

FOR WANT OF A BETTER



STRANGER IN A FAMILIAR LANDSCAPE

DANSE-VOICE-IMAGES

Deborah Lennie : voice

Annie Hanauer, Ingvild Marstein Olsen : dance

Patrice Grente : sound creation

Christophe Bisson : film

Yoan Vincent-Falquet : lights creation

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STRANGER IN A FAMILIAR LANDSCAPE is an exploration of the relationship between body, sound and landscape.

The body, like landscape, carries its own history. Even before our birth, we receive information about the world we are about to enter. Our surroundings are inscribed in flesh and bone, muscle and tendon, tongue and foot and skin. Each element of the environment in which we evolve affects us and contributes to the construction of our identity and our relationship with others.

Artists from different landscapes and geographical origins - Wahroonga in Australia for Deborah, Minnesota, USA for Annie and Brumunddal in Norway for Ingvild - we will question our relationship to body and landscape from a sensitive point of view, drawing on our personal experiences, to create a narrative of anchoring and wandering. How has our physical and sonic environment shaped us, in our bodies, our voices and our imaginations? How have our relationships with others been affected? Is the strangeness of our bodies the same for everyone? These questions form the basis of our work.



Annie Hanauer, Deborah Lennie, Ingvild Marstein Olsen

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Stranger in a Familiar Landscape was born of the encounter between Deborah Lennie, Annie Hanauer and Ingvild Marstein Olsen during work on PUSH, the company's latest piece. Each telling stories from their respective countries, they realize that they have very different relationships to the concrete, physical things in everyday life: sensitivity to light, coldness, relationship to open/closed spaces... Together, they explore the roots of these very different sensibilities. Each has lived the experience of exile, when, for long periods, they are called upon to work far from their country of origin, where these differences are felt most acutely. Convinced that our relationship with the world is not just a personal or family affair, the question then arose: how does the physicality of the place where we live affect our relationship with our own bodies and with others? They decided to work on this together.

At the end of 2022, Annie Hanauer received a commission from Greccio 2023 - Comitato Nazionale per l'ottavo centenario della prima rappresentazione del presepe / MiC Ministero della Cultura (Italy) to create a performance related to the Greccio landscape. She asked Deborah Lennie to work with her particularly on the sound, so that they could begin their research into the body/landscape relationship. Updraft is an in-situ creation based on the geographical and historical elements of Greccio. It is now considered as a first chapter in landscape work, the 2<sup>nd</sup> being STRANGER IN A FAMILIAR LANDSCAPE. The Théâtre National de Chaillot has offered support for Updraft as part of a 4-week residency.

## LINES OF RESEARCH

There are many avenues of research in such a vast subject, but we have identified two that we feel are worth pursuing as entry points:

1. The physical and sonic elements of the landscape, with particular attention to the female body in relation to architecture, climate, geology, geography...
2. The body as a metaphor for the landscape in its relationship to history.

History with a capital H, linked to social and political issues;  
history with a small h, linked to our personal experiences.

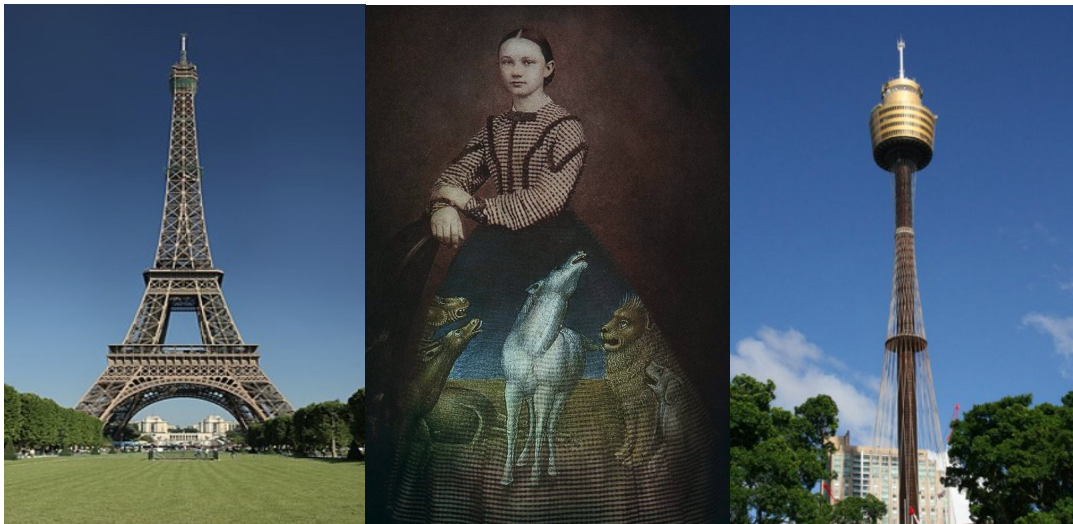


Aboriginal stone engraving in the area near Wahroonga in Ku-ring-gai, Australia

### 1. THE PHYSICAL ELEMENTS OF THE LANDSCAPE: AND IF I FALL, WILL I HURT MYSELF?

The physical and acoustic aspects of the landscape will be the broadest field of our exploration. During our stays in our respective countries, we will seek to inscribe in ourselves the characteristics of these through elements such as the brightness of light, the crushing heat that slows everything down, the terrifying cracking of ice, the smell of burning eucalyptus, the starry vault, the polar night, the deep forests, the skyscrapers-modernity-concrete-glass? What is the nature of these elements in everyone's landscape? Climate: are temperatures extreme or mild?

Is the weather very changeable, or fairly stable? Is the soundscape hushed, as in Norway, or shrill, as in Australia? Are there untouched natural spaces where we grew up, and are they a source of physical danger: precipices, raging seas, a killer sun, deadly cold... or, on the contrary, a place to rest and recharge our batteries by a lake, or in tranquil grasslands? And how does the body come into contact with physical materials: rocks, concrete, sand, pastures? When playing as a child, did we fall on concrete? How does the sun rise in the morning? Gently or abruptly? At Wahroonga in Australia, for example, the morning awakening is frighteningly brutal: all the wildlife wakes up at the same time, like an explosion. There are no gentle twilights either: in 10 minutes, night follows day. All these factors contribute to a physical universe that puts different demands on our bodies. So, when we're confronted with other types of landscape, other relationships with the sky/sun/weather/materials: how do we react? How can we accept or reject these differences?



We also want to take a more distant look at the urban landscapes that we are familiar with. More more specifically, we're interested in post-industrial revolution architecture, in particular the question of the predominance of a certain masculinity in modern urban landscapes. The physical forms of our most imposing buildings are quite equivocal. What are the implications of the omnipresence of erected forms, the use of hard materials (concrete, metal, glass...) that soar powerfully toward the sky? And how do these forms in the landscape affect women's bodies, how do they determine the relation women may have to exteriority?

Deborah Lennie took part in the Archipel 2022-23 project in Caen, Normandy. She was sponsored by the National Choreographic Centre of Caen. Here she met Elisabeth Taudière, architect and director of the architectural organisation « Territoires Pionniers ». Deborah was already thinking about this question and they exchanged ideas on the subject, with Elisabeth suggesting several eco-feminist works on these very issues. In *Stranger in a Familiar Landscape*, this research will be continued in a sensitive way, through dance, image and sound.

## 2. HISTORY / LANDSCAPE / BODY

The body as a metaphor for landscape. Each body has its own history and bears its traces. Stigmata, if you like. Some are visible, others less so; some remain on the surface, others deep down. The history of the body, inside and out, is similar to that of the landscape: abused, cared for, fed, watered, rested, pushed to its limits, exploited, pampered... What happens to our bodies, we bear traces of, just as natural and human events leave traces in the landscape.



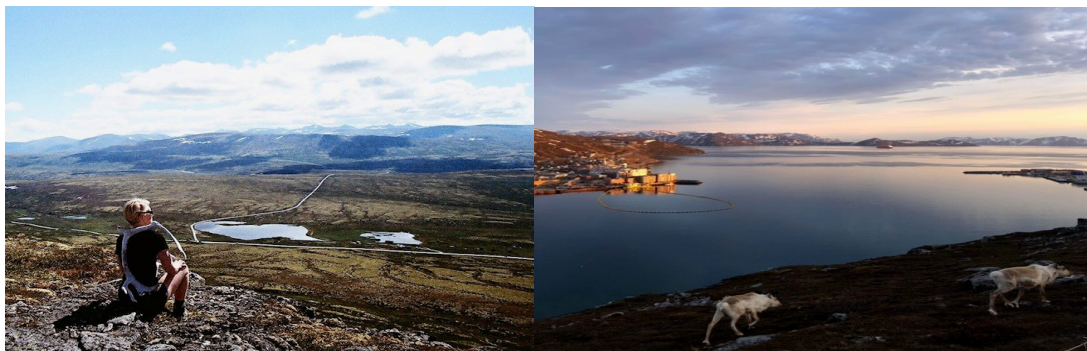
There are very direct and personal links that we are already beginning to see. Annie Hanauer, a native of Minnesota in the northern United States, wears a prosthesis on her right forearm. At the time of her last renewal, she realized that in her region there were some of the best prosthetic experts in the USA. Why is this expertise to be found precisely here, in her state? As is often the case, the history of technology is closely linked to economic priorities, and prosthetic manufacturing is no exception. The logging industry experienced an unprecedented boom in the 19th century. It was lumber that first attracted European settlers to Minnesota. In this nascent sawmill industry, workers were not protected by safety standards, and many accidents occurred while sawing logs. Minneapolis entrepreneurs, many of whom were amputees themselves, relied on local needs and made the city one of the leading producers of prostheses in the United States. Although the forestry industry is now in recession, prosthesis production continues. Annie was able to obtain a quality prosthetic thanks to the history of her region's landscape. Her body bears witness to this. The very intimate link between her body and the history of the landscape is direct.

The link between body and landscape is not always so direct, but also exists on a more subterranean level.

Deborah Lennie's relationship with the sea, for example, as she bathes in the English Channel in summer and winter, is partly attributed to a need to maintain this link with her native landscape. Sometimes archaic fears arise during her swims. straight from the Pacific Ocean. On several occasions, she has been brushed on the leg by seaweed, and

the terror of the shark fills her with adrenalin, like a buried memory resurfacing. There's nothing rational about it - there are no sharks in the English Channel - but it's a direct effect of memory in relation to the Australian landscape.

For her part, Ingvild, in her recent project "River Being" (creation 2022, produced by Oslo Kommune, Kultur Stadt Bern, Schweizerische Interpretienstiftung SIS, Gesellschaft zu Schuhmachern Bern) worked in-situ on the body's relationship with rivers. This body-to-body work with the elements of nature leads him to think concretely about climate danger. How does the relationship between the body and endangered nature work? Ingvild grew up in Norway, where nature and the landscape can be rather hostile. The cold kills. Glaciers are extremely dangerous places, and winters are long and harsh. This same nature today is more than threatened, and paradoxically needs our protection. Are we becoming Mother Nature's caretakers? And what real physical changes will take place in our bodies in the future, when our culture is so closely linked to extreme climatic conditions?



The landscape affects us individually, in the intimate history we share with it, but also in a history that goes beyond our individual lives.

Each of our places of origin (Australia, USA, Norway) has been the site of colonization, where indigenous peoples were forced to leave their territories to make way for invaders. The American Indians, the Australian Aborigines and the Norwegian Sami. Our project is not about colonization, but we can't ignore the presence of these peoples in the history of these landscapes. What if my street had been an aboriginal song-line for thousands of years? What if, like Kubrick's *The Shining*, we're standing on a Native American burial ground? Stories of sacred sites destroyed to promote settler construction abound on every continent. Are our bodies sensitive to them? Our relationship with the physical places where we live cannot exclude the part played by this history.

## THE BODY **SOUNDS** LIKE A STORY

"Our perception of space depends as much on what we hear as on what we see."

Max NEUHAUS



Glacier Jostedalsbreen, Norvège

The creation of a soundscape is central to the research for this performance and an integral part of its dramaturgy. Patrice Grente will compose the soundtrack in direct relation to the work on stage, after a period of gathering, research and recording with Annie, Deborah and Ingvild.

In *La Haine de la Musique*, Pascal Quignard writes: "Ears have no eyelids". Indeed, we cannot choose what enters us through our earholes and what does not. And this is true long before birth. Waves penetrate right into the womb, bathing us in a very specific and individual universe of sound that affects us physically:

"In utero, it is around 30 weeks that the first motor responses to noise are stably recorded: from eyelid blinking to more or less generalized startle, depending on the intensity and frequency composition of the stimulus; and cardiac: acceleration." (Birnholtz, Benaceraff, 1983; Kisilevsky, 1995). Carolyn Granier-DEFERRE, Marie-Claire BUSNEL, *L'audition prénatale, quoi de neuf ? Spirale* 2011/3 (n°59) p. 17 to 32

Sound is a landscape in itself: the Australian bush has nothing to do with Norwegian glaciers or Minnesota lakes. The anguish that fills your belly at the sound of approaching forest fires. Or of ice cracking on the glacier. Emotional ties to sound are inevitable. And yet, over the course of our lives, we learn to unconsciously filter the sounds that reach us. Our ears pick out familiar and foreign sounds, and process them in different ways; we learn to develop symbolic eyelids. Patrice Grente will work with the very matter of these little sounds that our ears ignore, but which have an effect on us.

What are these sounds that we block out?

"The physical aspect of a soundscape consists not only in the sounds themselves, the waves of acoustic energy that permeate the atmosphere in which people live, but also in the material objects that create, and sometimes destroy, these sounds. **The cultural aspect of a soundscape** incorporates scientific and aesthetic ways of listening, the listener's relationship with his or her environment, and the social conditions that **decide who gets to hear what**".

Emily THOMSON , *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2004, p. 1-2.

Our relationship with sound carries something of our history. And when sound becomes language, this history continues to be written. We'll be looking at the physical side of language, the voice. Each language resonates in different parts of the body: some languages resonate more in the nose, others in the pelvis, for example. In *Stranger in a Familiar Landscape*, all three of us have a different relationship to language, oscillating between French, English and Norwegian. Do the specific sounds of our languages affect our bodies and emotions?



To work on sound, Patrice Grente does field-recording, improvisation and writing. Sometimes, during the creative process, pieces are composed. We don't refuse. The three performers have different soundscapes within them, and the sound sources for the piece will be drawn from these differences. Between the sounds of the Australian bush, folk-songs from Minnesota and Norwegian glaciers, low-tech recordings, voices and languages, and urban ambiances... a soundscape is constructed. Like the background noise of life coming to the fore.



Chute. D'eau. Straight road. Ours hirsute. **Strømnettet**. Glace. Collarbone. **Colibri**. Cumulous clouds. Concrete walls. Waterfalls. Fougère. Béton. Bush-fire. Bjørnen. Chair. Falaise. Fossefall. **Ice**. Mudpools. Marteau piqueurs. **Hummingbirds**. Hairy bear. Bare. Flesh. Fish. Ferns. Cumulus. Glacier. Rivière debout. Ravine. **Barrière. Barrière. Barrière**. Chemin de terre. Chaud underfoot. Blinding light. Terrain vague. Cabin. L'odeur de l'iode. Le vide.

## IMAGE

For the image work, we'll explore the relationship between bodies and landscape using morphosuits, integrating landscape videos onto our anatomies. The green morphosuits worn by the performers will establish plastic links between their bodies and the environment. The contours of their bodies will merge with the projected landscapes, making it difficult to distinguish the boundary between the human body and the landscape. Images and videos may represent aerial views of natural landscapes, organic textures, or drawings and paintings created especially for this performance. Performers will interact with the projections, moving their bodies to reinforce the projected patterns and textures. The morphosuit creates a visual fusion between the human body and the environment, making bodies, human landscapes, hybrid beings moving like elements of nature.



Image : Christophe Bisson. Rock cracks in Australian bush.