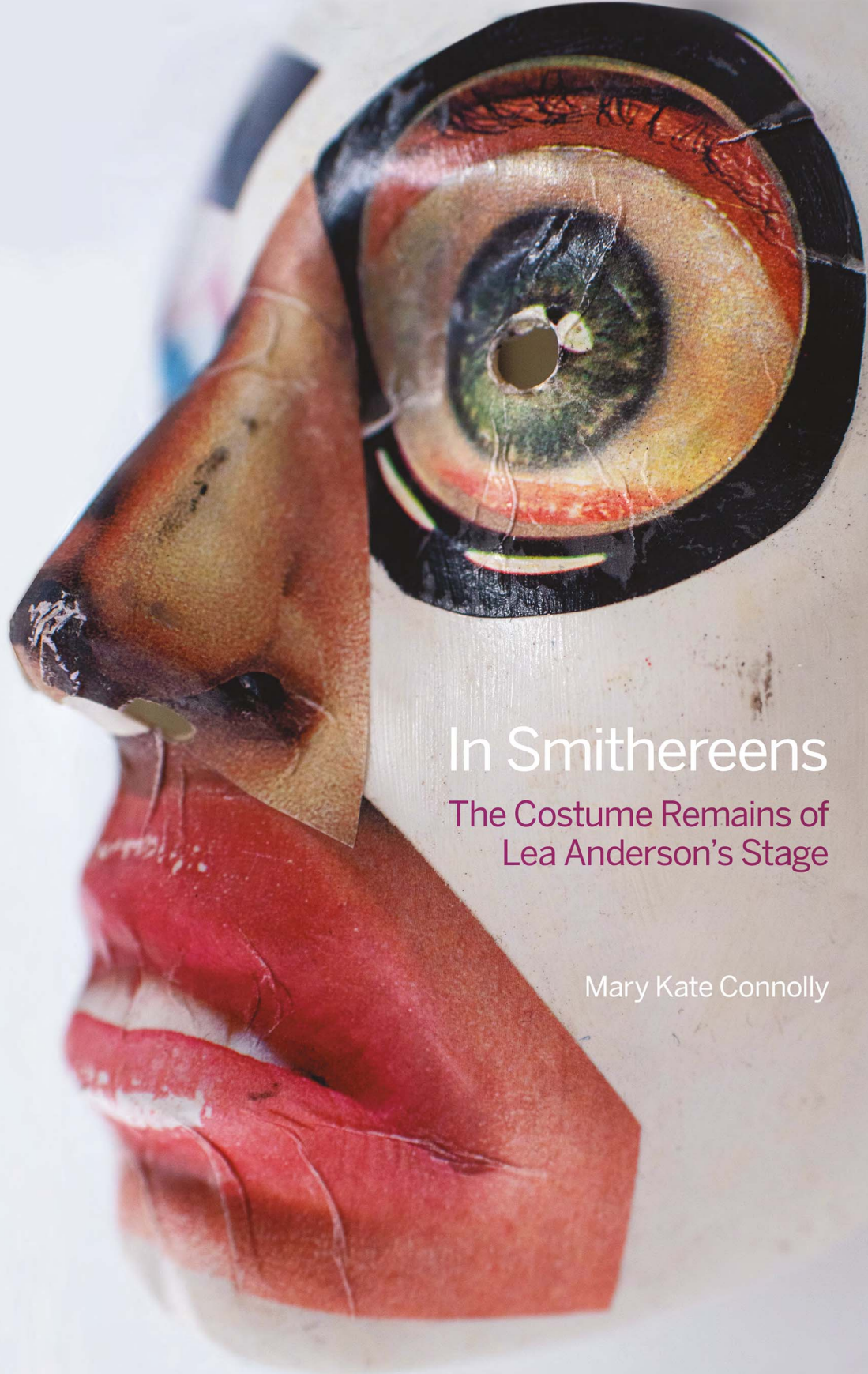




In Smithereens

The Costume Remains of
Lea Anderson's Stage

Mary Kate Connolly



Beginning

Deep in London's southern periphery down a warren of suburban streets, there is a lockup. Utilitarian, industrial, not much to look at, with a heavy duty padlocked door which slides upwards, disappearing into the recesses of the concrete ceiling. Heaving the door up reveals a portal to another world. Despite a slight damp smell and the pall cast by a bare lightbulb, from the moment of entering this cold cavern, you are confronted with the world of theatre. Here stored away, are the fabric remains of the stage. To be exact, the remains of the work of British choreographer Lea Anderson (1959–present). Distributed between this lockup and another elsewhere, are the trappings of well over 30 years of contemporary dance performance by her companies *The Cholmondeleys* and *The Featherstonehaughs*, who performed regularly from the mid-1980s until Arts Council funding cuts stalled their performances in 2011.

All along one wall, stacks of clear packing boxes reveal fake breasts and silver shoes piled neatly inside. Moveable costume rails are crammed with black clothing bags. Here, a see-through cover contains a polystyrene wig-head adorned with an elaborate pearl and satin headdress. There, a box of fabric samples bears several labels in assorted handwriting, some peeling or with words crossed out. It is a heady mix of highly theatrical garments and the trappings of industry – the everyday labour of lugging things around, of storing and cataloguing. An old Persil box houses a spare battery pack for a light-up costume, coils of industrial cabling hang on rails adjacent to those laden with tailored suits and satin dresses.



This netherworld, whilst captivating, is not unusual. From lockups and attics, to the prestige of environmentally controlled archives in major museums, a similar picture emerges of the fabric remains of theatre and performance. Secreted beneath tissue paper and protective covering, they are rendered silent – severed from the performances in which they came to life. Preservation within heritage collections focuses on protecting and sustaining the garments (Coffey-Webb and Campbell 2016). In doing so, a kind of disappearance can be enacted. For costumes which are excluded from archive collections deemed important or historically valuable, there is sometimes a total lack of visibility.

In the face of this vanishing, questions arise concerning the ephemerality of performance, the nature of costume as a generative and partially [re]constitutive document of performance, and the ethics of preservation and/or disintegration. If

preservation of costumes in the traditional archival sense results in a ‘disappearance’ into storage or protected conditions, it becomes pertinent to consider whether (and how) costumes might continue to ‘perform’ beyond performance.

This book centres on the private costume archive of pioneering choreographer Lea Anderson, an artist whose work has slipped somewhat from visibility since the cessation of *The Cholmondeleys*’ and *The Featherstonehaughs*’ performances in 2011. Like the slow degradation of the costume artefacts lying mute in their cold storage, so too a similar degradation is being wrought on the legacy of these performances. Small erasures and gaps in knowledge are growing – multiplying almost imperceptibly, like treacherous moth holes in wool. Material degradations of garments vary greatly according to their composition. Plastics can eventually leach toxins, rubber will shrivel and crack, silk may shatter in place, into smithereens. In addition to the material deterioration at work in Anderson’s costume archive, I would argue that there is a corresponding conceptual slippage of understanding and context of her work. It is perhaps most akin to that of a shattered silk blouse – the fragments are there, but now separated from one another – lacking a vital connective thread.

Placing Anderson’s costume archive at its heart, this book maps alternative after-lives for a selection of costumes, proposing that the costume archive can function as a site for invention as well as an alternative materiality of performance. Such an approach does not aim to mend these ruptures (both physical and conceptual) but rather to gesture to the fissures and holes. To use the costumes themselves as interlocutors of past performances now gone, witnesses to current erasure, and sites for creative ingenuity. As such, the book represents an attempt to see justice done for a select few totems of performance whilst also unpicking the complex predicaments surrounding artefacts which survive long after works which are no longer performed.

The significance of costume in Anderson’s work and its role in the devising process of her choreography is something which she herself discusses in detail (Connolly 2017). My longstanding interest in her use of costume has led to a further curiosity on my part, about the fate of dance costumes more generally, particularly outside the realms of repertory theatres or prestigious cultural institutions. What does happen to them once the performances have ended? My own embodied encounters with costume (particularly in my work with Donatella Barbieri as part of the research collective *Wearing Space*) signalled to me early on the potential of disused garments such as the ones populating Anderson’s archive.¹ I had no prior grounding in costume making or

costume-specific scholarship when I first started working with Anderson's costume archive, so was largely ignorant of the mechanics required to create, house, store, preserve, exhibit or indeed dispose of, used costumes post-performance. My limited interactions with costumes post-performance had largely been in the context of viewing traditional costume exhibitions which displayed costumes on mannequins, and backstage theatre tours I had attended. I was also struck by Barbieri's work within the archives of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, entitled *Encounters in the Archive*, in which she emphasized 'the absent body and the traces it leaves behind in the lived in and performed in costume', arguing that costumes 'are not only memories but acquire agency in the "dialogue" with an engaged viewer in the here and now' (Barbieri 2012: n.pag.). Barbieri's investigations contributed to growing areas of dress and costume scholarship which point towards the ties between garments and memories, and the entangled nature of garments and embodied experience (Grew 2019; Hodgdon 2016; Barbieri and Crawley 2013; Monks 2010; Taylor 2002; De La Haye and Wilson 1999).

Discussing costumes post-performance, Barbieri argues that 'Separated from its context costume becomes redundant, yet as an object it is marked with a creative process which mediates between performance, its crafting, the body and the gaze of the audience' (Barbieri 2012: n.pag.). The esteem in which I hold Anderson's work underscores a sense of dismay at the gradual disappearance of both her work and its surrounding context. I have wondered about this redundancy which Barbieri refers to, and the seemingly narrow ways in which costumes can live on post-performance as objects for interpretation within museums, or forgotten totems locked away in storage.

In 2016, Anderson was invited by the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, to create a performed costume exhibition *Hand in Glove*, featuring over 300 of her costumes and accessories with dancers performing vignettes from a number of her key works. This exhibition, which I will discuss in further detail later in this book, occupied the V&A's Raphael Court for several days. Dance scholar Ramsay Burt heralded *Hand in Glove* as having 'the ambiance of a club night with live and pre-recorded music ... with decor by Raphael' (Burt 2016: n.pag.). The event occupied a nether-world between the former performance lives of the costumes and the space of exhibition. Through being performed (with their original music and with original choreography), these costumes seemed to resist the mummification which can come with being presented as artefacts for exhibition. Whilst occupying a wholly different space to that of the theatre, *Hand in Glove* nonetheless retained an undeniably theatrical aspect

and thereby arguably eschewed interpretation in a traditional museological sense, reasserting the costumes' potency as agents of performance. After this brief exposure in the spotlight the costumes were once again returned to the lockup. Whilst Anderson is loath to part with any of them, the logistical and financial burden of sustaining them in storage is not insignificant. It was at this time that she remarked, only somewhat flippantly, to me that:

Sometimes I think I will burn them all and that will be a work, or perhaps auction off a few at Sotheby's to fund a new work, or maybe I should give some of them to somewhere like the V&A after all.

(Anderson 2016: n.pag.)

Whilst these were slightly playful remarks, they nonetheless sharply summarize the dilemmas which emerge in the face of costume's long survival post-performance. Questions arise concerning the nature of costume as an archival remnant, economies of value and the concept of costumes operating as trace repositories of knowledge. This conversation was to become a guiding light within the methodological and conceptual core of this book. It is one I returned to instinctively when devising the practical interventions to be carried out within the archive. Anderson's quandary chimes with my own observations of the costumes as having great creative potential and yet suffering from lack of visibility. A key aim of this book is to effect renewed visibility of an artist whose work has been somewhat erased and to highlight the potential for costume to serve as an eloquent, if fragmented, remnant of performance within an experimental archival framework. The costumes in Anderson's lockup are significant not only in terms of their materiality and design, but as the vestiges of a particular creative era within British contemporary dance. Anderson and her collaborators such as designers Sandy Powell and Simon Vincenzi, performer David Hoyle and composers Drostan Madden and Steve Blake created highly stylized performances which mobilized design and costume in a manner rarely seen in contemporary dance of that time. The costumes (if we view them as interlocutors of this period in contemporary dance) hold information regarding the works themselves and also the particular constellation of creative individuals who created them.

In the presence of ghosts?

Taking up a conceptual position which regards costumes as interlocutors invites an immediate problem: how to find the means of listening to what they might have to

tell us about the vanished performances in which they once lived. Following my own observations of the costumes within *Hand in Glove*, and subsequently confronting them in the cold damp of Anderson's lockup, inevitably perhaps I was struck by what I might refer to as their ghostliness. The uncanny nature of a lifeless mask moulded from the contours of a dancer's face or the strange [dis]embodiment of a nylon stocking still stretched into the outlines of a foot. My immediate impression of these costumes as being somehow haunted is not an uncommon observation. As Barbara C. Hodgdon (reflecting on 'Spectral Traces in the Archive') puts it: 'If live performances are already embodied ghosts to prior material exigencies, to prior performances, and also to performance memories, then the material remains surviving performance are ghosts ghosting ghosts – and they come not in single spies but in battalions' (Hodgdon cited in Abel and Holland 2021: 279).²

'The empty costume', as Aoife Monks has proposed is 'an incomplete body, brimming with potential and memory, imprinted by a body but no longer of it and offering a ghostly and inanimate outline of a body of its own' (Monks 2010: 141). The ghostly and sometimes uncanny nature of costumes post-performance had been touched upon by various scholars – both in terms of how repertory costumes may be handed down and reused (Taylor 2003; Arnold 2017), and in the ways in which uninhabited costumes become complicated totems – illuminating disappearance rather than successfully recapturing performance. As Monks has described, 'when we actually confront this object in the archive [...] it has transformed itself behind our backs, turning itself into a memento of loss rather than being a reliable piece of evidence' (2010: 140).

When asked in interview what a particular costume (*Dead Skin* costumes from her 2006 work *Yippee!!!*) now represents for her, Anderson replied that she viewed the costumes as:

inanimate objects like a discarded skin [of] an insect or a snake: dead and uninhabited. And it doesn't really mean anything to me. In my head, I know the missing parts of it – there's missing parts (it's not a thing in itself). It's not real until the dancer is in there. And it's not real until the dancer is in there doing it correctly in the right place. [...] So it's a kind of pointer. An arrow to something else [...] I'm usually looking at it for a different kind of reason like 'How we are storing this?' 'Is it worth storing it?' 'Where shall I put it?' 'Where does it need to be?' 'Will we ever use it again [...] what is using?' 'Will we need it to show someone?'. 'Is it worth keeping in case we do it again?', So that's the kinds of

things I think of when I see the stuff now from the show but I didn't think that before. Before it was full of potential and imagining.
(Anderson 2017: n.pag.)

Thus costumes post-performance possess an innately tricky duality – that of the logistics of preserving their bulky material form which persists in the face of performance's disappearance, and the total inability of that form to reconstitute the performance.

Or ineloquent, shattered remains?

Contemporary dance performance, often categorized as ephemeral, arguably leaves even fewer decipherable material remains than for example classical ballet repertory (where works are remounted and notated) or written plays where early written drafts and annotated scripts might still be accessible. However, costume and scenography often play a key role within the creation of dance performance. There have been iconic collaborations between choreographers and artists/designers, including Merce Cunningham working with Robert Rauschenberg (Potter 1993), Regine Chopinot with Jean-Paul Gaultier (Saillard 2010), William Forsythe with Issey Miyake (Tomić-Vajagić 2021) and Michael Clark with fashion duo *BodyMap* (Nothing Concrete 2020). Given the scope and importance of these collaborations, it is not unreasonable that costumes may come to be regarded as potentially potent *remains* of dance. The material realities of archival storage however – whether in museum holdings or the damp cold of a concrete lockup – run as a counter-current to any potential we might wish to project onto the garments themselves. For Anderson, the 'potential and imagining' of the garments is something that came before and is now submerged by the logistical quandaries of what to do with the material remnants of her performances (Anderson 2017). In the face of these constraints, an inevitable consideration emerges: whether to sustain or destroy these fabric remains that, in the 'here and now', have in fact come to represent for Anderson a vanishing or total loss of potential.

It is worthwhile noting that many of Anderson's works (from the 1980s for example) existed originally in a largely pre-digital age, where digital technologies were only emergent and therefore only photographs, playbills and other ephemera now remain of the works. Acknowledging the ever-expanding ways in which dance can be captured, represented and documented, evidenced in digital projects with choreographers such as William Forsythe (Zuniga-Shaw 2011) and Siobhan Davies (Whatley 2017),

the ‘remains’ of many [pre-digital] dance works sit outside of any such structures. In the case of a work which was neither notated (through a recognized dance notation system) nor filmed/archived digitally, items such as costumes may well seem to present as valuable and intriguing ciphers, yet in all sorts of ways they remain as stubborn detritus. Whatever their shape-shifting appearance when initially liberated from the confines of a dark packing box, they can remain exasperatingly partial and ineloquent in terms of evoking the performances now lost.

The costumes within Anderson’s archive were designed and tailor-made for each individual production. Their specificity of design renders them mostly unfit for subsequent reuse and there exists no text or score to anchor them thematically within a wider performance heritage. They were unique to each work performed by *The Cholmondeleys* and *The Featherstonehaughs* – they lived and died with them. Costume and design have long been central elements in Anderson’s works, not only influencing the choreography, but at times fundamentally altering the dancing body. Jessica Bugg (2020) cites Anderson’s work with costume as representing a markedly different approach to that of many contemporary dance choreographers. She argues that, in the main, costume for contemporary dance ‘has remained largely body conscious, prioritising ease of movement and functioning as visual enhancement’ (Bugg 2020: 353). As part of a study on the ‘lived experience of dress and its agency in the collaborative process’, Bugg interviewed a number of choreographers and dancers including Anderson and her collaborators to illuminate how ‘a deeper engagement with the corporeal experience of dress can activate costume as more than an applied visual overlay’ (2020: 354). She cites Anderson as saying that ‘I will not present anything in dance pajamas, and I will not present anything in bare feet. I just don’t understand what that means apart from you just got out of bed or I’m not dressed?’ (Anderson cited in Bugg 2020: 356).

Collaborations with designers such as Sandy Powell and Simon Vincenzi (among others) play a vital role in Anderson’s work, and her devising process of allowing the physicality of the costumes to disrupt or alter the choreography sets her work apart from many of her contemporaries in the dance world of that time. The visible investment in costume in works such as *Smithereens* (1999), which featured costumes made by highly skilled professionals including a tutu maker from Royal Opera House, London, demonstrates the value Anderson places on costume. Encountering these costumes in the lockup however, their previous vitality and potential appears emptied out, or, displaced elsewhere. Conceivably, this displacement opens a further insight

into Anderson's own indecision about whether to embrace the destruction of these costumes and be free of their inconvenient material bulk, or whether to continue preserving them for an imagined future to come, of remounted work or museological display. These questions arguably travel alongside a more complex one, of where, exactly, the legacy and history of past performance works such as these ones might reside. Is there a need to gather together and reanimate the material shards of vanished performances in the hope of a resurrection of sorts? Or, working from an acknowledgement of their innate partiality, might further fragmentation of these smithereens in fact prove a more provocative way to reveal both the losses and the material persistence of performance legacies?

Framework for an after-life

There's a familiar posture that gets adopted in the lockup. Like two character actors in an abstract material landscape of sequins, plastic oddments and grime. The artist and the scholar. She, poring over a costume or a sketchbook or a mix-tape with illegible biro listings scrawled on the back, and I, standing aside, pen or camera-phone in hand, not wishing to break the reverie. Waiting for the object to be contextualized for me; for it to come alive and drop down into legibility via her reminiscences of the history it is connected to. Some of these objects and costumes are already familiar to me – recognizable from the works I am acquainted with. Others are completely without context; a recording of found audio samples, say, by composer Drostan Madden, still in its large reel to reel format, the tape coiled round the plastic spool and encased in a battered cardboard cover. These objects speak to the sheer non-biodegradable hulk involved in recording things at that time – what it took to harvest sounds or images for an imagined future work, or capture aspects of an already-made work for posterity. Exclamations of 'Oh My God!' or 'I don't believe it!', or 'Oh yes, I remember this ...' are all commonplace punctuations of our meditative scenes together in the archive. Our relationships to the materials to hand and the legacy which arguably lies therein, or elsewhere, are wholly different, but our impetus in what we attempt to mine these materials for is not so dissimilar. There is something at stake in these moments. We try to make the most of what we find. Make the most of what it can tell us, of how we might use it and where (if anywhere) it could travel to, for the future.

My initial curiosities with regard to costumes post-performance, the logistical plight of these seldom-seen garments, and questions of legacy and displacement bound

up with fabric remains gradually distilled into an archival project design. Myself and Anderson decided we would try to 'do something' both physical and conceptual with the costumes in order to unfurl these dilemmas and identify new ways forward for her archive. We began with the basic idea of choosing three costumes which could be used as case studies to investigate the creative potential of costumes post performance. These were chosen by myself in collaboration with Anderson both as an extension of her original somewhat playful ideas as to what to do with her archive, and also as a result of encountering them physically in the costume lock-up. As we opened box after box in that freezing space and I held up each garment in turn under the bare lightbulb, I felt their storage was enacting a kind of banishment. I wondered whether they could be given an after-life other than these boxes, and if so, what it might entail. I speculated whether they could be used as test-cases for Anderson's throwaway remarks about the 'problem' of costume remains, and if so, which items would be best to choose and what we might physically do with them. Anderson was very open to the idea of working directly with the costumes to test whether their ineloquence as fabric remains in a packing box could be transformed into something else. An alternative after-life drawn from the past performances in which these costumes lived, which could frame these costumes in relation to the fundamental considerations which crop up for fabric remains: their materiality, value, legacy and potential for further dissemination.

The three costumes we selected were chosen with Anderson's words still echoing in my mind – that they might one day be destroyed in any case, or perhaps end up in a prestigious museum, or, if possible, could be monetised through sale 'at Sotheby's to fund a new work' (Anderson 2016 : n.pag.). Dwelling first on the idea of material destruction, we discussed the possibility of allowing (or in fact, causing) one costume to disintegrate as a means of hastening the inevitable material decline of the fabric remains in the archive. Fragmenting them further, in other words, to highlight their inherently partial nature – the ways in which they already operate as smithereens and will continue to fragment further over time. To this end, the most suitable costume was deemed to be a Dead Skin costume from Anderson's 2006 work *Yippee!!!*. The Dead Skins are bodysuits which relate to concerns of decay and vanishing both narratively (in relation to the themes of *Yippee!!!*) and physically (in their extensive staining, wear and tear and the visible bodily imprints which remain in them). Hence, the Dead Skin was the first costume we chose to work with.

In contrast to exploring material destruction, it seemed fitting to also investigate ways in which it might be possible to adopt museological and archival preservation and conservation methods within the physical and economic restraints of Anderson's personal archive. Essentially we wished to utilize the material preservation of costume remains for posterity as a means of recognizing their totemic importance, or indeed imbuing them with such via their careful archival care. These considerations led quite naturally to the selection of the full set of 36 moulded and hand painted masks from *Smithereens* (1999). These masks are richly crafted and long held in high esteem by Anderson as valuable objects, so it felt appropriate that they would be materially-cared for in order to secure their longevity towards a potential future of museological display or reconstruction of work.

Next, the notion of monetizing elements of the archive via sale was discussed. Would it be possible, for example, to sell some costumes at Sotheby's, London, or an equivalent auction house? If we were to test this possibility the chosen costume would need to be one which Anderson was willing to auction off and therefore part with forever. It would also need to be a costume of aesthetic or historical value in order to attract potential buyers. Anderson selected a three-piece painted suit from *The Featherstonehaughs Draw on the Sketchbooks of Egon Schiele* (1998 and 2010) for this third costume intervention. We aimed to sell the costume as a means of determining the economic value of the suit itself, but moreover the potential (if any) for economic transaction of costumes such as these more generally.

A final strategy for intervention emerged quite organically from those already described – that of further dissemination via display or exhibition. Unlike the after-lives afforded through conservation and heritage collections (such as at the V&A museum or National Theatre, London), I was conscious of the small-scale 'make-do' aspect of the archive collection with which I was dealing. From early on in the project I became concerned with how it might be possible to make visible the after-lives which we were seeking to create for the costumes. In answer to this question I decided to mount an exhibition of the fabric remains of Anderson's archive. This provided a means of investigating the transitions from live performance, to archival storage, to dissemination in alternate form (via exhibition or film, for example) which costumes such as these often undergo. The process of mounting this exhibition will be explored in more detail alongside Anderson's own exhibition, *Hand in Glove*, in relation to a wider frame of dissemination, in the chapter entitled Display.

The overarching strategies in this book of disintegration, preservation, transaction and display are each radically different from one another and could potentially be regarded as inherently contradictory. Deliberately setting out to disintegrate a costume is arguably as far as one can get from archival cossetting and museological storage for the imagined ages to come. What unites these strategies, however, is the implicit acknowledgement of their current predicament in the lock up: their invisibility, the erasure of legacy and their gradual but inevitable material decline. If this book is to scratch at underlying questions concerning the location of legacy for performances now lost, or indeed attempt any recuperation of that legacy outside of the largescale mechanisms which sustain cultural heritage, it needs to begin by mobilizing the ineloquence of these remains as a petition for something new. It must bind any imaginative potential which they might possess together with their impotence, and the numerous losses which their material persistence alerts us to. It requires adopting a view of the costume archive not as an ordered repository of past performances preserved in material form, but as the awkward, scattered remains of legacy blown apart into disembodied unequal shards. Smithereens of things – shows, ideas, choreographies – harvested at the end of the run, sprayed with Febreze to keep odours at bay, stuffed into bin bags, peppered with handwritten labels, catalogued in the best way possible at-the-time, with whatever time and money and storage was to hand. Smithereens, then, which have travelled, by staying immobile in their lockup, to the *here* and *now*, and which can, if we allow them, demand an alternative after-life that disrupts the vanishing inflicted on these costumes and the companies who danced in them.

Archival paradox

There is no hierarchy to the interventions outlined in this book – they are each separate avenues of exploration and, like the archive they work with, were carried out within the confines of whatever logistical and economic realities prevailed at the time. These included the habitual restraints of limited funding and the non-habitual interruption of a global pandemic which occurred midway through the project. I make no attempt either, to suggest that these strategies should be considered as representative of ‘best-practice’ for every costume archive. Rather, this book prioritizes a close engagement with the particular archive at stake, and in doing so seeks to stage a specificity of engagement which could be regarded as a fruitful means of unlocking the potential for costumes to live on in individualized after-lives. The interventions within this book could thus be considered as being akin to labelled

archive boxes stacked next to one another. Each one contains the remnants of a material journey, and the attendant knowledge and memories unfolded in the process. Engaging with these chapters as a reader is designed to mimic the sense of opening a selection of archive boxes (conceptually at least, if not physically), and peering at the materials entrapped within. The actual boxes in Anderson's archive are not uniform – some are large plastic tubs with lids, others repurposed cardboard boxes which once contained Freed dance shoes or Sony cassette tapes. Garment bags hang alongside the towers of stacked boxes, which in turn sit next to other uncatalogued heaps of audio equipment, folders of letters, and lastly, those omnipresent cellophane bags of spare zippers, fabric oddments and dye swatches. Useless detritus? Or, just possibly, the essential clue to what the original fabric or fastenings of a costume looked like, before repeated wear and dry-cleaning rendered it an altogether different hue. What to do? What to do with all of this *stuff*? Here in this book there is a deliberate attempt to present the remains of these costumes (both the actual costumes and the relevant information concerning them) as a site for encounter rather than a closed historical narrative. The holes and fissures which I have referred to earlier are at work and intentionally kept within the frame. The aim is not to close over these voids or fill in the gaps, but rather to gesture to the partial legacy left behind in these garments, and suggest ways in which they can be activated beyond their cold storage in the anonymous lockup.

Discussing her cross-disciplinary project *Mishandled Archive*, Tara Fatehi Irani outlines that the 'concept of the archive makes use of the passions and tensions of keeping, losing, conserving, destroying, listing, erasing, repeating and re-imagining moments for futures which may never come' (Fatehi Irani 2020: 13). Centred on a rare collection of Iranian archival photographs and documents, *Mishandled Archive* challenges conceptions of history and belonging via a 'mishandling' and displacement of archival artefacts. Fatehi Irani argues that within the conceptual space of the archive, '[r]igorous knowledge, imagination, fantasy and affect all cohabit and intermingle' (2020: 13). Her embracing of the paradoxes of the archive chimes strongly with the ethos of the interventions carried out within this project. Each one engages with specific remnants of the costume archive as an attempt to highlight their potential as generators of knowledge and imagining for alternative after-lives, but also, the inherent partiality and sometimes doomed futility of the archival gesture. In summary – this book does not wish to 'replace' the shattered smithereens of this archive with a polished scholarly account of Anderson and her work. Instead, the physical interventions prioritize the close encounter – they aim to pick up the

remaining shards and turn them over, gleaning what fragmentary knowledge they impart and allowing their material nature to dictate the direction of their after-life. Anderson's works (outside of the three selected costumes) are not discussed at length nor is there an attempt to categorize the legacy of *The Cholmondeleys* and *The Featherstonehaughs* within broad subject-matter categories (thematic concerns or late twentieth-century contemporary dance, for example). There are gaps and blind spots in this approach – in taking a position so 'up-close' both to the garments and the creative individuals associated with them. These are acknowledged as an inexorable element of this alternative approach to the costume archive. At times the methodology dips toes into film making, dress-conservation, auctioneer appraisals and more, yet it succeeds in mastering none of these. The interventions merely walk those paths as far as possible to test the potentials for these particular costume smithereens.

Partners in thought

The theoretical framework for this book has unfolded through working directly with the costumes as interlocutors at the heart of the project. Interactions with the costumes prompted further encounters with performers, designers, tailors and conservation experts. These meetings were carried out in a variety of settings – from noisy cafes to the hushed concentration of work rooms, and the bustle of a theatre costume department with rehearsal calls echoing out over the tannoy, obliterating the audio recording I was attempting to make. Due to the adaptive and process-based drivers of the project, the theoretical framework emerged in tandem with my work with the costumes and as a general rule I sought to avoid reaching immediately towards pre-ordained concepts from theory or particular fields of study (dance and costume studies, for example).

Photographic documentation of the selected costumes and my subsequent interviews with makers of the works in question give further shape to the after-lives of the costumes, suggesting both additional physical actions to undertake with the garments and avenues of theoretical exploration to pursue. I allow the physical actions carried out to point towards frames of reference which might prove apt partners in dialogue with the costumes. For example, with transaction the chapter looks to the visual art world to provide a suitable framework of valuation in relation to the three-piece Schiele suit. The *Smithereens* masks require a different approach and are greatly influenced by the conversations I have had with conservation experts, alongside broader perspectives towards artefacts within heritage and preservation contexts.

The conceptualization of ‘the ghost’ as it has emerged both within costume scholarship and wider sociological and cultural discourse also provides a useful backdrop against which to place the costume smithereens of this research (Monks 2010; Gordon 2008). The ghost can be utilized as a figure of unruliness: uncanny in nature, with the capacity to travel across time and across context. These conceptions, conversant as they are with my earliest impressions of the costumes and their stymied potential, operate as helpful counterparts to think through both the potentials and inertia of fabric remains.

Following on from this opening chapter I unpack in greater detail the conceptual underpinning of ghosts, and in contrast, the idea of fabric remains operating as forms of archival detritus, both of which assisted me in laying the ground for the practical material interventions I would go on to undertake – the ‘doing something’ with the costumes which Anderson and I had agreed to. This section explores tensions between ghost discourse as a useful provocation and conduit towards representational repair and the ways in which this constructed position must yield to the practical, economic and cultural conditions of Anderson’s archive. It emphasizes the notion that any haunting or alternative after-lives this book might set out to create begins with physical actions grounded in the *here and now* of the actual fabric remains. The conceptual tug of war between viewing the potential of these garments as being able to enact a haunting, and on the other hand the undeniable physical realities of their material inertia, accompanies the journey of these smithereens from beginning to end of this book. As the physical actions unfold through disintegration, preservation, transaction and display in the intervention chapters, these ideas continue to crop up and become configured in relation to the needs of the individual costume remains in Anderson’s archive.

From time to time, practical upskilling has been required in order for me to realize the project – garnering the fundamentals of film making, sound recording and editing, for example. Carrying out these actions, largely as a novice with no prior experience, is in fact a crucial element of the work that this book describes. The role of the novice tentatively finding the way forward fast became a generative position to occupy; allowing for curiosity and openness to prevail. Each physical gesture undertaken nudges on the research journey, conceptually shapeshifting the fabric remains and increasing the sense of my own entanglement with them. Alongside Anderson, I became implicated by the costumes early on – subservient to them – and no option remained but to carry on the journey of these smithereens as far as possible.

Roads not travelled

What paths does this book not take, and why? These are numerous. Despite the multi-tentacled nature of the research framework, there are many directions left untouched – set aside for future journeys. It would be impossible to track all of these here – the hunches, the sparks of interest found in surrounding conceptual worlds and fields of practice. It feels important to acknowledge their existence however, as important partners within the thinking of this book.

A chief area to be mentioned is that of the worlds of material culture and history of fashion and dress. Whilst the project does at many times crossover with these areas of scholarship and co-opt certain strategies and skills from within them (such as my training in dress handling and basic conservation), I must concede that the interaction with these areas of knowledge and practice has largely been at a limited, discreet level. This is partly born out of pragmatism – each of these areas (material culture, fashion and dress history) are vast in and of themselves. Moreover, there is a conscious decision to foreground a dance-specific perspective and to embrace the role of the uninitiated novice, allowing the research to delve *from there* into unfamiliar worlds. To give an example: deduction work utilized by dress researchers and conservators is often used to discover or validate the provenance of a historical garment for which there is little documentary evidence beyond the garment itself. Thus, museum specialists might look to discern details of who designed or made a garment, or for what purpose and by whom it might have been worn. With Anderson's costumes, the garments do not suffer from a comparable lack of verifiable historical information. Multiple memories and facts are still held, both within the material artefacts themselves, and the memories of the professionals who worked with them. This will not always be the case – the garments will eventually perish, and so too the individuals linked with their performance lives. The work of this book is therefore not about guesswork, but in fact about the gathering and collation of memories, traces and residues. This has been largely carried out via a dance-specific lens. The book prioritizes the encounter with the costumes as the key to unravel these associated histories and draw them together, but it does so with the sensibility of a dance historian or performer, rather than that of a dress history specialist. In the case of Anderson's costumes, we already know where the bodies are buried so to speak – I began the work with useful knowledge of the catalogue of works I would be investigating. In this sense, the guess work and intuition generally employed by a costume specialist (when confronting an unknown garment) is utilized, but in

a different way. There is an aim not only to gather relevant historical information surrounding the garment, but also to call up the partial embodied recollections and insights of the individuals involved with the garments which, if not documented now, will certainly slip out of reach of historians eventually, as time passes.

There were further pathways that could have been traversed, such as an investigation of the histories of the fabric used to make some of the costumes. The Dead Skins fabric, for instance, was purchased from a now closed-down establishment on Goldhawk Road in London, an area with a rich history of fabric shops, frequented by theatre designers and costume makers; another interrelated world similar to that bound up with the tailor's shop in Soho where the Schiele suit was made. Potentially deeper work could be done here in tracing the histories of the individuals and processes involved in the original base materials of the costumes, and the economic and cultural worlds of their production. There would be much to discover in these worlds which speak to the concerns of this book – different kinds of precarity, economic variability and dedicated, expert, craft and labour. Additionally, whilst the interviews with dancers threw up rich observations on the specific embodiments and reciprocal relationships engendered between costumes and bodies (and how these differed between dancers), further investigation could be made into how these differences may or may not have shaped the spectators' perception of the works and how the choreography was embodied differently by individual dancers. This is just a further sample of a pathway not followed in depth. There are many more potential avenues like this one to be explored.

The journey taken

In acceptance of the roads not taken, the false trails and the 'if onlys', what might be the benefits of the up-close, adaptive, encounter-led approach adopted in this book? Such an approach is inarguably one which inculcates blind spots. Yet it also allows the necessary up-close engagement which can facilitate an interlocution of the semi-vanished performance histories bound up in the garments under investigation. It foregrounds a specificity of attending to the archive in question, moving away from the categorical cataloguing and summative historical approaches sometimes favoured in more traditional archival contexts. It gestures towards the ruptures – the metaphorical shattering (akin to silk) of the legacy of Anderson's work. It seeks neither to repair these ruptures nor to turn away from them. It advocates a sense of care – a prioritizing of the smithereens – the 'little bits'. A *being-with* the materials as a

means of conjuring half-remembered entanglements and the reciprocal relationships between costumes and bodies once in full flight. It acknowledges the inevitability of material transitions, the steady march of degradation, the uncountable losses and yet still presses on. Up close. Picking over the shards which remain. It utilizes one small archive and just three individual costumes to excavate and illuminate the wider structures at work in their after-lives – physically, socioculturally, economically. It carries out this labour, not only as a work of illumination, but more optimistically as a means of divining a further sympathetic or fit-for-purpose framework for the interlocution and care of fabric remains. It could arguably be regarded as a ridiculous gesture – one that, in its futility and excess, deems these costumes to be materially frail, conceptually rich, ever changing and meriting our care.

Beginning again

But first, to begin once more. Here offered is an encounter with smithereens – the material remains of performances now largely ruptured but not entirely vanished from view. The writing attempts as far as possible to set these fragments on a new course towards their alternative after-lives. It is hoped that within this text, the methodological approaches, dead ends and attempts at interlocution all radiate outwards from the up-close material details of the garments themselves – just as they did during the work itself.



Afterword: The lockup continued

I am certain I can smell a trace of damp and tentatively ask Lea ‘Is it damp in here?’ ‘No I don’t think so’, she replies. ‘Though maybe it is a little. I prefer it to be slightly damp than dry but with moths!’ She recounts a story of the ‘Yellow Box’ storage facility she once used to store costumes which was very dry because it had fans, but then moths got in through the vents and ate holes in all the garments.

The lockup curves round to the left where there are piles of metal stage supports, chairs, stage lights (from *Yippee!!!*), and more rails and rails, boxes and boxes. We spend the next hour and a half opening boxes, peering through suit bags, stacking and restacking. Lea greets each garment with the hesitance of one reacquainting herself with dear but distant friends. ‘Which one is this? *Baby Baby*? No – these are the *Las*



Lea Anderson at the costume lockup. Photos: Mary Kate Connolly



Publicity poster for *Metalcholica* (1994). Featuring Gaynor Coward with makeup by Cash Aspeek.
Photo: Chris Nash

Vegas jackets! They were amazing.’ Anecdotes inevitably tumble out with each new item that she looks at. I am interested in the traces of the dancers’ bodies which are left behind in the costumes, which become uncannily inescapable when Lea picks up the *Smithereens* masks cast from the faces of each individual dancer. Some mime-artist white, some decorated with Hannah Hoch-style collages overlaid on the features from the dancers’ faces. Even without the scribbled name tags inside I can identify some of the dancers I am familiar with.

Later we turn up more masks – this time from the 1994 work *Metalcholica*, in which Lea herself performed. The black and white leather masks were based on a photograph of a face-painted Bronislava Nijinska. Lea looks at them. ‘Teresa? Is that her? Where am I? Oh there I am!’ She holds her own mask to her face. I ask if it still fits. ‘Yes, pretty much, although actually I seem to remember that this bit never actually fit quite right over the eyes’. As she wrestles to close the heavy duty padlock on the door, Lea tells me that just after the last *Featherstonehaughs* performance the lockup was burgled – everything thrown around, cameras and equipment stolen which contained the films of the final performances. There is something at odds, or jarring, about locking up this storeroom of theatrical wonders which has the aura of a shrine, and emerging once again into faceless suburbia. Walking away and waiting impatiently in the cold for the next train to spirit you away from this soulless place. Alice-in-Wonderland style. Almost as if it never happened ...

Notes

1. Projects devised for Prague Quadrennials 2011, 2015 and 2019 which comprised several approaches to using costume and objects as embodied partners in the choreographic and design process. These were in step with other research interrogating the interplays between costume and movement, including Jessica Bugg (2014, 2020), Sally E. Dean (2011, 2020) and Michèle Danjoux (2014, 2020).
2. Hodgdon has explored not only ghostliness and the presence of the actor’s body within costume, but also within other material remnants such as prompt scripts and rehearsal photographs. See Hodgdon (2016) and Abel and Holland (2021).