

Backyard activism: Site dance, permaculture and sustainability

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ABSTRACT ORIGINAL

Site dance performance offers creative opportunities for social and environmental activism. Conversely, social and environmental activism is becoming increasingly performative in seeking to evocatively engage a wide range of community members in both local and global concerns. The following pages focus on how research poetry arising in the creative process of developing performances of site dance may support activism. Drawing on interdisciplinary understandings of permaculture and sustainability and new approaches in narrative representation, the research poetry expresses backyard activism in a complementary manner to the site dance itself. The poetry synthesizes creative journal entries relating to somatic improvisation and choreography with dancers, and interviews and discussions with relevant community members. In Aotearoa New Zealand and in this wider neo-liberal era, urban residents are moving away from backyard gardening and local seasonal produce, and towards consumption of mass-produced, regulated and imported foods. In this context, community activism through performance may support local and alternative food movements and speak back to dominant, sociocultural and political power systems and norms relating to food production, consumption and sustainability. © 2019 Intellect Ltd Article.