

Dear LUTSF

I recently completed my screen dance research project in Sweden. Please find enclosed 2 paper copies of the report and 1 CDR of report and images. The project took place between the 16th March and 4th April. We travelled to Lulea on the 16th March, and moved north through the Arctic Circle to Kiruna and Abisko, returning to Lulea on the 28th March. We travelled to Stockholm on the 2nd April, returning to the UK on the 4th April.

The aim of the visit was to continue to explore ways in which the dancing body could be placed within the natural landscape, and this aim was met in full. The Arctic provided an extraordinary working environment for video, and the unique light and conditions that we found there has enabled us to gather some fabulous footage which will be considered and utilised at a later date.

Highlights of the project included - meeting with Maria Ryden of Dans Nord in Lulea, who supported us whilst we were in the Norbotten area of Sweden. She has a particular interest in developing her organisation to have a screen dance specialism, and our visit was the first step on this journey for her. Also travelling so far North and having the experience of seeing and recording the extraordinary light conditions that exists there. Seeing the intense blue of the landscape as the sun went down every evening. Walking across the frozen lakes of the area and experiencing cold that was so intense that ice was forming on our eye lashes. But the greatest highlight has to have been seeing the Northern Lights - twice. The strange ghostly appearance of this phenomenon was unlike anything that I have experienced before and I shall never forget it.

On returning to the UK, I gave a talk at a screen dance event in Bristol about our research and hope to give further talks at Brighton and Chichester universities later on in the year.

Information about the project is available through my web-site - [www.beckyedmunds.com](http://www.beckyedmunds.com) including a full version of the blog that was kept during the project.

Many thanks for supporting my work. This was a great opportunity for me to continue my research without having the pressure of having to create a final product.

Yours faithfully

Becky Edmunds

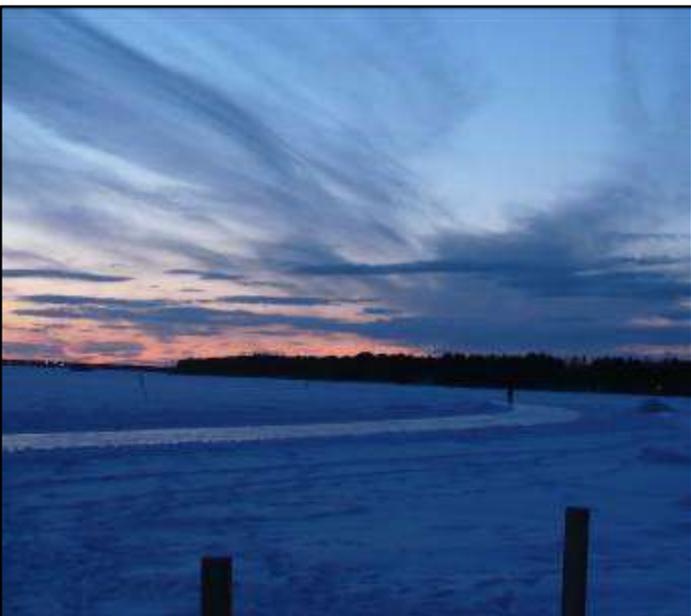
### **Final report for Lisa Ullman Traveling Scholarship.**

I was invited by the Shoot Dance for Screen festival in Sweden to continue a line of inquiry that was begun two years ago. In 2006, I undertook a screen dance research project in Argentina, which aimed to find ways to place the dancing body in extraordinary landscapes. My aim was to find ways in which the body and the landscape could co-exist on screen, looking for the movement that arose from the environment as opposed to imposing dances on the land.

Whilst in Argentina I met with Christina Molander from SHOOT festival in Stockholm, who invited me to continue the research in Sweden. During March 2009, I travelled north through the Arctic Circle and explored placing the moving body within the ice and snow, in order to discover the dances that arise from such harsh conditions. I was joined by dancer and sound composer, Scott Smith.

The work was framed by the exploration of a series of specific questions, relating to the nature of looking and seeing, and how a heightened awareness of my sense of vision can have a direct affect on my choices of how I frame what I see. How long can I look before I look *for* something? By paying attention to my looking, will I see more? Will I see differently?

Below are extracts from my blog that documents my time there.



### 17th March.

I have never travelled across the sea in a car until today. It's a slightly unnerving experience. The sea water around Lulea is frozen solid and there are roads across the ice to get you to the islands. It's fine, until you see the big cracks in the ice. That's the unnerving bit.

The light here is so different to the light in the UK, and it affects everything. Even the most familiar of sights seems slightly alien in this cold northern light. And those stretches of frozen sea, that are so vast and so solid. Bright white, like the salt fields in Argentina, but cold. Ice for as far as you can see. It's beautiful.

We arrived last night and were met by Maria from Dans i Nord. She has set up a really fantastic

situation for us here - we have an apartment, and she has been our guide today, and will be with us tomorrow, before we set off alone. It's good to have someone who knows where we are going.

The sensation of 'what shall I do here?' is familiar. I cannot imagine what I will do here. I need to let my eyes settle into the whiteness and the lightness and not try to second guess what might be the 'right' thing to do. I have no idea what will be the right thing to do. I just trust that something will become apparent and then I can act on it.

### 19th March.

Spent today on the frozen water between the islands of Lulea. There are pathways marked out through the snow and the ice is like a park - people use the paths to skate, ski, jog, walk their dogs. Earlier today there was bright sunshine and the light was bouncing off the white ice. This evening, the sky is grey, and the ice has lost its sheen. I wrapped the camera in bubblewrap plastic, set it down on the ice and slid it around. Camera skating. Spinning the camera around and seeing where the frame settles.

### 22nd March.



We have moved up to Abisko, close to the border of Norway. It is much colder here, and more still, as all movement and sound is muted by the cold. It is utterly spectacular. I have never seen anything like this Arctic landscape. The scale of it is immense.

Two days ago we travelled from Lulea to Kiruna - a mining town within the Arctic Circle. Whilst there we drove out towards the mountains, and shot some material in scrub land there. The snow is deep and there is an aspect to being in it that is utterly exhausting. Sometimes I wish for much smaller equipment, as hauling camera and tripod through snowdrifts can be hard going. There is a whole

rigmarole about going outside - get the equipment ready, climb into cold weather romper suits, get boots on - hats, gloves, by which time I realise that the keys are in my jeans which are under the romper suit and I have to take half of it off and start again.

Then I will be walking along what seems like fairly tightly-packed snow and suddenly I will sink down to my knees and I am left flailing around, with a large camera bag, trying to dig myself out.

Then, as in Argentina, there is the prospect of being faced with astounding landscape and feeling that anything additional that I might my place into it would be utterly superfluous. Why would you film dance out here? It would just get in the way of a perfectly good view. So, as in Argentina, I struggle with placing a dancer out here, and I look for the movement that already exists. Or if I do place a dancer there, he is standing still. Standing man.

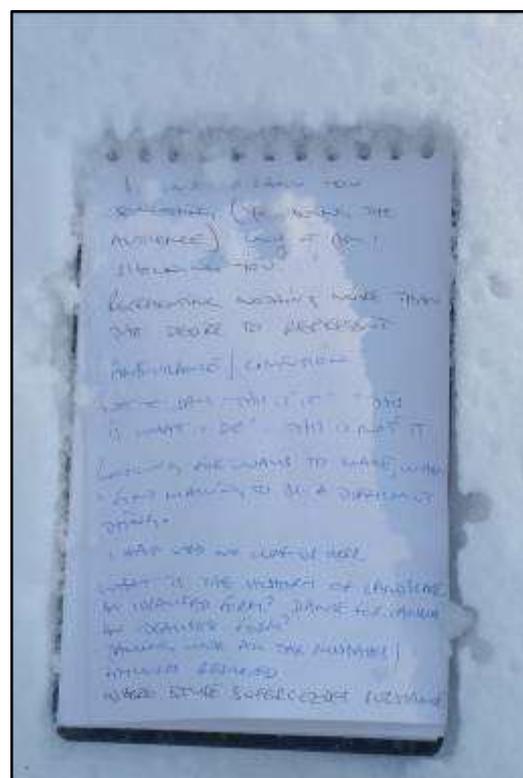
Up here in Abisko, it is even more astounding. Looking at it all I am overwhelmed and the marks that I make on tape seem somehow completely inadequate. But I keep making them - that's what I am here for. I am reminded of Jonathan Burrows who said that when he feels self-conscious whilst performing, he deals with it by letting himself feel more self-conscious. So if I am feeling inadequate, I will make this a study into inadequacy. I don't know what else to do about it.



### 23rd March

The Northern Lights danced for us last night. Brief but very satisfying.

What is it that i am trying to express by using a camera on this? I know that it has to be more than showing or composing scenery in frame. Am i trying to comment on it, or to convey how it feels for me to be here? Am I trying to oppose it is some way, in order to make the nature of it more visible? Or do something that would support it?



The questions arise around the screen as a site for choreography. What is it that I am choreographing? The body? The space around the body? The movement that already exists in the space? Or the frame around the space? I am trying to work my way through all of those options.

When does the choreography take place? Before I shoot? As I shoot? After I've shot?

### 24th March.

For the first time, I felt that the cold and the environment got the better of me today. Scott and I set out across the lake, with the aim of getting close to the centre of it, and of trying to spin the camera on the ice. The camera was all bundled up in its bubblewrap outfit, but the nature of the ice was so different to the man-made ice paths in Lulea, and no matter how we tried to smooth it over, we could not make the camera spin in a way that was satisfying. It was windy and absolutely freezing out in

the middle of this huge lake of ice. Suddenly I felt utterly defeated. I had used so much energy getting out onto the lake, and I was a long way from the shore (and the warm and dry accommodation), my plan had fallen apart and I was at a loss. We set off towards a small island in the ice, in the hope of finding a rock that we could sit down on. It is hard to judge distances out on the ice. You set off towards something that looks to be 5 minutes away, and after 5 minutes it suddenly looks to be 10 minutes away. Finally we sat on the ice near the island and ate some sandwiches. Then headed back to the warmth of our room. The whole thing completely exhausted me, physically and mentally. I couldn't make any choices at all, except for the choice to get warm.

### 26th March.

We left Abisko yesterday, after doing some final shots there and drove back to Kiruna. Being so far North was an extraordinary experience - the realisation of how it is to be in a cold place - really properly cold, so cold that it makes your eyes water and then your tears freeze on your eyelashes. It puts limits on things - how long you can be outside, how long you can be still for, how much you have to be aware of the temperature of the camera, constantly guarding against getting moisture on the lens that might freeze and scratch. This is very different to Argentina, where it was warm and staying outside for hours was the normal situation.



It is interesting that there are some technical decisions that working out in the landscape leads me to. I have been working with the zoom of the camera, which I never do in my normal working life - I avoid it normally, but out here it seems to be the only way I can find to express distance.

It is also interesting that I only work with wide shot out here. I have done no close ups at all - at least not of the body. I have close ups of twigs and icicles and snow, but the body seems to need to remain in the distance for me.

- how does one make work? What is it that I need in order to make marks on tape. Because I have no predetermined narratives to follow through, because I need to make the decisions about what marks to make based on my experience of being in a place. Again and again I have found myself to be overwhelmed by the really obviously beautiful places and more drawn to the odder (more ugly?) places. Or if I am working within beauty I want to take it out of view. Hint at it and then remove it. I worked with setting the frame around a beautiful view and then having Scott come into frame in order to spoil the view, or block it, or get in the way of it. To disrupt it in some way.



Now back in Kiruna we have been out in the mountains again, working today in very deep snow. Framing a patch of virgin snow and then working physically in it until its smoothness is completely destroyed. Trying to move in snow that comes up to your thighs, being able to fall into its softness and then becoming trapped by it and struggling to get yourself upright again. As a substance it is so dry and powdery, it gives way so easily, becoming really cold and wet when it gets between skin and clothing.

### 31st March.

Our time here is coming to an end. We are back in Lulea and we have reviewed some of the footage and made a couple of rough cuts from some of the material. Scott has made a couple of sound sketches.

Now there is time to look back and see what the process has been. The filming is a process of collection, and the work is in the looking and what emerges on video is a record of that results of that looking. A record of my decision making.

Representing nothing more than the desire to represent.

There has also been a frustration that I have been looking for some sort of a breakthrough. Something that will change the way that I work, that I approach making. This sense of a breakthrough happened for me in Argentina, and so there is the desire for it to happen again. But that is not realistic for an artist - to be constantly looking to re-invent what they do. There has to be time to re-

invest, to go further into what has been done before, rather than abandon what is known. So this has been a chance to remake, to retry, and the questions that arose from the Argentina project have been re-considered and have become more acute. Not necessarily answered, but restated.



Is it possible to avoid telling stories if you are placing a body into a location and filming it? I don't want to tell stories, but it seems unavoidable. The question that interests me is when do those stories emerge? Can I see the narrative as I film, or do they emerge as I put two pieces of footage together in the edit?

Whilst I want to avoid narrative, there is nothing that I have ever made that did not suggest narrative.

How abstract to be? Can I find ways towards abstraction by getting myself out of rationalisation.?

I find myself always making sure that I have beginnings and endings.

The true value of an opportunity like this is to be given the chance to find something difficult. To be thrown back onto my own practice and to reconsider the problems that it presents.



I will be returning to Lulea in the autumn to give a public presentation about the work.