

The Wave as Ritournelle in Emily Roysdon's *Uncounted**

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Uncounted experience, unseen in time. If only a wave in proximity to other waves. If only a wave that made a texture of a surface of a top of the line. If only a wave expressing the contour of a bottom, its bottom, the under. If only a rhythm. All potential to break. Crash. hit. rock. wander. If only a night wave, peaking. If only a wave never counted. Measured if a threat.

Emily Roysdon

The image of a wave became the ritournelle of *Uncounted**, a series of performance-based interventions that drifted in and back out like the tide throughout the *Performance Days* at approximate times. The presentations were the result of Emily Roysdon's two-year exploration of temporality, aliveness, periphery, her notion of discomposition, and their potential for instituting moments of political transition. Engaging this edition of *If I Can't Dance*'s key questions of appropriation and dedication, *Uncounted** presented Roysdon's methodology of thinking, living, and creating with and through the thoughts, lives and creativity of those with whom she shares common histories, struggles and passions. Ideas past and present took on a material consistency and were seen to undulate and morph as they travelled across time and from one body to the next. The words of Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, David Hammons, Lucinda Childs and Jack Smith encountered and were given new momentum or a change of direction through the spoken words and performative bodies of Roysdon and her team: MPA, Katinka Marac, Rory Pilgrim, and eventually engaging Gregg Bordowitz, and Frédérique Bergholtz as well. The wave provides a powerful image to picture this accumulative structure. It reflects how enfolded in any utterance are those who have come before, a chorus that has

the potential to swell-up and bring forth ever new constellations of meaning that will in turn, return and modulate the body of traditions from which it emerged.

The series of performances were playful and humorous. The artist's preoccupation with how to allow the aliveness of unaccounted forms of experience to trespass institutional codes, behaviours and barriers, lead to an on-going play of inside and outside. Literally, *Uncounted** took shape on both sides of the performance venue. The audience often sat in a blue-lit space listening to spoken narratives while performers bobbed up and down holding undulant wave crests outside the windows. At other moments the wave performers came in and wandered through the audience members, dispersed like immobile islands throughout the inside space.

The reoccurrence of similar elements across the series of performances took on what Deleuze refers to as the ritournelle [refrain], a small comforting tra-la-la that is intimately connected to processes of exiting and entering home. The ritournelle reflects how the reiteration of simple key features, such as the wave-crests, use of lighting, and what came to be known as familiar bodies of text and performers, instigated a recognizable idiom while at the same time addressed complex issues of territoriality and deterritoriality. With the ritournelle, like the rhythm of waves, the emphasis is not spatial but temporal. The return of bodies and ideas create a cadence, intimating fabrications of time. Counterpoints, like breakers that thrash-up against a rocky shoreline, were also deployed, notably when Roysdon abruptly hit the outside window pane, sprawled over its surface, the words 'cancelled time' could be read across her naked chest.

In the last performance of *Uncounted**, the bobbing waves moved in from outside and made their way around the clusters of audience members who sat on the floor listening to Roysdon read through sections of her own writing. The other performers began to do their work, eroding away the mass of static figures with a circular motion that gradually came to encompass all those present. Hands swaying hither and tither, feet pounding out the cadence, we had become one smiley and somewhat clumsy, big wave.

Engaging the impasse of political movements in the present to find new and efficient idioms, *Uncounted** questions how a political surge can acquire momentum, and gradually gain the capacity for seepage into existing structures. *Uncounted** shifts the focus from the visible manifestation of a (political) movement to the energies, desires, and affects that produce its form, rhythms, and intensity. The performances unfolded within their own vocabulary, suggesting how waves of appropriation and dedication can signal liquid forms of identification and solidarity.

This visitor report by Anik Fournier was written at the invitation of If I Can't Dance, and follows the various performances of *Uncounted** by Emily Roysdon, presented over four days during the Performance Days festival, 27 November - 3 December 2014, Amsterdam.