The Sound of One Foot Tapping

ANNE SCOTT WILSON

The Stockroom, Kyneton, 2016

Installation view, The Stockroom, Kyneton, 2016 (video still)

ARTIST STATEMENT

One foot tapping

Moving as an old person obviously is different from moving as a child or toddler – in fact during the middle part of my life I danced in live performance and choreographed movements for a living, so my body became like a professional mnemonic tool to facilitate complex performance design for entertainment.

I also see my body as a storehouse of movement vocabularies, facilitating everyday survival (e.g. not walking into walls or getting run over) at a cellular level, which raises a few questions.

In my practice I have struggled with finding a continuum of embodiment and translation of dance movement ideas into visual art practice. It's not that I want to perform, it's just that a vocabulary sits at the very core of my being – as ideas emerge they are often activated and expressed mentally as movement or dance.

My one foot tapping could be interpreted as a gesture of waiting, of remembering a dance or maybe I just lost a leg. It reflects a new freedom of practice-led research – a new way of employing old memories and engaging physically in this world while thinking about the next.

Anne Scott Wilson, 2016

ESSAY

Together in Elemental Dreams

Cameron Bishop

What lies beneath Anne Scott Wilson's beguiling, humorous and affective works in the Stockroom Gallery, Kyneton? Is there a coded message in there (like much contemporary art) telling us to: be better, be wiser, be respectful, be happier, be reflective, and be active? I'm not so sure Wilson worries about that, but an overarching prompt in her work resides on the threshold between thinking and not thinking, as her work uses archival imagery, colour, sound and movement to explore notions of what it is to be human in the 21st century. On the flipside of that threshold, another key prompt is: to move, or not to move? But let's get back to what it means to be human, which means we have to think about the inhuman.

In 2004 the artist Francis Alÿs released a fox into the National Portrait Gallery in London – it was free to roam. In the footage, the animal sometimes stops, seemingly to admire particular great works of art – it does not. Although one is tempted to anthropomorphise the animal, the things that trigger a response in it are, to us, more abstract and immediately sensory. Its reactions to smell, objects, temperature and light go some way to explaining its movements in the space, as do fear, hunger and the search for food.

Giorgio Agamben,[1] the Italian philosopher, suggests that the animal has a limited number of disinhibitors with which to connect to the world, and it is these things, in its immediate perceptual environment, that captivate it. The human, on the other hand, is world-forming, and aware of its own captivation in things. Equally, we have sensory disinhibitors that connect us to (and capture us in) the world in immediate ways, but we also have language, which allows us to reflect on ourselves, others and the world.

So here we are in the gallery, with Anne Scott Wilson's light objects and sounds – dis-inhibitors to our senses. They prompt whistles, they prompt wind, they prompt movement, thought and a reaction from your body, not your eyeballs.

Vision helps kickstart *The Sound of One Foot Tapping*, just as it does for the fox in the National Portrait Gallery, but it is only one part of our experience. Anne Scott Wilson asks that your body does the moving as images and audio flicker, trace, degrade, flap and move from patterns of recognition and error, into primitive warblings of sound, abstracted form, colour curtains and awkward choreography. Her works use strategies of appropriation, choreography and techniques of dexterous post-production editing, and installation, to provoke elemental reactions in the subject.

As Wilson describes it, the works evoke the "rhythm of an absent body", evident in the *Nutcracker Suite by Fax*, for which she mined YouTube for the digitised dance in all its iterations. Wilson grafted an abject score onto the abstracted and degraded imagery so that the many dancers performing the different choreographed versions dance to the untrained whistle of the artist.

This not only applies to the works, bringing a very human, or should I say animal, dimension to the work, but it stretches through the space, so that at once it affects both the work and the greater space. How does it affect you, one might ask? And, as a follow-up question, does it matter who is warbling? Wilson's whistle is abject and elemental, much like the howl of Alÿs's fox. It is modulated (again something the fox does depending on circumstances) to the score, and to whistle is to conjure elemental sound – all you need is a pipe, an angle and airflow.

Wilson skews experience, so that our expectations are never met but redirected. While you're in the space, join in on whistling the *Nutcracker Suite*, it's a well-known ditty. Have a dance and the work will respond. The colour and movement in this exhibition signpost experiences we've already had while placing our bodies in the here and now, with other bodies. We are respondents and audience, but also performers, together; we know the cues, we know the stage and behave accordingly – don't we? "I'm not going to dance or whistle," you might say. You already are.

As much as the fox demonstrates a way to behave in the gallery space that is purely instinctive, our sign systems (language) get in the way of our instincts. Wilson's works ask that you go with the curtains of light as they respond to your movements in the space; go with the errors and serendipity of the apparatus. As much as you are affected by the work, it is affected by you, and so are others. You are important in this work; but the work is important in you.

Which brings us back to the fox. It knew nothing of the works' great import, or the space in which it roamed, howled and pissed; its trajectory was affected however by its immediate animal perception of the space – its disinhibitors captured it in a closed world. In capturing us in the space, Wilson invites affective relations with objects of sound, movement and colour, and at the same time opens our world to other histories, recalled memories and perhaps most affectively, laughter.

Cameron Bishop

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1. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (2002). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004.

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Essay: Cameron Bishop
Artist statement: Anne Scott Wilson

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