

## Olive Bieringa – Favorite Exercise/ CI and Outdoor Work/ Personal Experience

My favorite exercise is not purely a contact one but something born out of the practice and extending into my interest of outdoor and place-based improvisation.

### Surveying

- 1). Your partner is your environment. Your partner is in stillness. Exploring the terrain of your partners body through your senses of touch, sight, smell, hearing. You do not have to be in continual physical contact. A set time frame is good. Like three minutes for example.
- 2). Once completed you may want to dance a response solo to your partner, of your surveying. Your dance is, in a sense, a map of the landscape (your partner) you surveyed. and a distillation of the information you collected as opposed to a distillation of what you did as a surveyor.
- 3). Next, you could create a frame of reference from which you want your partner to witness your response solo. For example, through a doorway or from underneath you. This frame brings the dance into a very imagistic place.
- 4). A final option would be to return to the surveying of your partner but that they would also be surveying you at the same time. Stillness is always an option, but not a rule. We become each others moving landscape. there is no commitment to a rolling point of contact but a deep physical research of how we move and who we are.

It is very satisfying to repeat this material over and over. It brings us into a very satisfying place in terms of developing images and ideas for dancemaking. It offers one way in which we can bring our dance into relationships with elements of the environment beyond the dance studio, including other people. I get to practice my skills of surveying and investigating in a deep and slow practice with my partner which can then translate into a curiosity and empathy for many aspects of the world we live and dance in.

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### My personal experience with CI

I have been a student of the form since 1990 and have been teaching and performing with the form since 1995. Contact Improvisation is a life practice for me. My daily class in humanism. The form has taught me many of my interpersonal and boundary making skills as well as being a physical study. Through this work I have been exposed to the worlds of integrated dance and place-based research and performance which I continue to investigate on an ongoing basis within the BodyCartography Project. Below is some text about the Project and what it is and why in a sense it has been born out of CI and improvisation.

The BodyCartography Project is an ongoing phenomenon, a body of research and performance work, which began moving in late 1997. We are a movement and dance ensemble that performs in public spaces, creating a physical dialogue between ourselves and the environments in which we work. Through focused research and playful exploration we utilize movement to explore the relationship between public life and artistic expression. We create work that is at once personal and idiosyncratic and also strong in its ensemble base.

As dancers it is crucial for us to assert the relevance of our bodies' experience in space, in a sense our cartographic process. As body-mind based artists we work to cultivate our bodies/ourselves as sensitive and intelligent agents within our communal environments. Mapping with our body-minds moves us toward a heightened state of awareness, presence and curiosity in which we engage all of our senses and associated memories to explore and document our present moment.

A core tool that we use for mapping is the dance form of Contact Improvisation. It focuses on how bodies move while in physical contact with each other as well as focusing on the physical laws that govern motion: mass, gravity, momentum and inertia. As a social dance it defines and asserts boundaries of intimacy, trust and self. We utilize Contact Improvisation to explore these same principles in relation to our environment and our relationships with one another out of the context of the dance studio and performance venue.

Central to our work is an ecological approach; a curiosity and compassion for all aspects of the world we live and dance in. This motivates our dancemaking and brings us into a relationship with the world where we are mutually shaping and being shaped in the same moment.

Inclusive and experimental in nature, BodyCartography opens a door to the performance and dance worlds for many as participants and audience. It gives people permission to play, explore and make dance with others in environments where this is not the social norm. We bring dance into everyday spaces. Dance is life. The work challenges the notion of art being separate from the rest of our life, but an integral part of it. It questions how we interact physically and express ourselves in public. It challenges the idea of art as a commodity; something to be bought and sold, put on display in commercialized venues and marketed as a disembodied concept. Our work is ongoing, occurring mostly in open/public spaces and is more often than not free.