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Countermove of the Transcultural: Moving With & Against

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I dig my hands into the cold sand and gaze at the black, shimmering sea.

It feels like the edge of the universe.

Shoko once told me that standing on the shore made her feel like she was standing on the outskirts of the world. As if she'd been pushed away from the center, away from people, until she reached the edge of the sea that was itself pushed away from the great ocean. (Eunyoung, 2021, p. 2).

In the English language, “to be at sea” is an idiom that suggests you might be discombobulated or confused. You have lost your bearings. And indeed, to be alive as bodies of water [especially in these catastrophic times this writing is taking place in] might leave many feeling tetherless, or at sea. But what if, for others, tetherless was another way to contemplate freedom? What if, for some, tetherless meant stepping up, speaking out, saying no, letting go, lifting up, stepping back? What if tetherless meant refusing the false compass points that directed us to this place? (Neimanis, 2021, p. 76).

I begin this publication with words from prolific South Korean writer and author Choi Eunyoung’s short story *Shoko’s Smile* (2021). The work is about the fraught friendship between a Korean girl and a Japanese girl unfolding over thirteen years as they struggle to fulfill their wishes. The ocean Eunyoung describes is used as a metaphor for the physical and personal distances the protagonists experience, as well as the cultural weight the two women wish they could extricate themselves from. I chose to begin this publication with this quote to articulate the main thematic resonances traversed in this publication: oceanic thinking, friendship, movement, and the experience of the Asian diaspora.



Figure 1: Photograph of the author. Photograph by Jack Single, courtesy the artist.

This publication is emerging from the need to document, archive and converse with Asian Australian performance artists who are making work and interrogating choreographic practice across the country. This writing is about working with as much as working against, attempting to expose, unsettle and create ruptures in the inheritances that come with working in a colonial Australian Arts landscape. Conversations surrounding Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) politics have typically centred on representation, working against disappearance and assimilation, and working against the periphery. “Much of the Australian white-settler canon reads for the first one-hundred and fifty years as a litany of othering” (Leane, 2018). “Beyond the First Australians, settler fictionists have depicted almost, if not entirely *carte-blanche*, the representations of further diasporas arriving – ‘the yellow peril’, for example” (Leane, 2018). In the words of Audre Lorde, “Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression.” She continues, “But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretence that these differences do not exist” (Lorde, 2017, p. 18). In acknowledging these differences, it is crucial to note

that terms like 'people of colour' are inadequate precisely because of the differences they claim to contain (Jing McIntosh, 2022, p. xiv), when such signifiers are always overflowing and cascading with embodied knowledge.

In a literal sense, the condition of being of the diaspora relates to “the scattering of seeds” (Ang, 1998, p. 223), which produces human subjects for whom notions of identity and belonging are radically unsettled. As James Clifford puts it in his discussion of contemporary theorising on diasporas, “Diasporic subjects are distinct versions of modern, transnational, intercultural experience” (Ang, 1998, p. 223). Diasporic formations are, thereby, a multiplicity of heres and theres that together make up decentred—partially overlapping—networks of communication, travel, trade and kinship that connect several communities of transnational peoples (Ang, 1998, p. 224). To link this back to oceanic thinking, I bring in a metaphor that Paul Gilroy used in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993)—ships lost in space to represent the diaspora, “ships in motions across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa and the Caribbean as a central organising symbol” (Gilroy, 1993). Being of the diaspora could be constituted to mean that those of the diaspora remain forever on the periphery, but what if there was no periphery? What if, like the ocean, there was no centre? And just like the ocean, which represents the borderless, we were able to shift and offer counter-movements to our own cartography?

This publication examines the snapshots of practice shared with me from three dance makers working across curation, choreography, and creative facilitation. In our conversations, we discuss how they have created performative works that shed light on submerged, traumatic histories that traverse the familial and the global. Specifically, we considered contemporary performance through the lens of their personal practices and performance traditions from Australia and Asia—Great Ocean regions, and how they have been included in various arts festival contexts. Utilising choreographic and curatorial perspectives, the reader is illuminated with glimpses of how performance traditions are intrinsic to understanding Australia's relations with its neighbouring countries and how these actions, in turn, encourage critical community dialogue and the re-examination of colonial histories.

Through these artist-curator-researcher-dancer-choreographer interviews, this research study seeks to offer a trans-historical window through which to reignite and sustain connections between Australian, Asian and Great Ocean countries and communities, revealing ties across times, places, and peoples, and how these traditions and connectivity are shifting with the advent of new technologies and new methods of storytelling. This research is describing the countermoves: the counter movements and critical dialogue that Asian Australian dance-makers have initiated around Australia. These countermoves are fueled by reciprocity of care and resistance towards colonial and institutional ways of thinking.

To introduce myself as the researcher, I am an Australian-Japanese artist, curator and dance-maker interested in interdisciplinary collaboration. Influenced by my experiences living peripatetically across East and Southeast Asia during my youth, I use an auto-ethnographic approach to my art and performance processes. My practice spans across visual arts, choreography, curatorial projects, written publications and creative facilitation. My research and choreographic explorations are heavily influenced by my upbringing across Asia and Southeast Asia, including living in Japan, India and Thailand, before relocating to Queensland. Essentially my body, mind and practice have never liked to stay in one place and, just like my hyphenated identity, my practice and way of living is hyphenated – always including a dash or a “gap”.

In Japanese, we call these gaps 間 ma. These spaces are porous and filled with lightness—where knowledge and time can transcend, becoming oceans of knowledge that blend into one another. As an artist, institutional rote learning encourages you to move in a singular direction and, in my mind, being an experimenter and essentially a hyphenated, transcultural, and diasporic person felt complex, as I have navigated my arts practice and own way of life. What has stayed true to me through all these explorations has been the powerful nature of working within collectives – finding individualistic identity within the collective space, whilst creating spaces for mutual support, working through friendship, and learning reciprocity of care from my Asian friends and elders. Cascades of knowledge and methods of “oceanic thinking” are inherent to collective artistic practices, as exemplified by the artist-researchers, choreographers, and curators I have chosen to interview as a part of this publication.

Embodied Methodologies

Figure 1 is a photograph from my ongoing body of work *between oceans* alongside the Japanese character of *ma* – the character for gap or space. What is highlighted by this imagery is a virtual space of continuous mobility, crisscrossing flows and multiple horizontal exchanges between different sites of diasporic connection, in which there is no centre (Ang, 1998, p. 234). What arises from this is the idea of privileging the periphery. How could we think like an ocean, where there is no geographical centre? With the experience of the diaspora comes filling in cultural and historical gaps with gaps fuelled by the imagination. These spaces are porous, filled with 間 *ma*, or “gaps”—filled with lightness—where knowledge and time can transcend, becoming oceans of knowledge that blend into one another.

To show what informed my methodology I would like to speak about what it means to string figure. In play and practice, a string figure is a design formed by manipulating string with the hands, using one’s own fingers or sometimes the fingers of multiple people, or even other parts of the body, such as mouths, wrists or feet. Discussed by multispecies feminist theorist Donna J. Haraway in *Staying with the Trouble* (2022), string figuring is a form of ‘continuous meaning’ making. These are practices for telling the stories of constellations and are thinking as well as making practices, as pedagogical as they are cosmological performances. You, as the reader, may remember playing this kind of game as a child, picking up threads and dropping them, with friends or on your own. Among humanity’s oldest games, in Japanese these games are called *Ayatori*, and around the world the games are the same and not the same at all. The gaps or the ‘*ma*’ are there, and these images arise time and again in this research project in different forms, as tapestries of knowledge, familial ties and bonds between practices and peoples. String figuring is a form of storytelling and fact telling; “... it is the patterning of possible worlds and possible times, material-semiotic worlds, gone, here, and yet to come” (Haraway, 2022, p. 31). Haraway works with string figures as a theoretical trope, a way to think-with a host of companions in sympoietic threading, felting, tangling, tracking, and sorting. Embodying the practice of feminist fabulation is part of this research. Following Marilyn Strathern, an ethnographer of thinking practices, she says, “It matters what ideas we use to think other ideas” (Strathern, 1992, p. 10). It matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges ... it matters what stories tell stories (Haraway, 2022, p. 35). This publication is presenting the

overlapping thoughts, desires and knowledges existent in the current landscape of Asian Australian dance-making practices and ongoing dialogues on how these practices sustain themselves.

The questions that have informed this publication include the following:

- *How can code switching in creative work offer viewers embodied knowledge of the diasporic experience?*
- *How may performative acts open spaces for critical dialogue to take place within Asian Australian and Great Ocean communities? How does this express itself in different places, sites, performative moments, and festivals?*
- *How may performative acts initiate spaces for critical dialogue to take place?*

Code switching, which I mention in my first question, refers to shifting between more than one language group in a single conversation, and I'm interested in how the gaps or the in-between spaces this creates reveals new sensations and realisations. I have drawn on what contemporary choreographer Jennifer Roche describes as a hybrid body to examine collisions between practice, theory and initiating critical dialogues with exemplary artists in interdisciplinary performance fields. As illuminated by Roche, the dancing body can become multiple configurations of selves, from the dancing identity to the choreographer, to the experience itself (2015). In this publication, I embody this through my transcultural, hybrid body and multifarious perspectives, which have helped me frame these conversations. For my methodology, I have utilised my own hybrid body of creative, cultural and professional practice, and string figuring, embodied writing and physical practice – specifically examining different methods of translation and code-switching processes I have used in my practice, and finally, talanoa-based interviews with the artists I have initiated conversation with, utilising talanoa as method and conversing with reciprocal care.

Talanoa as Method & Conversations with Asian Australian Performance Artists

The oceanic processes of sharing time, conversation, space and food, otherwise known as talanoa, have been intrinsic parts of pre-colonial gathering and time sharing and are existing cultural practices of the Pacific. The derivative of the word “talanoa”, is a Tongan term that means “to talk about, or to relate” (Churchward, 2015). As an oratory tradition, talanoa is a concept recognised in Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Hawai’i and the Solomon Islands (Prescott, 2008). In Tonga, the word “talanoa” usually refers to an informal conversation. Talanoa is made up of two conceptual parts: “tala’, which means to tell or to talk, and ‘noa’, which means anything or nothing in particular” (‘Otunuku, 2011, p. 45).

For this publication I present findings from three conversations that agitate and unpack what it means to be an Asian Australian dance-maker, curator and facilitator. In chronological order, the first conversation I had was with emerging artist, curator and dancer Dylan Goh, who examines his waacking practice as a form of intangible cultural heritage; the second was with dance artist, choreographer and facilitator Charemaine Seet, whose body of work has stretched over four continents and who continually explores the diversity of movement languages as a movement educator; and the lastly was with performance artist, choreographer and facilitator WeiZen Ho. To hold these conversations as semi-structured interviews informed by the Pasifika methodology talanoa, Research Ethics approval was undertaken, and I decided to document these interviews aurally before transcribing them in full and drawing out the thematic resonances.

Utilising talanoa means to use research methods that reflect the lived realities of the participants I work with. And it just so happens that food is a part of this conversational exchange process as well. When conducting my narrative based, semi-structured interviews, what I am keeping in mind is making the interview process moments for shared time, where there is a sharing of thoughts, provocations, and food. I specifically put funds aside to gift a snack to the participant that we can either share during the discussion or afterwards. I have wanted to lean into Indigenous-led methodology, yarning and talanoa, instead of reproducing western methods of research. Practices like talanoa and yarning have historically been used as an Indigenous-led methodology as they are so tied to the cultural contexts Indigenous practitioners are connected to. As a practitioner who does not

come directly from such communities, I wish to explain that my decision to implement these approaches, despite not being Indigenous myself, is due to having experience working with Pacific Island and Indigenous Australian artists. I have also sought guidance on navigating these methodologies through my supervisor artist and Bigambul descendant, Dr. Leah King-Smith.

In many ways, this means to practice talanoa, which in many Great Ocean languages means to tell a story. Generally, the term refers to a conversation, which can be used for different purposes: to teach a skill, to share ideas, to resolve problems, to build and maintain relationships and to gather information (Johansson Fua, 2014).

In the talanoa-based semi-structured interviews as part of this project, I discussed with each of the artists diverse futures, code-switching, dance and the curatorial, as well as the importance of sharing food and time. Each of the processes took over 50 minutes and one of the most beautiful parts of each conversation was purchasing the meal that we would share together. Over the last 12 months, these conversations included a Japanese bento box with Dylan Goh, bao buns and green tea with WeiZen Ho, and toasties and coffee with Charemaine Seet. Research utilising food and conversation is layered and complex. It can be as epistemological as it is genealogical, that it can be just as much about embodied knowledges as it is about connections to personal and familial history. As an example, in Brandon K. Liew's essay *Thank You for Calling* (2022), Liew provides a genealogical account of Melbourne restaurant Shakahari, in an intimate layering of his life with the lives of his family. "I dive into a bowl of Grandmother's noodles in the kitchen and I catch myself wondering if her first bowl tasted the same. Her fingers are slender but her noodles are fat and firm. Was it always this way?" (p. 83). In this way, researching with meals brings not only warmth and nostalgia but also complex genealogical, personal and epistemological lines of connection.

It has been illuminating to have these conversations with artists across different stages of their practices, from emerging to established, although it is challenging to map the richness of research. With Charemaine Seet, we drew from her experiences of working as a dancer in New York and the UK, as well as her most recent research as part of *Sixth Daughter*, her ongoing project exploring Teochew opera in Singapore, and its accompanying movement vocabulary, including sword work and

female hand gestures. "Sixth Daughter is a project to delve into the movement vocabulary of the first live performance I had experienced as a child in Malaysia and Singapore" (Seet, 2022). Her career has stretched over four continents, and she explores the diversity of movement languages as a movement educator, working from modern dance to hip hop and kung fu.

We discussed the appreciation and regard for visual arts versus modern dance, and the coalitions between them, but also the hierarchies that are existent in choreographic spaces, including navigating power dynamics between choreographer and dancer, specifically male choreographer and female dancer.

RT: ...once a visual artist knows that they're moving up or...going through these ranks, they kind of patent their ways of working... the types of ways they want their work presented, which I think, in terms of dance, it doesn't seem to translate because we're sort of dealing with bodies in space and everything.

CS: It's not like... there's a lot more variables. I guess I'm just generalising. I spent a lot of time at Merce Cunningham studio the year before Merce died because I felt it a place that felt like a visual arts experience more than a dance experience. But it was both things. There was that sense of and not necessarily the person. There was an attitude of being open to the materiality of things and not necessarily the people. It's hard to say. It's very unclear. Just generally speaking, the problem with bodies working is that most people in dance are women... Just historically there's inequity for women in dance, in terms of employment and financial support, and this is also reflected in visual arts hierarchies. There's something about the visual arts world that is almost corrupt, in my opinion. I don't know, maybe I'm just jealous because they have lots of money. Like, oh, you guys are so spoiled, you have lots of money. But maybe it's not true. But I spend a lot of time in galleries and it's one of my great loves. And there's just so much more support for all of that [fine art] over the centuries. And dancing also because it's done a lot by people who don't have access.

We discussed being women of the Asian Australian diaspora, which is a very culturally specific experience, and the diversity of movement languages Charemaine has explored.

CS: Yeah, it's really interesting because my daughter plays Chinese lute, and so I'm always spending time inside these different spaces where it's mostly new immigrants from China... And they have absolutely nothing to do with mainstream Australia. And they have their own galleries, insane. Like crazy stuff, like embroidery everywhere in porcelain. And you're the first person who's really open about talking about Asianness. I think a lot of people who are Asian, they're nervous about speaking about Asian-ness because they don't want to be, like, pigeonholed in any way. I'm not sure if it's that or not... That was a struggle for me, as well, because this is a key moment and I'll talk about it in terms of making and practice, because, whenever you work with a choreographer, especially when I work with my dear friend, Doug Elkins, it's a collaboration. I'm making, he's making. So it was a making time. And he was the first choreographer in my UK experience to come and say, 'I want you to do a kung fu thing'. And I'm like, you're serious? And... he said yes. And he absolutely knew the form. And I'm like, oh, yeah, I know that one. And he was really, like, taking it in and wanting to do it without and I thought, well, I can do this, but this is all my childhood just for fun. It's not real. It's like following Bruce Lee films. But I knew how to do the same attack he wanted, and I could find that in my body. It's amazing.

RT: I really want to see that.

CS: It's not that great. I looked at the old videos, but it was a great moment because it was when I was asked to go back to the language I had. It's like going to my dialect and bringing it out without filtering it through a Western template format.

This recalls Constance Wu's comments on being an actress who does not shy away from leaning into a role that amplifies her Asian-ness:

I've heard a lot of Asian actors say, "I refuse to play stereotypical roles. I want to choose roles that could be played by anyone." They say that "success" will be when our Asian-ness isn't a part of the story, when we get

cast in “non-stereotypical’ roles. I do not subscribe to this idea of success... There are people who genuinely embody stereotypical attributes—they’re our mothers and fathers, our uncles and aunts, our brainy cousins—I don’t want to hide their voices or their stories... Stereotypes are not harmful for their mere existence; they’re harmful for their reduction of a person or group... When a great actor refuses to play previously stereotyped roles, I worry that their proud proclamation of that choice actually reduces our humanity. When our reactivity to old wounds renders us ashamed to the point of objection or repudiation, it reinforces the mainstream’s ignorant theory that the people who embody those stereotypes are inherently shameful. Or at the very least, uncool (Wu, 2022, p. 122-3).

To bring characters or movement styles into a contemporary context allows for more representation of the uniqueness of stereotypical movement. By placing them in a new light, the characters are given flesh, bones, history, heart and thereby expands them, without reducing them.

Charemaine’s most recent work *Sixth Daughter* delves into the movement vocabulary of the first live performance she experienced as a child in Malaysia and Singapore. She explains:

I guess street opera when I was a child was pretty rough and ready and there was a lot of gangsterism and a lots of being paid off by people and stuff like that but, the person I’m studying from, she started as an opera singer after independence in Singapore; which was a time of poverty in Singapore... So I’m interested to find out all about that and look at how... she developed a performance career from there and how it now sits in Singapore... there is some interest in traditional arts and Singapore but not enough to support everybody and I don’t know that they’re supported enough to maintain what they do yeah so they offer a house.



Figure 2: Photograph of Charemaine Seet. Courtesy the artist.

Over bao buns with WeiZen, we embarked on discussing acknowledgement of country and what this means to migratory beings as well as the socio-cultural rituals of walking. Having begun as a classically trained musician from Malaysia, WeiZen discussed the opportunities that came with being able to become her own artist in Australia, the importance of articulating artistic practice as not practice per se but repositioning practice as a way of life, and how ways of life blend into deconstructing and making new systems. We began our conversation with what was sitting with her of late, her work *WHAT PERSISTS Memory Walks*, supported by Critical Path. *Memory Walks* was an invitation for residents and non-residents who have a connection to the Blue Mountains to offer WeiZen and Alan Schacher, as concept initiators of the research project, walks that held a personal significance to them.

WZH: I realised I don't see as much art and performance work as I'd like to, given how much is out there. I find it incredibly overwhelming. But the major part is kind of over, now, for the research process with Alan Schacher, the Critical Path Grant to explore this very, very simple concept of how we kind of gain and develop a sense of place through the archive of our feet. And what does that mean? A lot of it comes down to landscape and memories and the fact that, I often think about how the original people have never left. There is an amazing tenacity that I feel my familial ancestors from HengHwa (PuTien) area of the Southern (Hokkien) Province of China may not have quite possessed because we scurried away as soon as we found the opportunity. So we're the kind of people who will never, ever be able to go

back and attempt to connect to ancestral land because we left it. And I feel sad with this comparison. I've always felt sad about it and, at the same time... I don't know how they've managed it. It's like they've accepted it. They, the original people of Australia, are really clear about their root relationship with this land. It's like, no matter how much someone shifts their perception around what they are, and who they are, what their relationship is, it never changes something within them which runs very deep.

Of course, there are legacies that are borne across multiple generations. Of course, there are kind of generational, I think every group of people who've gone through that level of dispossession, violence and shame, humiliation, all those kind of activities that come with the glut of humanity, which we all have, in varying degrees, have obviously taken many generations and will take many generations to heal, transformatively. Like, every bit of trauma that you have as a family, it takes several generations to resolve. And it's only if you're heading in a 'positive' fashion. There is no kind of progress really that's linear when you're trying to heal. Everyone has to collaborate on this, like all members from generation to generation. And the passing on of this story and all the things that you glean from it is so important in terms of what is 'acknowledging'? It's acknowledging the entirety of one's history, as an individual, within the context of family, as a people. And yet, I don't know how one can maintain the continuity and vividness of memory across 60,000 years... So, I can't even, like my family won't even do that in... one and a half generations... But there is a kind of imaginative hook back to what maybe is a memory that doesn't reside on the surface, and perhaps it's a lot deeper than we understand. I have no idea.

RT: I think it's also that idea that the time is still here... it's still happening now.

What came about as part of 2022 research residency creating *WHAT PERSISTS Memory Walks* was that WeiZen and her collaborator formed a community of residents in the Blue Mountains, whilst also working with a village in Indonesia via Zoom. They worked locally with social and cultural researcher and anthropologist Dr Phillip Mar in the Blue Mountains, and, as part of an Australia-Asia exchange, they collaborated with Mella Jaarsma and Mira Astiningtyas, residents of the Kaliurang Community in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

WZH: It was a real phenomenon and quite incredible that we are able to find the partnership to resource another volcanic mountainous village in Indonesia and parallel a lot of this through Zoom... And Kaliurang is a total socio-cultural tapestry that's completely made of Indigenous people. They are the people who always belonged there. And here we were. We were a massive community of individuated sub-communities, of which this village is, of migrants, really several generations on — so there is always a big difference. And the fact that we had this vision that maybe it could be a kind of walking ritual. And the workshop process was really tough, we weren't able to get the retention. We thought it was going to be a complete disaster, but we'll just do a prototype. In the end we got all these people because it was actually reaching out and saying, I know you're not interested in the workshop; however, we're doing this. And everyone just came. But then because they came, we drew in strangers... one of my things was, I have such a big fear of walking alone in the bush... It's more that I have to kind of shift myself to be with this environment. This is what this environment offers. So, part of it was to grow that part of myself. And it's pretty amazing also, meeting farmers, physiotherapists and anthropologists...

What struck me most in these research interviews was that many aspects of the way in which the practitioners viewed their practices as Asian Australian dance-makers situated within a broader Asian context was in line with how previous researchers on diaspora view diasporic existences. Just as I began this presentation mentioning Paul Gilroy's "ships lost in space" (1993) and Ang's "scattering of seeds" (1998), both WeiZen and Dylan Goh described their practices and what they were doing as a form of tapestry. For WeiZen, it was socio-cultural; for Dylan, it is a kind of tapestry of experiences which makes him the person and artist he is.

The string figuring or forms of tapestry were interwoven throughout these talanoa-based interviews. In many ways, this metaphor is enmeshed in our conversation of language, code-switching between one language or dialect to another, and how a tapestry can uncoil, remake itself and transform.

DG: I'm an artist, creator, dancer, museum worker... what really drives my practice is looking at different facets or narratives in Asian Australian experiences and that, even as Asian Australians, it's very large and complex to me. But I want to try and explore that and deconstruct that by showing a tapestry of experiences.



Figure 3: Photograph of Dylan Goh. Courtesy the artist.

In our conversation, Dylan and I talked a lot about our mutual appreciation of waacking, which is the dance style Dylan specialises in. It is a form of street dance created in the LGBT clubs of Los Angeles during the 1970s disco era. The style is typically done to 70s disco music and is mainly distinguishable by its rotational arm movements, posing and emphasis on expressiveness. We riffed on the idea of going back to where waacking began and how Dylan's research examines how waacking is a form of intangible cultural heritage. Dylan's perspective of waacking brought to bear a key aspect of how the practices of intangible cultural heritage aim at the formation of community (Wulf, 2011, p. 83). For the artist, Dylan's love and appreciation of waacking has emerged from being someone who is seeking to belong and be supported by community. Through co-presence with community members, waacking transforms itself into cultural action (Wulf, 2011, p. 85).

DG: ...waacking originated in the 1970s in the underground gay clubs of Los Angeles by the Black and Latino community there. So that was where it was birthed, and that's where it was popularized as a way to kind of escape gay persecution at that time. But then, with the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, a lot of those original practitioners passed away, unfortunately. And, because there wasn't any documented support for the original practitioners and their techniques, their styles, it wasn't like there was any of the whole YouTube or Netflix, these sorts of education and dissemination resources...

So, when we talk about this in context of intangible cultural heritage, continuously evolving, waacking is now a global phenomenon. But there have been conversations in the community about like, who is, what is waacking, what is not waacking, because, over time, the dance style has borrowed from different influences. So, from martial arts to films, to actresses, and people have added their own techniques and flavors onto that... waacking pretty much epitomises the idea I was talking about because it's a form of intangible cultural heritage, which developed through global practitioners around the world, and then through adapting, and then teaching to new generations, everyone's style of waacking is different, but we still call it 'waacking'.

These conversations brought up four key themes: socio-cultural tapestries, community sharing, past events brought into present day—acts of cultural remembrance, and desires for the future. Essentially when looking at these conversations and what they indicate about dialogue in the arts more broadly, we see the need for interwoven dialogue or 'future tapestry.' This kind of tapestry may look malformed and take on ebbs and flows, but it also creates the capacity for free-flowing dialogue; which may be key to equalising artistic spaces. Each conversation included a reflection of what a more diverse and inclusive future for the arts might look like. Here is what each artist responded with:

RT: ...if you were to imagine a more diverse and inclusive future for the space that we're situated in now, or maybe just the world, in general, if you feel like you want to think on that scale, what would that look and feel like to you, maybe specifically in the art sector because we are talking about arts?

CS: I don't know if I can imagine it as an inclusive space how it would look like. I just feel like everyone just takes one step towards what they think is equitable – everyone in their own way. And if the people come to a space that is different to where they've been before, that everyone just gets treated like a person and not like a statistic... I think it sounds really corny and stupid, but it's basically that. But it also means having to make those choices and make those efforts, which will seem very clumsy by inviting people in who have never been in... I know that there are a lot of forces who want to divide people. And this came up in the conversation I had as well, which was like, what makes you think you can talk about this? And I'm like, because it's a way of uniting us against what I would call an evil – just that attacks everyone and attacks white people, too. I said I'm looking for that moment to have solidarity, not start to nitpick and separate us based on significant differences then... Yeah, we can be specific, but we can also be in solidarity against a certain specific thing. It's a hard one. It's a really hard one. And these conversations, they come up a lot. And I think it has been about sort of unpacking. However, the point an artist is making is not a political point necessarily. It's a human point. So it's our human experience of people being rejected or hurt or turned into objects, whatever. It is that situation, which is the ultimate political point, but it's not political, which people seem to resist now.

WZH: I think loosening the boundaries between practice and living, there's something to do with that. Like it's very tight at the moment, the demarcation, and I would like to find another term for the P word because it's more about values of living, and those values may shift over time.

DG: Um, I think when I was thinking about this question, two things just came to mind. One is, when I look at leadership bodies and boards and CEOs and things that I see someone who looks like me in there, and, not just like, oh, I see someone there because they are the head of Asian Art. There has to be a reason for them to have that position. Like, I just want them to like, get there and be there. That would be encouraging. Yeah. And I think another one, if we're talking about the long, long-term future, it'll probably get to the stage where we don't necessarily need to have priority areas in funding bodies, competitions and grants in the art sector because you can read into that what you will. But I think there's a reason why there's

like priority areas over why did they use these schemes to address or target culture. The thing that comes to mind, like culturally, linguistically diverse communities – there's a reason why there's these categories that have been kept in place, keeping records. And I want to get to a future where we no longer need to do that...

DG: Another concept I've also been thinking about, in terms of curatorial practice or dance practice, is defending these spaces, like when we talk about curatorial spaces, too, as spaces which nurture you, in which you feel safe, in which you can be yourself. What steps, or what sacrifices, or what actions do you take to get to the back end of this stage? And, personally, I think, especially when you don't necessarily have a lot of power or say and people want to sway you one direction or another, being able to defend those spaces?... That got me into thinking like, you know, you can't necessarily be neutral when someone tries to encroach on these spaces, and you have to take a stand or work like covertly or somehow, just like, remember that if your intention is to create these spaces, you have to take an active stance on it. Yeah. Defend it.

In writing this publication and bringing together these conversations, I hope to offer the possibility of creating new contemporary discourse on Asian Australian dance making in the arts sector. How could Asian Australian performance enhance and bring to the forefront Australia's relationship within Asian-Great Ocean regions, across past, present, and possible futures moving forward? By untangling the idea of the 'archive', there is hope for what these entanglements with the past might mean for our shared future (Jing McIntosh, 2022, p. xv). Alongside the generous and exciting conversations with the three aforementioned performance-makers, this publication is the beginning of unlocking different pathways to understanding Asian Australian storytelling through dance and choreography. The discussions that were had, infused with Indigenous-led processes of *talanoa* and *yarning*, the provocations offered, have created trans-historical windows through which to reignite and sustain connections within Australian, Asian and Great-Ocean regions, revealing ties across times, places and peoples through generational care and embodied knowledge. This writing is about working with as much as working against, attempting to expose, unsettle and create ruptures in the inheritances that come with working in a colonial Australian Arts landscape. "Those who work against – against disappearance,

against racism, against the colony – show a way towards new futures, a way to oppose that writing does not matter, that culture cannot have material repercussions, that it too disappears when faced with racism, genocide and colonisation... We know from history that change is not instantaneous, so we can only keep building” (Jing McIntosh, 2022, p. xii).

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