Sue Healey
BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

1962 – Born in Auckland, New Zealand

1981 – Began studies at Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, Australia

1983 – became a founding member of Danceworks Company, Artistic Director Nanette Hassall.
Graduated BA Dance performance (First Class Honours)

1983-88 – choreographed and performed with the company throughout Australia and internationally.

1988-91 – lived and studied in New York with Merce Cunningham Company, Trisha Brown Company, Steve Paxton, Dana Reitz, Douglas Dunn.

1991 – returned to Melbourne and gained first Australia Council grant to create her first full-length work ***The Long Fall from Splendour to Splendour*** with composer Mike Nock.

1993-95 – Artistic Director of Vis-à-vis Dance Canberra

1996 - present - created work as **Sue Healey Company**, based in Melbourne and Sydney (1999 - the present). Tours internationally and nationally. Lecturer at Victorian College of the Arts, WAAPA, UNSW, QUT.

2000 – MA Choreography (University of Melbourne, VCA – First Class Honours)
Choreographic Fellow, Dance, Australia Council

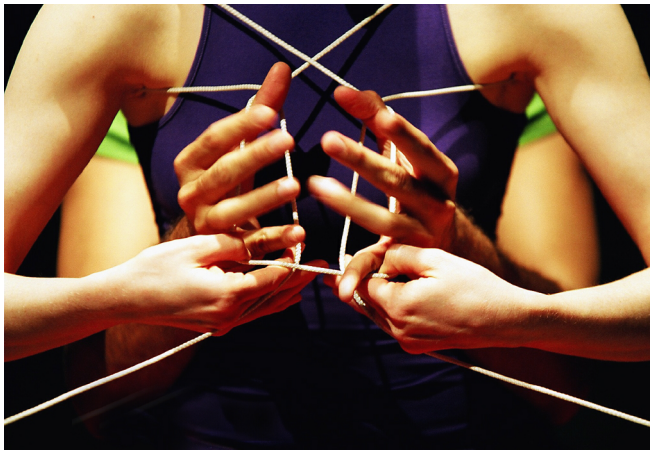
2007 - Robert Helpmann Scholarship winner

2014 – Australia Council Creative Fellow
Made Honorary Fellow of University of Melbourne (VCA)

2015/16 – currently creating On VIEW series: Dance Masssive Festival, Melbourne, Carriageworks, Sydney and West Kowloon, Hong Kong.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
http://www.suehealey.com/

http://performinglines.org.au/about-us/initiatives/maps-nsw/sue-healey/



STUDY NOTES

Fine Line

A dance film by Sue Healey (2003)

Performers: Victor Bramich, Shona Erskine, Nelson Reguera, Lisa Griffiths, Nalina Wait.
Music: Darrin Verhagen
Cinematography: Mark Pugh
Editor: Sam James

Fine Line is the culminating work of the ***Niche series*** - a 5 part collection of works devoted to the choreographed body and its intricate occupation of space, a navigation of fine lines and precarious terrain.

The Niche* series*:
Niche – short dance film
Niche/Salon – performance gallery installation
Niche/Japan – full length performance for 11 Japanese dancers and Shona Erskine, performed Aichi Arts Centre, Nagoya, Japan.
Fine Line Terrain – full length performance for 5 Australian dancers, performed Sydney Opera House, Melbourne, Canberra, New Zealand.
Fine Line – short dance film - a distillation of ***Fine Line Terrain***
(winner Reeldance Australia 2004)

Choreographer's statement:
Each work found its own *niche*, so to speak. I started with a dance video focus—wanting to make dance for that specific space rather than my usual method of choreographing the action before its translation into video or film. As our focus was space, it made absolute sense to keep finding new spaces and contexts to explore, manipulate and extend our material, including the screen space, a traditional proscenium space, a white gallery, a new cultural space (Japan) and a 'site specific' (30 metre deep) space. I didn't set out to create a series—it evolved quite organically. I can look back and see that the driving force was a search to place the 'right' work in the 'right' space.

More info:
http://www.suehealey.com/the-series1.html

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SYNOPSIS

Fine Line explores the fragile spaces we inhabit - *fine lines* that map the precariousness of our relationship to the world and to each other. The dancers navigate through a design of many white lines dissecting black infinite space. This dynamic 'architecture' frames, connects and entangles the action, creating a terrain of intense physicality, abstracted yet emotionally charged.

Fine Line is dance of intricate detail and sensation, blending with the lush soundscapes of Darrin Verhagen's original score.

The work endeavours to question, unsettle and expose basic assumptions on how we occupy space – space is critical in our lives, it affects the way we live, move, and interact with each other.
On a human scale, the space of our bodies is our physical reality.
On a global scale, the competition for space is the source of much conflict.
On a universal scale, space is a conundrum – how do we deal with the relative scales of immensity of the cosmos to the molecular and atomic??

This work pivots upon the idea of space, the articulation of the body and imagination, through various terrains.

2 spatial concepts underpin the series:
Firstly the idea of a niche – in a biological sense a niche is an environment that provides appropriate conditions for a species to survive and thrive…it is also a small intimate space.
Secondly the image and metaphor of a fine line, an abstract divider of extremes, upon which our lives often balance…the *fine line* between connection and isolation, order and chaos, fragility and strength.
Reference text: ***The Poetics of Space*** – Gaston Bachelard (French philosopher).

ANALYSIS

Movement:

- Movement is composed of an exploration of angles, corners, lines, surfaces, volumes and 'niches' of the body.
- Small gestures usually, emphasis on hands, but all body parts activated and choreographed.
- Some pedestrian movement but stylised and choreographed
- Points of contact between dancers emphasized. Negative spaces around dancers also accentuated. Closeness and proximity between dancers is investigated.
- Phrases of angularity with dynamic shifts.

Choreographic techniques:

- accumulation: solo phrase, to duet, to trio, to quartet
- splicing 2 phrases together to create a 3rd phrase.
- reversing/retrograde the movement
- mirroring but separated in space.
- variation – in rhythm, in dynamic, in body part used.
- repetition, but changing spatial orientation or timing.

Spatial Elements:
The kinesphere is thoroughly utilized.
Movement is mostly contained within human scale.
Size – mostly small and intimate gestures.
Direction – multi-directional, 360 degrees as well as from above and low.

General Space:
Level - all levels used, with low to medium predominant
Place - the space created by the house of lines is a centralized space, so that the camera can circumnavigate the action within it. Many 'places' of the house of lines are navigated and activated by the dancers.

Dynamic elements:
A wide range of dynamic play within the movement and the edit. Discuss each section for particular dynamic investigation (eg the first duet is mostly staccato and

quick, contrasting with the trio that is slow and sustained)
The edit accentuates some moments of slowing down, as well as *glitching* in and out of time.

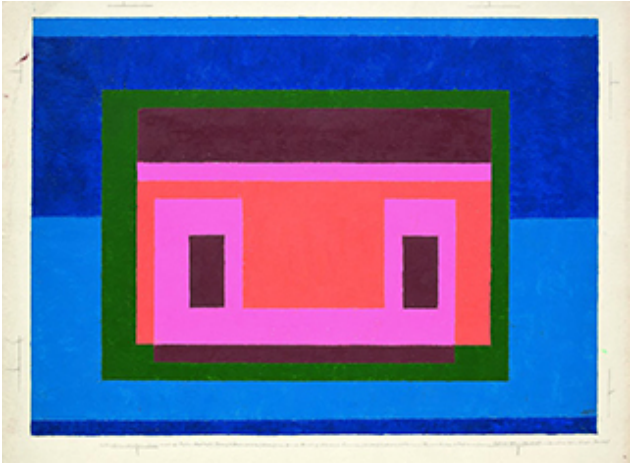
Form:
Short film/choreography distilled from full-length live work and entire ***Niche series***.

Accumulation – 1-5 dancers.

The Space – becomes more and more inhabited, to then stretching and distorting, to entangling, to finally collapsing/disintegrating.

Visual Elements:
Settings - a neutral black space, with abstracted white lines that suggest walls, rooms, dividers, houses, connections. Utter simplicity in design, so the imagination can be activated.
Visual inspiration James Turrell's First Light drawing series.

Colours - the colour palette is strong blocks of colour but with muted tones; orange, green, purple, dark pink. Skin tone is important and to see the touch of the skin between performers. Inspired by painting by Josef Albers below.



Costumes are simple to allow the shape of the body to be seen easily, especially angles of hips and legs.
(also a very small budget!)

Lighting - simple overhead light giving the feeling of being in a domestic room

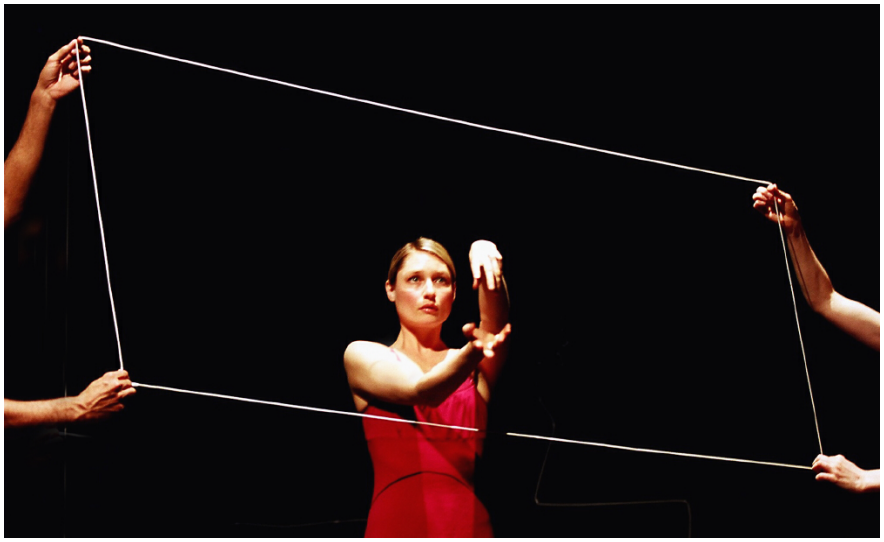
Aural Elements:
Electronic, mixed with voice, piano, unexpected irregular rhythms at times.
The voice is used because of it's timbre, its quality. It is in fact an Arabic love poem – chosen because we had just gone to war in Iraq (and it made me think about war being often about a spatial conflict – I really like the quality of this voice - human, real in the midst of the electronic score.)

Motifs:
The hands write in the space or on bodies, as if inscribing the space around them.
Angular shapes of usually unemphasized body areas, eg. Elbows, throat, wrist, fingers, hip socket, knee.
Everyday gestures mixed with contemporary dance language.
Acute attention to shape and gesture.

Symbols – lines, corners, planes/walls, niches/rooms, intimate spaces, a house.

Interpretation of the work:

- awareness of the space we inhabit (personal kinesphere, the space of our lives; domestic, cities, countries, global, cosmic). We live in a precarious age, and as humans we possess great power to create, yet paradoxically wreak havoc on the planet. ***The Niche series*** makes a statement about the contradictory fragility and power of our species and the space we inhabit and alter so powerfully.
- 'Fine lines' between connection and isolation, order and chaos, fragility and strength. The lines represent spaces that separate as well as connect us.
- The camera as a tool to investigate space. The space of the dance is revealed in ways that are impossible to achieve in live performance. For example;
  - use of close-up and extreme close-up,
  - the camera circumnavigates around the dancer (a choreographed eye),
  - the camera views the dance from above, from low…,
- The camera frames the space and allows the choreographer to switch perspective and point of view (impossible to do in a live scenario)
- The edit of this film is in fact a choreography – each scene, each transition, each cut, employ choreographic decisions that manipulate space AND time to construct the dance.



Choreographer's Notes (to be considered as you watch the film)

FINE LINE

The space of the circle diminishes, disappears to a point.
Becomes a line. Drawing of lines in space, from the body.

A line in space, an edge to fall off, walls that separate, but can be fallen through.
One person in the house of lines,
contained within the geometry of abstracted rooms.
Floor, roof, walls, surfaces.
Navigation of this space, niches, lines and angles of body,
(Lisa's phrase is a variation on my original (can be seen in Fine Line Terrain).
Notice the camera circumnavigates the solo.

Shona enters the frame form below. Accumulate to duet.
Close personal space, between 2 bodies, how do we 'fit together'? or react to our personal space being entered?
Mirroring, co-habiting in a close space. 2 busy female bodies working and playing together.
Unison phrase but manipulated in space.
Bird's eye view.

Enter Victor – male energy, close, intimate space,
how do 3 bodies fit together in the material, what are the possibilities for shape and negative space?
Enter Nalina through a negative space, the space becomes even closer,
A duet of contact, tracing the space of the bodies, intimate lines and points of contact. (Duet is created from solo phrase material)…and begins to reach for boundaries.

Lisa solo, the lines begin to bend, reality shifts, the space distorts.

All 5 in house - domestic, intimate, confined space.

Human interaction, the space of the human – what we do in our domestic environments (eating, sleeping, caring for someone, watching tv, studying, laughing, cleaning, watching, opening a door, dreaming….)

Shona solo – confined, feeling of not enough space, crowded, always being watched.

Bodies as kinetic sculpture, cause and effect, subtle connections between each other, to collapse.

Nelson solo - The walls begin to break, disintegrate, space bends, bodies create distortion.

Victor and Lisa - The lines that connect us to each other, and entangle us,
The lines fall - an inevitable collapse, disintegration.
To nothing.