



Bianca Hester  
PROVISIONAL DEVICES FOR THE  
PRODUCTION OF A PROPOSITIONAL  
LIVING SPACE: first of four sequences

Studio 12 / Emerging Writers Program

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LIVING SPACE: first of four sequences  
This project involves collaborative processes with Daniel van Cleemput &  
Jude Walton  
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## Dancing for Architecture

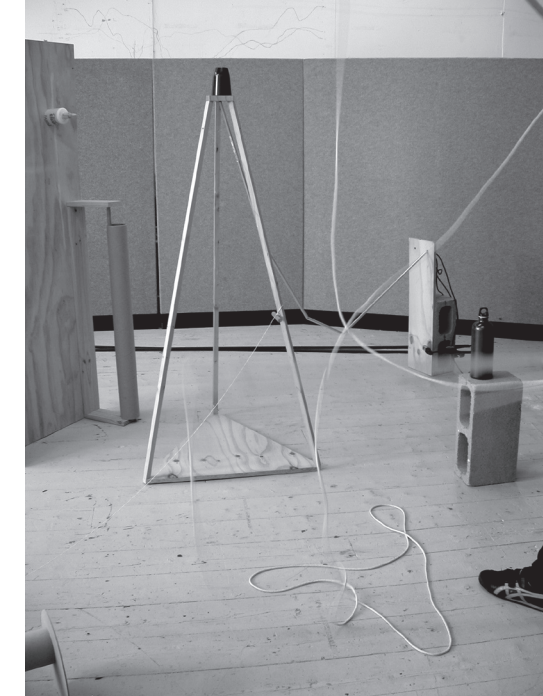
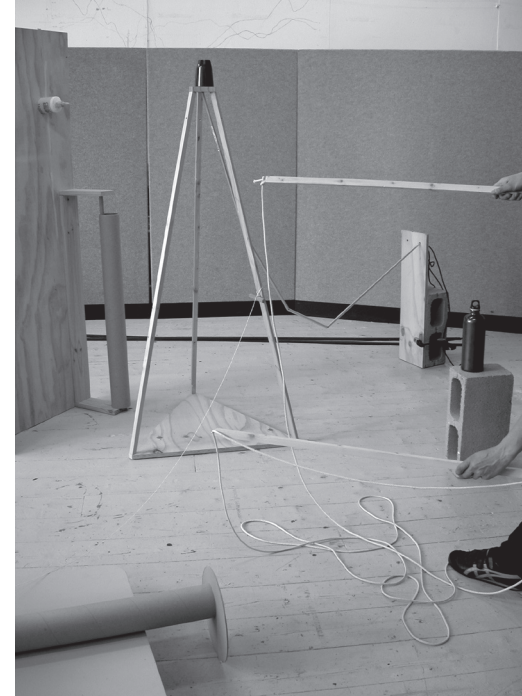
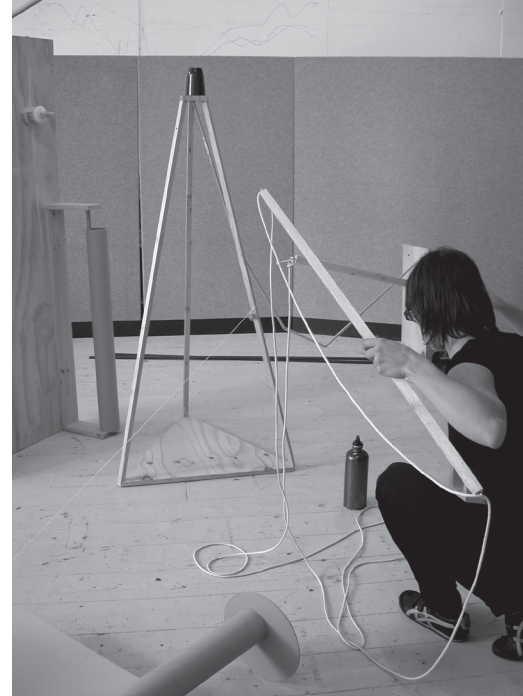
Bianca Hester is standing in her studio demonstrating a “device to produce movement”<sup>1</sup>. Which is a fancy way of saying that she is rolling a cardboard tube on a long string along the floor and pulling it back again like a yoyo. At each end of the tube is a wheel, with the tube forming an off-centre axle.

As the device rolls to and fro it bobs up and down, tracing an idiosyncratic trajectory. It’s vaguely comical. If you’ve ever seen children’s wooden toys like those ducks-on-wheels that approximate a loping gait when pulled forward, then, in both principle and effect, Hester’s movement machine is the same.

A child yanking a toy along the floor is involved in spatial and bodily exploration that is an essential part of the developmental process. Progressing from bum shuffling to crawling to walking, he or she acquires a bodily memory and a mapped understanding of the environment.

Hester’s Studio 12 project follows an analogous logic. A range of provisional devices consisting of strings, pulleys, planes and counterweights will be used over the month-long exhibition period to map movement and space, being and time. Captured on video, these maps will form the basis for the design of a temporary dwelling space for a project next year.

In March 2008, Hester will exhibit at Showroom gallery in London. Her proposal is to establish an inhabitable module within the gallery that would serve as both base camp and social experiment. Hester has emphasised that there could be no divide between living and exhibition functions/spaces – the (process of) dwelling would be both artwork and a platform for other engagements and social interactions during her time there.



Studio 12 is a test site to develop a propositional study for this dwelling. Working with architect Daniel van Cleemput, Hester will put her gadgets to work to produce a repertoire of movements and actions. This will become the raw data for Hester and van Cleemput’s collaborative design process. Tracing body movements to use as architectural input was an intuitive leap, Hester says, but it can be seen to develop from ideas of generative mapping already present in her work.

The usual idea of a map is of something representing a terrain. Jorge Luis Borges once imagined a map literally co-extensive with the empire it charted. Indeed, his allegory perfects the ordinary understanding of the ideal map. It would represent a terrain so exactly that it could be pulled back, like carpet, to reveal the land beneath, like so much spongy underlay. And as the map was rolled back it would disappear, humbly giving way to the real it depicts.

But, at best, maps are only ever a partial representation of the terrain they encode. Mapping is a process of selectively registering the chaotic complexity of space. It can be argued that these partial and selective mapping processes in fact preclude a co-extensive relationship with a map’s purported referent. What is mapped then is not sameness but difference. “Put simply, a roadmap made of paper is not co-extensive with the terrain that it maps because it literally exists as a different material, spatial and temporal entity.”<sup>2</sup>

For Hester, that’s room to manoeuvre. The gap between map and terrain creates the possibility for another sort of activity to emerge. Mapping is treated as a generative process rather than a descriptive product. In Hester’s own account, “movement-mapping, video-mapping, measurement, the production of built-constructions and objects, and the production of diagrams and texts”<sup>3</sup> become means to move sculpture beyond a discipline constrained by objects. These processes form the background to the experiential mapping of the current project.

It’s been said that writing about music is like dancing about architecture – to suggest that they’re both pretty stupid pursuits. Yet the latter is what Hester is up to in Studio 12. Only she’s dancing for architecture, not about it, and that makes all the difference.

Bodies being and moving through time and space are the subject of this latest, architectural, inquiry. In a shift in focus the performative elements that were only implied in Hester’s earlier work now take centre stage. She admits that she had been tiptoeing around the idea of dance. Is she now ready to pull on the legwarmers and get physical?

Dylan Rainforth

IMAGE CAPTIONS: Inside Cover: *provisional devices for the production of a propositional living space*, production still 2007 Above Sequence: *provisional devices for the production of a propositional living space*, work in process 2007

<sup>2</sup> Hester, Bianca. *Material adventures, spatial productions: manoeuvring sculpture towards a proliferating event*. Exegesis submitted as part of PhD (RMIT University, 2007), p. 90.

<sup>1</sup> Hester, Bianca. Conversation with the author, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 88.