



# THE BOOM PROJECT

by Rosalind Crisp



*Dance has exhausted herself. Form is collapsing. Nature is rapidly being extinguished.  
Our house is burning, hors control.*

*In the wake of this collapse, the infinite potential of attention is exposed.  
No longer the centre of a domesticated world, Dance has gone wild, unfastened herself - each moment a tear in time.*

**The Boom Project** emerged from my exchanges with Helen Herbertson between 2010 and 2015 in Paris, Melbourne and far eastern Victoria. Thirty years of deconstructing movement inform the complexity of compositional choices in this work, but what is tearing at my attention now is more loaded than the direction of a bone in space or the proximity of two surfaces. Helen's gaze thickens my awareness of feelings and fictions in my body. This shift in my dance practice has been further inflamed by the shock of returning to Australia. The countryside I grew up in has been devastated: the forests I roamed stripped by clear felling, the river I swam in poisoned by a copper mine, feral deer wreck my family's conservation covenant, suburbia spreads like a cancer, summer tourists invade the beaches oblivious to rare nesting birds, government 'fuel reduction' incinerates thousands of hectares of bush every year, half of all digging mammal species are extinct.

Australia's biodiversity is collapsing. This saddens me deeply. It is a force I feel when I'm dancing the complex and subtle cognitive processes inside my body.

Helen begins by observing my dancing, at times circling slowly to realign the angle between us ... asking 'what is she doing now?' Sometimes I respond, in French or English. We murmur to each other. One of us might move off to a far edge of the space, stretching the connection, never losing it, occasionally shouting back from the distance. Ben's design holds us intimately *with* our audience, never confining the vastness of the work. Boom is made for big spaces.

The Boom Project choreographer and dancer Rosalind Crisp / live companion Helen Herbertson / designer Ben Cobham/Bluebottle. First produced and presented at Dance Massive festival 2015 by Arts House and Omeo Dance at Blueprint Showroom North Melbourne.

*We came to the work sharing practice with long stretches of time in between. Watching, waiting, asking questions of 'her', giving space to be together as the territory unfolded. My 'place' with the work opened and closed, rose and fell, expanded, deepened, at once mysterious, crystalline, empty, full. For a long time I resisted moving to watch Ros's extraordinary facility with improvised physicality inside this new terrain of image, place, sensation. The vastness of the planet colliding with the fullness of 'being', inside and out was a constant joy and surprise. As we circled around the 'something' of the work, I asked myself what to do, where to be, who to be, how to be. My interrelationship with Ros, my collaborative history with Ben, connection to my own work, my dancing and performing nestled into the terrain. The imprint of a first presentation space joined playful interactions with Ben's curiosity and questions. The entrance of others to watch drew a line in the sand, 'lightly now' and a substance of sorts. That we could share the first outing all together, everything resting lightly upon everything else was very satisfying. The Boom Project was so much more than the sum of the parts. Still, I don't look too hard at what it was/is. I know there is more to find as we go again and again, as Ros ingests what unfolded and goes on with the multiple reverberations. The passionate questing continues ...*

Helen Herbertson

**The Boom Project** reviewed by Jana Perkovic

I am not sure which astounds me more: Rosalind Crisp's new work for Dance Massive festival, The Boom Project, or the fact that I am able to describe it at all. Dance pieces of this kind – pure dances without a narrative, based entirely in movement – are usually extremely difficult to explain in words. You resort to metaphors of cooking or cuddling, or philosophy.

But The Boom Project is so exhilaratingly earthy and present that it seems to ground us instead of confusing us. I entered the space exhausted and hungry; I exited elated, blabbing. It is a dance piece that restores clarity of mind and energises the body.

A few words on Crisp: with her company Omeo Dance, Crisp had a highly respected studio practice in Sydney from 1996 until she was poached by Atelier de Paris–Carolyn Carlson, where she remained associate artist until the end of 2012. She currently divides her time between Australia and Europe, touring, curating, and developing an influential teaching practice. If there was ever a good candidate for a damehood, Crisp would be it.

Her practice is based on sourcing movement from any part of the body but eliminating habitual gestures. There is no set choreography. In The Boom Project, Crisp responds to the space, the audience, and quiet verbal and physical cues by Helen Herbertson, creating on-the-spot sequences of highly conscious movement unanchored in any recognisable dance poses.

Deborah Jowitt writes about dance that is all shape-making and dancers who forget to think about how it gets done. While so much contemporary dance stays on the surface of the body, Crisp sources hers from deep inside, achieving a powerful physical presence. Her movement comes from a place of inner focus and remains energised even when slow or still, never faltering. Almost clown-like movements morph from one difficult gesture to another without ever settling into a moment of pause, a comma.

Blueprint Showroom is a new space for Arts House, a large warehouse magically transformed by Bluebottle for this piece into an ethereal white space that seems to recede into infinity. Crisp moves through it like a globe of physical force, leaving behind a palpable trail of energy. By the end of 45 minutes, the entire enormous space is pulsating, and so are we.

The Guardian, Monday 23 March 2015 (5/5 stars) [www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/mar/23/the-boom-project-review-dance-massive](http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/mar/23/the-boom-project-review-dance-massive)



## News from the body

**The Boom Project** has profoundly changed my artistic practice. The borders between sensation, imagination and fiction are now very slippery - if I take time to notice. I feel my elbow, I imagine it, I sense-see an imagined hole in my elbow, I breathe and at the almost-same instant I am filled with horror at the clear felling of the last old growth forest in my region and from the crack in my elbow sawdust pours out. This *news from the body as it happens* is a capturing of each minuscule, local detail of change in my body (even breathing makes us move!), and a welcoming into the body of sensation-images from my lived experiences in this terrible time of extinctions.

*Shoulders slump, soft fine finger bones crumble, knees slacken, begin to shake, white throat opens, lets light in, tree creeper exits from my hollow breath. I feel a twang behind the eyes, tight fist I lean forward, incline my head, feel the saliva run down my cheek. It sticks, fills the little hollow inside my mouth. I suck on air, cool rainforest air, 65 leadbeater's possums found in there. Call it 4,000, give or take (more like take). I breathe in between two ribs. They crack. Sawdust from Vic Forests runs out. Joints once firm now splayed and played by white-ants. A home for vandals. Legs sink heavy as a buddha in mud. Last ditch attempt to pull myself up to lillipilli heights and look out beyond this fragment, this last tiny remnant. 2% of scattered old growth remains. What have we done? 'A line in the sand' says the Hunter, 'no more extinctions'. Fat words from fat politicians. An exclusion zone, the size of a broom cupboard hits me on the back of the head. I reel forward, clutch at lomandra stalks, spin out of control into twisted branches ripped from their mothers, a pyre piled high. Bulldozer tracks dig into the side of my ankle. Hard crusted earth, life sucked out. Rain plummets down my bare back, a greasy trail of longing. Loggers have left 30 hollow dependant species homeless. Broken helmet of honeyeater fallen prey to big business disguised as jobs. 'Prosperity must increase!' More fat words.*

## What has dance got to say?

a string of messages from the body  
micro moments that expand awareness of the present  
fatten up the present moment so the wipe-outs feel less traumatic  
sensation as the link between dance and extinction

*I fold her over to one side, slip my arm under her broken legs, dangling inert. I lift her head, glassy eyed. They had stuck a stringy bark branch under her beautiful soft face, yellow fur still shining. Health stolen forever. Wild dog baiters never say dingo. By the side of the road this exquisite golden being, hated by men. Her paws hang soft, barely full grown. A real beauty. Forget those roadside flowers for loved ones. Here is love in mountains.*





### **Blast scum cull me dead in a body borrowed**

a solo by Rosalind Crisp

My flesh has learnt to separate. Blotched bits drop off every night, like the species that disappear every day as we white people push further and further into and against this land. My body is undone, the skin saturated with sensations sucked out of the ground. Images are hauled through. The emergent matter holds in the tissue for a brief moment ...

#### **Prologue**

*It's hard to dredge up the heart and soul and lungs of the land. Can I suck it through me? Small porous earth holes, make them wider, gaping, so I can take my fill. Fill my vessel body.*

*I'm sinking, arse to earth, fingers to grass, twigs scratch my bum, ants wobble climb over my toes, one makes its way up the cliff face of my right ankle.*

*I breathe, I heave. With the sink that follows I flow with my organs deeper into ground. 'She's gone to ground' they said.*

#### **The audience experience (imagined)**

*Quietened by the harsh wind and cackle that accompanied their journey here down the narrow scrubby path, they wait at a respectful distance as horsewoman commences her union and disentanglement from the bare ground. Ground once fertile and peopled, now abandoned and fallow. Follow your thoughts and sensations she said to self. One long thread of surging irregular organic thrust upward on a diagonal. A sudden break of bough, a heave and thud. Another body fallen. Acting on instinct she ploughs on through, climbing the tree of forgotten knowledge, letting fall those bits of despair. Pain is a condition of the skin, causes lumps and bumps and fissures of pus. Stuff seeps out, can't be held back as the body only knows how to surrender. Giving over to it, she pulls herself up, follows a line of spittle and dives out and around some thorny bushes. This is the dance.*

Blast scum cull me dead in a body borrowed created for Siteworks, Bundanon, New South Wales, Australia 26 September 2015



**Crisp and Wiget**, an article by Susan Leigh Foster

Directly in front of us as we walk into the sun-filled dance studio is a make-shift white wall across which five dessicated fish are hanging. Their life's juices have evidently drained into five white enamel bowls lying on the floor several feet beneath them – the fluid a complex golden brown, not unlike the fish's skin. It's horrific. A scene of clinical dissection, ordered decay, withered life.

The dancer and the musician are sitting separately, she on the floor, he across the room on a chair with his cello. We each make a place to sit built from mountains of pillows piled in several different locations scattered throughout the space.

They begin: she by moving very slowly; he by attending to the space and its sounds, the creaking roof, her barely audible breathing. We watch her begin to sense the porousness of her skin, the varied surfaces of the body, its interface with the surroundings. It's a very hot day. Now she's on her feet, eyes bulging out with surprise; now she's trying to move, but every way is blocked. Each effort is met by a cement wall, a hampering of the body's capacity to extend fully in any direction.

She tries to carve out a space, to strike out into space, and cannot. She counters this stuckness by slowly backing towards one group of seated viewers, giving them the double message of literally turning her back on them and moving to join them. She pauses. Almost ten minutes has passed. He starts to bow the strings making no tone, only the brushing sound of catgut on wire. Now they're joining their deliberations, and she morphs through the space, reaching out here, transiting through there, balancing precariously. Each of these emerging moments in motion seems to be reflecting/producing images, registered on her skin, in her muscles, and crossing her face as dismay, exasperation, futility, horror even. Possessed by scenes that inhabit her, bone-deep, she cyphers the world dying. It's about birds trying to fly; it's about land drying out; it's about trees losing their force; it's about ... it's about ... it's about dancing the end.

I know this because I have talked to her about her dismay over climate change, but any viewer could also intuit much of it, taking as a starting cue the fish.

She pauses in a crouch, her face ravaged, worn, desolate, monumental, as it surveys the landscape of what she has just danced. He launches into lyrical, poignant melody. Following the cello's outpouring, she

hitches up her pants, shrugging her shoulders as if to say, 'this is just what's coming up today; nothing to be done about it.' And now the images keep coming, although quieter, more melancholy. Eventually, she comes into close proximity with him, both having returned to a more contemplative state as he delicately bows the side of the cello. Suddenly the cello's front is facing him, and it's as if a third body has joined the two. They agree the piece is over with a mutual nod of heads.

It's not a happy dance; not a fun dance; but instead a dismaying, depressing channelling of conditions in our present moment. This is not what improvisation should be! And yet it happened. And now people are applauding, but also wasted. It is very hot.

Tomorrow it will be completely different, although the fish will still be there as you walk in ... You see, the fish are dried and salted, purchased that morning at the Russian market near the musician's house. The fish were his idea, along with the coffee-infused water in the bowls that so resembles their life's fluids. He is from Switzerland and has been thinking a lot about climate change. She is from Australia and can't stop thinking about it. They have collaborated before, but not like this.

They are content with their communion, although it could have been a little longer ... perhaps ... but then again, the ending was so clearly presenting itself.

We are having a beer and reviewing what happened. 'Take it on the road,' I say, grinning. They laughingly agree, noting that the tech list would consist of a request for five dried fish. (They would supply the enamel bowls.) But what could they take on the road? Their ability to tune to one another, and to their environment; their willingness to show honestly what they are feeling in the moment of performance; their articulateness at dancing and playing; their ability to improvise a performance.

They decide that tomorrow, he will sit somewhere different, and perhaps, she will begin standing ...

*Crisp & Wiget* by Rosalind Crisp (dance) and Bo Wiget (cello). Produced and presented in Open Spaces by Tanzfabrik at Ufer Studios Berlin, July 2015. Developed with support from ImproXchange Berlin and PIN festival Stockholm





### The Infinity Party

The Devil's tongue is round as a small stone. It hovers and licks the teeth. The lips peel back, sucked up towards the nostril. Stuff drips out of the right nostril. We climb up this slime and begin the long shiny ride up the beacon of a nose. Close to the top the left eye catches my peripheral vision, pulls me out and off the bridge of the nose. Teetering in mid air I suck and grind my climbing shoes back onto the smooth Devil nose bridge and with great effort, heave myself back onto the slippery organ and continue my hike up towards the flashy eyebrows. Brows so sharp you could cut cheese with them. A small tuft weed protruding from the left cheese cutter exposes the fact that the Devil (this Devil) is not perfect. He/she is DEEPLY FLAWED.

*Describing parts of the body comes from Isabelle Ginot. Makes me think Boom has also been nurtured by my long collaboration with Isabelle, where I discovered the joys of slipping, in writing, from anatomical 'reality' into fiction. I've taken this practice into and through my body. In mid story writing we went to dance, shifting attention 'inside' and 'outside' the body, I realised that my senses play a huge role in stimulating my writing imagination. The Devil's face came in to view. I moved physically into the story I had part-written, took it over as dance.*

Slowly the climbing to infinity party grimped their ecclesiastical way diagonally up the slippery ebony side of the DEVIL'S NOSE. It was a slow laborious labour, pick axe after tooth by claw. Driving rain forced them to continue at a snail's gait. They hoicked their hoods further over their heads, faces disappearing, eyes tiny slits against the wind. The Devil murmured, let out a foul odour from its enormous forested nostrils. A woman shouted out as she slipped backwards off and over the slimy slippery surface. Ropes twanged, stretched and strained. Too bad. They broke. She fell. Gone. The Infinity Party minus one continued up the soaking phlegm-shined slope.

*I am sticking close to the unraveling emergent images. Not running off ahead too far, but extracting each word, every morsel from deep connectivity to the image*

Another foul puff exuded from the Devil's nostrils. One courageous member of the infinity party took his axe and vita wheat biscuits and determinedly hacked his way around to the gigantic yawning mouth of the left nostrilla. He clung on the curly edge by the string of his teeth and peered in. Took a deep breath. Regretted it. Gathered his boney emaciated limbs and leapt down onto the soft hoary grass floor of the left nostril. Plop, plod and flod were the sounds of his footsteps on the floor of the Devil's left nostril.

*delay delay delay, holding myself back in the continual emerging stream of image journey unfolding*

He looked up. Millions of massive tall hair trees rose up before him. Soft thread hung down from the trees. Between the trees the floor was mossy, soft, silent. He wished he had his camera with him not that it could photograph silence. He felt calm and safe and lay down under the hair tree gossamer to rest his weary head. Not for long! A cracking sound was heard ricocheting through the glade like a whip crack. The ground wriggled and wobbled. He was wobbled awake. Saw things from a funny angle. The cavernous cave was all a muster, mucking up messing up. He tried to reach the safety of the hair trees but was shot out of his cave and fell 3,000 planets.

The Devil wiped his nose.

some time later...

Let's go back up and over the Devil's nose. A few clues remain. Some of the Infinity Party were nervous. One had fallen. Another had gone off adventurously never to return. Clouds were forming over the far side of the nose bridge and things were not too rosy. Finally the cheese-cutter eyebrows came into view. Well, first the left one, then the right. The thick end of the wedge was hanging over them. They looked up. A thin grey light reflected from the phlegm-soaked nose bounced off the cheese-cutter eyebrow wedge and hit three of the infinity party in the eye. Arghh they cried as one, falling backwards. Quickly the crew leaders pulled on the ropes and successfully hauled them back in, like landing a few giant barramundi on the deck. No-one was game to look back. To turn was to die.

They all crept on in silence, single file. By hook and crook they managed to swing themselves up onto the Devil's eyebrow and stood as one looking out into the nothing distance. Proud of their achievement thus far but whitewashed of hope as the view revealed only VOID. Thoughts of home were pointless. So they ambled along in the fading amber light towards their final destination: the DEVIL'S HORNS! Strange weeds and hedges blocked their path. They hacked and smashed their ways forward, fevered by this last ditch attempt to MAKE IT. Around the corner of the right horn scuttled a soiled scum bag of a rat. Not really rat but more rat than man. Damn! They weren't the first to the HORNS. All hollered at once to scare and forget the rat, cause it to slip off or evaporate. But shit is sticky and it clung on. Finally with machetes they managed to dislodge it and do away with it. Proof of their prowess.

Horns in sight they clambered up the boney sides only to find that the top top points of the horns DISAPPEARED OFF THE PAGE. The infinite end they had longed for was cut off, truncated, didn't exist. Not even nothing existed. Nothing was nothing and nowhere. They realised that they too where nothing but a few fleas on a DEVIL'S HORN.

The Infinity Party, a contemporary fable by Rosalind Crisp from a VCA workshop with Jenny Kemp at Napier St. South Melbourne, July 2015

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