

BEGINNINGS

The journey began with a commission by UNCW's Office of the Arts. The only restrictions that were placed on me were: it has to be engaging for 3rd grade children and it has to be interactive.

I chose the topic of water.

Water is a common thread that runs through all my works. A common thread that runs through all our lives.

I began investigating the topic of water for all I could imagine. I created many small flashcards with a topic on each:

WATER - BODIES OF WATER - OUR BODIES IN WATER - WATER BODIES - WATER POLITICS - WATER PLAY - WATER WARS - THE WATER IN OUR BODIES - BODY WATER - POLLUTED WATER - CLEAN WATER - SOUNDS OF WATER - SCIENCE OF WATER - TINY WATER - BIG WATER - SURFACE WATER - DEEP WATER - STATES OF WATER - PHYSICS OF WATER - PHILOSOPHY OF WATER - POETRY OF WATER - WATER CYCLE - etc...

MORPHING

These topics began to form individual sections of the piece. Over time I condensed these topics down and some categories merged, some new ones emerged. The final scenes were titled as such:

WATER - BE WATER - LISTEN TO WATER - TALK WATER - EXPERIMENTAL SOUND KITCHEN - HELLO WATER: IT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE - WE NEED WATER - CHASING WATER - BOTTLED WATER - WHAT'S IN MY WATER? - WHAT WOULD WATER SAY? - THE BODY OF WATER - OUR BODIES IN WATER - BOILING POINT - BODIES OF WATER - WATER BODIES - SOURCE (of...?) - MOTIVATOR - MOVEMENT - INTERACTION - CONNECTING AND LETTING GO - PEE - SHRINKING HABITAT - 'THE SKY IS THE LIMIT': A TURTLE'S VIEW (CANOPY) - WE ARE ALL KIN UNDER THE SKIN - WATER IS FINITE - THE POETRY OF WATER - TRASH AND POLLUTION - CANOPY BECOMES CARPET: WHAT IS IN OUR FUTURE WILL BECOME OUR REALITY - A SEA OF TRASH - GOING DEEPER (to find ... food) - CARPET TO TAPESTRY: a backdrop against which everything else will be experienced - BIO-LUMINESCENCE - BEAUTY - DEATH IN THE NET - LETTER TO WATER - WATER, WE WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU

THE STAGE PERFORMANCE

The set design influenced the piece a great deal and gave me new opportunities to express concepts of pollution and impending future challenges: the 5,000 bottles were first assembled to hang down, forming a curtain, like a waterfall. We then figured out how to make it a canopy, beginning high up in the space, slowly moving down over time until it ends up on the floor, and finally change configuration to turn into a tapestry. The canopy signifies a race against time as well as our relationship to plastic pollution: at first the canopy is far away and doesn't hinder us at all. It looks beautiful floating high above.

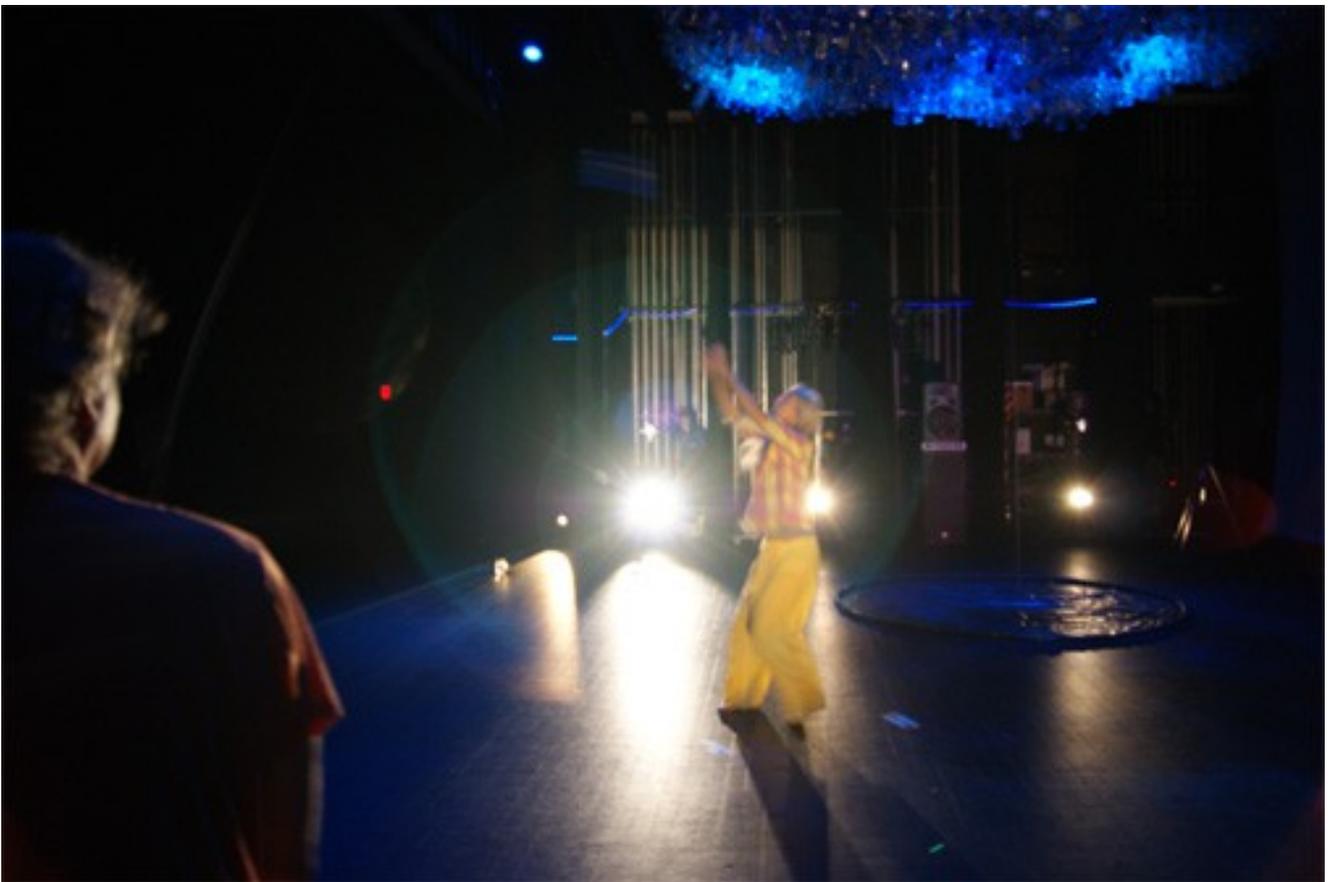
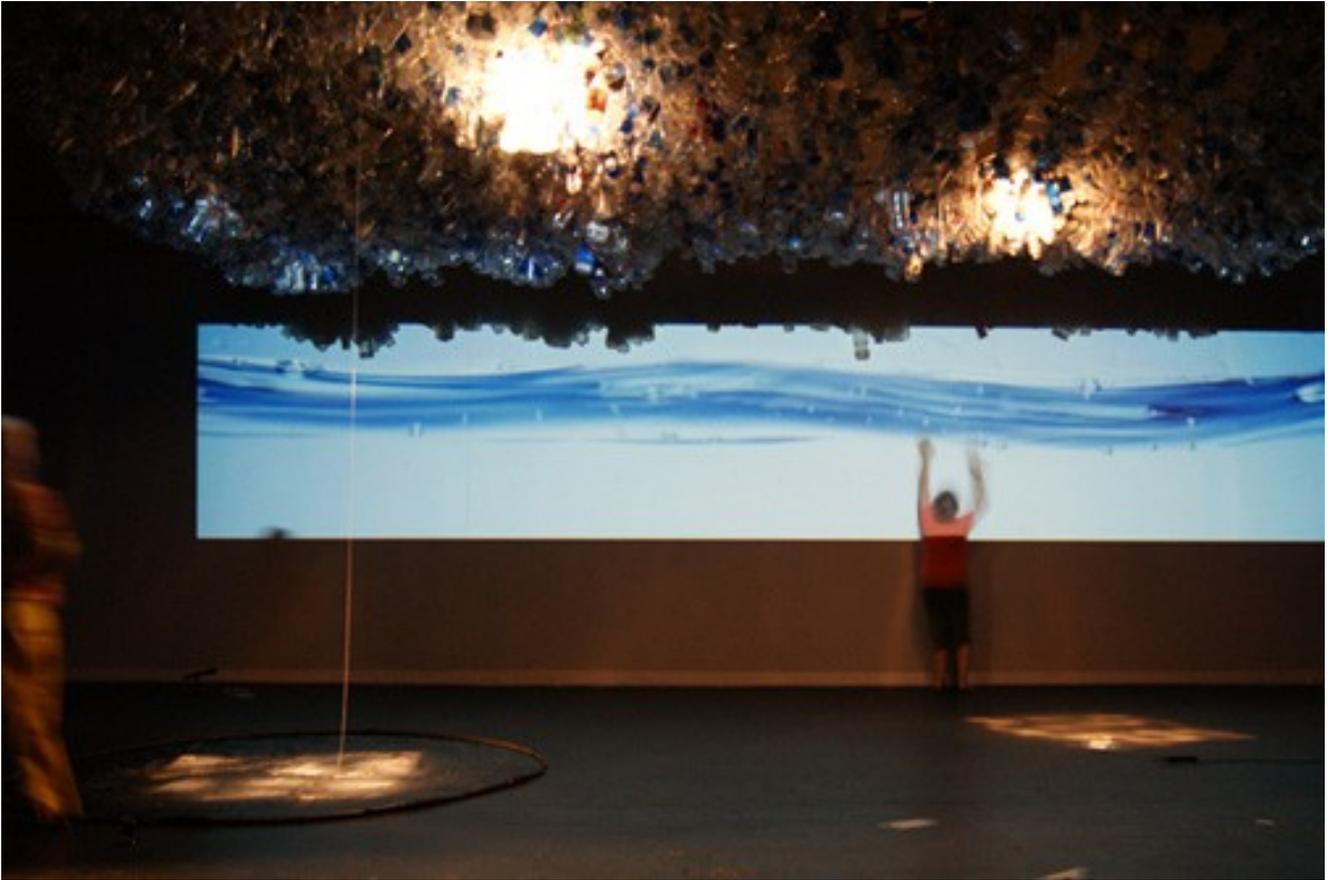


Photo of musician Perry Smith and choreographer/dancer Karola Lüttringhaus by Ryan Mulder.

It's motion toward the ground and toward the performers is hardly noticeable, and with each video that is projected onto the back screen, the canopy has come down to the next setting, nearing the heads of the performers, who have to crouch down, their space and the space for the video projections getting smaller and smaller.

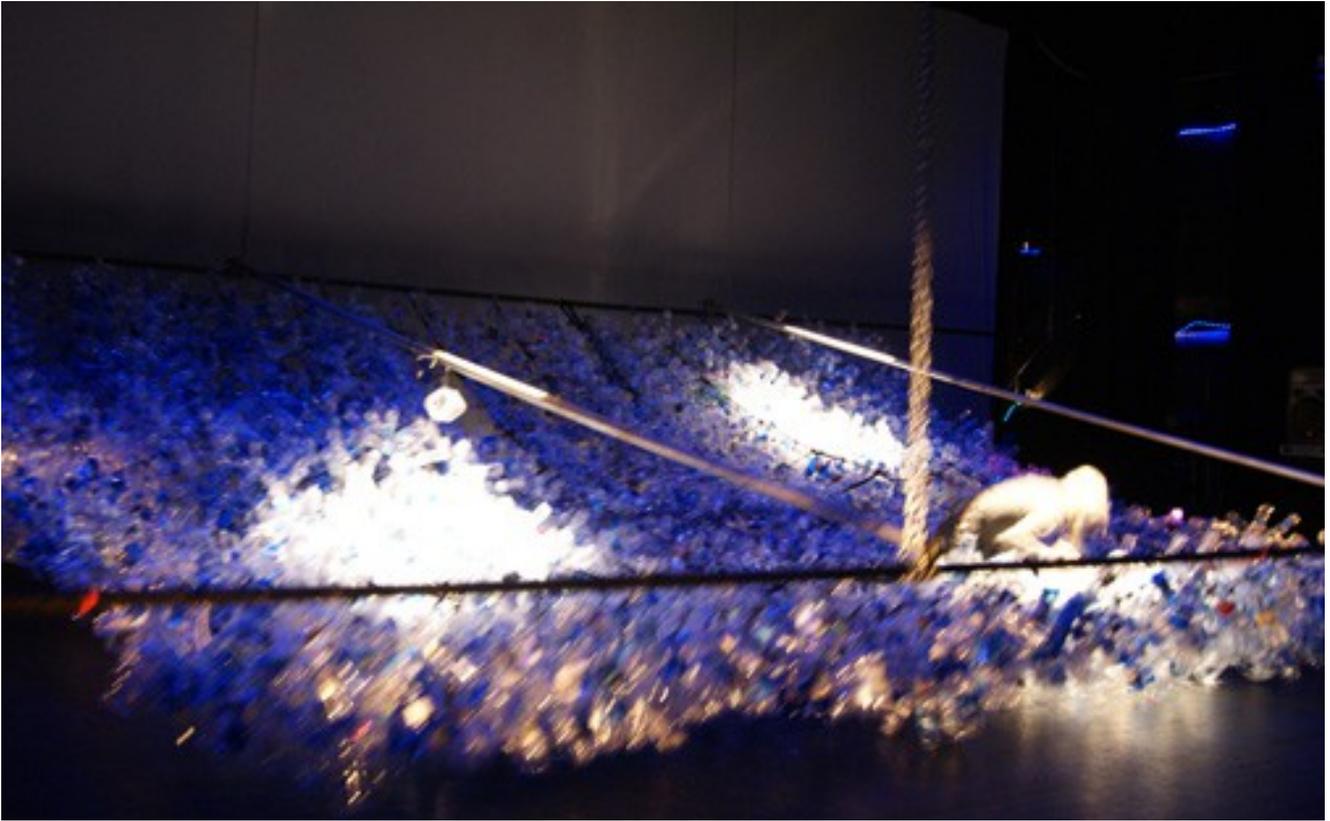


The canopy has come down to setting #2. Photo of musician Perry Smith by Ryan Mulder.



The canopy has come down to setting #3. Photo by Ryan Mulder.

Karola Lüttringhaus



The canopy has come down to setting #5. Photo by Ryan Mulder.

Eventually the canopy engulfs them and they permeate through the membrane of bottles, like skin allowing water to come through its pores, the performers migrate through the layer of bottles, that then becomes the surface on which they struggle to walk. The canopy of bottles makes a lot of noise as they step through, and search for solid ground. The canopy continues to move after the last video plays, which submerges us deeper and deeper into the ocean, metaphorically speaking, as the canopy moves upward on one side only, leaving the other end to trail behind, forming a tapestry along the back wall, a backdrop against which all other actions take place from here on out. By now the dancer has transformed from human to bio-luminescent deep sea inhabitant.



The canopy has come down to setting #7. Photo by Joel VanFuller.

The tapestry becomes a web, a net, within which the dancer becomes entangled and 'dies'. Once all movement has seized, the curtain closes and the musician comes out in front to ask audiences to write a letter to water together, which is projected onto the wall of the theatre. This letter to water is where my installation picks up.

This summary is a very short and condensed version of the many things that we did as part of this performance. We played water instruments, made it rain, chased water bottles, read poetry, talked to, danced and sang with audiences, threw ice cubes, played water sounds with steam kettles, straws, and wine glasses and we drank lots of water.

THE INSTALLATION 'LETTER TO WATER'

The installation picks up where the stage performance left off. It will be very different from the original stage piece especially as far as our experience as audience is concerned.

Audience participation changes from call and response formats to a more lonesome and self-guided engagement: no performer is talking to us or touching us; we are alone in the space. The creative team and other audiences left messages for us to read, to listen to and to view. We are allowed to touch the installation, move bottles around, lay down, sit, stand, and linger as long as we want to. TA feeling of loneliness and deserted-ness spreads, as we watch accounts of life, almost as if we stumbled across the last remains of a civilization left behind.

CONCEPT

Time slows down, the installation sits there waiting for people to enter, to and discover. It unfolds sound, images and traces of others that have been here before us.

REDUCING

I wish to condense the myriad of elements that were created for the live performance into one or two more succinct metaphors and imagery. I am hoping to create a space that changes over time because of audience contributions, a space that gains complexity while reducing the amount of visual stimuli to the absolute necessary.

Elements to design are:

sound score

video score

interactivity and logistics such as signage, paper, pens

the structure itself.