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doi:10.1017/S0149767718000219

Jay Pather Reimagining Site-Specific Cartographies of Belonging

Ketu H. Katrak

> I was interested in space, and then public space as animate, as a personal and political phenomenon, a powerful conveyor and custodian of power, emotion, and meaning [433]. . . . My singular pleasure in site-specific performance beyond its interplay of architecture, urban spaces and dance is that the moment of interaction is largely uncontrolled and uncontrollable in so many respects [442]. . . . The performed moment is so alive and unyielding on risk, vulnerabilities, truth and openness. This for me encapsulates what living in South Africa requires us to face and build, the coalface of what we as individuals can do in those rich moments of interaction, this opportunity in an emerging democracy to find something new and miraculous in each other, in those private moments in those public spaces, forever shifting, forever tilting [443]. (Pather 2013a, 433, 442, 443)

Jay Pather is a unique South African artist, an award-winning choreographer, curator of site-specific choreographic works, theater director, academic, and cultural activist. I describe Pather as an "ethno-global" artist—a South African first (of Indian, Tamil heritage) with a global vision.[1] He describes himself as Indian in heritage and black in ideology; indeed, he is recognized as a mentor who fosters black artists, some of whose lives he has transformed. He is recognized today as a visionary figure on the South African arts scene playing influential leadership roles in arts organizations and festivals.[2]

In this essay, I argue that as an innovative choreographer and curator of site-specific works, Pather uses space creatively to inspire social change by providing access and challenging social, cultural, and political exclusions of South Africans of color during and after apartheid (1948–1994). I explore Pather's site-specific work by providing a theoretical context of the conjunctures and disjunctures of space and race in his choreographed site-specific work, *Cityscapes*, first performed in Durban in 2002, and in Johannesburg in 2003. Parts of the same work were entitled *From Before* and presented in New York City in 2004. In each city, *Cityscapes* was received

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767718000219 Published online by Cambridge University Press

differently since Pather selected different sites for the same performances. *Cityscapes* demonstrates Pather's imaginative, bold, and unique juxtapositions in the South African context, such as a skateboarder youth encountering a black matriarch or pantsula performers (a popular dance style, described below, of South African blacks in townships) in pin-striped business suits carrying briefcases going up the down escalators in an affluent shopping mall.

I further argue that Pather's aesthetic-political vision deploys art to raise issues of social justice. With his site-specific work he aims to provide access to creative works to South Africans of diverse races, classes, sexualities, physical abilities and languages in domestic, public, legal and governmental spaces, to bring together diverse populations, whether on the street or inside historic buildings, and to ignite unexpected conversations in a society with a devastating history of racial segregation. Even in public spaces Pather's works are as technically accomplished as inside a theater. Pather fulfills these goals by recognizing the human body as a symbol in the struggle for equality. Pather's interventions in specific sites as in *Cityscapes* (2002, 2003, 2004) that I discuss below (even as I allude to his other creative choreographies) are echoed in Edward Soja's notion of "transdisciplinary perspectives" that includes "social and historical along with the spatial" (Soja 2000, 3).

Pather's aim to provide access to high-quality artistic work to diverse South Africans is a political act in that it challenges the use of spaces recently forbidden to the majority of black and colored South Africans. Controlling space was critical; indeed, it was the foundation on which apartheid functioned, such as the forced relocations of populations of color.[3] Henri Lefebvre's text, *The Production of Space* provides important theoretical engagements with location and space that resonate in my discussion of Pather's transformative uses of sites for his creative work. For instance, Lefebvre describes space as "a social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure" ([1974] 1991, 94). I will show below that the very forms of Pather's site-specific works are, indeed, "intimately bound up with function and structure" (94).

This article is divided into three sections: first, I discuss Pather's personal and intellectual biography as choreographer, curator, and director. The synergy among these previously distinct roles are at the forefront of twenty-first-century scholarly and conceptual illuminations in the fields of dance and performance. As director since 2010 of the Gordon Institute for Performing and Creative Arts (GIPCA), recently renamed Institute for Creative Arts (ICA) at the University of Cape Town, where he is also associate professor of drama, Pather curates symposia and exhibitions, interdisciplinary workshops with performers, scholars, and literary and visual artists. Second, I discuss theoretical concepts on space and place presented by Pather himself in a landmark essay entitled, "Shifting Spaces, Tilting Time" (2013a) that articulates his reasons for using particular locations wherein he choreographs the human body dialoguing with architecture and occupying sites resonant with history for South Africans. In this discussion, I include thinkers on space whose ideas resonate with Pather's such as Lefebvre, Soja, Edward Casey, and South African scholar Clare Craighead, among others. Third, I analyze the roots of site-specific work in ritual. These theoretical ideas are illustrated in Pather's choreographed and curated *Cityscapes*.

Pather's Personal and Intellectual Biography

> My sister, three brothers and I lived in a small flat opposite the Shah Jehan cinema and the Himalaya Hotel on the corner of Beatrice and Grey streets [in Durban]. The skyline (included) a tower of a church, a turret of a mosque and the spiraling apex of a modernist building. I recall peering through a small window of the flat on a Saturday night, watching the dressed-to-the-nines patrons of the Mountains club at the Himalaya transform after 11 pm when all hell broke loose, with fists and bottles flying. (Pather quoted in Robertson 2002)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767718000219 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Pather's vivid memory of his own inner-city childhood recounted above includes "the kind of ambiguity and incongruity," as Robertson notes in the same review, "that Pather sews as a thematic thread through *Cityscapes*"; this is discussed further below.

Born in 1959, Pather grew up during apartheid and enduring two periods of state of emergency. His family lived in Durban where the majority of South African Indians reside even today, making it, in Anahita Mukherji's words, "the largest Indian city" (2011) outside India. Pather's Hindu household was politically aware and progressive. Pather attended the University of Durban, Westville (now called the University of KwaZulu-Natal), earning a BA (Honors) in English and African Literature in 1982. The European-based curriculum exerted a prejudicial self-consciousness about language since "deviant sounds" of nonwhite students had to be erased via laboratory exercises (Pather 2013b). Such attitudes hardly respect one's personhood and human individuality. When Pather received a Fulbright award in 1984 to study for an MA in theater at New York University, away from the daily onslaughts of apartheid, he remarks (in the same interview) that he felt fully "human" for the first time in his life. Pather's teacher, Richard Schechner, had a significant impact on him. While in New York City, Pather encountered political theater and visual art, and came out as gay though sexuality is part of larger progressive politics. He returned to South Africa in 1985 and has been based there ever since. As a politically progressive South African citizen, Pather's artistic contributions since the 1980s intervene in struggles for a just, nonracial, nonsexist society, even after apartheid's "supposed demise" in 1994. Since 1996, Pather has been artistic director of Siwela Sonke Dance Theater Company (SSDT; "*siwela sonke*" translates from isiZulu as "crossing over to a new place altogether").[4] The word "place" is significant in analyzing Pather's innovative site-specific work, interacting with buildings, as well as with a variety of public landmarks, whether inside Cape Town's City Hall, or outside, on iconic urban squares. In *Getting Back into Place* (2009), Edward S. Casey argues persuasively for the significance of "place" in philosophical inquiry rather than the primacy given to space and its attendant concept of time.

With his SSDT Company, Pather has choreographed award-winning works commissioned by prominent dance and arts organizations in South Africa such as FNB (First National Bank) Dance Umbrella (Johannesburg, 2003), Jomba! Contemporary Dance Festival (Durban, 2004, 2015), and National Arts Festival (Grahamstown, 2003) among others. Internationally, Pather and his Company have been invited to create work at the Metropolis Biennial in the Netherlands (2009), the World Social Forum in Mumbai (2004), New York City's African Arts Festival (2004) among others. He has showcased work in Madagascar, Angola, and Zanzibar as well as in India, Germany, London, and Australia. He is the recipient of a Brett Kebble Art Award (2004), FNB Vita Awards for Choreography (2000), Durban city's "Living Legend" Award (2016), and the University of Cape Town's Creative Works Award (2016).

Pather's choreography with SSDT is hybrid as he draws upon classical Indian, classical and popular South African dance styles and contemporary dance. Along with variety of movement, Pather, like other world-class dancemakers such as Akram Khan and Shobana Jeyasingh in Britain, creates a palimpsest of movement with visual art, video, and multimedia. Such an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach adds layers to bodily movement, as when a dancer's human body works in tandem with visual art and multimedia. Further, as theorized by Erin Brannigan (2015), dance as a body of knowledge has the physical capability of intervening in, even transforming fields such as visual art. For instance, Pather's choreography in his movement and multimedia work entitled *Body of Evidence* (2008, not discussed in this essay) layers his dancers' bodies with larger than life visual projections of parts of the human body, such as the spine, the foot, or the eyes, taken from Henry Gray's *Anatomy of the Human Body* ([1858] 2015). *Body of Evidence* probes memories of violence, during apartheid and after, held in the human body's bones and muscles.

As with movement and visual art, the concept of "choreographer as curator," as discussed in Tom Sellar's and Bertie Ferdman's coedited special issue, "Performance Curators," in *Theater* (2014), is

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767718000219 Published online by Cambridge University Press

highly relevant for Pather, whose curatorial activity in conceptualizing and organizing festivals in Cape Town such as *Infecting the City* Public Arts Festival (since 2012), and "Live Art" (since 2014) involves his choreographic skills. Dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster in the introduction to her edited volume, *Worlding Dance*, notes how "dance studies is expanding and diversifying throughout the world" (Foster 2009, 1). The role of curator, reserved until recently for visual art, is useful in redefining performance, bringing live art to live audiences, in varying locales that encourage spectator interaction. Specifically, in South Africa, taking art to diverse people in city centers and inside historic buildings confronts specific boundaries of spaces where blacks and people of color were forbidden to go during apartheid. Pather's curation of the yearly *Infecting the City* public art festival in Cape Town involves selecting artistic works and finding thought-provoking locations for them along with his choreographic acumen. A variety of performances during these public art festivals use inter- and multidisciplinary techniques that cross borders between dance, theater, visual art, multimedia, and technology, echoing Lefebvre's remark that multiple disciplines coming together evoke "ways to thread through the complexities of the modern world" for artists (quoted in Soja 2000, 6).

Such synergistic connections among expressive forms of dance and music, poetry and sculpture, drama and movement are part of African and Indian worldviews that do not compartmentalize these artistic expressions and thus, are in line with Pather's South African home and Indian ancestry. As an artist-activist, his political commitment connects integrally both to South African history as well as to progressive global performance as showcased in Pather's choreography and curation of site-specific *Cityscapes*. The latter was performed in different sites, such as the Durban beachfront (out of bounds for blacks and colored people during apartheid) or inside a hotel room, among other locations in Durban and Johannesburg. Pather's avant-garde choreographic aesthetic includes dancers' physical movement along with video, speech, and visual art.

Theoretical Concepts of Space and Race

> A revolution that does not produce *a new space* has not realized its full potential. . . . A social transformation to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and on space—though its impact need not occur at the same rate, or with equal force, in each of these areas (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 54). . . . "Change life! Change society!" These precepts mean nothing without the production of *an appropriate space* . . . a critical analysis of all spatial politics. . . . State-imposed normality makes permanent transgression inevitable. (73, emphasis added)

Lefebvre's concepts of transforming space in order to effect social change are relevant to Pather's uses of space. I analyze the conjuncture of space and race as a critical aspect of South African history in which theorizing space begins with the struggle over land ownership between indigenous peoples and colonial occupiers. Displacement is woven into South Africa's painful history of land dispossession endured by legitimate black landowners who were driven away or forced to labor for the conquering British or Dutch. Entire indigenous groups such as the Khoikhoi were decimated in this brutal history.

The indigenous black population, composed of different ethnicities, inhabited the southern tip of the African continent. That population's history can be traced back nearly two thousand years to the San and the Khoikhoi, together known as the Khoisan people, generally identified by their occupations—the San as hunter-gatherers and the Khoikhoi as pastoral herders. In modern history, their earliest encounter with Europeans was with the Portuguese at the Cape around the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. By the end of the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth century, English and Dutch seafarers entered the Cape. Europeans traded metal for the Khoikhoi's

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767718000219 Published online by Cambridge University Press

cattle. When the Dutch established the Dutch East India Company in 1652 and became settlers, battles ensued over land ownership, an ongoing issue for many South African blacks even today. Although there were three Khoikhoi-Dutch wars—in 1659, 1673, and from 1674 to1677—the Khoikhoi population was defeated, expelled, and perhaps worst of all, forcibly dispossessed of their land. The Khoikhoi suffered an enormous loss of life due to a smallpox epidemic, "against which the Khoikhoi had no natural resistance or indigenous medicines. The disease had been brought to the Cape by Dutch sailors" (South African History Online 2014).

Pather's site-specific works connect to contemporary locations as well as evoking the past when dealing with land issues of dispossession rooted in the Native Land Act of 1913. There is a continuing search for the reclamation of property and human dignity as showcased in Pather's curated symposium entitled "Land: Performances, Installations, Film Screenings" (November 21–24, 2013). This symposium took place under Pather as director of the GIPCA at the University of Cape Town. In "Land" creative artists and scholars explored trajectories of personal history, home, and displacement. As video artist Sivuyiswe Giba notes poignantly in a multimedia installation:

> Longing. Searching. Lost without a home, even in this land of my foremothers. We roam the land searching for a place of our own, where we belong. . . . I have superimposed myself onto the material and aesthetic that is land, questioning who the purveyors of land are and how we relate to land and locate ourselves within it when history has not . . . represented our truth. (Giba, n.d.)

Pather has also curated symposia on various subjects such as "Republic: Art, Nation-State, and Authority" (2011) and "Remaking Place" (2015) at GIPCA. In 2014, he launched the Live Art Festival in Cape Town; in 2017, this festival took place under GIPCA's new name: Institute for Creative Arts (ICA), with Pather continuing as its director.

Another community to which Pather belongs, namely, South Africans of Indian origin, dealt with issues of belonging from the time of their migration to South Africa. Some of them had been indentured laborers and others had been free traders. This community, caught in the middle between whites and blacks, continues to occupy an uncomfortable in-between space. Indians constituted their own immigrant community in this new land where their commonalities took precedence over their religious, regional, caste, and class differences as defined in India. Under apartheid, since 1948, this community was controlled under systemic racial divisions, as were blacks and coloreds, until independence in 1994, when Nelson Mandela was voted in as the first black president of a democratic South Africa.

Although Pather's goals are never narrowly ethnocentric (as in connecting *only* to his Indian ancestry), his progressive vision significantly uses art to militate against injustices to South African blacks (majority) as well as to brown and colored peoples who were excluded from the full privileges of citizenship. Painful expressions of exclusion forbade blacks and coloreds from public spaces. During apartheid they suffered outsiderness, even as citizens, from certain whites-only locations. The Group Areas Act of 1950 deliberately forced people of different races living harmoniously side-by-side to give up their homes and move to segregated areas, partly to prevent intercommunity political activity against apartheid. South Africans of Indian origin experienced this legislation most bitterly as they had to give up their homes bought after years of hard work and move to separate ethnic enclaves.

Even in postapartheid times (similar to what Neil Lazarus describes as not the morning but the "mourning after" independence in many postcolonial nations), the apartheid legacy of *where* blacks can afford to live and work continues to haunt the majority, who still live in townships at the edges of cities, enduring economic inequities (Lazarus 1990, 4). It remains ironic that one of the

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definitions of space found in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "a continuous area or expanse, which is free, available, or unoccupied" (2000), was falsified completely by apartheid's racialized system of segregating and mandating where different colored populations could live. Lefebvre's passionate argument that occupying certain spaces is connected to possibilities of revolutionary change, connects to Pather's choreography in postapartheid times as seen in *Cityscapes* and other works, wherein South African black and colored citizens reclaim spaces denied to them during apartheid.

Similarly, it is appropriate for my analysis of Pather's work to consider ideas advanced on "site" as a multidimensional concept. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "site" (as opposed to "space") as connected to a concrete place where "a particular event or activity is occurring or has occurred" (2000). In *Site-Specific Performance* (2010), Mike Pearson puts forward two issues regarding "site" that resonate with Pather's site-specific work. First, Pearson cautions against defining a "type" of site, whether .site-determined, site-oriented, site-referenced, site-conscious, site-responsive, or site-related. Although each site has different nuances, in this essay., I focus on Pather's site-specific work that can move from outdoor locations, for example, from a city center, to indoors, such as inside a shopping mall. In these various configurations of sites, it is important to recognize that they can overlap. For instance, a site-specific work may be connected, indeed determined by a location's historical significance, such as the Slave Museum in Cape Town or Constitutional Hill in Johannesburg. Even if a locale's history is familiar to onlookers, an artist like Pather may subvert, question, or draw out different meanings from the site's historical resonance, making it relevant for contemporary times.

Pather's site-responsive choreography (not discussed in this essay) is related to site-specific works, though the former has additional meanings that connect a work's theme to its location. Site, as part of a larger discussion of space, includes related words such as "place," "location," and most important, Pather's use of history-saturated sites that add the dimension of time to considerations of site. This provokes the conjuncture and disjuncture of when (temporal dimension) a performance is most relevant in a certain site (spatial).[5]

Second, Pearson's preference to define site-specific work as "performance: to embrace the fullest range of practices originating in theatre and visual art, and to demonstrate affiliations with the academic field of performance studies" (2010, 15), echoes with Pather's embrace of the word "performance" to delineate his multifaceted work located in many sites (Pather 2013b). Pather enables us "to keep our contemporary consciousness of spatiality, our critical geographical imagination" "creatively open to redefinition and expansion in new directions; and to resist any attempt to narrow or confine its scope" (Soja 2000, 2).

When asked, "how he determines his sites" in an interview with Terri Davidoff, Pather responds: "It is something about [the sites] that is iconic, the *genus loci* or spirit of the place. . . . It has to do with the underlying *raison d'être* of the spaces themselves that are sometimes aesthetically loaded and at other times proffer other possibilities, not least of which is to comment on the space itself" (quoted in Davidoff 2006, 141). Pather's faith in the human body that can "control meanings within what can potentially be alienating urban spaces" is expressed in his essay, "Shifting Spaces, Tilting Time" (2013a, 433). He portrays dynamic interactions between certain well-known architectural buildings, such as Durban City Hall or Cape Town railway station, and the people inside these sites or walking outside them.

Pather attains his goal of providing access and belonging to people previously kept outside city centers by creating new ways of communicating among diverse South Africans. He challenges the vestiges of apartheid laws by taking over whites-only spaces for all South Africans. By performing in recently still segregated geographical spaces, Pather enables unlikely populations to rub shoulders literally in public spaces where during apartheid, blacks and whites remained totally separate in their daily lives and rarely shared any artistic work together. Pather confronts the apartheid-era

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767718000219 Published online by Cambridge University Press

attitudes of white superiority that led to low self-esteem for blacks by including blacks as performers and spectators in his site-specific work. As dancers and viewers, blacks reclaim their rights as South African citizens with their full humanity. Pather's uses of specific sites creates spaces for communication across communities. He reclaims the "public" in public spaces, hence democratizing space.

Pather interrogates discriminatory attitudes that regulate who belongs in certain public spaces, who is left out, and how public art can foster a sense of belonging. Without romanticizing the possibilities of public art, he aims to challenge "a kind of alienation" propagated by certain artistic forms and to show how public art potentially enhances "interconnectedness" among South Africa's diverse people (Pather 2013a, 433). He admits that his early work, though well received, "did not reach the kind of audience [that he] was interested in, an audience whose roots [he] share[s]" (437). In order to appeal to such spectators, he incorporated popular South African urban dance forms such as pantsula and discovered that "public art may well be an ideal link" between artist and audience.[6]

Pather's performers, in site-specific and other works, include black women with ample hips, "big bodies or small bodies, men who are not the princes of ballet" (Pather 2005a, quoted in Davidoff 2006, 136). He layers his choreography innovatively from a palette of dance languages—South African dance styles such as Zulu and Xhosa (denigrated during colonial and apartheid eras, that Pather recuperates as "classical" with their own idioms), Indian classical dance styles such as bharatanatyam and kathak, South African popular dance styles such as pantsula, isicathimaya, gumboot dance, along with a hybrid commingling of modern and contemporary dance. Pather is profoundly conscious of South Africa's colonial legacy; hence, even as he deploys modern and contemporary dances of Western origin, he uses them as relevant for the South African context.[7] He emphasizes the language of gesture, of physical theater and the body, that can transcend linguistic barriers among speakers of South Africa's eleven languages recognized by the country's constitution.

In his interview with Davidoff, Pather cites two main elements that attract him to site-specific work: first, he embraces the challenge of taking contemporary art to the street and presenting it in a way that is not patronizing to an audience of passersby, but with full attention to technical details of lighting, music, and costume. He is committed to making such work available to people of modest means who may never have set foot in a theater (Pather 2005a, quoted in Davidoff 2006, 139). The second element lies in Pather's interest in dialogues between the moving body in space and spatial tension. The performer interacts with space that is regarded "as animate, as a powerful conveyor of meaning and emotion. The performer engages with the space in both a physical and an emotional manner" (139).

Site-Specific *Cityscapes*' Roots in Ritual and in Postmodernity: Space and the State

> My site-specific performances stemmed from an interest in the essential connectedness of the moving body to the space within which it moved: the body as it is framed variously by the architecture of a building, the pavement or concrete concourse, a narrow, stony road of desolate recently bulldozed waste land rendering the human frame vulnerable under an open sky. (Pather, 2013a, 433)

Pather does not claim to be doing something new in his site-specific work, such as in *Cityscapes*, since outdoor performances are rooted in ritual in both ancient and modern times. In ritual, there is transformative potential, whether in a temple or on the street. These spaces are remarkably different from the confined spaces of indoor theaters where audience responses are controlled by the walled space itself. Not to romanticize the "freedom" (and rigors) of the street, however, there is an open-endedness to the affect produced by dancers/actors and a similar freedom for

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767718000219 Published online by Cambridge University Press

spectators who can engage or simply leave the space at will. The flexibility of outdoor space allows dancers/actors to interact with spectators, some of whom may have stopped out of curiosity. This may lead to unplanned responses. The roots in ritualistic practices of storytelling or communal sharing lie beneath contemporary site-specific performances.

Along with ancient ritual, Pather notes in "Shifting Spaces, Tilting Time" that in inner city urban spaces "our rituals have changed concomitant with a fledgling democracy ... [with] our embrace of an international post-modernity" (2013a, 435). He welcomes the postmodern approach with its gaps and fissures, finding that "site-specific performance in referencing its history to ritual ... allows for momentary coherence that [he] has found to be compelling" (435).

In *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture* (1989), theater historian Marvin Carlson discusses how places of performance embody social and cultural meanings, "which in turn help to structure the meaning of the entire theatre experience" (26). Carlson continues: "City street and market places continued to serve for the ancient forms of civic entertainment—the parades and processions ... the acrobats, farceurs, and mimes whose descendants may still be seen today in the clowns, mime, fire-eaters, and jugglers found in such popular urban gathering places" (26). Even as cities around these performances change, and even as traditional city squares may disappear, their "modern equivalents (are) found in pedestrian malls" where walking and shopping occurs together (27). He notes that French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau was an early proponent of outdoor performances. Rousseau "recognized a connection between the institution of theatre and the urban culture in which it developed"; he distrusted both and "banned both the institution of theatre and its architectural housing from his ideal republic, which was to have only open-air festivals, civic celebrations" (Rousseau quoted in Carlson 1989, 29). According to Carlson (1989, 32), Romain Rolland took Rousseau's banning of indoor theater further into "a condemnation of capitalism." Rolland favored "proletarian pleasures" in the open air and remarked that: "A happy and free people needs festivals more than theatre houses" (Rolland quoted in Carlson 1989, 32).

Pather is in line with these thinkers in recognizing the semiotics of the street, skillfully and artistically mining specific locations' political, even overdetermined resonances in racially divided South Africa. Performance theorist Richard Schechner describes activities that unfolded in nontheatrical sites, such as marches for civil rights and other protest gatherings, challenging state authorities as "American prototypes" of theatre (2003, 67). In apartheid South Africa, funeral processions often turned into political rallies on the streets and were confronted by police. Spaces contain discriminatory practices imposed by the state. Spaces also hold memories, whether in the confined walls of a prison or in the open market square.

Pather gives new meaning to working "on the edge," startling spectators with creative interventions that challenge the history of segregated spaces, embodying what Lefebvre describes in *The Production of Space* as "the long *history of space*, even though space is neither a 'subject' nor an 'object' but rather a social reality—that is to say, a set of relations and forms" ([1974] 1991, 116). Let me illustrate how Pather's use of a site ignites its "long history" via a segment of *Cityscapes* that unfolds in a prestigious shopping mall that carries apartheid-era remnants of a whites-only area. Pather disrupts this past by presenting black dancers as business men wearing suits and carrying brief cases in this space, not attending to business activities but dancing pantsula. Through his innovative juxtaposition of black business men dancing pantsula, Pather aims to startle diverse spectators, even inspire unexpected conversations among those who would usually inhabit segregated neighborhoods inside or outside cities. Pantsula and namastap (folk dance forms from western South Africa and southern Namibia) performers dressed in Armani suits with cell phones surprise spectators who recognize the styles and see them in fresh ways in their contemporary representation with performers dancing to a remix of Carl Orff's "O Fortuna" from *Carmina Burana* (1935).

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Gumboot dancers performing in another section of the traditionally whites-only shopping mall evoke postmodern juxtapositions between people shopping and the dancers. Created by black miners, gumboot dance is rooted in their work experience wearing gumboots in mucky environments underground. Davidoff recognizes that "such juxtapositions not only erode decades of prejudice . . . but ultimately develop understanding" among diverse people (2006, 148).

Similar to Lefebvre distinguishing among different kinds of spaces—physical, mental, social—exploring "'real' space, namely, the space of social practice" (Lefebvre, [1974] 1991, 14), Pather, too, deploys these different registers in the South African context. "Social spaces" during apartheid, marked and marred by racialized divisions, forced black bodies to segregated margins in townships with substandard living conditions; they could enter white neighborhoods *only* to provide labor. There was the further outrage of the misnomer of rural "homelands" to which blacks were relegated, where the land was arid and economic opportunities minimal. Spatial designations of everyday life—the marketplace, a shopping center, a park—remain regulated and still need decoding in postapartheid society. Pather's site-specific work confronts old racial codes and echoes Lefebvre's question, namely, "what paradigms [would] give them [spatial codes] their meaning, [and] what syntax governs their organization?" ([1974] 1991, 16). Lefebvre continues: "If indeed spatial codes have existed, each characterizing a particular spatial/social practice, and if these codifications have been *produced* along with the space corresponding to them, then the job of theory is to elucidate their rise, their role, and their demise" (17). "Spatial codes" to use Lefebvre's phrase, governed particular bodies during apartheid. Postapartheid society opens up avenues for curating public art that is Pather's passion. As curator of the largest and most diverse annual public arts festival in South Africa, *Infecting the City*, Pather aims to reclaim the "interconnectedness" among diverse South Africans that was "impeded" during apartheid, leading to "physical and psychic separation still waiting to be healed" (Pather 2012). He adds that "public art" can enable this healing since "it has always been a part of who we are on this continent, in this country, given our history of public ritual, public protest, and celebration."

Pather's aesthetic-political goals of access and of connecting diverse South Africans are realized in *Cityscapes*. In 2002, such site-specific work was quite new in South Africa. My analysis of *Cityscapes* relies on South African veteran journalist, Adrienne Sichel. As an engaged witness, her observations are vivid, astute, and reliable in terms of her position as arts writer for *The Star* (equivalent in stature to the *New York Times*). I also draw upon artist-scholars' comments such as those from Lliane Loots, lecturer in theater at the University of KwaZulu Natal, artistic director of both Flatfoot Dance Company and Jomba! Contemporary Dance Experience Festival as well as those from Clare Craighead, assistant artistic director of Flatfoot Dance Company.

In *Cityscapes*, Pather reimagines cartographies of belonging where the human body, dialoguing with architecture, remains a site of historical and political references. Pather's choreography of *Cityscapes* negotiates interactions between Durban's iconic architecture and people. In his director's notes, Pather remarks: "Spaces shape movements of people who, in turn, shape those spaces" (quoted in Robertson 2002). Journalist Heather Robertson in "Space Explorer" notes that Pather offers a "prosaic impetus" for his site-specific work on city streets in his remark: "I'm fascinated by Durban's architecture and the reason is quite pedestrian. I'm a pedestrian—I don't drive" (Pather quoted in Robertson 2002).

Spatial correspondences between brick and concrete and live human bodies fosters connections among people, previously separated forcibly. It is significant that Pather chose Durban as the site for this work, the city in which he grew up and that is historically significant as the port where the first indentured Indians arrived in the 1860s; today, Durban has the highest number of South Africans of Indian origin. In *Cityscapes*, Pather commemorates Durban's sites such as Grey Street known for its Indian businesses and the beach front among other locations. Pather's imagination interacts with this city "in a way that celebrates our uniqueness as Durban(ites)"

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767718000219 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(Pather quoted in Loots 2002). In "Cityscape 'happenings' [that] catch Durban off guard" (2002), Sichel comments usefully that Pather has "lovingly hijacked architecture and landscape that he [has] impregnated with dance and music forms which tap into the city's glorious cultural contradictions and dazzling incongruities. It also plugs straight into Pather's yeasty social transformation and displaced identities. Race, religion, tradition and art are catapulted into fresh aesthetics and expressions" (10).

Sichel's vivid account in the same review, "Cityscape 'happenings' [that] catch Durban off guard" (2002) enables us to visualize the five segments of *Cityscapes* performances across Durban:

> Rarely has a love letter been as astutely cross-cultural and joyously multidisciplinary as the month-long site-specific *Cityscapes*.
>
> Consisting of two phases—rehearsed and performed outside on location and then relocated inside—this merger of theatre aesthetics with street smarts culminated ... in a four-day innovative performance cycle at Durban Art Gallery for a paying audience.
>
> The targeted sites—the North Beach Pier, the Out of Africa Coffee Shop at The Workshop, a room in the Albany Hotel, the Musgrave Centre and 320 West Street—caught the general public off-guard.
>
> Irony, cultural context and conceptual wizardry deliciously fused in one marvelously entertaining fell swoop. This formula was echoed in each of the five innovative segments accompanied by their own video installation filmed on location. (Sichel 2002, 10)

Sichel provides lively details about *Cityscapes*' outdoor performance at North Beach where Pather used "Shembe reed rattles, Celtic steel taps and Kathak bells [that] echo, and transmogrify Indian Ocean waves" (10). Further, South African scholar, Clare Craighead in her essay "When the Rainbow is Not Enough: Site-specificity, the body as site, and intercultural practice in Jay Pather's *Cityscapes* (Durban 2002)" analyzes how each dance form "interprets and accesses" the rhythm of the waves without any one of the three dance forms dominating (Craighead 2010, 270). Craighead continues:

> Spatially, there is no "centre stage" as it were. Rather than merely sharing rhythms, each form listens to the others to create a percussive soundtrack ... and at times clash in a cacophony of sound and unmatched rhythms in their responses to the ebb and flow of Durban's Indian Ocean. (271)

Another site of *Cityscapes* showcases a startling image of a black woman rapp-jumping down the wall of the upmarket shopping mall called Musgrave Centre. Pather comments to journalist Heather Robertson in "Space Explorer" (2002) that this dramatic jump enables him to parody consumerism and the risks involved when people move up in economic class with privileges of credit cards instead of cash. The possibility of using plastic is exciting and fearful especially for folks moving from rural to urban areas, along with making the change from cash to credit.

During the "Hotel" segment of *Cityscapes*, Pather involves his performers and spectators in a profoundly intimate scenario. "Hotel" is set inside a fifth-floor room at the Albany Hotel (Durban), where ten spectators stand close to the two performers as witnesses rather than onlookers in a traditional performance. The audience becomes part of the intimacy as they participate, given the closeness, almost viscerally in the fraught relationship between a white man and black woman. The movements vary between tenderness and violence (based on physical theater) as Pather uses

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"language as a point of communicative clash (where performers Ntombi Gasa and Denton Douglas speak across each other in isiZulu and English respectively)" remarks Craighead, "and at other times engaging a more subtle communicative clash through the notion of secrecy" (Craighead 2010, 272). The climax is stunning as a tall, clay-covered figure emerges from a cupboard, puts on "a pair of dark sunglasses and is wrapped in brown/gold tulle". This visual image showcases what Craighead endorses as Pather's artistic acumen in mixing "traditional and the contemporary cultures in South Africa" (272).

Although *Cityscapes* was presented first in 2002, "the seeds" for the "Hotel" segment, Pather remarks, were planted years back in 1996 when he stayed at The Albany Hotel in central Durban for four weeks while working on his dance-theater work, *Ahimsa-Ubuntu* (1996). Since Pather does not drive, he remarks: "walking a lot, but also walking on late afternoons, early morning, I would see the city in a very different way and almost, it was like seeing in black and white. I began to be aware of a city, that without the people, speaks ... is resonant ... there are these ghosts ... these voices ... but when you put people in ... the dialogue is so rich" (unpublished interview with Craighead in 2005, quoted in Craighead 2010, 272).

Cityscapes, funded by South Africa's National Arts Council, the National Arts and Culture Trust, and Durban Arts, is remarkable most especially for "its collaborative impetus" remarks Sichel (2002, 10). The work included forty-two dancers from different dance companies—Eric Shabalala's Shwibeka Dance Company, One Hour Pantsula Company, the Celtic Dance Company, Pravika's Kathak Kendra, Lliane Loots' Flatfoot Dance Theater Company, and video artists Junaid Ahmed, Thando Mamma, Storm Janse van Rensburg, and Greg Streak, who documented the site-specific performances from their own perspectives and later shared them in the Durban Art Gallery for a paying audience. In the same review, Sichel judges this collaborative enterprise as setting "new parameters for public art ... and rais(ing) the bar on cultural tourism. *Cityscapes* is about exposing heritage and cross-pollinating peopled spaces" (2002, 10).

In 2003, the prestigious FNB Dance Umbrella invited *Cityscapes* to Johannesburg. Sites selected in this city included the Oriental Plaza, the Carlton Centre escalators, the upscale Sandton shopping center (associated with expensive stores and wealthy clients), and a room inside the Devonshire Hotel in Braamfontein. As in Durban, the performances culminated at the Johannesburg Art Gallery with fifty dancers drawn from Johannesburg and Durban, with video artists "insinuating" themselves, in Sichel's vivid words, "into the crevices of public life and individual imagination with creative stealth and artistic guile" (2003, 10). Among the multiethnic dancers were white South Africans from the South African Ballet Theatre, appearing alongside classical Indian dancers of the Tribhangi Dance Theater Company along with black Shembe worshippers from Moving into Dance Mophatong, and Siwela Sonke dancers carrying silver umbrellas. An amazing juxtaposition unfolds when amid the sounds of ankle bells and Shembe rattles, "a boy on a skateboard zooms by in the shopping center—appearing to be a neighborhood kid" remarks Sichel, but "he was, in fact, Siwela Sonke's dancer, Denton Douglas" (10).

In showcasing different races performing together, Pather does not endorse the postapartheid slogan of *simunye*, translated as "we are one" in the new "rainbow nation." Rather, he deploys what Sichel calls "an ingenious ploy," namely, having all his performers' bodies and faces, ballet dancers, black, colored, and classical Indian dancers, "painted white with *umako* powder used for rituals. Skin-tone becomes irrelevant in this most color-conscious of societies. What counts are the rhythmic bodies, dancing to recorded ocean waves and Baaba Maal" (2003, 10). The ideal of "we are one" is hardly a reality in postapartheid South Africa; rather, this enforced unity paradoxically fosters separateness of local cultures and is similar, as Craighead notes, "to apartheid policies around 'separate but equal'" (2010, 260). The slogan of *simunye* encourages an uncritical celebration of multicultural unity; Pather objects to enforcing a fake unity among diverse people. His objections are echoed by Lliane Loots, who argues astutely that "multiculturalism in South African

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767718000219 Published online by Cambridge University Press

performance practice has lulled us into another type of stereotyping (dare one say racism)" (Loots 2001, 12). Rather, interculturalism "as a cultural in-betweenness, a place where cultures meet, dialogue and often clash," contends Craighead, is more resonant than multiculturalism in considering Pather's site-specific work (2010, 261). Pather's interculturalism raises important issues of "cultural access" and "ownership," and as Craighead notes, is realized in performance via "cultural layering and clashes within spheres of cultural practice and production" (262).

Cityscapes was Pather's first site-specific work that marks a significant period in his career as well as serving as a historic marker, as Craighead notes, "within the local South African performance-scape" (2010, 269). Pather's unique contribution lies in his selection of particular spaces, along with his creative inclusion of various dance styles and companies as well as local video artists who document segments of *Cityscapes* from their points of view. These videos, screened inside an art gallery link the outside locales of this video-making to the inside space of a gallery. Further, Pather transforms the usual gallery ambience by challenging separation of art works from spectators since these videos showcase dancers who are now the audience.

Sichel's reflection on *Cityscapes* over ten years after its first performance in 2002 encapsulates its key achievements: "*Cityscapes* plays with various clichés, textures, histories, architectural contexts and iconographies to create fresh aesthetics, which contain familiar touchstones but are wide open to interpretation" (e-mail to author, March 31, 2014). Pather himself in his 2015 TEDx talk entitled, "A Love Affair with Space," expresses his continuing fascination with urban sites for performance:

> The city as sensorium, as a space of wonder, as a space of rest, a city of wonder, inside shopping centers, inside shop windows, making parts of the city come alive with sound, through body paint, through smells, music, and touch. . . . Ultimately it is about you and us as a group owning the city [with] a sense of wonder, of occupying a land and a country, a city that actually feeds us not in a utilitarian way, but in a spiritual and in a centered, in a communal, a social way. (Pather 2015)

Pather draws on his skills as choreographer, curator, and theater director in his site-specific work in order to facilitate access to public spaces for diverse South African performers and audiences and to ignite dialogues among them. His creative choreography opens up new interpretations of dance forms, popular and classical, located in unexpected locales and in creative juxtapositions. Even as he recognizes the immense challenges facing South Africa, he remains hopeful that art plays a significant role in social justice work and that it uplifts ordinary South Africans' spirits, even when faced with inequities rooted in apartheid and prevailing in postapartheid times.

Notes

1. I coined the term "ethno-global" to describe the creative vision of world-class writers such as India's Arundhati Roy in an essay entitled, "The Arts of Resistance: Arundhati Roy, Denise Uyehara and the Ethno-Global Imagination" (Katrak 2009) in Anderson and Menon (2009). I also consider Jay Pather an ethno-global artist.

2. Pather served as chair of the selection committee of the National Arts Festival (previously called the Grahamstown Arts Festival) that takes place each July in Grahamstown. He is curator of the largest public arts festival, *Infecting the City* in Cape Town (since 2012), and cocurator of Spier Contemporary among other positions.

3. Draconian laws during apartheid included, among others, the Immorality Act (1927–1957) that forbade intimate relationships among different races, and Pass Laws (1923–1986) that controlled where South Africans of color could live and work. Colloquially, passes were called *dompas*, i.e., "dumb pass." The Group Areas Act (1950) forced South Africans of color to move from their homes to ethnic enclaves.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767718000219 Published online by Cambridge University Press

4. On February 1, 2016, Siwela Sonke Dance Theater (SSDT) Company named one of its principal founding members, Ms. Ntombi Gasa, as interim artistic director, with Pather as executive artistic director. Pather's choreography with SSDT is performed across Africa, Europe, and Asia. Most recently, on a US tour in summer 2016, Pather's choreographic collaboration with Cape Town's Janni Younge Productions (linked to the Handspring Puppet Theater Company, of 2008 *War Horse* fame) in Stravinsky's *Firebird* was performed with US symphony orchestras in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles, among other locations.

5. Pather's site-responsive dance-theater works include *Home* (2003) and *The Beautiful Ones Must Be Born* (2005b, adapting the title of Ghanaian novelist Ayi Kwei Armah's novel about postcolonial Ghana, *the beautiful ones are not yet born*), performed on historic Constitution Hill in Johannesburg. Pather's 2010 *Qaphela Caesar* (*Beware Caesar*) was set inside Cape Town's City Hall, using fourteen rooms for fourteen scenes; the same work was performed inside the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, and at the State Theater, Pretoria.

6. Pantsula is rooted in South African black townships and the *shabeen* (speakeasy) and *tsotsi* (gangster) culture of the 1950s. Director Oliver Schmitz's acclaimed 1987 film *Mapantsula* contextualized this history. In the mid-1980s, urban black teenager males claimed and developed this dance form and subculture with a strict dress code, performed in streets, in youth clubs, and at competitions and reached the formal dance stage only at the inaugural Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg in 1989. Today, the youth, including girls, as well as men and women perform and still compete in pantsula groups wearing street clothes and signature Converse brand sneakers. The signature style footwork, performed low to the ground, with lightning-quick steps sometimes demonstrates influences of Michael Jackson, American hip-hop and breakdancing. Post-1994 pantsula is part of South African popular culture, music, fashion, and contemporary theater dance. I am indebted to Adrienne Sichel for this information on pantsula, communicated to me via e-mail on March 20, 2016.

7. There are similarities and differences worldwide in creating contemporary hybrid choreographies; see Katrak (2011).

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