony and the ground and between the right and left-hand sides of the building. The rigging was challenging as the rigging points were set a long way back from the edge of the roof. For each dancer’s line, approximately 25 metres of rope were needed to reach the edge. These ropes formed a giant ‘cat’s cradle’ on the flat roof, that formed a major trip hazard. Each day these ropes had to be re-rigged as we could not risk leaving them in situ in case of damage by birds or weather. The amount of rigging rope used meant that the ropes were very ‘bouncy’ as all rope, even the semi-static line that we use for vertical dance has elasticity. This makes ascending ropes harder. However, there is a benefit in combining rigging and choreographic roles as the rigging performs an integral function in the choreography, defining where the performers are situated and what they are able to do.

**Walking in a contained space**

Reflecting on this project raises a number of thoughts about its context in comparison with the earlier *Fly Butterfly* (2009) project, with particular reference to the history of marching in Northern Ireland and the carnival ethos of The Beat Initiative. These are worth considering as they frame the choreography differently. *Life is a Carnival* (2011) was an event hidden away at the back of Ulster Museum, with the parade element contained within the Botanical Gardens. Whilst this location
rendered the event more controllable, and provided a suitable gathering place, the power of civic visibility of masses of people partying in the streets was missing. The parade did a circuit of the gardens, thus the event felt more like a festival than a carnival parade with a destination. The containment of the carnival within the Gardens was undoubtedly a result of the date of the event, 24th July, in the middle of the Orange order ‘marching season’ in Belfast, which stretches from April to August. The fraternal, protestant Orange Order undertake marches to celebrate the Protestant Dutchman, William of Orange, often known as ‘King Billy’ who replaced the Catholic King James II after he was deposed in 1688. The main event of the season is focused on 12th July when the various lodges of the Order come together. Each lodge has a marching band and often includes the Lambeg drum, reputed to be one of the loudest acoustic instruments in the world. The marches are militaristic, following specific historic routes through the city, often passing through contentious areas with high numbers of Catholic residents. The union flag is particularly evident in the marching season. During my various visits to Belfast I witnessed the marching, the abundance of union flags around the city and also the attitude of the people I was working with, who remarked that it was common practice for Belfast residents to leave the city during the marching season. Frictions arise mainly when the Loyalist Orangemen march through Catholic or nationalist areas. The marches are heavily policed due to a history of conflict and the residents are inconvenienced by the closure of many roads. The Catholic residents argue that this is an infringement of their human rights, because the marches are sectarian and do not embrace all communities in their commemoration of an event which patently celebrates the subjugation and conquering of the Catholics. The Orangemen argue that it is their human right to walk down ‘the Queen’s Highway’ without impedance
and they blame any violence or requirement for a heavy police presence on ‘hangers-on’ over whom they have no control and on Republicans.

This was the backdrop to the Beat Carnival’s *Life is a Carnival* (2011) event and probably explains the decision to hold a ‘protected parade’ that snaked its way around the Botanical Gardens with no ultimate goal, unlike the *Fly Butterfly* (2009) parade which culminated at City Hall. The parade was instead shielded by the boundaries of the Gardens from any conflict in the City streets and somewhat divested of the communal impact and excitement of a street carnival turning it into more of a stroll in the park followed by a nice summer picnic with a festival feel.

In her history of walking, Rebecca Solnit talks about the power of walking as an active way for people to ‘make their history rather than suffer it’ (2000:59), to undertake a collective walk which marks a route through the city. In the case of the Beat Carnival parades, the aim is celebratory, with large colourful costumes, dancing and music. The Orangemen parades are costumed according to a tradition of uniform and the music played is militaristic in nature; the spirit of these parades is very different. Solnit comments that ‘the collective walk brings together the iconography of the pilgrimage with that of the military march and the labor [sic] strike and demonstration… a pilgrimage makes an appeal while a march makes a demand’ (2000:58). Whilst the carnival parades are not ‘pilgrimages’, they do make ‘an appeal’ to the city for peace and reconciliation, whereas the Orange parades are more accurately characterized as marches based on demands about rights to space. Belfast has a cultural tradition of walking and parading in the streets to celebrate events, as such as Saint Patrick’s Day and the loyalist events. A Parades
Commission, set up in 1998 by the British government, exists to monitor and settle disputes about parades and has the power to impose conditions on events. These might include changes to the route of the parade, restrictions to clothing (no paramilitary clothing to be worn for example), music to be played (no loud drumming in certain areas and only hymn tunes in other areas) and the banning of flag flying.

My research into the social practice of parades in Belfast has shed light on my choreographic decisions made instinctively at the time in response to the architecture and function of the museum, and the larger parade context, which by this time was more familiar to me than when I worked on *Fly Butterfly* in 2009. I now see how the practice of walking - around a museum, in the streets, as part of a parade and so on - as a spatial practice and a lived experience, is part of the social fabric of Belfast (and indeed of any urban space) so it makes sense that I decided to begin the work with people walking on the building. The containment of the parade producing a spiral spatial pattern is similar to how the artist Richard Long exhibits documentation of his walking work in galleries. His line made by walking of 1967 is represented by a spiral the same length on the gallery floor, compacting and squeezing the original walk into a small space. In some respects, the *Life is a Carnival* parade could be regarded a spiral replica of the *Fly Butterfly* parade in 2009. The line made by walking through the streets of Belfast in 2009 became a spiral apparently going nowhere in 2011. However, as Wickstrom notes in relation to the legacy of the Occupy movement (in Cull and Daddario, 2013: 39), it is important to give weight to the gathering of people sharing 'lived experience' as a positive affirmation of a desire to move forward together, even if it happens in a more 'neutral space' (Ploger, 2007:22). Repetition is all.
Concluding thoughts

Lefebvre’s idea that nature is hidden from view in modern cities, which have ‘confiscated’ space from nature (1974:49) has been explored in the context of Belfast, where culverted rivers have been searched out by local artists, who have talked about them in plays and made them audible in sound installations. Likewise, *Fly Butterfly* (2009) used natural symbols of rebirth (the caterpillar and the butterfly), *Life is a Carnival* (2011) took place in a highly managed civic garden, and all three works used the human body ‘to remind the built environment about nature’ (Manifesto for Vertical Dance). Perhaps the re-insertion of nature is a powerful tool in the search for peace and reconciliation in a violent and restricted space, particularly in the form of physical human presences that share and produce new social spaces. All three works have produced social space, but in different ways: *Fly Butterfly* (2009) was a mass inhabitation of a monumental space to re-inscribe it as a social space; *Off the Wall* (2010) re-assigned an abandoned space, a vacant lot, as an auditorium from which to watch a ‘cabaret’ of vertical dance and the contained ‘parade’ of *Life is a Carnival* (2011) occupied a safe and protected space.

We have explored the dual significance and purpose of walls in the city of Belfast to divide and to protect, but also as surfaces upon which to express oneself, by painting murals or by dancing upon them. The wall is a powerful symbol in this city and the act of dancing on walls can construct a powerful message. The monumental walls of City Hall separate the civic powerhouse from the public who were welcomed for the *Fly Butterfly* (2009) event, but kept at arm’s length. The walls of the Crescent Arts Centre, pierced by transitional objects – windows – allowed passage between inside and outside worlds, creating a more social, human space, suggestive of the
possibility of building connections between different worlds. Ulster Museum’s brutalist walls symbolise the impenetrable, and its architecture, through its dissonant relationship to the earlier part of the building, emphasises separation. These three events, occurring in three consecutive years, seem to trace a journey from the very centre of the city, to more peripheral locations, and from bold openness and visibility to timid closure. And yet, the repetition of the activity reasserts the possibility of creating shared spaces, even if they move and morph through time and geographical location.

The process of retrospectively researching the history of the production of space of a location in which I have made vertical dance has uncovered a wealth of new knowledges and insights about the significance of the location of these performances in three distinct sites in Belfast. In the next Chapter I will examine three works made in one location in Caernarfon, North Wales.
Chapter Five

Producing vertical dance space in North Wales

Introduction

The ideas enshrined in the Manifesto for Vertical Dance are further crystallised in this chapter, in which shared creative visions giving rise to different vertical dance activities in one location over a period of three years are examined. All the strands of research: prototype, metaphor, orientation of dancer in space, and production of space are brought to bear on these vertical dance examples in a more systematic way. The context in which each work was initiated is outlined to establish the specific collaborative framework, which gives way to a brief description of the work. Each work is then examined using the same framework, outlined above. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the reworking of the last work, Gwymon (2013), undertaken to enable it to circulate as a product in the marketplace, drawing on issues raised in Chapters One and Three. The chapter begins with research into the history of production of social space in Caernarfon and then Galeri, continuing the approach taken in the previous chapter.

All three works to be discussed here were made at Galeri in Caernarfon, and were born out of collaborative relationships with staff, the building’s architecture and associated artists. The chapter will address the nature of this collaboration, in relation to Chapter two’s new metaphor for vertical dance: VERTICAL DANCE IS A CREATIVE NEGOTIATION OF SUSPENDED BODIES MOVING ON VERTICAL SURFACES and the Manifesto for Vertical Dance’s call to ‘share your vision with people’. The physical actuality, concept, and use of the vertical surface in each work
is very different, and an exploration of this aspect of the works will thread through the chapter. The analysis of each work will also consider the space occupied by the work in relation to the everyday occupations of the space, what sort of social space was produced and what, if any changes occur in that space resulting from the choreographic interventions. This continues the thread of Lefebvre’s work in relation to the production of space.

**History of production of social space in Caernarfon**

Before discussing the Galeri building, it is worth considering the history of social production of space in Caernarfon briefly to gain an understanding of the context in which my three vertical dance works were produced. The town is in the county of Gwynedd, which is rich in natural resources attractive to settlers, and sits at the mouth of the Seiont river where it flows into the Menai Strait, which separates the mainland from the Island of Anglesey, known as ‘Mam Cymru’ (mother of Wales) or the ‘breadbasket of North Wales’ due to its fertile fields (Kovach, 1995). Its origin, in the sense of its significant emergence from natural space into social space (Lefebvre, 1974:49), is ascribed to the Roman occupation and construction of the fort Segontium (named after the river Seiont), built around AD 80 to subjugate the Celtic Ordovicians. When the Romans left, around 380AD, Caernarfon become part of the Kingdom of Gwynedd, ruled by Welsh kings. The county of Gwynedd remained independent until 1283, when the English invaded in response to the refusal of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, who then ruled Gwynedd, to pay homage to Edward I of England. A huge, imposing Castle was constructed, but never finished, by Edward I, between 1283 and 1330, and Caernarfon became the seat of the English government in North Wales. The town, which now has approximately 10,000
inhabitants, has spilled out of its medieval walls into suburban development with a concomitant sense of disjuncture in the architecture. The castle, which has hosted the investiture of the Princes of Wales since 1911, along with the medieval walled character of the town has contributed significantly to the growth of the tourist industry. The history of Caernarfon, like that of Belfast, is a history of violent occupation, however the history of the former stretches over 2 centuries, whereas that of latter stretches over just over 400 years. The American peak oil historian and ecological history scholar John Michael Greer, stood on top of a hill looking down on Caernarfon and read the history in the landscape before him:

The ground beneath us still rippled with earthworks from the Celtic hill fort that guarded the Menai Strait more than two and a half millennia ago. The Roman fort that replaced it was now the dim brown mark of an old archaeological site on low hills off to the left. Edward I’s great gray [sic] castle rose up in the middle foreground, and the high contrails of RAF jets on a training exercise out over the Irish Sea showed that the town’s current overlords still maintained the old watch. Houses and shops from more than half a dozen centuries spread eastward as they rose through the waters of time, from the cramped medieval buildings of the old castle town straight ahead to the gaudy sign and sprawling parking lot of the supermarket back behind us.

The green traces of the hill fort showed the highwater mark of a wave of Celtic expansion that flooded most of Europe in its day. The Roman fort marked the crest of another wave whose long ebbing…offers up a potent reminder that history doesn’t always lead to better things.

2008: ix - x

In this excerpt, Greer captures the accretion of productions of social space visible in Caernarfon very evocatively. He not only reads the landscape like a book, but engages with it in a sensory way using metaphors of water and tides - houses and shops ‘rise through the waters of time’; Celtic expansion has a ‘high-water mark’; the Romans ebb away’ - to suggest the movement of time through space, and felt in the body: ‘the ground still rippled beneath our feet’. He points out the ways in which the
space of Caernarfon has changed over the passage of time, and breathes life into the social through the metaphor of time as the sea, retrieving a sense of nature in his construction of the social space before him. Looking down from a hill, like the call to the vertical dancer to look down in the manifesto, he experiences the world from a different perspective and uses his body and his imagination to remind the built environment about nature. He weaves a narrative between physical, mental and social spaces (Lefebvre 1974:9) revealing, through his interpretation, that social space is a dimension that cuts across ‘a myriad of stories’ (Massey, 2013). Greer’s deciphering of social space through metaphor bears some resemblance to the use of metaphor in the production of space in the choreographic works described later in this chapter. For example, like Greer, Gwymon (2013) uses the metaphor of the sea to build the world of the dance in relation to the space it occupies; in Pobl Dre (2012), the town centre is imaginatively created in the foyer of the theatre and in Ynghlwm (2011), the same space becomes a scene of alpine rescue. It is also pertinent that Greer recognises that progress ‘doesn’t always lead to better things’ (2008: ix – x), reminding us of the importance of a commitment to social change for the better of all.

Production of social space at Galeri

I move on now to consider the site of Galeri Creative Enterprise Centre (CEC). The centre was built in 2005 as a development from the regeneration work undertaken by Cwmni Tref Caernarfon, an independent Town Development Trust set up in the early 1990s to regenerate run-down properties in the town (Arad, 2010:18), in response to a decline in the social, cultural and economic life of the town. The assets gained through these activities culminated in the building of Galeri, which provides a home
for twenty-four local micro businesses and houses a gallery, café, bar, rehearsal
studios, meeting rooms and a theatre with a programme of arts events (Arad,
2010:18). It generates most of its own income, but receives some government
support in the form of grants. The centre was built on a brown field site, and has won
a number of awards including a RIBA award in 2005 and Best Building for Public
Use in the Scottish Design awards in 2006 (ibid., 2010:48). A leading Welsh artist
comments that ‘Galeri offers a lot under one roof…because it comes from Cwmni
Tref Caernarfon it is from the town for the town’ (ibid, 2010:7). This comment
suggests a shift in originators of spatial practice from government to an independent
collection of townspeople, seeking to take action to improve life, similar to the action
taken by the community to save the Crescent Arts Centre in Belfast. Both places fall
between Lefebvre’s monument/building dialectic being neither fully ‘monumental’,

Galeri is situated just outside the medieval walls of the town, overlooking Doc
Fictoria, now a small and picturesque marina set in a renovated area including
restaurants, car parks, a supermarket and modern apartments with views across the
Menai Strait to the island of Anglesey. This site was formerly an industrial area, a
busy dock and shipyard through which around 3000 vessels passed annually, many
exporting slate quarried in North Wales. Ship-building was a major industry with
ancillary businesses such as rope-making, foundries and carpenters, leading to the
doubling of the town’s population to 10,000 (a similar expansion as Belfast in the late
1800s). This expansion resulted in over-crowding and poor living conditions in the
town, which many locals sought to escape by emigrating on ships leaving the port,
‘the last sight of Wales and their homeland …was the Quay and Castle of Carnarvon’
(Banholzer, 1998:18). The industrial ‘wasteland’ on which Galeri and the dockland
development was built is now largely hidden from view, replaced by a modern
development and a leisure marina stocked with pleasure yachts. The back of Galeri
overlooks the marina, and this is where we created Gwymon (2013), looking across
the marina to Ynys Mon (Anglesey) beyond, sensing the sea’s promise of a better
life as well as the dangers lurking beneath the surface. The exterior of the building is
ringed by walkways, or balconies at first and second floor levels, (evoking the decks
of a ship), accessible from inside each office and meeting room and connected to the
ground via a spiral staircase (locked from the outside), which functions as a fire exit.
The Theatres Trust, a theatre database and advocate for good theatre practice,
notes the building’s ‘semi-industrial character is well suited to its dockside location’
(n.d.). This suggests that the architects wanted to reference the industrial past of the
site in the new building.

Moving inside the building, through automatic glass doors, past the box office on the
left and the entrance to the art space on the right, one enters the foyer with a bar on
the left, and a café ahead, overlooking the marina. The ceiling here is the full height
of the building (some 15 metres) providing a very attractive proposition for vertical
dance, with strong rigging points available in the form of structural girders. Opposite
the bar is a double staircase (one set of stairs goes up from the entrance, the other
from the opposite side), leading to the first floor. Both the first and second floors
(which house offices, access points to the theatre, studios and meeting rooms) are
ringed with balconies, which means that the foyer space is visible from everywhere,
again, a very attractive proposition for vertical dance activity. Thus, the foyer is a
focal point for social gathering, overlooked by a space of continual circulation
through the building, which provides opportunities for greetings horizontally and
diagonally across the space. There is a sense of circularity and openness, of dynamic exchanges possible across the space.

The two vertical dance works produced here build on this space of encounter to create new connections between performers and watchers, watchers and watchers and performers and performers. The effect of performance in the foyer space is to highlight the inherent social geometry of Galeri that encourages interaction and movement. Theatrically, this space is like theatre in the round, extended upwards, like a Greek amphitheatre, additionally allowing circulation around the performance, so that it can be observed from different positions. This kind of ‘in the round’ performance space promotes social interaction and shares affinities and similarities with street theatre and rituals, underlining a social function of performance less possible in a proscenium arch theatre which, in a sociofugal manner directs the eye towards the stage, ‘throwing spectators apart’ (Pearson, 2001:108). Pearson further contends that in the proscenium arch theatre, ‘space becomes a static object whose structure is regarded as unchanging’ and that ‘the role of the spectator in signification is denied’ (2001:108). I would contest the second part of this statement; the spectator always has the capacity to create meaning, but I would agree that the process by which this is achieved is more passive in a theatre, whereas in a space like Galeri foyer, the audience can move, choose new viewing positions, look at others and construct meaning in relation to the whole space. They become embroiled in the exchange called for in the Manifesto for Vertical Dance, and therefore in the production of a new social space. The two performances in this foyer space changed the space by inserting performers into the void across which people regard each other. *Pobl Dre* (2012) changed the space physically (albeit
temporarily) by inserting a fake wall and windows on one side of the foyer and all three works changed the Galeri spaces metaphorically through the choreographic imagination manifested in the movement of the dancers.

_Ynghlwm/Roped Together (2011)_

[https://prezi.com/6cl1xt4tsppp/ynghlwm/](https://prezi.com/6cl1xt4tsppp/ynghlwm/)

**Collaborative context**

This work grew out of a request from Elen ap Robert, who was at that time, the artistic director of Galeri, to produce a performance that occupied the interval space in a talk given by mountaineer, Andy Kirkpatrick. I knew immediately what to do in response: create a duet using counterbalance, based on climbing partnerships from the past, specifically involving a female mountaineer. We decided not to advertise the performance but to ‘spring it on the captive audience’. Counterbalance\(^\text{16}\) is a technique I experienced during participant observation with Lindsey Butcher of Gravity and Levity in 2007 and 2008 (see Chapter One), and subsequently during workshops at the European Aerial Dance Festival in Brighton (2010 onwards). This system enables the dancers to travel up as well as down in space, using each other’s weight, to ascend or descend, like on a seesaw. The distance between the two dancers can be augmented if dancer moving upwards climbs the rope attached to the other dancer and the dancer on the ground pulls or ‘takes in’ the rope through the belay device, making the rope shorter. _Ynghlwm_ (2011) is structured around this physical principle echoing the relationship between two climbers, where one climber

\(^{16}\) Counterbalance is a system where One rope passes through a pulley overhead and two dancers wearing harnesses are connected to either end of the rope either with a knot or a belay device, such as a grigri, which is a belay device which ‘locks’ to allow a climber (or dancer) to position themselves. Regular belay devices require the belayer to hold the rope for their partner.
'leads’, moving up and away from their partner. The duet was created for Simon Edwards (rigger and mountaineer) and myself, and drew on our experience of climbing together over many years.

**Description of the work**

The audience spills out of the theatre at all levels, to discover two ‘climbers’ frozen as if in a photograph in the foyer. A woman is collapsed on the floor and a man is kneeling beside her, head bowed. Music plays. The man grasps the woman’s hand pulling her to her feet. Eyes closed, she sways and swoons. He gently pushes her back onto her feet. She collapses back to the floor. He jumps in the air, falls the floor, lifting her off the ground. Her eyes open. She places her feet on her partner’s knees and stands on them. Imagining a mountain landscape, she pulls her partner towards her. They hold onto each other, looking down (an imaginary cliff) swaying gently, just above the ground. He offers his knee and she climbs onto his shoulders. He stands up. Suddenly she falls and causes him to flip upside down as he catches her fall; he slips slowly to the ground. She climbs up his rope, lowering him completely to the ground. She places one foot on the rope and stands on it horizontally. Then she spins around the rope, holds it with both hands, and walks in a circle in the air. She climbs higher and higher. Near the top, she flips upside down, and performs birdlike movements. Tipping upright again, she places one foot on the rope. Her partner stands up and circles slowly, causing her to rotate, balancing delicately on one foot. She pulls him towards her. His feet come off the ground and they both spin. He falls. He jumps, they try to connect but miss. Upside-down, they embrace mid-air. He passes her and climbs higher and higher. He falls. She catches him. She lowers them both to the ground. The rescue is complete.
Relationship to prototype

Ynghlwm (2011) uses climbing equipment to suspend dancers, although one dancer is often on the floor and the rope, which functions as a thin, bendy wall\textsuperscript{17}, also provides a means for the suspended dancer to maintain their position, ascend or descend, in a public space. The addition of a pulley to the standard equipment improves the efficiency of the dancer’s ability to ascend and descend. These three aspects of the work (equipment, suspension and wall) do not conform to the prototypical vertical dance work outlined in Chapter One. The equipment has been augmented to provide a significant change to the choreographic possibilities, permitting ascent as well as descent. The rope becomes a metaphor for a wall which substantially alters the movement. The space the dancer occupies is substantially changed. A solid wall stops the dancer’s movement, it bisects and limits her space – she can never go through the wall to the other side (except through a window). Instead, with the ‘rope as wall’, the dancer can explore the space all around the rope, which provides a grounding surface and changes the frame of spatial reference she employs. The counterbalance system introduces an interdependence between the dancers which affects their use of and sense of weight; every movement has a consequence for the other dancer. The male dancer is heavier than the female, which creates a specific choreographic pattern of ascent and descent: the female always ascends and the male descends, unless they climb using each other’s rope to support their weight. This difference in the dancers’ weights creates a dramatic effect of falling when the male dancer ascends and releases; he descends quickly to be caught by the ascending dancer.

\textsuperscript{17} I was inspired to explore the possibilities of a rope as a floor by seeing Vide Accordé (2006/2007), by Cie Retouramont (see Chapter One).
**Metaphor: Galeri foyer is a mountainscape**

The space is imagined to be a mountain environment in which a story of adventure unfolds, harnessing the knowledge and experience of the audience (mountaineers, climbers and members of mountain rescue) to help construct this world. Their extensive expert knowledge of the equipment and its purpose, enabled them to read the dance in relation to their own experience of climbing, the mountain environment and in some cases, rescue scenarios. Several audience members told me afterwards that they recognized their own experiences as climbers and rescue team members in the performance. The music, which is ethereal in quality, contributed to the creation of a different, metaphorical world and the costumes suggest a climbing partnership from a different era. Additionally, the use of the partner’s body to attain height (standing on their knee and shoulders – see portfolio) is a recognized strategy used in historical rock climbing. The umbilical connection of the performers via the rope is a standard method to provide security in the climbing and mountaineering environment and the effect of one climber falling is that the other climber is displaced. This was a metaphorical world constructed through shared expert knowledge of equipment and climbing and mountaineering history providing a channel for audience members to access their own memories and experiences of the activity.

**Spatial orientation**

The circular nature of the space, combined with the ‘thin bendy floor’ means the dancer, (me), does not use the proscenium arch/constant cross of axes to orientate herself (Chapter Two). She cannot identify the position of the audience as a spatial anchor because they are everywhere; she perceives them as dispersed throughout
the space, some moving, some stationary. Her body receives the gaze of the watchers from every angle, nothing is hidden. Her constantly changing relationship to her ‘floor’ means that any static external spatial anchor is transitory, it is seen in passing. The body cross of axes (Laban), or relative frame of reference (Levinson et al) is crucial; she senses her orientation internally, according to the geometry of her own body. Floor and ceiling provide constant orientational markers, but right and left, forward and backward change constantly. When she balances horizontally on one foot on the rotating rope, her sense of up through the crown of the head is directed towards the audiences standing on the first-floor balcony, sending an imaginary searchlight across the faces of the watchers as she rotates around the rope. The horizontal arc that her body cuts through the space echoes and complements the circular design of foyer space. This a delicate balance in space, anchored by a heightened sense of the geometry of her body articulated by Laban as ‘Innumerable directions [which] radiate from the centre of our body and its kinesphere into infinite space’ (1966:17).

**Producing and changing social space**

The dance was not advertised, so the audience came upon it by surprise. The habitual patterns of behaviour associated with intervals (buying drinks, chatting, going to the toilet) were gently subverted as the dance began. It is clear from the film (see portfolio), that the attention of the audience is gradually drawn towards the dance as it plays out. The chatter subsides (not completely) and most people start to watch. Standard activities such as buying drinks continue, but another activity, watching a performance, is added. These are two ways in which the social conventions of theatre going are modified: non-advertisement and insertion of
performance in the interval of a performance. In addition, the audience were positioned ad hoc around the space, there were no seats, and no specific places to stand. The galleries at all levels, designed to be walkways, became viewpoints. Audience members could see each other across the space, and the bodies of the dancers were inserted into the central void. The foyer space - a threshold to the proscribed performance area, the theatre - was reframed as a place where performance can happen, which opens up the possibility of changing the social meaning of performance and the function of the space. The use of the void in the foyer as a performance space additionally reframes the spaces dance can occupy. The metaphorical transformation of space into scene of mountain rescue connects the Snowdonia mountains outside the building through the foyer and into the topic of the lecture in the theatre, drawing memories and images of nature into social space. Finally, the everyday spatial practice of Galeri’s foyer was changed as the staff and occupants of the offices viewed vertical dance happening in the everyday space whilst the dancers were rehearsing.

**Pobl Dre – Townspeople (2012)**

https://prezi.com/42wsv7kxgi-u/pobl-dre/

**Collaborative context**

Local artist Luned Rhys Parri requested a performance in the Galeri foyer to mark the opening of an exhibition of her work in the Art Space. Parri makes three-dimensional characterisations of local people out of wire, packing tape, papier maché and old clothes. The backgrounds of these ‘sculptural paintings’ feature monochrome collages of photocopies of photographs of buildings in villages and towns in North Wales which contrast with the brightly coloured characters. (see
portfolio). For this exhibition, she focused on the Maes (town square) of Caernarfon as her inspiration.\textsuperscript{18} Galeri technical and arts space staff Gwion Llwyd and Menna Thomas were involved as co-creators, making a ‘fake wall’ backdrop with windows and a projection of the Maes. Parri led a creative workshop in which we produced papier maché props and costumes: aprons, a tea set, invisible dogs (leads with no dogs) and men’s ties. These formed the basis of the choreography which metaphorically transported the Maes into the Galeri foyer, much like \textit{Ynghlwm} (2011) had imagined a mountainscape in the same space.

\textbf{Description of the work}

The audience entered the foyer to the sound of seagulls and were invited to find a place from which to watch. The entrance to the café, at the far side of the foyer was sealed off by a floor to ceiling ‘fake wall’ which represented a terrace of houses with four windows, all closed. Two male performers (one was the composer/musician) wearing very large, bright papier maché ties passed through the audience with ‘invisible dogs’. The composer opened the windows on the far left and leant out. A cock crowed. Three women opened the other windows and looked out. They swung their legs out and sat on the window sills. The middle woman produced a very large teapot whilst the others produced two large cups. Tea was poured and drunk. The women fell out of the windows to a rhythmic score incorporating the sound of teaspoons, wearing their aprons back to front. A kettle whistled. Music began and a bizarre tea party ensued during which tea was repeatedly poured and drunk, watched from the windows by the two men. One man climbed out of a window and

\textsuperscript{18} I had been training a local group of dancers for one year and thought this might be an ideal performance project for them and I successfully applied for a project grant from the Arts Council of Wales to fund the project.
read a newspaper. As he descended, two women appeared wearing coats and carrying handbags. They flew in and out of the windows and then fought each other with their handbags. They descended and a man and woman danced with ‘invisible dogs’. They descended, having bonded over their dogs and the women who watched from the window above showered them with confetti from their teacups.

**Relationship to prototype**

Pobl Dre uses prototypical rock climbing equipment to suspend dancers on a vertical floor, upon which they perform dance movement in public space, leading to choreography of descent, altered spatial perception, changes to performance conventions, and modified habitual patterns of behaviour. Whilst *Pobl Dre (2012)* apparently fulfils all the prototypical criteria, the wall was not solid or real, it was made of calico fabric, stapled to boards, and attached to the balconies. It provided a strip of unstable, fabricated ‘wall’. Furthermore, like the real windows of the real wall of the Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast, used in the 2010 performance, *Off the Wall*, (see Chapter Four), this wall is breached by fake, cardboard windows, which were used choreographically, unlike Moretti’s avoidance of the window in *Far Vuoto* (see Chapter One).

**Metaphor: Galeri foyer is the Maes in Caernarfon**

In this work, the space is materially altered to extend the metaphor. The facades of houses constructed on one side of the space provide a projection surface onto which a distorted photographic image, inspired by Parri’s art work, developed from observations conducted in the Maes, and exhibited in the arts space, is projected. The windows in *Pobl Dre (2012)*, as ‘transitional, symbolic and functional objects’
(Lefebvre, 1974:206) create two worlds – inside and outside - permitting passage between the two and facilitating social interaction between the dancers and between the dancers and the public. The sound score reflected the indoor/outdoor spaces by juxtaposing sounds of seagulls with the rhythmic percussion of teaspoons against teacups. This was a tipped up, strange world in which inhabitants emerged from the first-floor ‘windows’ of their ‘houses’ and used the ‘walls’ of the houses as a location for everyday activities such as drinking tea, walking dogs, reading newspapers and fighting with handbags. The wall became a series of metaphorical spaces: a parlour, a café, a park, a bus stop. Only the dancers were real: there were no dogs or tea, and aprons and ties were made of paper. This was a fragile, upturned social world in which the everyday life of people living in the Maes grew from contemplation of Parri’s art work, then played out in public space. The delicate walls with their homemade windows called into question the ambiguous boundary function of walls (discussed in Chapter Three), separating spaces which are ‘an ambiguous continuity’ (Lefebvre, 1974:87). There is an interesting connection here with Angie Hiesl’s 2006 work *x times people chair*, in which 10 people, aged between 65 - 80, sat on chairs attached to walls high above street level doing ordinary tasks, such as writing, cleaning shoes, reading a map, making a sandwich and reading a book. The effect is that the public look up at ordinary domestic interior activities, performed in extraordinary exterior positions, and this calls into question the boundaries between inside and outside, private and public which are created by the walls of the built environment.

**Spatial orientation**

In *Pobl Dre* (2012), like *Ynglwm* (2011), the audience were all around, though not
as dispersed as in the latter work. This required the dancers to use a relative frame of spatial reference, tilting their world through ninety degrees so that they could stand on the vertical floor, requiring both dancers and observers to give the wall the ontological status of a floor, with the entailment that a wall is a floor and is for standing on, as discussed in Chapter Two (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). At the same time, understanding that the wall is also still a wall, albeit a fake one, is integral to the narrative world of the work and therefore it is important that dancers and audience are able to overlay one system of spatial orientation over another. The challenge of the unstable wall required a delicacy and accuracy of movement in space in order not to go through the wall and undermined the experientially based everyday metaphor that a wall is solid. An additional challenge to spatial perception was how to orientate objects when upside down, or standing horizontally on the wall, in particular the teapot and cups. As we established in Chapter Two, spatial orientation in an inverted position is difficult and this was made more challenging when attempting to create the illusion of pouring tea upside down, so that the metaphorical tea would flow upwards into a cup held upside down. The invisible dogs presented similar debates: if you are walking horizontally on a wall as if it were a floor, does the invisible dog follow suit? All these challenges revealed that performing habitual everyday tasks in this tilted world might be even harder than dancing in this space.

**Producing and changing social space**

Rehearsals took place over the period of a week, during which time, the ‘set’ materialized and was transformed each day. In this way there were material, albeit temporary, changes to the social space over time. Resident office staff commented on the changes to the space they encountered each morning. The installation began
with the attachment of wooden boards on the balcony, followed by the Calico, which masked an entire side of the foyer, floor to ceiling, for one day, until windows were cut. This radically altered the space; people were no longer able to observe each other across the space. Once the window orifices were created, partial sightlines were restored. Finally, frames were added, completing the illusion of a series of facades of houses inside the foyer. In addition, an alternative entrance to the café was created, changing habitual patterns of movement through the space. During the performance, the ‘backstage’ or ‘inside’ space, behind the fake wall was cordoned off from the public, further restricting and changing everyday circulation in the space. 

*Pobl Dre* (2012) created an exterior world (the fronts of the houses) within an interior world (the foyer), and within that world, additionally created an additional private space (backstage, or inside the houses). Extra, or surplus social space was produced within a social space. Like *Yng hlwm* (2011), an outside world was metaphorically brought indoors, but in this case, the world was extended beyond an imaginative metaphor using material objects. As Massey points out, ‘social space is something we construct and which others construct about us… we constantly build, tear down and negotiate’ our social spaces (in Read, 2000:49). The fragility of the papier maché objects (walls, windows, crockery, aprons, ties) constructed for *Pobl Dre* (2012) underline the importance of ‘social interaction’ (Massey in Read, 2000: 49) over material objects, for example, the drinking of tea. Space is never finished, it is a process, a ‘simultaneity of stories-so-far’ (Massey, 2005: 9): after the performance was finished we tore down the installations, little realizing that in 2015 we would recreate *Pobl Dre* (2012) in the same space for their 10th anniversary celebrations; the calico had gone missing and had to be remade. (see portfolio).
Collaborative Context

Mari Emlyn, the director of Galeri Arts Centre in Caernarfon, asked me to produce a piece of choreography for their summer festival entitled Môr y Mynnydd (Sea and Mountains) on 24th August 2013. She provided the title of the piece and some of the subject matter: *Gwymon y Môr* (1909), a travelogue by Welsh writer Eluned Morgan, describing a journey to Patagonia in the early 1900s. Morgan was born on board the ship Myfanwy in 1870, in the Bay of Biscay, during a journey from Wales to Patagonia. This might partly explain the consummate passion she expresses for the sea, and her belief in the necessity of experiencing life on the waves and risking one’s life to truly understand the poetic majesty of the sea (2011 translation). She talks of the sea as her ‘tierra natal’ or ‘land’ of birth (2011: no page), where the Atlantic Ocean provided a ‘hammock for her crib’ (my translation). She describes a blissful feeling when she returned to the Bay of Biscay during various trips, despite its reputation as a stormy and dangerous place (Bates and Spencer, 2016). She explains that she has never felt or understood fear of the sea because the power of the ocean allows her to feel closer to God (2011: no page). In Chapter Three of *Gwymon y Mor* (2011) she describes an argument with the captain of the ship about her desire to stay on deck during a storm against his orders. He eventually capitulates, but for her safety, ties her to mast with strong rope, where, for four hours, she experienced the full spectacular force of the storm (2011: no page). Her passionate and vibrant description of this experience was the basis for developing

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19 Mari Emlyn took over as director of Galeri in 2012, shortly after *Ynghlwm*.
20 The book was in old Welsh, which I was unable to read, but Mari told me the story and I found a Spanish copy that I was able to read.
choreography in which two women were tied to a building which metaphorically represented a ship in a storm. Alongside this, I also drew inspiration from images that link women and the sea. For example, the figureheads on the front of ships, sirens that lure sailors, mermaids, women waiting, watching the sea, for the return of a loved one.

Gwymon (2013) was originally made in one intensive week, on the outside of the Galeri building, by the dock, on the balconies. The music was created by Rob Spaull, and performed live by Henry Horrell (violin and other instruments) and Eve Goodman (vocals) who wrote the lyrics to the song (see Appendix Three). It was developed at the same time as the dance, in public, on the balconies of the Galeri building, overlooking the dock. Costume designer, Sabine Cockrill’s creation of long green and blue tails were an important element in the development of the choreography and were incorporated into the movement (see description below).

The rehearsal process culminated in a 20-minute performance. The following year, I adapted Gwymon (2013) for performance on solid walls, to enable it to be performed on other buildings. In the analysis, the two versions will be distinguished as Gwymon 1 (the original Galeri version) and Gwymon 2 (the wall version).

Description of the work

Both versions of Gwymon are structured as a journey from land to the seabed. In Gwymon 1, the first section focuses on the land women watching and waiting. The dancers pace the handrail, cradling the fabric and wrapping it around their hands. They look out to sea, leaning out from the balcony, mirroring the figureheads on

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21 Gwymon was funded by a research and development grant from Arts Council Wales.
ships they hope to see coming towards them. They mark time, their legs marching across the face of a horizontal clock (see portfolio). In the first section of Gwymon 2, the wall becomes a vertical bed, and the women, whose eyes are closed to begin with, dream of the sea (see portfolio). They toss and turn, and, as in Gwymon 1, wrap the fabric around their arms and wrists. Much of this section is performed upside down, suggesting an unreal world of dreams. The image of figureheads from Gwymon 1 is lost as it is impossible to recreate on the flat wall.

In section two of both versions, the dancers embark on a sea journey. The movement uses gentle pendulums, suggesting a calm motion of the sea. In Gwymon 1 this section is quite short as the narrow handrail is a precarious surface on which to walk, whereas in Gwymon 2 this section builds into more complex choreography with aerial rotations and jumps. The following section evokes a storm. The choreography in Gwymon 1 imagines that the women are on board a ship (represented by the building) and are hanging on to stop themselves falling into the sea. In Gwymon 2 the women embody the storm and the sea; the elements and the women merge in choreography that employs full pendulums and bigger aerial jumps and rotations. In the final section, the women cling to each other and become tangled in the ‘seaweed’ costumes. In both versions, they are imagined to be between land and sea, finally, to descend, tangled in seaweed on the seabed.

**Relation to Prototype**

Both versions of Gwymon used **standard equipment, suspended dancers** and **dance movement** with a strong **narrative of descent** as well as a **choreographic trajectory of descent**, rehearsed and performed in **public space**. Gwymon 1 is not
a prototypical piece of vertical dance. The lack of a solid wall entailed different choreographic responses. The dancers began the work standing upright on the handrail of the balcony as well as performing in the voids above and below the balcony. *Gwymon 1* has some sections which treat the vertical part of the handrail as a narrow piece of ‘vertical dance floor’, such as during the journey section. *Gwymon 2*, on the other hand is prototypical vertical dance. The altered perception of space for the dancers is stronger in *Gwymon 2* as they spend much of the time in horizontal or inverted positions. The exterior of the Galeri building had never been used for a performance before, and this created an opportunity to develop new collaborations with the staff and the public in relation to their perception of this building and its functions. During the week of rehearsals, impromptu assemblies of people gathered to watch our activities and this space of assembly was augmented on the performance day. A space for passing through became a place to linger. The habitual gaze of the passer-by out to sea was diverted towards the building which reflected images and sounds of the sea behind them. Indeed, the public saw themselves and the dock and sea reflected in the windows of the ground floor café of Galeri (see portfolio). In this way, the habitual rhythms of movement and gazes of the public in the dockside space were modified by *Gwymon 1*. The extended rehearsal period of *Gwymon 1* (most performances of *Gwymon 2* were afforded at most 2 days of rehearsal) meant that the effects on habitual behaviour in social space were repeated and therefore reinforced and more perceivable as the dancers ‘inhabited’ this vertical space for longer.

**Metaphors of the sea**

To develop the metaphor that Galeri is a ship in a storm (*Gwymon 1*), Rob Spaull,
the composer, created a sound-score incorporating creaking noises, sea-shanties and bells warning of storms. The image of the building as a ship is underlined in the choreographic images of the dancers as figureheads, leaning out from the building. In the storm section, the dancers use the steel cables and handrails of the balcony to hang on, losing their grip and being thrown across the ‘deck’ of the building to find something to hang on to again. The music also builds the metaphorical world through Goodman’s song that describes a relationship between women and the sea. She distinguishes between the ‘women of the sea’ who are ‘under the water’ and the ‘women of the shores’ who wait for a ship to come in (Goodman song lyrics, 2013 – see Appendix Three). This distinction is reflected in the choreography: the dancers move from being women of the shore, waiting and dreaming (perhaps of the women of the sea), to being on a ship, to entering the sea and slipping to the bottom, as women of the sea. The song accompanies the dream-like sections of choreography, the wrapping of the seaweed fabric around the limbs of the dancers, turning them into creatures of the sea. In this way, music, words of the song, architecture, location, costumes and movement of the dancers combined to create the metaphor that THE BUILDING IS A SHIP. This is a new, ‘imaginative and creative’ metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 139) created precisely for Gwymon; we do not normally look at buildings as if they were ships, unless an architect has designed one in such a way. The entailments that followed from the metaphor THE BUILDING IS A SHIP are built through conjunction of music, costume, movement, location and architecture.

Costumes, originally created by Sabine Cockrill and remade and developed in 2015 by Ceri Rimmer, functioned as part of the metaphorical framework of the
choreography. Long green and blue fabric tails suggest seaweed that the dancers can gather in, cradle like a baby, tangle around their arms and legs and form into a single mermaid’s tail. In the storm section the tails of the dancers’ costumes hang down, as if the sea is pulling them down. They succumb and descend, tangled in seaweed (costumes), sinking to the seabed (see portfolio).

The sea metaphor in Gwymon 2 did not imagine the building as a ship; instead the blank walls functioned as the prototypical vertical dance floor and in the first section the walls were imagined to be a giant vertical bed on which the dancers roll, turn, toss and dream (see portfolio). THE WALL IS A BED metaphor was constructed through the movement of the dancers (rolling, stretching) with their eyes closed, the clutching of fabric as if it were sheets and the dreamy sounds in the music. Each location in which the work was performed had water nearby, even if it was not visible to the audience or the dancers. New choreography was developed which embedded and extended the sea metaphor more deeply within the movement. For example, the metaphor that the dancers are seaweed gave rise to floating, waving arm gestures and feet rooted to the vertical sea bed (see portfolio). Symmetry and mirror imaging was also used throughout to create the sense of the reflective surfaces of water. The dancers often move as if there is a mirror between them, suggesting that one person is dancing with their mirror image, underlining a sense of ‘out of body’ experience that Morgan describes in her description of the storm. In addition, surfaces of the dancers’ bodies become metaphorical mirrors, specifically the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet, capturing reflections of the world and themselves to use as anchors in space (see portfolio).
The movement of the sea, the waves, is metaphorically echoed in the pendulum movement of the dancers during the journey and storm sections. The parabola of the rope swinging from a fixed point creates high points and low points, akin to the swell of the sea. The high points of the pendulum create moments of suspension, like the still point at the crest of a wave and the dancers emphasize these moments by extending them. The sense of being buffeted in a storm is created by densely packed sequences of aerial rotations and changes of direction.

**Spatial Orientation**

*Gwymon 2* poses greater challenges than *Gwymon 1* to the dancers in terms of spatial orientation. During the first half of the work they constantly shift between upright and inverted body. The inverted (crown of head to ground) position makes left and right directions quite difficult to comprehend. During the opening dream section, the dancers also have their eyes closed, further destabilizing their equilibrium. They cannot use their vision to help orientate themselves, so they rely on their intrinsic, body cross of axes (Laban), knowledge gained from extensive training and rehearsal in vertical dance. Extrinsic information comes only from the wall itself, through touch, which can be confusing if the dancer tries to decode right and left from this information. When facing the wall, right will be one direction, and when facing away it will be the opposite direction. But the wall is the only concrete reference point. In this situation, the metaphor, BUILDING IS A LOVER (I wrap the building with my body/embrace the wall), developed in Chapter Two from the experience of *Descent of the Angel* (2009), is useful. The wall, which is hard and unyielding, must be perceived to care for the vertical dancer so that they may develop a relationship which will guide the dancer in space and permit them to
perform as if they were dreaming in bed. For the choreographer on the ground it is very difficult indeed to know which side is which from the dancer’s point of view, and this difficulty is augmented when the dancers mirror each other. Mirroring is easier when the dancers have their eyes open, directions can be given to stretch inside arms toward each other, or away from each other, but with eyes closed the anchors for orientation and describing orientation are very limited.

Once the dancers open their eyes, the range of methods available for spatial orientation increase. The audience, on the ground facing the wall in most cases, provides a constant anchor and the dancers are eager to engage the audience visually so even when they don’t look at the audience, their bodies constantly project energy in that direction. The building and its environment provide further spatial anchors: for example, at Venue Cymru, facing to the right, the dancer sees the entrance to the box office, facing left, the Cae Mor Hotel. With her back to the wall, the vista opens out: the audience below, the car park behind, and in the distance the Carneddau mountains. These landmarks assist orientation; the dancer mainly operates using the relative FSR, or body cross of axes, but will draw upon extrinsic information to enhance her spatial perception and her projection of her body into space. This is crucial for the dancer to connect with the audience, otherwise the performance can be too internal, as if the dancer is in a personal bubble, performing for herself alone.

Producing and changing social space

In Gwymon 1, the metaphor that Galeri is a ship which goes on a journey into a storm with two women on board makes a strong connection to the local history in two
ways. The narrative of travel echoes the emigration of many Welsh people, yearning for a better life, in the 1800s and the metaphor of the ship links to the ship building industry which existed on the site in the 1800s. In this way, the choreography, directed initially by the suggestion of Mari Emlyn, connects to and reflects the local historical production of social space, now all but hidden in the new development. A further historical connection to Eluned Morgan occurred two years later, when we reprised *Gwymon 1* for the Patagonia 150 celebrations on the 25<sup>th</sup> July 2015; the audience were members of the Caernarfon Patagonia Society. *Gwymon 1* built on the previous relationships established with the director and staff of Galeri through *Ynghlwm* (2011) and *Pobl Dre* (2012). The sharing of vertical dance visions generated collaborative productions of space offering shifting perspectives of the world, in some cases, changing the habitual patterns of movement through and within the spaces.

**Adapting Gwymon 1 to make a product to circulate in the marketplace**

On the face of it, *Gwymon 1* was fundamentally site-specific; the movement was made to fit a space metaphorically and physically, echoing social history of the location (shipbuilding and emigration); moving the work and remaking it for different spaces ran the risk of destroying it (Barry and Serra in Kwon, 2004: 12). I was intrigued to see if it was possible to retain the sense of the work and equally, the pull of extending its visibility and economic viability was strong. I remade the work for a prototypical solid wall, kept the subject matter and tweaked the structure. The music was rewritten and recorded and the work was shortened to fifteen minutes. Some of

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22 Patagonia 150 celebrated 150 years since the Welsh settlement in Patagonia.
23 The economic gain from *Gwymon* was very limited for me, but it provided employment for local artists in a region that has very high unemployment.
the sounds very specific to Galeri (the creaking of the boats, the bells), were omitted in the recording. The movement was altered substantially as there was nothing to cling to on a flat wall; the choreography became more abstract and more complex, relying on movement and sound to create the narrative, and the metaphorical role of the building subsided.

Gwymon 2 was performed in a range of locations between 2013 and 2016. I proceed to analyse five of these to see how the performance of the same work in different locations produces social space and how or if changes in those spaces were effected.

Venue Cyrmu, Llandudno, 2014 and 2015

Llandudno is a Victorian seaside town, providing a link to Gwymon’s sea theme, although the connection with the sea differs considerably from that of Caernarfon. The performance wall faced away from the sea, so a vital visual connection was lost and the sea had to be sensed and imagined, prompted by the sounds of seagulls.

The work was adapted using Venue Cymru’s fine prototypical vertical dance wall and was performed there twice, once for the Llawn Festival in 2014 and again in 2015 for a participatory arts day.

Venue Cymru first hosted vertical dance activities in 2012 when they and Conwy Council commissioned me to choreograph a solo called Aviatrix, inspired by Amelia Earhart, as part of the Adain Avion Olympic project (2012). Gaining permission for this was very challenging as the management were understandably risk averse. The successful negotiation of permission, allowing the performance to take place, paved
the way for future activities, and in 2016 Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence became
company in residence at Venue Cymru, where we also now run a youth vertical
dance group.

_Gwymon 2_, in this context, was part of a continuum of vertical dance activity at
Venue Cymru, where our presence is now fairly commonplace. This process is
evidence of how a new social space for training, rehearsing and performing vertical
dance has been collaboratively produced with the staff of Venue Cymru through
negotiation, affirming the metaphorical statement proposed in Chapter Two, that
VERTICAL DANCE IS A CREATIVE NEGOTIATION OF SUSPENDED BODIES
MOVING ON VERTICAL SURFACES.

Riverfront Arts Centre, Newport, 2015 and Millennium Centre, Cardiff 2016
Riverfront Arts Centre, as its name suggests, is next to a river, which, again, was not
visible to the performers or the audience. The surface of the walls, light blue metallic
sheets provided an effective sea-like surface on which to stage the work. Newport is
the other end of Wales and this was the company’s first performance outside North
Wales, as part of a Dance Platform which provided a gateway to a performance of
_Gwymon 2_ the following year in British Dance Edition (BDE) at the Millennium Centre
in Cardiff.

The Millennium Centre is in Cardiff Bay, built on land reclaimed from the sea. The
wall we were allocated was indoors, in the Glanfa foyer area, so again, despite its
proximity, the sea had to be imagined. We expected the wall to be white (as it was
during our site visit); instead we found a mural celebrating the work of women during
WWI, providing a very different context for the work. We normally rig from structural elements of architecture, such as i-Beams or plant on the roof of a building. The concept of rigging off something that needs to be tethered to prevent movement was a little alarming. Presenting a piece which is made for an outdoor location indoors was strange; the weather, such a potent force in Morgan’s writing, was absent. All these conditions created a very unusual situation for us as a dance unit, and the work felt oddly dislocated and out of context, but not destroyed due to its transfer to an alternative space (Serra in Kwon, 2004), largely due to the incorporation of the narrative into the choreography.

BDE is a ‘trade fair’ for dance, completing the journey of Gwymon from site-specific immovable work to a product which has entered the marketplace. The space was to some extent pre-produced by the organizing team of British Dance Edition who engineered the timing, movement of people, and the spaces of performances. Our role in producing and changing space was more functional; creating rigging points from moving overhead truss, cordoning off areas under the dancers and lighting the wall so that the dancers stood out and the mural receded.

**Welsh Government offices, Llandudno Junction 2015**

Government buildings have risk averse managers and very strong, bullet proof windows. The estates manager required extensive documentation and several site visits before granting permission, which was finally given by the Welsh government offices in Cardiff. The performance was part of a new street festival called Trakz in Llandudno Junction, and this was the second year of the festival. The government building was opened in 2010, occupying part of the former Hotpoint factory site just
outside Llandudno Junction. The vertical performance ‘floor’ was reflective glass (which amplified the reflective theme of the work and multiplied the dancers), fronted by a large pond, separating the audience from the dancers. This performance probably changed space more than any other: it brought people onto a new site to assemble to watch a performance, turning a space of governance into a space of festival and performance. The change in the usage of space has continued: there was another vertical dance performance this year, with permission granted by the Welsh Government and funded by the Arts Council of Wales, as result of the efforts of a local councillor who has raised funding and galvanized local arts groups. This is an example of how vertical dance develops collaborative partnerships with local councillors, building and estates managers and other institutional staff. These partnerships grow out of negotiation, requiring patience, understanding and often, compromise. The fact that vertical dance has been invited back proves the form is persuasive and a new social space has been carved out at a seat of governmental power.

Base Sousmarine, Saint Nazaire, 2016

Saint Nazaire was one of the largest harbours on the French Atlantic coast before the Second World War. The Germans arrived in 1940, razed the Compagnie Generale Transatlantique and by 1942 an enormous new submarine station had been constructed, with space for 14 submarine vessels. After the end of the Second World War, the base was abandoned, but in 1994 it was re-urbanised by the municipality and now houses several museums. The geographical location, a port in the Bay of Biscay provides a serendipitous connection to Eluned Morgan’s birth, the source of the Gwymon story, bringing us full circle. The proximity of the sea and
lighting which threw shadows and ripples across the walls created a very suggestive space for the work, and the choreography of descent combined with the metaphor of sinking to the sea bed made a strong if bizarre connection with former subaquatic function of the building. In Saint Nazaire, vertical dance had a role to play in proposing a different quality of occupation, a vertical inhabitation, to counterpoint the monolithic brutality of the building and its heritage.

**Concluding thoughts**

This chapter has brought together three distinct approaches to choreographing vertical dance which produce and/or change social space at the same location. Considering the history of the production of social space in the vicinity, moving from periphery to centre (Galeri), reveals the significance of the wider context in which the choreographic productions of space take place. The mountains and nature, which provide a backdrop to Caernarfon if you face away from the Menai Straits were metaphorically introduced to the foyer of the building by the performance of *Ynghlwm* (2011). On the same evening, leading mountaineer, Andy Kirkpatrick introduced his new book, *Cold Wars: climbing the fine line between risk and reality* (2011), and discussed his relationship with risk in his mountaineering activities around the world. Attending the event were some 200 local mountaineers, climbers and mountain rescue volunteers. In this way, the presence of the mountains, representing nature, pervaded the building for one evening. *Pobl Dre* (2012) brought the central space of the town, the Maes, inside the medieval walls of Caernarfon, into the foyer of Galeri, outside the walls. The opening of Parri’s exhibition, *Y Maes* (the square) condensed and amplified the presence of the town square inside the building, simultaneously reproducing one social space (the Maes) and producing another (Galeri). The final
work, *Gwymon 1*, made a metaphorical connection with the former function of the site in the 1800s, as a shipyard and harbour. All three works were recreated in different contexts in the same spaces: *Ynghlwm* (2011) on 29th September 2012 for the Casgliad Dance Collective showcase, *Pobl Dre* (2012) on 11th April 2015 for the tenth anniversary of the building, as part of a collection of works by artists associated with the centre, and *Gwymon 1* (2013) on 25th July 2015 as part of the Patagonia 150 celebrations. Massey’s insight that space is never finished, it is a process, a ‘simultaneity of stories-so-far’ (2005: 9) constructed through social interaction is important in my choreography, developed through a collaborative relationship with the people connected to a site as well as the accreted spatial practice at the space of production, in this case Galeri. I have been very fortunate to have been able to explore these spaces again and again and again, over the period of five years in such diverse ways and I’m very grateful to the mutual trust and shared visions that have been established between Galeri and myself.

All three works have been examined through the lenses of relationship to prototypical vertical dance, metaphor, spatial orientation of the dancer, and production of, and changes to social space. *Ynghlwm* (2011), *Pobl Dre* (2012) and *Gwymon 1* (2013) all deviate from the vertical dance prototype. *Ynghlwm* (2011) replaced a wall with a rope and introduced a pulley into the standard equipment of vertical dance thus substantially altering the choreographic possibilities and the spatial orientation of the dancer. *Pobl Dre’s* (2012) wall was ‘fake’ and fragile, with window apertures creating inside and outside spaces. *Gwymon 1’s* (2013) wall was fractured and fragmented, consisting of a narrow hand rail and some horizontal steel cables, and voids above and below the balcony, substantially changing the
choreographic possibilities. *Gwymon 2* (2014) was the only work that conformed to the prototypical model of vertical dance, a reflection of, or a result of, its adaptation for the marketplace, responding the need for modifying the choreography for a generic vertical dance space (a blank wall).

All the works described in this Chapter used metaphor to develop new choreographic worlds and project these into the space. *Gwymon* (2013) and *Ynghlwm* (2011) used costume and movement only to signal these worlds. *Ynghlwm* (2011) relied on the inherent signifying properties of the equipment to tell its story, and the expert knowledge and experience of the audience to interpret it. *Gwymon 1* (2013) imagined the building itself was a ship in a storm, projecting Morgan’s story onto its structure. *Pobl Dre* (2012), on the other hand, introduced material changes to the space in the form of set and props to build its metaphorical environment.

The spatial orientation of the dancers in each work relied to a greater or lesser extent on the body cross of axes, or relative frame of spatial reference. *Gwymon 1* (2013), in which the dancers spent more time upright with multiple means of attaching themselves to the building using their own bodies, presented the least changes to everyday spatial orientation. *Gwymon 2* (2014), on the other hand, required complex spatial orientation strategies using the body cross of axes in order to perceive left and right directions when upside down. In both versions, the audience was below and facing the performance, so the dancers needed to simultaneously be aware of orientating themselves according to a constant front, i.e. employing Laban’s a constant cross of axes, or what Levinson et al. call an ‘orientation-free intrinsic array’ (2002). *Ynghlwm*’s (2011) ‘rope wall’ produced a 360-degree space in which the
dancer had no real fixed points of reference, relying entirely on her internal relative sense of orientation. Finally, *Pobl Dre* (2012) required the same kind of spatial orientation as *Gwymon 2* (2014), without the sense of a constant front, as the audience were all around.

These works produced space by using metaphor to imagine the space differently. Some works changed the space physically, by installing new objects, which changed sightlines in the space. Others changed habitual pathways and caused people to look up and experience the world from a different perspective (*Manifesto for Vertical Dance*), both in rehearsal and performance. The accretion of vertical dance rehearsals and performances at Galeri, and subsequently at Venue Cymru, has augmented the function of these spaces, consolidated vertical dance through repetition, and simultaneously normalised the activity. The void of Galeri foyer space is now a potential space of performance, and the balconies are walls for dancing on. Venue Cymru’s big blank wall has become a regular vertical dance rehearsal, training and performance space.

The relocation of *Gwymon 2* (2014) has provided an opportunity to evaluate the validity of ‘touring’ work made site-specifically. The removal of both the original site, overlooking the sea, and the metaphor of the building as ship, placed a burden on the choreography itself to carry the narrative of the work. It is clear, however, that each different site has a distinct history of social practice, which resonates to a greater or lesser degree with the themes of the work, generating different productions of space and new meanings in each case.
Conclusion

Where am I now?

I was inspired to begin this research in 2005 because I had a strong sense that my sense of orientation in space was being fundamentally altered by my nascent vertical dance practice. My motivation emerged from an ‘an enthusiasm of practice’: something which is exciting, something which may be unruly…’ (Haseman: 2006:3). My ideas about the specific research focus of this project have mutated over the twelve years of the project, but the consistent factor has been my ongoing practice, through which I have thought and practiced my way to resolutions (Haseman, 2007: 147). My position in relation to my practice is very different now; currently I am an established vertical dance artist with a company and a significant body of choreographic work, a breadth and depth of pedagogical experience in the field and strong connections with other international artists through the Vertical Dance Forum. The expert practical knowledge I bring now to my object of study has been forged in the ‘contingent register of performance making’ (Melrose, 2002: 15) over the whole period of research and is conceptualized here in this thesis. The Manifesto for Vertical Dance that pervades the thesis is a concentrated, distilled version of the research, formulated as a call to action. It has a political motive – to change social space for the greater good – calling not for singular revolutionary

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24 The Vertical Dance Forum was established in 2014 by Fabrice Guillot from Compagnie Retouramont to share and debate issues arising in Vertical Dance. There are seven members: Compagnie Retouramont (France), Gravity and Levity (UK England), Fidget Feet (Ireland), Il Posto (Italy), Aeriosa (Canada), Histeria Nova (Croatia) and Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence/VDKL (UK Wales). The group have met 3 times since its inception, in Ireland (2014), Croatia (2015) and Italy (2016). In 2017 the group were awarded a Creative Europe grant to continue meeting until 2019. VDKL hosted the first of these meetings in Wales in July 2017. For further information see https://verticaldanceforum.wordpress.com
actions, but repetitive ways of being collectively and collaboratively in space that accrete over time, gradually changing perceptions and producing new social spaces.

Choosing a specific period of my practice (2009 – 2015) isolated a specific set of works around which to frame the research. The geographical locations of the practice - Surrey, Belfast and Caernarfon – have contributed to the shape of the research which I chose to organize chronologically, reflecting the accretion of my knowledge over the time span of the project. The first location represents the beginning of my journey in which I work out how to physically orientate my body on a vertical floor through pedagogical and choreographic investigations. In Belfast, I was an outsider brought in to work on three diverse projects on different monuments and buildings in the city, responding to new and challenging situations in an unfamiliar social, cultural and political context. In Caernarfon, I was (and still am) a resident working in different ways and in different spaces on and in the same building, allowing me to build upon knowledge gained in Belfast, and apply it in more concentrated and consistent ways, in one location. I was new to North Wales when I undertook Ynglwm (2011) and the processes of Pobl Dre (2012) and Gwymon (2013) have enabled me to develop my practice in relation to my new place of residence.

The question, where am I now? seems overly simple at the end of such a long process, but it encapsulates the spatial aspect of my undertaking literally and metaphorically. In this space, now, I choreograph the ending of this project and the beginning of new ones, drawing together my findings in each of the areas of research enquiry and commenting on the links between the various approaches to
demonstrate the insights have arisen from the interpenetration of diverse theoretical and practical investigations. For example, how the research into the operation of metaphor in the context of the dancer’s spatial awareness then became a framework for discussing my choreography in Chapter Five.

Using prototype theory (Wittgenstein, 1953; Rosch, 1978; Lakoff, 1987) in Chapter One, I constructed an experimental category and prototype of vertical dance with ten properties, identified from my own practice and observations. The category and prototype were used as tools to construct a concept of the nature and characteristics of vertical dance. This approach has influenced and been influenced by all the approaches in the project, including the practice. The specific themes (or prototypical properties) of walls, equipment, suspension and altering of spatial perspectives have discursively infused the whole project. Lefebvre’s concept of windows as transitional objects (1974: 206) prompted me to define the prototypical wall as one in which there is no passage between inside and outside worlds. Evanitsky’s search for support/suspension in the ‘fragile’ world of aerial dance and her desire to exist in the ‘in-between moment’, the transition between supports for the body in the air ‘to exist outside this “normal” framework’ of aerial dance (2008:34) revealed to me how the boundary between vertical and aerial categories could be fuzzy (Zadeh, 1965). Employing the prototype as a lens through which to view my own practice has given rise to surprising and unexpected insights about how my work is situated in the category of vertical dance I have constructed. All the work I have presented in this project fits within the category, which prompts me to ask if the properties I chose for the ‘best example’ were influenced (albeit subconsciously) by my own practice and in turn, influenced how my work would be situated. In other
words, did I construct a category that my work would fit into? I think this is bound to be true to some extent, and yet two recent works, developed just before I constructed the prototype, step outside the category of vertical dance into aerial dance, (Omnibus, 2016) and photonics, or the science of light (In-Visible light, 2016) affirming Melrose’s (2002) idea that practice precedes cognition. In other words, the ‘contingent register’ of new practice I undertook beyond the time frame of this project has effectively been ‘called into being’ (2002:15) through my use of prototype theory.

It is very likely that my understanding of the category will change over time, indeed it may be abandoned entirely. I am interested (and nervous) to share my formulation (which has arisen from my needs in this project) with the wider vertical dance community. My nervousness stems from a possibility that other artists might perceive the category and prototype as promoting a view of an ideal form of vertical dance, which is not helped by the terms ‘best example’ and ‘prototype’. This is a concern that Rosch (1978) addresses in reaction to confusions and misunderstandings of the perceived status of a prototype as a ‘reified…specific category member or mental structure’ in her statement: ‘by prototypes of categories we have generally meant the clearest cases of … membership defined operationally by people’s judgments of goodness of membership in the category’ (1978:11). Any future public presentations of the category and the prototype, out of the context of this research, must provide a contextual framework which explains prototype theory.

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25 Further information about these works can be accessed at:
as a means to understand and talk about a subject, not as a model of ‘best practice’. Future research might be undertaken to refine and limit the properties of the prototype eliminating or subsuming those which occur less often. For example, the specific and limited equipment outlined infers a choreography of descent. The specification of rehearsing and performing in public space may change over time; vertical dancers may develop more work in theatre settings.

The historical overview of vertical dance in Chapter One was limited to providing a context for my practice, precluding a more detailed exploration. The short exercise of looking back to the roots of vertical dance through the lens of the prototype has indicated a need for further research in this area. What it has revealed is a range of routes into vertical dance: climbing, aerial dance, circus, gymnastics, modern or contemporary dance and a wide diversity of practices, some prototypical, others more gradated. Analysing specific case studies uncovered a range of approaches to the wall as a central property of vertical dance, both as a metaphorical concept and a material reality. Walls, as surfaces to be danced on, emerged from this analysis as real, fabricated, thin and bendy, fractured, fragmented, soft, crumbling and dissolving. A surprising insight was how some choreographers chose to further limit the options available in the already limited space of vertical dance: the absence of lateral pendulum movement in Walker’s Why? (2005) and the avoidance of the window in Moretti’s Far Vuoto (2012), creating dramatic tension by leaving a surplus of spatial possibility unexplored.

The investigation of the spatial orientation of the vertical dancer revealed new insights about problems of communication between bodies on the ground and in the.
air. These observations suggest that choreographers, like myself, utilise an interplay of frames of spatial reference (Levinson et al, 2002), body cross of axes (Laban, 1966), landmarks and metaphorical images (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Further research is required to understand more precisely how dancers on walls and choreographers on the ground find and develop shared languages.

Research into metaphor developed in Chapter Two to understand how dancers orientate themselves in space and observers perceive their action on a tilted floor has been effectively applied to the analysis of processes of creation of my choreography in Chapter Five, revealing that metaphor is a method I have been using extensively to generate choreography. This is a serendipitous result of applying Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) ideas to vertical dance, evidence of the ‘contingent register of performance-making’ (Melrose, 2002:15), that something I have done instinctively is now something I have conceptualized and can choose to employ cognitively rather than instinctively in future choreographic and pedagogical practices.

Lefebvre’s theory of production of social space examined in Chapter Three arose from his project to create a unified theory of space employing Marxist theories of production. His statement: ‘to change life… we must first change space’ (1974: 190) attests to the revolutionary nature of his project, and prompted me to ask whether vertical dance has the capacity to change space and therefore change lives. The first step to answering this question was to identify the history of the production of social space at the locations of vertical dance production under scrutiny here: Belfast and Caernarfon. Lefebvre pinpoints the emergence of social space as the moment of
significant settlement in nature (1974:192); the emergence of the built environment. Undertaking the exercise of researching the productions of social space over time in Belfast and Caernarfon has revealed new insights about these spaces in which I have produced performances retrospectively. In future, I would like to employ this type of research as a choreographic method so that new ‘differential’ productions of space can be explicitly built upon the foundations of past spatial practice.

Lefebvre characterizes the construction of buildings as a confiscation of space from nature (1974:49) and considers that nature has all but disappeared from urban spaces. He calls for the revolutionary, spatial, dancer’s body to recover nature through lived experience and thus unify the perceived, conceived and lived aspects of space. Answering his rallying cry, I have argued that the suspension of bodies on buildings inserts nature into the built environment and provides new images of relationships between hard, inert surfaces and soft, living bodies. Lefebvre imposes a dialectic logic on specific properties of architectural space: monuments, buildings, walls and windows. In the case of monuments and buildings I found his dialectic fails to account for buildings such as the Crescent Arts Centre in Belfast and Galeri in Caernarfon, which owe their existence to local community action designed to improve social space, and can be conceived of as neither monumental nor prosaic (Lefebvre, 1974:225-227). On the other hand, his dialectic is very useful in the conceptualization of walls as boundaries that can be breached by windows as transitional objects (1974: 206). The application of these concepts to the prototype of vertical dance has resulted in the emergence of a highly differentiated set of choreographic approaches to the wall as a material object and as a metaphorical concept.
In order to survive as a professional practice, vertical dance needs to operate in the marketplace. Lefebvre’s (1974) Marxist explanation that products need to erase all marks and traces of the labour of production to circulate in the marketplace presents a problem for vertical dance which is characterized (at least in the prototypical formulation) as fundamentally site-specific. Moving the work runs the risk of destroying the work. The production of a dislocated ‘nomadic’ art object (Kwon, 2004) which can successfully function as a marketable product is a tricky proposition for prototypical vertical dance, and one which I faced in adapting the original Gwymon to re-site it in alternative locations. This process was of benefit to me in economic terms and in terms of raising the visibility of my work beyond North Wales, most notably its selection for presentation in British Dance Edition in Cardiff in 2016; the original version would not have been selected for logistical reasons.

There is a wider problem in defining dance as a product which has erased all marks and traces of the labour of production because the very nature of live performance conflates production and consumption – the dance is danced, therefore produced and consumed at the same moment. If we ignore the performative aspect of dance, and define the labour of production as the choreographic rehearsal process, there is a case for arguing that dance works that are made in closed studios and toured as finished works to theatres have entered the marketplace as products. In the case of prototypical vertical dance, which is rehearsed and performed in public space, the ‘marks and traces’ choreographic process (the labour of production) are not erased or hidden; they are displayed publicly, like moving billboards, on the exterior vertical surfaces of the urban landscape. The work of production, including the mistakes, improvisations and repetitions are shared publicly in an opening out of the production
process that runs counter to the capitalist drive towards a standard reproducible consumer product. In this way, the category of vertical dance I have identified can unify the conceived, perceived and lived aspects of space through the actions of the dancing body. Put another way, representations of space (the urban environment) and spatial practice (habitual spatial behaviour accreted over time) are changed in representational space (the dancing on buildings in real time) which produces new, differentiated spaces.

Where I am now, is in a different space, produced by the accretion of practical and theoretical explorations of productions of space over time, still looking up and inviting others to join me to inhabit vertical space, to experience the world from different perspectives and to remember nature whilst inhabiting the built environment.


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Appendix One: Chronology of vertical dance works by Kate Lawrence
Further information on each work below is available on

http://www.verticaldancekatelawrence.com/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>High Art</td>
<td>Vertex Climbing Wall, University of Surrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Highconography</td>
<td>George Edwards Library, University of Surrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>(Descent of the) Angel</td>
<td>Various locations – see webpage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Ion Beam</td>
<td>Ion Bean Centre, University of Surrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Fly Butterfly</td>
<td>Belfast, City Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Off the Wall</td>
<td>Belfast, Crescent Arts Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Raschmunzel</td>
<td>Haus der Geschichten, Linz, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Life is a Carnival</td>
<td>Belfast, Ulster Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 - 2014</td>
<td>Ynghlwm/Roped Together</td>
<td>Various locations, see webpage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 - 2016</td>
<td>Pobl Dre</td>
<td>Various locations, see webpage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Aviatrix</td>
<td>Venue Cymru, Llandudno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>C’laen ta!</td>
<td>Yglwys Llanbeblig and Ysgol Hendre, Caernarfon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 - 2016</td>
<td>Gwymon</td>
<td>Various locations, see webpage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Yr Helfa/The Gathering</td>
<td>Mount Snowdon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Porth</td>
<td>Various locations, see webpage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>(Hints to) Lady Travellers</td>
<td>Venue Cymru, Llandudno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Amser Panad</td>
<td>Galeri Caernarfon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>In/visible Light: The Vertical dance and Light Experience</td>
<td>Pontio, Bangor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Cuddio/Ceisio – Hide/Seek</td>
<td>Happy Valley, Llandudno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Omnibus</td>
<td>Galeri, Caernarfon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Two: Vertical dance Timeline

All data refers to harness work with ropes – I have not looked at aerial disciplines such as fabric, trapeze, corde lisse etc. I have included some mention of bungee (elastic rope), but this is incidental as some companies use rope and bungee in the same performances. I have also included examples of work that uses climbing/bouldering. I have indicated individual vertical dance works, where they are not the common practice of the choreographer or company.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Company/Practitioner</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Anna Halprin task workshop and Esposizione</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Alwin Nikolaïs Sorceror</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Trisha Brown Planes</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1969/70</td>
<td>Trisha Brown Man walking down the side of a building</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Trisha Brown Floor of the Forest</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Multigravitational Aerodance Group</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Gordon Matta-Clark, Tree dance, tree house</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Trisha Brown Roof Piece</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Trisha Brown Walking on the Wall</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Batya Zamir Company</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Trisha Brown Spiral</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Terry Sendgraff – Motivity</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1979 - present</td>
<td>La Fura dels Baus</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1980 - present</td>
<td>Zaccho Dance Theatre</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1984 - present</td>
<td>Legs on the Wall</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1985 - present</td>
<td>Streb Extreme Action</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Johnny Dawes (climber)</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Patrick Berhault and Patrick Edlinger (climbers)</td>
<td>France</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1986 – 2001</td>
<td>Roc in Lichen</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1988 - present</td>
<td>Scarabeus Aerial Theatre Dance in 2001 with Lindsey Butcher</td>
<td>UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1989 - present</td>
<td>Cie Retouramont</td>
<td>France</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1991 - present</td>
<td>Project Bandaloop</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1992 - present</td>
<td>Les Lezards Bleus/Antoine le Menestral</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1993 - ?</td>
<td>Aussibal et Cie</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1993 - ?</td>
<td>De la Guarda</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Nikki Smedley, Rock</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Organization/Names/Company</td>
<td>Country</td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>1994 - present</td>
<td>Brenda Angiel</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>1994 - present</td>
<td>Il Posto/Wanda Moretti</td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>1994 - present</td>
<td>Deborah Colker</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>1996 - present</td>
<td>Flyaway/Jo Kreiter</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>1997 - present</td>
<td>Oeff Oeff</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>1999 - present</td>
<td>Wired Aerial Theatre</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>En-Knap, Iztok Kovacs, Dom Svobode</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>2000 – present</td>
<td>Alban Elved Dance Company</td>
<td>Germany/USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>2001 - present</td>
<td>Aeriosa Dance Society</td>
<td>Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>2001 - present</td>
<td>Motus Modules</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>2002 - present</td>
<td>Kate Lawrence, VDKL 2014</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>2003 - present</td>
<td>Gravity and Levity/Lindsey Butcher</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>2003 - present</td>
<td>Fuerza Bruta</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Sens Productions Melt</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>2004 - present</td>
<td>In-senso</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>2004 - present</td>
<td>Fidget Feet Aerial Dance</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>2006 - present</td>
<td>Mattatoio Sospeso</td>
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<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>2006 - present</td>
<td>Frikar</td>
<td>Norway</td>
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<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>2006 - present</td>
<td>Ascendance</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>2006 - present</td>
<td>Sacude</td>
<td>Spain</td>
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>2006 - present</td>
<td>All or Nothing Aerial Dance Theatre</td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>2007 - present</td>
<td>Del-reves</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>2007 - present</td>
<td>Eventi Verticali</td>
<td>Italy</td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>2008 - present</td>
<td>Archanthrope Cie/ Genevieve Mazin</td>
<td>France</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Angelin Preljocaj/Ballet Preljocaj, Snow White</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>2008 – present</td>
<td>De L’air dans L’art Danse Escalade</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Company/Project</td>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Sens Productions Rapture</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>2010–present</td>
<td>Abel Navarro/Luft-Danza</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>2010–present</td>
<td>Julie Nioche, Nos Solitudes</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>2012–present</td>
<td>Barbara Foulkes</td>
<td>Argentina/Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>2013–present</td>
<td>Histeria Nova</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Three: 
Gwymon Song lyrics by Eve Goodman

Welsh (language in the soundtrack)

O dan y dwr mae merched y môr.
Yn y dyfroedd clir mae nhw’n dianc y tir.
Mae curiad y tonnau fel curiad ei clonnau.
O dan y dwr mae merched y môr.

Wrth ochor y tir mae merched y glannau
Mae nhw’n canu cân gydai henaid ar tan
Mae’r llong fel angel ar gopa’r gorwel
Yn hwylio trwy’r dwr i’r merched y glannau.

Rough English translation:

Under the water are the women of the sea
In the clear deep waters, they escape the land
The rhythm of the waves like the rhythm of their hearts
Under the water are the women of the sea

At the edge of the land are the women of the shores
The sing their song with energy on fire
The ship, an angel, at the summit of the horizon
Rows through the water to the women of the shores

(Eve Goodman, 2013)