

Submission and proposal for *Embodied Cartographies*

Curated by Fay Stevens

Fringe Arts Bath, 26th May – 11th June 2017

Robert Luzar

grammee@gmail.com

M: 07561093577

www.robertluzar.com

Overstepping Steps in Sand – Standing Over Stones

The proposal opens through this scene: Four people stand apart and over an irregular patch of sand, the 'point' or location at which they start and stop. By standing in a public area – be it square, street, park – any passersby sees them. Under their feet, the sand stretches consistently over an area fitting all four – creating an island of sorts. Some with brooms others with rakes, each person steps and marks the sand. Connotations of 'shifting sands' about 'footprints in sand' – an effort to 'embody' change, uncertainty, mortality, toil. Trailing steps, marking – and unmarking – footsteps, one behind another. Walking, stopping, stepping, and so on. Each sweeps the sand, reshaping the self-contained area; the metaphor of 'island', of a remote patch localising elsewhere, shifts shapes by dispersing. Eventually dispersing outward. Within the sanded area, one person walks from one spot to the next person's spot; the next person steps away from his and into the next one's. Each gradually marks but – echoing a kind of traceless yet persistent action – un-marks, virtually 'over-steps'. One steps over the next; using broom or rake, another pulls the sand over another's trailing sandy-imprint. The 'persons' (artists, performers) becomes hazier now. Steps go on. Marking, un-marking... evermore tracelessly. Persisting. More to appear – rather than immaterially disappear – the four stand, walk, recursively coming to a form of standstill. At times they speak, say ambiguously militant words to one another – "move on... nothing to see here" or "demand the impossible" for instance. Again, the use of rakes, brooms, even physical parts of themselves (forearms, legs, torso) – make marks and – paradoxically – mark over. Step over step. Inevitably sweeping, shaping and re-shaping: the sandy area over which the four figures stand-and-step, and activity of stopping and going, sweeping and dispersing goes on until this sandy area, this ambiguous island, this four-person spot, disappears. And yet all four persons, so to speak, re-appear. Standing over stones.



Overstepping Steps in Sand – Standing Over Stones is a new live-art work. It will use four artists (including myself) and be located in a public area. Ideally it would be located in a public square in Bath (eg. Kingsmead Square, historically important for theatre). And it would use 'sand' as a material to both metaphorically and practically 'ground' the work in its time: a duration of however long it takes to spread out the sand. The duration – as length of time – is variable; the work 'ends' once the sand and ensuing actions are said to end by the four performers.

It offers all audiences ways of looking at, and even listening to (as all four artists will intermittently be uttering ambiguous phrases, elaborated shortly), some of the most basic yet elusively complex of actions: pace, step, stance. An island of sorts, the layer of sand underneath each artist/performer's feet will – partly – give visibility to the steps; inevitably, brooms and rakes will be used to pull over the sandy-imprints and, fundamentally, remove the sandy 'ground' that starts from under their feet. Each performer pushing the sand around, ever outward expresses, as I call it, 'overstepping'. Erasing imprints made by stepping over and unmarking footprints, expresses a more complicated 'in-active action'. Rather than 'erase' everything, the work here aims to give a completely different perspective to bodily appearance and notions of un-working. This coming-to-appear of physicality – to stand, and stand-out so to speak –, gives this work its radical sense.

The traceless four-person action articulates 'cartography' by shifting 'mark' to a very different logic of space, localisation and (collective) subjectivation. What's meant by people ex-isting?

The contexts of urban existence, where everybody seems to 'disappear' into the crowd, will in this way be interrogated. For the sand will progressively be swept away and into the pavement; but the work's progressive removal of the sand-as-ground will symbolically shift views onto the physical stances of the performers. There are some contexts echoed in this work too. Visually, the entire work echoes Samuel Beckett's made-for-television play, *Quad*. Four figures walk by pacing from one corner to the next of a square-shaped stage; however, in *Overstepping Steps* this 'stage' will simultaneously change shapes (by the four performers sweeping the perimeter) and spreads out (until swept into crevices found in the existing pavements and stones). So instead of the stage being solid and immutable, the material base of sand will be used to iterate qualities of change (positive and negative). The other reference comes with popular uprisings, protests and policing; amongst other phrases, audiences will hear utterances of "move on, there's nothing to see here" and "demand the impossible". The sand-layered area will echo metaphors of 'shifting sands' – paradoxically, expressing both benign ontogenic change and uncertain catastrophe, total self-effacement. Toil, strife, decision in times of 'risk' and ensuing paralytic anxieties, economic systems, uncertain mobility.



