

Island of lost baggage.

Cove extended Bonemap's appreciation of atmospheric conditions towards a prototype immersive installation. The spatialisation of the installation environment, influenced and inspired by the patterns, movements and serialisation in the natural world, was the reflection of an imaginary geography. The awareness of place within the imaginary of the artist was an ontological condition that allowed the work to wander into surrealistic representation. Contemporary notions of magical realism¹ and assimilation of Indigenous knowledge was linked to the phenomenology of 'wonders' and 'marvels'. One of the most diverse ecological zones on earth, the Great Barrier Reef, the tropical rainforest and the tropical savannah all figuratively coalesce in the world heritage listed wet tropics torrid zone of Australia. The marvelous reality of the tropical environment included such biological features as bioluminescence and iridescence. The qualities of biological light emission² and spectacular diffraction of light as structural iridescence³ were scintillating patterns of light that influenced the media art and design proposed for Cove. The biological strategies for 'living light' included: camouflage, attraction, repulsion, communication and illumination.⁴ These same strategies were enacted in the configuration of an interactive gossamer light curtain that formed the diaphanous separation of the dancer and the audience within the interactive installation of Cove. It was through the light curtain that the synthesis of an imaginary world and representation of marvelous atmospheric 'weather' phenomena underscored one of the creative themes associated with the production. The scintillation was a layer of atmospheric light and sound spatialisation responsive to movement in a pre-defined zone.

The Cove is an allusion to a small sheltered bay. A dimensional cartography symbolised the landform of a coastal inlet. The Cove was represented by a scenography of hundreds of suitcases and luggage in piles resembled the landform of a bay. The luggage handler was no longer an operative in the territory and those seeking its asylum appeared to have abandoned their carriage on these shores and vanished. Was it exclusion or expulsion? The lost

baggage island of Bonemap's Cove was also the immigrant's loss of a material life in the "liminal zones where the conditions of existence are reduced to ... 'bare life'"⁵. The audience was a transient visitor to the Cove and witness to a single arrival, as the dancer appeared through the diaphanous screen, trailed by a large marine trunk.

Bonemap's artwork *Cove* was a metaphor of human psycho-geography that seeks to imagine place as a layered cultural landscape. "White settler-culture", as denoted by Paul Carter (2004), was perhaps less dominant in the reaches and provinces of the far north of Australia, yet abided in the alterity of a provincialising heterotopia. In the peripheries, the action of Western style cultural production, as an expression of 'settler-culture', was a colonizing force that highlighted critical cultural tensions. The complexity of a post-colonial world was one of radical localization between the imperial centre and the identity of the periphery.⁶ The actions of destabilization that appeared in the post-modern metropolis and attributed to healthy disruptions of capital had additional powers of subversion for the periphery. *Cove* represented the once-colonized world shaped by "a modernity that is scored by the claws of colonialism, left full of contradictions, of half-finished processes, of confusions, of hybridity, and liminalities"⁷. As noted by Ashley (2010), *Cove* "felt like a tear in the space-time continuum, a place apart, where eras overlapped and dissolved, and where I could access memories not all my own, but achingly familiar nonetheless." Ashley continued,

A moth or butterfly appeared high on the scrim and, following its flight; the ambient soundscape began to intone differently as I moved around the space. The moth was replaced by particles that could have been moondust or fog, and the power of the viewer to affect the projections quickly became apparent. I began to raise and wave my arms and walk back and forth, creating a black 'hole' in the fog which followed my movements. Then, mid-wave, the projection faded, an extended world beyond the scrim dawned. A woman in a red satin dress pulling a large travelling trunk was waving back at me.

Cove can be described as an interactive media arts experience that transformed the interior of the theatre into an immersive space that placed the audience at the centre of an imaginary geography. It was a subtle interactive space filled with ephemeral light sources, projection and sound. The meteorological and atmospheric effects created a transformative environment inhabited by the performer and audience. Large forms integrated into the work as both sculptural elements and projection surfaces like ancient landmasses. The fleeting atmospheric effects in the work represented the sanctuary of a 'cove'. Sculptural representations of sea passages and landing sites integrated with media and performance to complete the immersive quality of the installation.

Cove represented a particular shift in complexity for Bonemap's practice and structure. As an intermedial creative arts partnership the research moved consciously toward a reflexive methodological modeling of practice. The workings of an interdisciplinary team of artists were made purposeful and directed. The specifications of a collaborative and hybrid—fluid and thoughtful—journey into art were structured and pushed in an intrinsic direction. This direction was the development of a prototype participatory machine that reconsidered the experience of perception for its audience. *Cove* was an installation environment responsive to an audience through reciprocal movement interaction. The narrative centre of *Cove* was a kinesthetic regime between a dancer's journey of assimilation in a marvelous place and the audience's ambiguous experience of co-habitation.

The ethical principles of Bonemap's practice in *Cove* were channeled through an ecological and inter-relational essentialism. The interest in process included intuitive design and an interface that was reflective of the lessons learned in the co-presence of performance, narrative fragmentation and natural environment aesthetics. Post-colonial social circumstance and meteorological atmosphere were a blended metaphor within the prototype interactive installation. The motif of 'weather' was explored as an interactive system of digital particle projection

and this weather was the atmospheric condition experienced as kinesthetic interactive elements by the audience.

Reference List

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¹ For a discussion of magical realism see Reeds 2006, 'Magical Realism: a Problem of Definition'.

² For an account of bioluminescence see Rodgerson's 2011 '*Bioluminescence: characteristics, adaptations, and biotechnology*'.

³ Stavenga et. al. provide notes on the material structure that forms iridescence.

⁴ (Liaqat in Rodgerson 2011: 97).

⁵ (Gilbert & Lo 2009: 186)

⁶ (Yeoh 2009)

⁷ (Lee & Lam in Yeoh 2009)