

everybodys publications



# **everybodys self interviews**

everybodys publications  
www.everybodystoolbox.net

Edited by Mette Ingvarsten and Alice Chauchat

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*everybodys self interviews*

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## Contents

everybodys	7
Eleanor Bauer	10
Alice Chauchat	25
Florent Delval	30
Juan Dominguez	34
Ion Dumitrescu	40
Frédéric Gies	43
Trajal Harrell	46
David Helbich	51
Mette Ingvarsen	55
International Festival	61
Xavier Le Roy	65
Neto Machado	76
Chrysa Parkinson	81
plan b	91
Alexandre Roccoli	94
Petra Sabisch	97
Isabelle Schad	113
Noé Soulier	120
Jefta van Dinther	124
Andros Zins-Browne	128



# EVERYBODYS

November 2008

*Could you briefly introduce yourselves?*

Everybodys is an artists-initiated and artists-run performance platform. Its aim is to develop discourses and possibilities for exchange within the performing arts. It is an international project that everyone can use and contribute to at [www.everybodystoolbox.net](http://www.everybodystoolbox.net).

The webpage consists mainly of a collection of games created by artists in order to reflect on and expand their understanding of work. The games offer opportunities for artists to discuss their strategies, methods and ideas. Everybodys focuses on how singular artistic positions can contribute to the development of a more general discourse within the performing arts today.

*How were the self interviews of this book created?*

Most of them were written in response to an open call that everybody's made in October 2007. However, the format of course existed before and has been used by various people in the past. As you can see from the dates of the contributions of this book, a few were written earlier.

*Why did you decide to work with the format of self interview in the frame of everybody's?*

We wanted to see how interviewing oneself could be considered a working tool for developing, clarifying, mapping, documenting, inventing or describing processes of work. To examine how the question/answer process differs when you are having a dialog with yourself from when you are being interviewed by somebody else. We thought it would be interesting to actually see the format in action, to see how it is being used and what kinds of texts it produces.

## everybodys self interviews

*Could you mention some of the ways in which the format is being used?*

People write about their work in various stages of the process. Different approaches appear when the self interview is used as a tool for preparation, production or postproduction reflection. Think of the difference between writing a self interview before you are going to make a performance, where you are about to invent, expand and challenge you own ideas, versus using it as a way of documenting the process you have just been through for instance.

*Is there a particular technique for writing a self interview?*

No. Indeed our interest lies in how a simple format can give a frame for writing, while at the same time allowing each writer to interpret the task as they please. You don't need to be on time, nor to be prepared, polite or to speak in a friendly way. Neither do you have to be scared of the journalist twisting your words into meanings you would never even have thought of. The great thing is that you can be as rude, as rough or as soft as you like. You can poke and divert or support and continue as it fits you. You can write it in 20 minutes or in 20 years. There is no prescribed way to write, no model that has to be followed.

*You mean that the self interview is primarily for oneself?*

Well not exactly. It's not a question of self indulgence or self celebration, nor of keeping your findings to yourself. It is exactly about working solitarily in order to be able to produce perspectives that can be shared and that contribute to developing the field you are working in. It is about finding ways of communicating about work, that allow for a large degree of specificity/personality without canceling the collective relevance.

*Do you use the self interview to (re-)affirm your ideas?*

Maybe rather than (re-)affirming, it is about making an effort to actually articulate that which seems obvious to yourself, which might not at all be that obvious to others. In that sense, it's about discovering in/consistencies within thinking. In/consistencies are also exactly openings for others to fill in. And the process of mapping out one's thinking is a chance to divert it and to find other ideas.

*Could you describe how you are trying to make this circulation of ideas possible?*

## everybodys

This collection of self interviews is an open collection that keeps on expanding. Everybody who wants to write about their work is invited to upload their self interviews to the everybodys webpage. In this way the “technology” of writing develops through the usage of the tool and the discourse expands with each new contribution. We hope that this book will encourage more colleagues to write their own self interviews and upload them on the website, so that the ideas and questions can continue to stimulate the community.

# ELEANOR BAUER

## On AT LARGE

January 2008

### OBJECTIVE:

In this interview, I will address the questions afoot in my current project, “AT LARGE,” as well as the question of what I want to say with it—not in terms of a message that could rather be articulated in a text such as this one, but what I want IT to DO—what kind of experience or understanding would I like a viewer to come away with.

### STRATEGY:

Because writing alone is for me always some form of self questioning and answering, forcing myself to clarify by addressing the imaginary or potential opposition, advancing and defending, the rhythm of explicit question and answer is usually subverted in the flow of thought. In order to use this rhythm which is already installed without disrupting it, and yet be able to track and organize the questions and answers that direct (and mis-direct) the thought, I developed the following format for this self interview:

I will use **bold** to tag **the words or phrases within a question or answer** that can produce further questions or that demand clarification. *Questions and clarifications stemming from those bold sub-issues will appear in italics. I will underline sentences and phrases that arrive at answers to the above main question.* I will use ALL CAPS to emphasize something merely for the sake of emphasis, as it is the only available form of emphasis remaining after the above meanings have been assigned. Traces of this format remain where they were used, and disappear in gusts of inspir-/explanation.

### DISCLAIMER:

In efforts to make this acceptable reading material for others, I tried editing and revising, but it's hairy and dense and seems impossible. I have decided to leave the original text more or less as a time capsule, and an honest response and rigorous attempt at the task of self interview. At worst, the below excess of words is vain, masturbatory, obsessive, manic, and excessively introspective. At best, the below excess of words is generous and holds a few gems of crystallized thought that hold in them a ray of hope for extended relevance to others.

COMMENCEMENT:

I hereby commence this self interview

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Let's start with the first question. What do you want to **question** with your current project?

“AT LARGE” is a piece motivated by a very huge and dangerously simplifying question: “what is the position/role/purpose of dance in the world at large?” This is a question that I realize is grossly impossible, even stupid, mostly due to the generalizing/globalizing/universalizing aspects of the two words “at large.” Therefore, that is where I take up residency: in questions such as how very general kinds of values about dance (pleasure/expression/authenticity/virtuosity) do or don't persist, and are or aren't supported in various systems of visibility and production, specifically within the overriding force of globalization which today encourages dissemination and mass-distribution on ALL levels of society and culture. Baudrillard speaks about universal truths (democracy, human rights, etc) being value-deflated and meaning-drained because of their co-opting by economic and political processes of globalization. So what happens when media, such as Youtube, television, or even documentary movies (such as RIZE), which are also participating mechanisms of cultural globalization (not always directly linked with economic globalization), replace body-to-body transmission of dances? **Does this alter our sense of “universal truths” in dance or are we no longer concerned?** When everything is accessible, everything is everybody's, everything is treated as cultural currency, and appropriation (rather than belonging or not belonging) is the common mode of relation to what exists, everything is doubled, imitated, transmitted virtually, simulated, represented—choose what-ever language you wish to speak about it, we no longer seek shared values by agreement or consensus, but individual truths by positioning in relation to each other within an infinite fractal horizon of Others. Finally, any values or truths previously considered universal are also thrown on the menu of free-for-all, mix-and-match, choose-your-own-adventure assimilation of cultural codes, values, and references with which individuals invent, define, and situate themselves today.

All of this may seem totally obvious as a part of our reality, which we all know, experience, and understand. But it is something I think has not been dealt with directly in the medium of dance, in the physical doing of dances, where this cultural condition is happening “at large” and inadvertently. It is apparent in social dance phenomena: the mixing, spreading, infecting, morphing, virtual participation and reaction via Youtube. It is apparent in the dance field in the tendency and demand for dancers to be capable in as many dance forms and techniques as possible, and how “contemporary dance” in South Africa can share

similar esthetic values as “contemporary dance” in Brussels, it is apparent in the choreographic dilemma of oversaturation where every code including the acknowledgment of codes has been claimed and rewritten.

As each body has a certain limit to the amount of different things it can do, and any specific physicality demands training and practice, **the dancer must choose** and s/he becomes a mix of what s/he chose over time to pursue or erase, what s/he was trained into or out of, and what s/he blindly habituated. In both of these cases—the way dance forms are spreading in a more general public and the way dance techniques are circulated worldwide in my professional field—what is similar is some kind of challenge to the fixity of cultural context and the emphasis on individual implication/choice. **So the work we have set ourselves in “At Large” is to take the physical/personal catalogue-body that exists in the training and versatility of a contemporary dancer and further this body’s relation to Other bodies, other dances, dances taking place in other realms, and see how we can not only be the ready-made evidence of our circumstances, but re-invent the ingredients of our recipe of self construction, play the field in wider and other fields, perform the global experiment unto our selves, and see how we can overcome these codes to reflect upon and challenge our relationship to dance and our position in it as well as an audience’s.**

WHY?

The point for me in taking all of this up is to challenge the consensual hermetics of my own perspective: in an artistic process, in an artistic field, in various milieus of that field. This is not about exoticism, not about eclecticism, not about generalization, but about using general, external, and other perspectives to reflect upon my own: going all around, within, and to the edges of what is considered dance, what I have been educated to consider dance, what other people consider dance, *in order finally to dance*. By taking on various positions and values of dance, gathered by interviews with professionals in the field, gathered by obliging ourselves to see all the dance performances we can even if it’s not our interest, gathered through commercial contexts, virtual contexts, by learning new dances, and by simple observation of how dance is distributed, understood, talked about, exchanged, taught, performed in these various spaces, the purpose is of course not to find and deliver THE answer to the question of the position/role/purpose of dance in the world “at large” nor to glorify all positions besides the one I am placed in, but to mobilize, to get unstuck, to get on with dancing in a way that is directly and explicitly about how, today, to get on with dancing. So in a sense we pursue a meta-dance: a dance about dance that is as equally a dance as much as it is a reflection upon what is a dance.

In order to achieve this, what we (project collaborators) must admit and eradicate or deliberate is that in the “contemporary dance field” (as in other fields of existence), we are always in the process of socially constructing norms and defining boundaries and categories for the individual. This is not a value judgment, but a mere fact of our conditions: we are consistently in a social construction of likenesses, by physical proximity, the formation of milieux within the field, the processes of consensus that color collaborations, and of course in processes of authority and discipline (education or CHOREOGRAPHY PROPER in the classic sense). I have no problem with norms, belongings, communities, agreement, or even consensus as such, I just think we ought to be aware of them, and in fact, if we want to make all that is written here the stuff of our performance, then we have to be very careful with the way we communicate with each other in the making, how we work together, and how the individual remains crystallized and sharp around the edges, in order to make visible that which I am talking about, which is a research upon specificities within generalities, an appropriation of them, rather than a resignation to them.

Finally, in respect to *WHY*, I think the largeness of such a question is interesting in that its impossibility normally pushes it under the rug and its simplicity makes it very easy to leave behind in favor of more tangibly problematizable questions, questions that lend themselves more easily to concrete artistic productivity than to semi-sociological/cultural/anthropological hypothesizing. But it is this silly question which has been itching at that unreachable place on my back, scurrying around in my blind spot, boiling my blood, and pulling me in and out of love with the medium of dance ever since I had the capacity to question the value of what I am doing with it, and if I don't take this fabulously fortuitous opportunity of time, space, and clever, talented, capable collaborators to rip it to shreds in this way, I'm afraid I'll never get on with more important things and be able to make anything else than a dance which is only conscious or concerned with itself being a dance. It's not artistic puberty, it's just an ongoing process at a crucial moment. OK, fine, it's artistic puberty. QUE VIVA!

Returning to questions/terms remaining in bold from the above:

so what happens when media such as Youtube, television, or even documentary movies (such as RIZE), which are also participating mechanisms of cultural globalization (not always directly linked with economic globalization), replace body-to-body transmission of dances? **Does this alter our sense of “universal truths” in dance or do we not care any longer?**

*Well, in the dance field (which is slow and not so affected by this culture storm if it doesn't want to be) about 50 interviews with professionals in both New York and Brussels revealed that certain universal values withstand a lot of differences: everybody still dances primarily for some kind of pleasure or satisfaction, and in*

*watching dance, is attracted and satisfied by believable visible pleasure of the performer/dancer. Also, we are still apparently looking for self expression as well as an ability to identify the person through what they are doing when dancing. So in all of this, we do apparently still look for authenticity, we are after the real thing onstage. The question of whether other stages and other contexts of seeing dance or ways of transmitting it besides watching live performer/live bodies alter our investments in it is unsure and would demand another interview process for comparison. But these values do seem persistent indeed, and capable of trumping all other frames, surface interests, or reasons for dancing and seeing dance. But MY purpose is not to make generalizations in order to deliver universal truths, but to allow a multiplication of answers to create specificity and mobilize positions FOR THE AUDIENCE to move through. Hence why "AT LARGE with reasonable doubt," the book portion of this piece, will not be an essay or book written by me drawing conclusions upon these interviews but a collage of all the transcribed interviews that hopefully maximizes the moving between positions (this will take some crafty editing) and allows for persistent values to be nothing more and nothing less than persistent values and observable as such.*

--

### **the dancer must choose**

*So we use personal taste, attractors, desires, our own actual processes of individuation as a way to set the limits of the "research," to not get lost in all the options available to us when we decide we will make it our work to learn new dances from other contexts. This also provides for "how the individual remains crystallized and sharp around the edges"*

==

From "What do you want to **question** with your current project?"

### **Is questioning actually the process?**

Yes, I would say that questioning is the process. Early on, the question was asked by one of my collaborators, Manon Santkin, "Is this a process where the question wants us looking for an answer, or a set of answers and delivering them, or is this a process where the question continues to motivate a search?" Her question was geared towards the inclusion or exclusion of doubt arising in the process. **Doubt** in terms of: *when we ask about "the position/role/purpose of dance" do we concern ourselves only with affirming it, or are we allowed to say, "dance is boring and worthless," for instance.* I answered that I would prefer the latter, and that we construct a position out of that that can be utilized and materialized. We have since then thought the process as one where returning to the basic question continues to produce further possibilities and **gives the piece a gravitational center** around which a very broad and inclusive range of positions can be taken up, including doubtful ones. But what is ironic is that by allowing and including doubt, allowing ourselves not to only search for the affirmative and motivational answers, *we diminish doubt as a **dead end** and mobilize doubt as a position to pass through.* This is extremely exciting and allows me

as a maker to feel that there is no part of my collaborator's brain or potential or interest that has to be left outside the studio doors, but that all modes of criticality and distance are instruments not only to strengthen the work, but to **broaden its perspective**, which is not just a value as such and a pleasant way to work or some kind of political correctness, but a *choice that is consequent to the motives of the work itself, which strives to achieve a virtual kind of at-largeness via inhabiting/assuming a multiplicity of possible perspectives.* And I say virtual kind of at large-ness because we cannot tackle much actual at-largeness from the means to create a dance performance for the stage, and I accept this to a certain extent: the actual at-largeness efforts are there, but have their limits in by-productivity, mainly in the form of a publication and video installation in the lobbies, and perhaps other forms as well, time and money pending of course. But these other media will still most likely reach few more people than those that come to see the live performance, though they extend the experience of the performance to a larger space/time frame of consideration and allow for other perspectives to be tackled than those of the three performers.

*Finally, an important distinction here is made: THE POINT OF "AT LARGE" IS NOT TO COMPETE WITH GLOBALIZATION BY TRYING TO EXPORT OUR LITTLE DANCE-WORLD PRODUCT BETTER. (Although it previously was the idea, but all smart-ass attempts at that were simply not feasible, such as our effort to get the Radio City Rockettes to perform Trisha Brown's Accumulation in The Judson church, or the invention of a fake social dance fad, which we abandoned and then decided rather to re-instate as a part of the project with the invention of "Scratching"... the success of which is of course less than questionable).*

As you can see these options are not only limited in terms of production requirements, but in fact, they are actually limited, in that they can only be an ironic gesture in relation to the question. So by taking the choice early on of returning again and again to the same basic question and not spinning off too far on the tangential developments of the question, or rather spinning off in several directions but not choosing one as the landing point, I think the hope was basically that this central question that unifies or connects all of the products of the project is the one that pierces through and is shared with the audience.

Yes, but this is actually the question now—**whether or not your question becomes the audience's question**, or as you said above, if this question is the **gravitational center of the piece**, or if it is actually just the gravitational center of the process. Are they not looking at something else than your questions when they look at your material(s)? They are in a way looking at answers; however, they may all be spin-offs of the same question. Do they appear as symptoms of the same crux, do they all lead back to the same issue, or do they rather produce several sub-issues?

*I think they produce several sub-issues in fact. Because although the process circulates around the same question, that question is finally not what the spectator sees—I think the spectator so far sees (as I gather from showing one month into a 3-month process) a very diverse set of dances, diverse ways of performing and transforming those dances. Our thinking about dance itself does not produce a reflection on dance itself, but rather makes more visible the values and perspectives that we take up in relation to dance—entertainment, pleasure, technicality, virtuosity, expression, communication, literal meanings, history, culture, etc. By doing several of many, we don't say anything about them, but we each pursue some kind of investigation and expansion of our own relation to a widened scope of movement(s). So rather than putting the viewer in the position of understanding, accepting, or disagreeing with some statement we or I deliver about these versatile perspectives on, and capacities of, the medium, it can be great if we manage to **produce a state of questioning and reflection in the viewer**, rather than resignation in regards to the excess of different ways of being onstage. I think this can of course be controlled to a certain extent by the “how”: by being deliberate and responsible about this diversity, perhaps we can achieve our desired appearance as personalized documentarists and individual catalogues, the effect finally being that the performer becomes the **direct instigator of thought and experience**.*

*OK, but communicator of WHAT thought and WHAT experience? Produce a state of questioning and reflection OF WHAT in the viewer?*

Well, I think the role of the viewer has mainly to do with recognition here. Everything he or she sees is **placeable** in some way. *All positionable in relation to varying perspectives on the medium of dance, or varied positions of spectatorship.* The very diversity of possible actions and ways of being onstage generated by the same stupid basic question is not just intellectually but materially fascinating to me, in that options of esthetic, tone, style of delivery, shape, form, etc. form a material arena where style becomes content. The how becomes the what, and I don't just mean in virtuoso performing. If the what is dance, dance dance dance dance dance dance and more dance, people stop caring about what dance we do, which is exactly the point, as I don't see any importance of one over the other anymore in my reality, whether we lift our left arm or do a triple pirouette or krump, the viewers just want to get underneath that material to the why we do it, by looking at how we do it. The way we frame, perform, order, deliver, connect, relate all these different dances is therefore responsible for content in this piece because of the very **breadth of movement that we choose to make available and possible for ourselves** in it.

*Why such a breadth of movement possibilities? Could you not make life easier on yourself and the viewer by choosing to do less different things?*

Well, no.

1) For selfish reasons, a.k.a., personal interest and desire: because of a very serious dancer-performer-doer investment and interest in being a maker, I want to make something inside of which myself and the dancers feel potentialized, mobilized, moveable changeable unfixed not simplified not type-cast not situated on time-out, not limited to re-execution of the thing that satisfied the question one day before, not obliged to land on the same conclusion every day in regards to a moving questioning process. 2) For "sociological/anthropological/cultural observation reasons"; because that diversity of material is the reality I am confronting deliberately in this piece: a contemporary reality of hugeness, fragmentory-ness, wikipedianess, endless relations and information accessibility, decenteredness, a world of oversaturated signifiers and infinite relativity, where no meanings are stable and codes are used abused and reused, where we are searching for meaning and attempting to build meaning out of codes which are shifting and sliding, where cultural currency is fast and furious, where things belong to everyone and appropriation is like Corn Flakes for breakfast, where the individual is not even a social construction of a set of cultural conditions, but a moving target whose whole being and engagement with the world depends on quickness not only to access and absorb information, but to immediately have an opinion about it **and their own version of it**. We are dealing with adaptability, flexibility, instability of meaning in a cultural condition that is beyond postmodernism in the sense of context defining content, but in a bizarre conflation of context and content where **context digests content and spits it out again** and context is not even stable. *I am also talking about context as the individual*, because I think the idea of culture and belonging and society as capable of establishing norms or consensus is disappearing in our contemporary reality, and therefore I think to work as super individuated individuals in relation to a surplus of options is relevant here now today in that it IS here now today. 3) Because I am bored of the idea that a piece has to be about one thing and not as complex in its relation to thought as everyday thought is, as complex in relation to experience as everyday experience is. 4) I am making a dance from thinking about dance, and therefore whose dance/what dance is indeed a field of questioning that I am not interested in simplifying or landing on.

So it seems the challenge, therefore, is **how to make a piece which is not schizophrenic but flexible.**

*How do you make a piece which can contain all of these interests without falling apart at the seams or turning into an undecipherable mess?*

By materializing the solutions and proposals from the questioning and beginning to **map** them, **a web of ideas is materialized.** The work then is how the **material constructs a concept as a world**, a question or set of questions which then can be activated in the mind of the viewer.

*What is the role of mapping in the process and/or product? Is the map a tool for your organization of your thoughts or something that should reveal itself in connections visible to the viewer?*

Mapping is kind of a visual organization process that allows me to connect, relate, and position all the spheres our research is taking up. Sometimes the map is a set of concentric circles, noting realities that a dance is made within (individual-collaborators-studio-dance field-theater-dance public-polis-world—and then finally this overarching globule called the internet which touches on any of these realities, or hovers around them all, in some way). But mapping also of the questions, where the off-shoot questions of the question can be set in relation to each other in a kind of flowchart. All this mental organization helps sometimes in thinking how to structure the material finally, so that the relations that we are building can be reflected in the piece, spatially and temporally. In terms of composition (what comes first what comes next) but also in terms of where things take place, and in what form or media (in a book, in the theater, in the lobby, on a screen, what kind of screen), before the “show,” in the “show,” after the “show.” So that is kind of the role of mapping or the extent to which I relate to it.

*I want to go back to the term “dead ends” that you introduced way above, because I think it also relates to **how to make a piece which is not schizophrenic but flexible**. I think this notion of “dead ends” is key to your understanding of how to structure and carry your piece. And maybe it can be used in the mapping process as well.*

Yes. Thank you for catching that. It's true that **if we want to avoid landing on an answer or delivering A message**, we have to be careful for periods. Dead ends. Conclusions. So, because we flirt with very essentializing perspectives, but at the same time inhabit many, it's about passing through them, seeing how long to spend in them before they grow a period at the end, and how to slide out of them so that the thing that comes after does not negate or erase the thing that came before, but seems like a reasonable connection, and then the connections build a movement of thought in the viewer, a willingness to accept several perspectives in the same viewing experience, and hence how we get at stating nothing through uttering everything, and hopefully how we allow our own process of challenging our own perspectives to become a viewing experience of challenging your perspective as a viewer. It's also about how to create a field in the mind of the viewer, where they are keeping things in store and placing them next to each other even though what they receive is still subject to the persistent linearity of time. And finally, in some cases this may mean avoiding dead ends and always sliding, but also I am thinking that dead ends are useful in escaping the linearity of time: if we always slide, we are always in a line, in a line that wants to lead to a period. But perhaps by choosing where to divide and cut, chunks of material can coexist and be understood in relation to each other in retrospect.

which may be a useful tool in creating a mental map in the mind of the audience, instead of a single stream.

*What do you mean above for **material to construct a concept as a world**, a question or a set of questions activated in the mind of the viewer? And how would you like those questions to be activated in the mind of the viewer?*

I will answer now first the question just above about the concept as a world. This is important because, while I very much try to **avoid values about dance, what it should be, what it can be**, what kinds of dances or processes or performances I think are more pertinent than others, I can definitely assert for myself a very strong position that I have for my own interests in the medium and how I would like to engage it. Which is: I am not interested in the material (live performance/dance) illustrating a concept, or in the terrible mistaking of concept for thesis, a message that has to be ordered and delivered under the guidance or authority of a pre-fab “concept,” but rather in **MATERIAL CONCEPTUALISM / CONCEPTUAL MATERIALISM**.

*What do you mean by “material conceptualism/conceptual materialism?” (Besides that it sounds completely pretentious).*

I mean that the concept acts as a field of research in which material is generated from that research, things are produced, and the very important step we have now, at this stage in the work, where we have a wealth of material and some time to make a “piece” out of it, is to consider carefully how that **material feeds back into the concept, has the possibility to change and develop, improve the concept, and even creates connections within that field of research that propose a different concept than the one that is the base for creativity**. So what I mean by *material conceptualism/conceptual materialism* is that *neither domain rules over the other, but that both have the ability to form and shape each other in the process of making a piece, which for me is especially important in the field of dance/performance/movement, where I can use my body as a tool for information, get to understand what it is capable of doing TO a concept, not just with or under a concept*. And that the domain of the concept is not understood exclusively as a linguistic one. Which is CRUCIAL to a notion of media specificity, what makes it a dance and not a self interview or a floral arrangement. A self interview can do TO a concept also, and is at this very moment doing a fantastic chiropractic overhaul to my concept, but **all the media products of the questioning process should also be able** to do some version of that. OR NOT — this is not to say that everything that is made inside the fence of the field of questioning is great because it was grown in that soil, but to say that we can also do some weeding, and therefore tidy up/tighten the material conceptualism.

Ok, fine. So basically you describe a pretty general process of making stuff, a ping-pong between material stuff and ideas/thought. That is fine and well. But now, as you acknowledge above, where you are is a crucial moment. It is a moment (among many more, I hope) where you now have to step back a bit from the material, what has it been generated BY and see what it generates, so that the material plane/domain of thought, meaning production, conceptness, can do what you say you want it to, which is to change, improve, develop the initial concept and **create connections within the field of research that propose a different concept than the one that is the base for creativity.** *But are you serious about the material being able to propose a different concept than the one that is the base for creativity?* Or do you actually know exactly what you want the material to do and now you need to do some weeding in the field and figure out how to do it efficiently?

Well, this is interesting, because at first I thought I knew what I wanted the material to do and now I realize that the material itself has a lot more to offer than a fulfillment of that desire. I set out simply saying I wanted the material to communicate/share my questions. After this most recent showing, it seems that the problem is that the audience didn't just want our questions, they wanted **my/our positions in relation to those questions.** Which is slippery because I am not interested in taking up and asserting A or MY position(s) with my artwork for several reasons which will be unfolded in the remainder of this text (see **politician vs. performer**), but it is also both difficult and ironic for the very simple reason that *my position in relation to the questions is resolved or changed by doing the work, and therefore shifted, and therefore moving all the time.* This is exciting to me as a method of making, and even an overall artistic disposition: shifting through positions rather than choosing one and asserting it. It's also this very *feedback between thinking and doing, concept and material* that makes me interested to enter the studio each day. **So each time an answer appears, it's a matter of going back to the start of the question and asking again, to get another answer, to come up with many potential positions/solutions/answers as material.** Besides this method being chosen in consequence to the piece being built on a breadth of answers to one simple question, to me there is no point in over-rehearsing what you know when there are more things to discover. *It's funny because this is actually the problem with "problematization": finally there is no problem. It gets solved. Then what. Busy work, or a new problem. :-)*

*Ok, so now that you have defined what you mean for **material to construct a concept as a world,** I would like to focus on that as **a question or a set of questions activated in the mind of the viewer.*** How would you like those questions activated in the mind of the viewer? Or how do you think that is made possible?

I think the desired response mechanism would be a basic “read between the lines” capacity that I think most people have: a kind of gestalt effect of gathered signs. When people are used to assume that the whole is different than the sum of its parts, they invest in the connections between what is presented as a family of pieces of information, and it is not necessary to provide the didactic dotted lines between the lobby installation and the moments onstage that employ the same devices as the dances on Youtube that are seen in the lobby and et cetera. In this way, reading the book afterwards at home or on the train or several weeks later, the gestalt effect also connects the performance to that other place and time and the between spaces are larger, and there is more space for the spectators mind to do the filling-in. Perhaps it’s a good antidote to a show which is a potentially over-dense barrage of information.

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### **THE POLITICIAN vs. THE PERFORMER:**

Herein lies the crisis of authorship: the artist can never be taken as documentarist/observer, but is asked for her editorial, opinion, position on the matters she presents. This to me is problematic, not because I strive for objectivity, and not necessarily because I (I as author) would like to, or think it possible to, disappear behind the strength and thingness of the material itself, but because I would like for the material (especially now I speak of the Youtube material) to speak for itself rather than for people to try to decode how it is supposed to be **speaking for me**, or us, or the “message” of the piece. There is no message, only interest, and therefore I would like to be able to share my fascination with things as they are without standing between the viewer and those selected things. I would like my framing of those things to offer no more than a window upon that which is accessible to them otherwise and an opportunity of time and space to contemplate them under a slightly different light.

*How can I evade being put in the position of the politician, whose citation of any existing phenomena must be aligned and embedded in an argument or agenda other than pure observation and gentle, unencumbered analysis of what is?*

Perhaps the solution is to aim for as dry and clear as possible, as hands-off as possible a presentation of the Youtube clips, letting them stand as something like field research, which is precisely what they have been. Therefore, rather than trying to sew together tricky connections, the material can appear as a sort of index or catalogue, organized as factually as possible towards an actual documentation of things which are going on out there and visible/accessible to anybody and everybody to varying degrees via the internet.

*I want to address this issue of the material speaking for itself rather than speaking for you. First I think this is impossible. Because you chose the material in some way it will speak for you at least as a (re)presentation of your interests.*

Yes. No problem for material to present interest (of author[s]). Problem for material to be mouthpiece or stand-in for agenda of author. Now, here I have to draw a distinction between existing material which is displayed as a document (Youtube and video) and existing material which is taken on by the performers (live). Because here is the line where I think “existing material” cannot function as a ready-made and where the performer herself can also not function as a ready-made. In the sense that the material, because it is performed by a person onstage, is in a position where it cannot speak for itself, but is in a heightened relation to the deliverer where the material either speaks for the performer or the performer speaks for the material. Which is the main friction of the live performance element of AT LARGE: I am interested in how, in confrontation with an endless sea of over-saturated codes and referential feedback, one manages to create meaning for oneself, and I consider this a highly individual process on a basic level of subjectivity in communication and meaning production, but also a highly individualistic process as a product of an overall cultural climate I think “we” (globalized Western civilization) find ourselves in today.

*A note on we: I admit, as a U.S. American, I probably have less resistance to this state of “cultural free-for-all,” considering that the individualistic consumer model of identity construction is largely a product of “American” capitalism and of the fact that U.S. culture is a culture so explicitly built upon the mixture and appropriation of already existing cultures in uncontrolled, unaccounted for, and unintended ways, starting with the country’s rapid colonization by Europeans, followed by the importation of slaves from Africa, and by the early massive influx of immigrants through Ellis Island for the industrial revolution, all within a matter of less than 500 years. I note these obvious facts because I think older countries with more history, while they do participate in the cultural free-for-all and do engage with the speed of exchange, absorption, consumption, and adaptation, also have an older, slower-cooked national cultural identity or values whose traces are more indelible and identifiable, more of a traceable thread in the mix than a BRAND of mixing.*

So, finally, the question of the material speaking for itself or speaking for the speaker is THE question of authorship, identity, and making sense of the world today which I think the live performance of this piece can tackle in a way that is **specific to the medium of live performance.** One form of this friction is in the topic of self expression—literally, how one manages to express oneself using all of these codes, and where is there even a notion of oneself when we are dealing with a self that is post-social construction, some kind of monster of a drive to assert one’s individuality, bred with a basic drive to belong which is insatiable and sliding, considering that that to which s/he can or might belong is multiple and shifting.

So I think my particular interest in using/recycling/quoting/adapting existing material is supported by a suspicion about ready-mades. I think ready-mades don't exist in the performing arts, or are nearly impossible, precisely because of the performer, the distinction and potential of distance between the performer and the performed, and all the attitudes that can be placed between the doer and what is done. This to me is a medium, a rich field of play between context and content, where the performer provides context on her very own simply in the way she does what she does. By taking this field of multiple possible perspectives as an invitation to use/pass through more than less, the performer becomes a site of at-largeness, the performer as an individual avoids being in the position of delivering the truth inside of this web of ideas and reference, and keeps the at-largeness from condensing, landing, settling, or shrinking in her "her"ness. Here again arises the difference between **the performer and the politician: the politician must choose one position and decrease the distance between himself and what he says, or else he is fickle or dishonest. Why should the performer be held to the same standards of consistency or honesty?** I am not interested in the theater as a place of getting to the essential truths, but a place to question what might be assumed or forced into the truth-box outside of the theater.

The impossibility of ready-mades and the use of reference/adaptation is close to my other impossibility in the performing arts which is abstraction. What's interesting to me is that all attempts and methods of abstracting the body can be identified within a genre or style or movement in the performing arts that are connected with different moments in history, fashion, other arts, cultural views. So rather than the possibility of true abstraction, we have several ways to signal abstraction based on different periods in time when abstraction of the body was attempted, codified, accepted. The thought that any movement is potentially abstract because movement itself is meaningless without the context to define how it should be understood is actually not true, because there is no context left unclaimed, unconnoted, and therefore no possibility of meaninglessness (besides in the bad sense, where such meaning has not been cared for and we are left with "meaningless garbage," but I will not discuss meaning in not-deliberate art because analyzing the work of those who do not analyze it themselves to me is a waste of time and is no more or less valuable than the activity of dream interpretation). The impossibility of abstraction because of reference brings me to my interest in the **unitard** and other such "abstract" dance costumes—they are *vestiges of a time when the costume was used to turn the body into a purely formal medium, and now they stand as signifiers* that say "Graham" or "Cunningham" or "Nikolai." So if what we are left with is an endless feedback of reference and recognition, wherein there is no escaping what exists (this is what I mean by the contemporary state of over-saturated codes, which I think exists in all media including language), one had better be deliberate about how one appropriates and uses what exists, or, in my case, make that whole game of referral to context as content and as signification part of the **game of meaning production.**

## everybodys self interviews

*I think that is part of what is desired from the audience with this piece. For them to engage in a game of meaning production with the performance.*

Yes indeed. And for that to be active on many levels at once so that no element is meaningless, or just there to support another, more primary element—i.e., there are no “just pants”—there are clingy movement pants, aerobic fitness pants, hip-hop pants, rock’n’roll pants, swing pants, hammer pants, street-wear pants (casual, dress, 40s 50s 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, 00s) ... each of which signify a different reading of the action, a different context, which, when developed enough as its own line of visual communication then it becomes fully functional and autonomous as a potential field of play in the *meaning production game*. So then the costumes that are worn outgrow their position as support of the action and can then weave their way in and out of alignment with the action, in the forms of agreement, confirmation, dissonance, conflict, compliment, displacement, etc. in relation to the body that is moving inside of them.

And this goes for every other medium or element engaged, hoping that they all affect each other, and the viewer’s sensitivity to significance and signification is pulled from several perspectives at once.

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*You frequently mention or allude to a resistance to delivering a message. But do you think this is an invented pressure, I mean, do you think anyone is actually looking for a message?*

Yeah, they are. As much as I think we are over interpretation in the sense that Susan Sontag has been read and reread since the 60s, and as much as I think the majority of capitalist society is all about experience in the sense even consumer product relations are all based on experience today, I still have found that, with everything I have made (with the exception of “ELEANOR!” which is blatant and obvious and basically full-on didacticism excused by stand-up comedy) someone has always asked me, “What are you trying to say with this?” or says something like, “But what do you want from the audience?” And this need for a message from either the side of the doer or the side of the viewer is not just about didacticism but about motivation—WHY do you want to make THAT thing. And sometimes there is a gap between the WHY and the WHAT, or the WHY is not evident or implicit in the WHAT.

I think this is the very basic crux of this whole self interview: that what I research or what I am interested in, and the products produced by that research or interest are NOT one in the same, and that the products do something else and function in another way. Therefore, there is always a wild goose chase, as performed in this text, of understanding that relationship and gaining some control over it.

# ALICE CHAUCHAT

## On COLLECTIVE SENSATIONS (praticable)

January 2008

*Hi Alice,*

Hi Alice,

*Can you explain to me this project you're working on at the moment?*

Well, it's still a bit blurry, I have to admit, but maybe I can try to lay out its different entries, the starting points, desires, or questions that bring me to do this: What can an audience get from watching a group of people on stage? Can people share sensations? Can people share imagination?

*When you say "people share," which people are you talking about? And what do you mean by sharing?*

By sharing, I mean investing in a common question and experiencing this investment as togetherness. That brings us to the first question. In the last years I've been working a lot on the relation between audience and performers, but always in small formats (solo, duet, or one-on-one relation). I've always wanted to make space for complicity, in the sense that we (audience and performers) would all know what was at stake and how this was being dealt with, to open the door for the spectators to engage in the performance as active members of a collective event. This doesn't necessarily mean having the same role, but it means that roles are acknowledged and that their investment forms the event, together with all relations at work during it. In a solo it is clear that the only human relation going on (at least for the performer) is that with the audience. In the duets I did, we focused on our relation with the audience, not on the couple story happening on stage.

*So the shows are about the theater situation of people watching other people do something the latter have prepared?*

Yes, in a way, very much so. Now when you look at group performances, the complicity between the author and the audience can still be there, but complicity between performers and audience runs the risk of being replaced by that between performers, where the audience becomes excluded from the action and can only witness or experience the stage activity by proxy.

*But what is it that you want instead?*

I want the presence of the audience to be a constitutive element of the performance, I want the performance to need the audience in order to make sense. That's what I mean when I say performance making is the organisation of the conditions for an experience, an experience for the audience. If the piece can happen on its own, I don't need to ask people to look at it.

*Mmh, maybe you should read Brecht to be a bit more articulate on that point.*

Yes, probably. But from what I know, I'm probably looking for alienation and trance at the same time: to provoke a trance state that is not a result of identification.

*Now, I checked the French translation for complicity, and the word seems to have a slightly different meaning in both languages. In French, complicité points to a positive sense of togetherness supported by the notion that the people involved understand something in the same way and enjoy this shared understanding. In English, complicity has a negative connotation of shared crime.*

Well, thank you for the clarification. I will go on using *complicity* as if it was *complicité*. So, I started to wonder how this complicity between performers could be mediated in a way that would allow the audience to join in. Not to dissolve this togetherness but to open it up to another type of togetherness that would include all the people present in the room.

*I see. Now, to be involved together in something you need something. What is this something in your project?*

It is the relation between movement, sensation, and imagination. If we reject the body/mind split we have to consider these three as bodily activities that connect without being the same. Each can activate the others, for example, imagination can motivate movement, movement induces sensation, and sensation can feed imagination. I find sensation and imagination very interesting for a group work because they are so extremely intimate. And they give urgency to the question of what can be shared, both on stage and in the whole room. They also make individuality explicit: however much a group we are, we still don't share our ex-

periences. And this is interesting because if we can't share experience, still, for me, performance making is very much about laying out the conditions for an experience. I think these are contradictions that can push me to look at things from another angle.

For example, when watching someone move, sensation is shared through kinesthesia. In this project I want to reverse the relation between movement and sensation: instead of movement producing sensations as by-products, to use movement in order to produce a pre-defined sensation.

Then instead of a performance producing imagination, I want imagination to be the motor of the performance. In both cases, individual sensation and imagination precede movement. The idea being that the resulting movement can in turn nourish more sensation and imagination for the other performers and for the audience.

*You mentioned mediating the complicity between the performers. Can you explain?*

For the group activity to be the sharing of individual activities, and for this sharing to exist in itself, this sharing needs a mode of communication which remains separated from that of the activity itself. If we use verbal language, the audience can receive the same information as the performers, and the performers can appropriate it in an individual way. The point here is to maintain a distinction and thus a friction between individual and group, to make their relations perceivable. I also think that the openness of this exchange can give space for the spectators to develop their own relation to the spoken words, at the same time that they can watch the effects of these words on the performers.

*What kind of words?*

Fragmentary descriptions of one's own activity.

*Are you interested in the individual? In psychology?*

I'm not so interested in psychology, but very much in human relations, in the politics of performance and the politics of collaboration. To think about relations and group you need to consider the individual as unique, to honor alterity. By this, I mean to consider that the other is different from oneself, and that one doesn't know where these differences lay. Individuality is what makes someone not the same as someone else. In this case, the differences interest me less than the acknowledgment of these differences.

If I consider you to be the same as me, there can be no movement between us, no change, no effort towards understanding.

*Yes, it's true that I often don't understand you very well, like now for example: you say you want to underline alterity but not its specific appearance; how can you do this?*

Well, I'm not sure. Maybe it's more a question of degree than of exclusion. What I want to show is a group as a heterogeneous ensemble of radically different persons that is fed by each of them and by the relations between all of them. And then I also want to set up a situation in which the audience's position is affirmed as different from that of the performers, where it is clear that audience and performers don't perceive the situation in a similar or even mirrored way; where the spectator understands what is going on onstage but can't follow the exact steps of its unfolding. The stage activity, with its own motivations and resources, should induce an experience that exists for itself and not by proxy.

*Well, it seems that the interest here is to bring forth alterity in its various degrees and figure out communication possibilities based on it instead of despite it. But I'm getting a bit lost... How about a concrete description, so I can have an idea of what we're talking about?*

For now I started developing a group practice, at first for the sake of practice in the frame of *praticable*,<sup>1</sup> and then further on as a potential base for a performance, which is what I'm working on now. It has many variations, but all function on the same model. My favorite goes like this: each participant invents an imaginary body for herself, with as many details as possible, and moves in order to produce the sensation of this imaginary body in one's own actual body. Then one by one the participants name a detail about their own body (ex: "5 giant tongues are coming out of the back of my head"), and the others integrate this feature into their own body, so that change happens at the same time for all but not in the same way. The performers don't copy each other, but infect each other through language. The activity of imagining and moving in order to make an imaginary sensation real produces very intense concentration and body presence. The movements don't look like forms so much as textures, in contrast to the descriptive quality of the words spoken.

*Your example with the tongues is rather unexpected I must say. Are you into science fiction?*

You know, this is something I've always loved about dance classes, that the teacher would say things like "feel the roots grow under you foot," or "your body is suspended by the top of your ears," "bring the space with you as you run," and we would understand exactly what they meant even though they obviously didn't expect us to turn into trees or defy the laws of gravity. They used these images to help us produce a sensation, and the production of this sensation would be

## everybodys self interviews

the desired movement. I've been thinking more and more about this mind-as-body idea and came to this: if we consider imagination to be a physical activity that is rooted in sensation, i.e., in a super personal experience, what could be a practice of collective imagination? Performances are also a place where we can experiment with our perception of the body. Maybe the wish here is to produce a body that invents itself and that is transformed by the other's imagination. And to address the spectators' bodies in the same way, where they can be touched kinesthetically by the bodies on stage as well as suggestively by the words.

*Is it important to you that imagination produces something new; are you into invention, like, creating from scratch, or if not, what role does culture play in this practice?*

Bodies carry stories, histories, memories, and with this complex of knowledge, they can imagine. It is interesting to leave the idea of cultural repetition aside a bit, and embrace its appearance, because it cannot *not* appear. This leaves space to focus on the activity itself, to invent together, and to immerse in it, and possibly to hallucinate that which is implicit in this shared imagination.

*Well, thanks... I'm curious what this will be like.*

Yes, me too. Thanks.

1 An ongoing project by Alice Chauchat, Frédéric de Carlo, Frédéric Gies, Isabelle Schad, Odile Seitz. Based on sharing physical practices, *praticable* brings together research, learning processes, creation, production, and distribution, multiplying circulations between them.

# FLORENT DELVAL

December 2007

*Are you used to the practice of the interview?*

Well, I think I have to answer yes and no at the same time. Basically, I performed a lot of interviews as a journalist. And only few as an artist. For my practice is divided between these "two domains"... in a way of course, there's no border-line. It is more a technical categorization. So am I used to interviews? As an interviewer, I think I'm tending more and more to abandon all patterns, that is to say all prepared questions. It is something I learned on the field ... the more clever the questions are, the worse the result is. I think it was a meeting with the Japanese musician Keiji Haino who triggered this statement. He's a rock icon, but he has the aura of an Eastern sage ... he's a character, and he told me, "Why are you asking all these questions, since you know the answers already?" I was a little bit stunned. But then I learned to leave more and more space for improvisation. So the more I do interviews, the less I know how to do them. The more I practice, the less I'm used to it (*laughs*). And as for my role as an artist, I think I've been interviewed three times only.... But I think I got more profit from these interviews when I had to answer "I don't know" or "I don't understand the question." Because when you're affirming what you know or pretending to know, usually there's nothing happening....

*Ok, great. So I think I should improvise questions with whatever comes to my mind and you should answer, "I don't know."*

Basically, yes (*laughs*).

*Well. So, as you said, you have a double activity, don't you think they interfere, one with the other?*

Do you mean as a code of ethics?

*We can start by that....*

So, no I don't have a code of ethics. Even though I'm thinking about this question often. I know that, for instance, if you become a museum director, you have to stop being a critic. It is mandatory. But frankly I don't understand why. I think it is almost the same activity. For instance creating a structure, a collective, a new

mode of distribution is also an artistic gesture. Thomas Hirschhorn's *Musée Précaire* is a fine example. And recently I saw a festival organized by Association Lisa in Utrecht, and for me, it was brilliant in the concept: they were curating and at the same time participating. And their own performances were kind of responses to the works of the guests. So the structure they created was a work of its own. It was in between a structure, a work, a symposium....

And if you think that if I write a good paper on someone, then I would get an advantage, like get programmed somewhere, it is very naïve. It doesn't work that way. Or yes, it could work that way, but even if I were only a critic, it would work that way too. Maybe I'm not clever enough to take real advantage of the situation....

*But how are you passing from the journalist mode to the artist mode and vice versa, if I may say so?*

There's no such shift. It is very simple, I'm writing on works I like, I'm working with people I like and soon I will organize a small video art event in Brussels to promote artists I like. Of course I will not write about this event in magazines I'm working for, but that is the only limit.

*So you're defining the limits by yourself?*

Yes.

*So we just have to trust your honesty....*

Well, I don't see another possibility.... But this is not interesting frankly. What is interesting is when I'm writing an article, when I'm assisting the work of other people, when I'm doing my own work, it is the same process more or less. As I told you, now I'm thinking of this video exhibition. And it is really exciting: like, which artists should I choose, why, how they will interact, how to build the space....

*So do you consider your activity as an art critic as art?*

I don't even consider my art practice as art (*laughs*). I don't want to be arrogant saying that... It is just that I'm working at a modest level now and I still haven't achieve something that satisfies me. So I wouldn't say it like that, because I don't want to say my articles are that important. But I would say that all my activities are at the same level. Maybe it is the same as you said, but it is a different way to put it.... To make a long story short, the processes are exactly the same. You're searching for the more efficient way of getting somewhere, and once you choose to go there, or there, the actual practice leads you in a slightly different place. And so you try to correct it but not really because you have found some-

thing new ... blahblah ... It is the most basic dialectic of artistic creation, but it's also the way the act of writing functions....

*But then I still have difficulties not thinking critique/theory on the one hand and art/performance on the other.*

It is the same for me, I sometimes have difficulties to think out of the established patterns, even though I know that these differences are pointless. As soon as art became self reflexive, the borders became blurred obviously. I have a conference project about Andy Kaufman, an American entertainer, whose work is however important for reflection on performance art. And I want to do it on a stage. But at the same time, I want it to be done in a straight way, just talking, giving information, reflections ... not like "performative conference." I don't know if I'm clear....

*But what is there in common for you between practice and theory?*

I could obviously answer that the lecturer has a body, but I'm not really thinking in those terms. I would rather say that everything I do is more or less linked with the act of writing and literature. That is the common point of it all....

*Are you interested in literature? In today's literature?*

Not so much ... I'm only reading classics, from time to time. Greek literature. Or historical books. I don't have much interest in literature....

*This sound a little bit paradoxical*

It's true, it is a total paradox. I'm mostly interested in people like Georges Perec or Edouard Levé because their way of working is more like that of visual artists. I don't think Perec ever considered himself a visual artist of course. But a text like *200 Postcards* could be the work of Claude Closky, for example. I like Raymond Rous-sel also....I was also very interested in sound poetry, like Bernard Heidsieck, etc....

*So your work is literature. But you're interested in literature only when it is not literature.*

Hmmm ... yes!

*So where is the literature in your work...?*

It is quite difficult to say exactly, but let me tell you about an interview I had with Ivana Müller.... While we were talking, I noticed that she was always referring to choreography even when she was speaking of her texts or videos. And I said, "Why don't you only use the word '-graphy?'" And maybe someone else could

## everybodys self interviews

say that all of this is not “Choreography,” but “Music.” So I tried to question her about that. And it is not that, for her, choreography is the origin of all her art, but that she chose that it would be the place from where she’s talking. It is a frame to reduce her field.

And for me, I think it is almost the same, but I chose to talk of literature. As for now, I’m working on a piece called *A Simple Dance*, and we’re looking at the minimum requirements for dance.

*That is to say?*

We’re working on basic statements we’ve collected, like “Dancing, it is going up and down,” “Dancing, it is breathing,” “Dancing, it is being together” etc.... It is a work about definition, I would say. Can you imagine a party, for instance ... and there is a guy who’s not having fun with the others. But almost imperceptibly, with a glass in his hand, all stiff and shy, he’s shifting his weight from one foot to the other. So in a way, he’s dancing. This is what I would call minimum requirements for dance. And this way of defining things, making categories is a way of working inherited from my studies ... I must confess I’m really a maniac with definition. A cat is a cat and nothing else (*laughs*).

*Don’t you think that “text” or “words” would be more appropriate?*

Yes maybe. I think I’m a definition freak because I cannot define my work.... But maybe I’m thinking “literature” like Literature Studies, which are more oriented on analysis, classification, etymology, Latin, linguistics, etc....

*Anyway, this project, A Simple Dance... It is a little bit contradictory, for you were criticizing categories a few minutes ago.*

Yes, I know. But this project, *A Simple Dance*, is a little bit of a joke. And I’m trying to cure myself (*laughs*). But to be true to my work, I have to acknowledge my contradictions. And anyway, we are surrounded by categories, binary thoughts, etc.... We cannot really avoid them. Like, I’m really against all distinctions such as written/improvised, art/critique, theory/practice, documentary/fiction. But sometimes I use them to facilitate a conversation.

*Have you used such shortcuts in this conversation?*

I’m afraid I have.... May I ask you something now?

Yes.

Have you asked any questions already knowing the answer?

# JUAN DOMINGUEZ

## On FROM... TO...

November 2008

*Good morning.*

Hi.

*Sorry to propose this interview so early, I know you don't wake up early.*

It's ok. My mind will be slower, but we will manage.

*Ok. Can we start?*

Sure.

*This first question maybe sounds critical to you, but I think that your answer can drive us to a major point of your work.*

Shoot!

*Do you consider yourself funny?*

More than critical, it sounds like ha ha ... let's presuppose that I am funny. It is true that I use humor, and if I use it, it is because I have a sense of ... so I guess I am funny because I see what my humor produces, but I know that I am not funny for everybody. I have suffered from this my entire life. A part of my humor is quite brutal and creates a lot of embarrassing moments for both, the giver and the receiver. When this happens I feel so sad ... he he. No, really, it is not funny, and it destroys me because I always use humor for enjoyment not the opposite. I am also very bad at making jokes, but this is always a good test. It helps me know where and how to invest.

*Where does your humor come from?*

I guess that's partly natural, but not only; I mean, it doesn't come from nowhere. I use humor as a strategy: to survive when I was young, to be stronger later, to

seduce later on, clearly always to transform reality, but lately, in the last ten years, I have used it as a tool for working, during the process and as a result. I also use it for work, since I am a professional, working for others. But this humor is proposed naturally as part of the way my communication functions. So there is not an intentionality of getting something from being funny, I am simply funny or not. The only thing I work on is what this humor produces, I cannot *not* become conscious of the production when I use it. I also come from a culture that uses irony in a very cynical way, and this sometimes can be not generative, but just the opposite. So I have to be aware and in control of this production.

*Are you afraid of not being taken seriously by people?*

I know it is risky, but through humor many levels of communication can be proposed and perceived. We could think that it is a tool for consciousness. Anyways, I simply cannot help enjoying, and if I enjoy what I do, there is a moment when you die laughing. I am not looking for humor, but if it appears I'm not the one who will dismiss it.

You just gave me an idea; maybe I should try to do a piece based on comedy. Maybe I should try to really go far and try to be as funny as I can, extremely funny, more than ever. I think I am going to try it. But in 2011. I first have to finish the other three pieces I have in mind right now.

*Now that you talk about the present, and before you start to fantasize about the future, I would like to enter your current project. You are working on a subjective relation between language and body, and you are using linguistics as a source, right?*

Right.

*Can you introduce the project a bit? By the way, what is it called?*

The research project is called *from...to...* and the piece I will make out of this research doesn't have a name. It will be titled with a blue drawing.

Briefly, I can say that in the last few years, and more concretely since 2002, I have cancelled out the body as a focus of expression. There was a need to find a more balanced communication with the spectators. And the body in dance was, for me, only graspable in a state of body idealization.

Starting to do my own work, I couldn't continue the dynamics I was involved in, and passed to another more reflexive, more conceptual one. For that, but without leaving the interest in transformation and the use of transversality in between fiction and reality, I started to work with written language, proposing through it an image that spectators could create. So there is a responsibility that is shared in the production of the expression. Language was also, in that moment, a more sharable channel for this expression.

## everybodys self interviews

When I got the commission to do this research *from...to...*, I thought that through the study of linguistics I could have more tools to develop this shared expression. On the other hand, my body has lately become relevant as a map of my identity. I felt the necessity to place the body in a situation where there are no borders but in a recipe of which we know the borders; language. Does that answer your question?

*Let me ask you more so that we can get little by little to the point.*

Not a problem.

*You have been working with different languages, in different countries and cultures, and also working on different aspects of linguistics, and as material, you work with verbs of movement. It sounds huge. I will not ask you to summarise the research, but has the piece more from somewhere?*

If I understand well the question, you want to know what I will use out of the research for the piece.

Yes.

Well, before developing some ideas I got out of the research that really implicate the relationship between language and body, I want to work on an expression that doesn't mean anything on a language level, but that comes from language. So I am using structures and logics from language, but I am not using words. I want to provoke an experience for performers and spectators that goes over language. Language seems to open our understanding but also to cancel out other possibilities I am looking for. I want to suspend the moment that appears between sensation and perception. So before representation. That's why there will not be language as such, but an experience that can be later discussed.

*In this experience you are talking about what will the elements be?*

I am working with the body and the physicality the kind of communication needs. I am using sound, but in a way that communicates states which we can surf. But experiencing.

*Can you be more specific?*

Not really ... wait, I try .... If you have to experience the danger of crossing a street, you will not cross the street two minutes before a car is passing. You will wait as long as you can in order to feel the danger. Let me think whether this is a useful example. What I mean is that the experience has to be intense enough and accessible enough or possible enough. I think there is a state where you are



*the body as an object, the absence of the body, the imagined body/the imagined situation. Why come back to the body, a body abandoned on purpose?*

Well, for a while this virtual experience was great, gave me more freedom. But after a while you cannot stay there, otherwise you lose action. Maybe intellectually there is action, but you lose dynamics, you lose balance. Now I need both actions, but not the subjective and single ones, they should be shared.

*What is, or where is, the language's physicality? Can you transform its analysis into activism?*

Fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu...through its study I can understand better how we perceive, how we represent, how we communicate, and afterwards, I link these aspects with the idea of before language and after language. Probably I am looking for a space in between the before and after language. It is a space where you don't need to breathe, where you don't need to measure, where you only need to disperse yourself. While you disperse, you don't need to represent, you simple are.

*Beautiful, I want to live there, although I can't imagine what it looks like....*

It doesn't... Let's change, this is too mystical, we need to get dirty also. A dirty mysticism. He He.

*You told me before the interview that you are working on giving physicality to sound and sound to action.*

If you say so....

*Can you explain it?*

Well, I am working with non-verbal communication aspects. They include, among others, the sounds we produce in order to support verbal communication. I am giving these sounds the supremacy of communication and trying to propose them as a physical space, a space through which you can surf, and a space that of course will affect you.

If you go work in the morning, and you meet in the entrance of the building where you work a little boy crying, you will have a kind of reaction to it. But if, when you come out of work and see another little boy also crying, or better yet, the same as in the morning, or better yet, a whole family including the little boy from the morning, your reaction will be different. Imagine if you stay the entire eight hours of your work day watching them. It is not anymore about why they cry, that's probably clear (money), it is about what the whole configuration produces. This example was good, right?

juan domínguez

*I don't know if it was good or not, but interesting.*

This reminds me of the story you told me about the pullover. You were looking at a pullover of yours during the 45 minutes that your washing machine's short program lasts while washing it.

Yes, but it was crazy. I invented a series of stories that happened to the pullover that was living on a planet that turns on itself so fast that you cannot walk, you are bumping all the time. And after that about sub aquatic life. Forget about it. These are stories for not sleeping.

*I come back again to a previous thought: what is activated or what is the action you want to propose with this project?*

I am thinking of the physicality of the sound and giving sound to the body, instead of carrying on thinking of shape and meaning; I am going to the essence of language. Taking a certain semantic degree, changing priorities, with the intention of waking up the instincts, the lower ones. Looking for another balance between mind and body.

So the action is different, as its priorities are different. Listening, enjoyment, sharing, deterritorialization, no space and time measure, they are experiencing it, and the identities are peeled, they remain live meat to feel the pure air, the purity of love.

My God, can you stop me, don't allow me to talk so much please.

*To finish I would like to ask you about the methodology you are using to grasp this expression you are looking for.*

There is not a specific one. The methodology is built at the same time we work. Probably when we are done, we will be able to see what kind of methodology was used. We are before the beginning. There is no methodology there. Although there, methodologies are wild hungry animals that will devour you if they hear you breathe.

# ION DUMITRESCU

## On THE WAY THINGS MIGHT GO

March 2008

*Hei Ion!*

Hei Ion!

*What are the questions that you would like to be asked about your work?*

I generally consider that I am able to face any kind of question or problematic regarding the work that I'm trying to put together. But it might not be true. So before anything, I am concerned with the consistency of the notion of "work" so I would start from here. What does it mean to work and to produce work?

*What does it mean to produce work?*

This question arose, it's true, along with the necessity of being active. Together with the pressure of the environment, one needs to justify his existence within society. The role that you choose, or choose not, to perform in the environment in which you live is the work, and reflecting on it could also happen to be called "work." The work is not (from my point of view) autonomous. I don't perceive it as something static or fixed that belongs to me or is produced solely by me, but on the contrary, as a permanent negotiation between the sociocultural context, the cultural agenda of your time, and your awareness of that. The reaction to what is going on around you (depending on how much access you have to information) is also precarious and fragmented. So what is one's position as author in the frame of a contemporary dance piece? Can one reflect on identity through dance performance?

*Can you reflect on identity through dance performance?*

Good question. I don't know what kind of identity you refer to. My identity as a choreographer owes a big percentage to the people that are around me, the performances I have seen, the texts that I'm reading, the research that I'm doing on the internet (ubu.com for example), the personal crises and frustrations with everything mentioned above. That's why for my latest project I refused to produce

any material or make any choreographic decisions during the time allocated to construct my piece. The starting point was the invitation from CNDB (National Center of Dance Bucharest), who decided to give me financial support to make a piece. They initiated something for me to do so I passed it on to others. I invited friends to carry on the process in my presence. I worked on the projects and ideas of other people in the frame of my rehearsals. It was a question of strategy and arranging the meetings.

*How did you arrange the whole thing, what was your strategy?*

Right on the spot. The meetings were set up before, with each guest choosing how they would like to be present in the frame I was proposing. Some of the guests proposed different ideas for a dance piece; with others I had conversations relating to each one's approach towards the representational space. I witnessed or participated in projects that I invited in to my rehearsal time, all of which were recorded on video or just audio, to have some sort of third party all the time that was also, somewhere in the future, me.

*What else?*

Key question. As time passed I gathered a bulk of mini DV tapes that consisted of, as I called it, my material for the work. But the experiences were so far only mine, so reproducing or simply showing the tapes to an audience wouldn't have been quite accurate. It would not have been enough to give an idea of the process to an audience, in a performative understanding.

At some point, a few weeks before the premiere was due to take place, I was invited on the National Radio (the cultural division frequency) to talk about my work and other things related on the air for one hour every day from Monday to Friday. So I thought to push and extend a bit the frame of my project and send someone else the first day. The decisive thing, in terms of strategy, was to be unrecognized by anyone in the institution and to deal somehow with the identification card at the entrance, because the National Radio is a military-protected institution and you have to present an ID to the guards. The tasks we had to overcome proved to be less difficult to surpass than we expected, and for one hour Manuel Pelmus was Ion Dumitrescu in a context that relies only on audio presence. The moderator asked questions and Manuel calmly responded and gave his personal view on different issues concerning aspects of my work and life. The next day—

*Ok. You can't escape the ways you are aware that people might read your performance (any kind of performance) through today's representational system, and the extent to which one is informed about it or is avoiding it. The current debates are opening the possibility of interpretation towards other areas of art that you can choose, or choose not, to ignore. Where do you stand, and if there*

## everybodys self interviews

*is such a position to be taken, on a long term scale? Could it be that one shifts constantly, according to the different postures that have been offered in the sociocultural environment?*

What a various set of questions, it seems a little bit hard to link them. I was getting used to predictable questions.

The fact that choreography is still a precarious presence in the art field, and has a weak discourse among the other art practices, actually grants it a privileged position; dance seems not fixed as a paradigm, it's a domain that is still looking for a meaningful place in art history. Choreography still negotiates its limits and has become open towards the problematic of society also through constant reassessment of its esthetics and conceptual basis.

The performance that was shown at CNDB in December somehow followed this idea and remains an open frame that tries to conceive the representation in a collaborative way with the audience, to shift the roles and logic of a common dance performance, to change the postures of performer/viewer. To have two perspectives, one real (palpable) where one (the viewer) takes part and produces "material" in close intimacy with the performer and one virtual where one can witness on a screen the others having the same experience (which is never the same actually). The body of the performer becomes a white sheet of paper where the spectators inscribe themselves (they are invited at the entrance to write with a black marker on Ion Dumitrescu's body). So the dancer eludes the condition of the medium and protagonist's role and remains just a sort of platform on which the spectators act and thus generate meaning.

*It is not clear to me what this performance looks like, but I hope to see it.*

I thank you, Ion.

*Thank you.*

# FRÉDÉRIC GIES

## On DANCE (praticable)

November 2008

*You have made a piece, Dance (praticable), that is based on a score that can be performed alone or in a group. The premiere of the group version just happened. Do you think that the solo version and the group version are the same piece?*

They are not the same piece. There is just a few adaptations contained in the score if you want to perform it in a group, but it is not them that changes the work. To perform the score in a group makes a lot of things more visible than in the solo version. The effect of amplification created by the simultaneity of several interpretations of the score makes the structure of the piece more visible. It becomes very clear that the performers are following a plan and are sticking to it. It also appears in a clearer way that the structure of the piece is arbitrary in many aspects. In the solo, the focus is more on this ever-changing body that the piece proposes, on the changes in movement qualities. Somehow, the arbitrary aspect of the structure can be perceived in the solo as something similar to self expression. What prevents this is the particular kind of neutrality that the performance of the tasks asks of the performer. In the group version, the treatment of the space takes a very important place that is not visible in the solo. The spatial construction is extremely visible because it is repeated simultaneously by all the performers. The group version also raises questions around political organization, around community and individuality. It also makes visible in a very clear way the question of interpretation that is crossing the whole project. Though I propose a new interpretation of the score at each performance in solo, this question is not as visible as it is in the group version.

*Can you speak more about interpretation?*

The piece is based on a score that the performer has to interpret. With each performance, it is a new interpretation, and thus it produces something else, for the performer as well as for the spectator. What I became aware of while performing the group version, or after listening to feedback and looking at the film recording of the piece, is that this work also keeps open a space for interpretation for the spectator. The piece doesn't impose one single reading and doesn't manipulate

## everybodys self interviews

the spectator. There is no imperative. In that sense, the spectator is directly involved in the work of interpretation.

*What is your relation to composition in this piece?*

Composition is one parameter that we don't work with at all when performing the score. For example, when the score indicates that there is not a particular pattern to follow in the space and that we can circulate as we wish, we don't try to compose in real time an interesting choreography in terms of space. The treatment of the space depends on the movement quality that we are in, and the relations between the performers are random. Though you can identify a clear structure, there is something extremely random about how we deal with movement, time, and space. This contributes to the totally unspectacular aspect of the piece, but also produces quite interesting moments of coincidence, of contamination between the performers. It also creates a non-hierarchic relation between the performers. Each performer appears individually in a random way, not because of the composition. The spectator will maybe look at one of us for a while and for any kind of reason, or for an addition of several parameters, he will switch to someone else. And so on. Another spectator might follow only two or three persons within the group. It's very open, nothing is made to guide the gaze of the viewer in the direction of one particular performer at a particular moment.

*Does the score produce uniformity in the group of performers?*

No. It produces equivalence between people, but not uniformity. It creates community because it is based on a shared practice of bmc.<sup>TM</sup> But as it is not about technique and shape, it doesn't make us become uniform. I also see that the more we create community, the more the differences of interpretation appear. The work is conceived in a way that it shows that everybody can do it, whatever your body education background is. So it doesn't hide the differences between people at this level, but lets them be visible. It makes the body education history of each performer visible, without judging it. I think this is a consequence of the way of initiating movement that comes from bmc.<sup>TM</sup> This visibility is a side effect of the activity. It is not something we focus on. It is just there and we accept it totally.

*What does the piece stage?*

It stages movement but not signs. Even the movements that can make us think of signs that we know don't appear as signs. It is movement. It appears very clearly in the fourth section of the score, when the task is to hold for a few seconds a posture that crystallizes an endocrine gland (we do this for each endocrine gland). Sometimes, this activity can lead us to conjure images that recall well-known and symbolic images. But, even in this case, the way we produce the

## frédéric gies

forms makes it so that it's not about working with signs. So, the way we dance can remind of some dance styles, but they are not these dance styles because we are not reproducing forms. One can recognize some signs, but they are not these signs because we are not reproducing them. It's all about movement.

- 1 An ongoing project by Alice Chauchat, Frédéric de Carlo, Frédéric Gies, Isabelle Schad, Odile Seitz. Based on sharing physical practices, *praticable* brings together research, learning processes, creation, production, and distribution, multiplying circulations between them.

# TRAJAL HARRELL

## Interviews Himself as Alexandre Roccoli

### On SHOWPONY

June 2008

AR: *How long have you been working in France?*

TH: All together, I have been in residency for eight weeks.

AR: *Why did you choose to work in France?*

TH: I had been doing research in France since 2003 and developing some professional relationships here. I had worked here before, but this time has been the most supported in terms of time and economy. But one could say, "we chose each other."

AR: *And where? Paris?*

TH: No, at three national choreographic centers. CCN Montpellier, CCN Belfort, and CNDC Angers.

AR: *Working on?*

TH: A new group piece entitled *Quartet for the End of Time*.

AR: *What is it about?*

TH: I have a hard time talking about it before it's finished, but, suffice to say, it's about sincerity.

AR: *Sincerity, in what way?*

TH: I cannot say. I am too "in it" right now. I don't want to talk so much about it... I know that's quite difficult for an interview, but perhaps we can talk more about the last piece I made, *Showpony*, which we performed in France.

AR: *Yes, I saw it on DVD.*

TH: Yes, I think it is related to the work you did in New York.

AR: *In what way?*

TH: In that the work deals with the notion of dance community.

AR: *Can you say more?*

TH: No, absolutely not... I'm kidding! The work is about the relationship between competition, support, and rapport, and how they define dance community. Through this inquiry, the work attempts to blur the boundaries between audience, community, and performer through the frames of visibility/invisibility, attention /non-attention, recognition /non-recognition—all being things which define what gets valued in community and in particular in artistic community.

AR: *Who defines these values?*

TH: I think we all define these values: audiences, performers, makers, programmers, funders. And mind you, often the audience is also made of professionals in the dance community alongside people with no relationship to the dance community. So, I think performance is a place where this set of values is performed on many levels, some more subtle than others, of course. *Showpony* tries to bring this frame and performance of values to the forefront of the performance rather than allow it to remain the underlying subtext.

AR: *Is it confrontational?*

TH: I wouldn't say it is confrontational. In fact, it might be the opposite. It's non-confrontational. It doesn't force you to look at or examine anything. There are many choices presented, and this array of possibilities forces you to confront, or perhaps align yourself with, what you value as an audience—what you pay attention to or recognize or make visible. Or, rather, I could say it opens up a space of attention and non-attention and all those various things I talked about—yes, a space of visibility and invisibility, etc.

AR: *Can you be more concrete?*

TH: Well, you could spend the whole piece looking at the audience if you wanted. The architecture of the seating allows you to look at the audience quite a bit and we, the performers, sit in the same seats as the audience. So, you don't have to look at the dance, per se. Maybe you just look at the two people sitting across from you. I am tremendously fascinated by watching audiences. I am

## everybodys self interviews

the annoying person sitting in front of you at a performance who keeps looking around at people. What is the dance in other words? I mean this is the question we keep asking, no? And how we perform as audiences is inextricably linked to how value is assigned in the dance community. Or at least it is one way. And one way among many that we try to forefront in *Showpony*.

AR: *Do you think every performance is a dance community?*

TH: Well, I think every dance performance is an opportunity to perform community, yes.

AR: *How did you start this research?*

TH: It started with the piece I did before *Showpony*. It was called *Before Intermission* and after this work, I had major post-performance depression. And I thought, why do this? I was onstage for eight minutes total of the thirty-minute piece, and the piece didn't tour. So, I worked for a year and a half on something, and my own stage experience of it was sixteen minutes in total. I thought, wow, there is something wrong in this equation. I decided that for the next work I would be onstage every minute of the piece. I didn't want to miss a second of it. So, I began to consider the economy and value of that time. How it could be defined? Who would define it? And what were the potential consequences? At some point, I realized too that I had found another link between the Judson postmodern tradition and the voguing tradition. This link being that they were/are intense communities and that the notion of community has propelled both of these traditions.

AR: *So you see community as defining the value?*

TH: No, I think it's quite complex. Community is a filter through which we can see how values get assigned, negotiated, perpetuated, created, etc.

AR: *And is there a difference in how they get assigned in voguing versus Judson?*

TH: Of course.

AR: *How?*

TH: Again it's complex, but in voguing one way in which value is assigned is through competition. Voguing is a form of competition first and foremost. I wouldn't say that value in the Judson tradition is not assigned as well through competition. Of course it is, but it is more subtle and a subtext. In *Showpony*, we both try to be subtle while simultaneously framing aspects of competition.

*AR: I don't quite follow, how is the Judson tradition competitive?*

TH: Well, every performance relies on some degree of comparison with other performances. This all gets extenuated through critical reflection on the part of the spectator as well as through the critical industry surrounding the artwork through curatorship, economic support, clapping, reviews, etc. Yet, what I think is incredibly important is that this competition is balanced by a tremendous amount of support on the part of all these structures as well. And both of these communities—Judson and voguing—reflect that culture of support as well. As well as the third aspect I spoke about, rapport. I think in dance, unlike any other field, the support from those with whom you compete for support is as critical. How many of us could have any kind of work without the professional support of our colleagues? The same colleagues we compete with for money, gigs, recognition, etc.

*AR: More than any other field? Are you sure?*

TH: No, I am not sure, but I think the precarious economics of dance requires a kind of mutual collegiality that isn't necessary in, say, the visual arts where there is more potential for economic freedom. It is kind of lame to invoke the visual art comparison, but I think the same is true for music, theater, film, etc. It's all quite relative for sure, but what I am talking about is different than collaboration.

*AR: In what way?*

TH: I think if we were to do a study of all the art industries, I think one would find a greater percentage of people in dance sharing economies. There is more gift economy, I think. People do more things for free, little, or no money. There is also more necessity to share economies administratively and to share space. I think of course you have people working for free on film as well, but you also have 100 million dollar films. You don't have so many 100 million dollar dances, so the potential for complete economic independence or sustainability is less. Not that a 100 million dollar film is independent. I am just saying that in an economy of that size, you have individuals benefiting at economic levels that foster independence from the kind of support and economic need at the individual level that most contemporary dance runs on. It's one of our strengths and one of our weaknesses. So many artists in other fields are able to own their means of production and sometimes even the means of distribution. This is rarely so in dance. I don't know if it would even be a worthy goal. That's a good question. The fact that we need and rely on each other in order to sustain our work and potential growth fosters something quite human in scale, which perhaps is one of the great beauties of dance. Which I think in some way connects quite directly to the performing community. The slideshow at the end of *Showpony* begins with a series of photos of beds. David Bergé, who collaborates with me on the

## everybodys self interviews

slideshow, and I are both constantly collecting pictures of dance community beds. People in the dance community have a kind of unwritten apartment share code embedded in the community. People are always hosting each other and/or hosting friends and colleagues of each other. Because people move around for work and travel so much, yet most often don't have budgets for hotels unless it's an official institutionalized gig, there's quite a bit of this kind of unofficial sleep-over going on. An empty room or bed, sofa, or sometimes a whole apartment waiting for someone who's in town to perform, rehearse for a project with little funding, maybe looking for work or doing research or whatever. Sometimes there's money exchanged, sometimes not. Most often, not, I would say. It's not even really a barter system, but definitely a feature of this economic interdependence and gift economy. Then, too, there are also the beds in the different residency centers, which we as invited artists invited at different times inevitably share, as well as the beds in hotels which certain venues routinely book for artists. These, too, form a part of this economy. All together, those photos of the beds further symbolize the beauty of that kind of very human scale connection and performance of community.

# DAVID HELBICH

February–March 2008

David: Are you an artist?

David: Yes.

David: What kind of an artist?

David: —

David: Ehm, are you a passionate artist?

David: No.

David: You are not an obsessed, passionate artist?

David: No.

David: Are you an artist who loves his work?

David: Yes.

David: Do you think that you are a good artist?

David: Yes.

David: Very good?

David: No.

David: But you like your own work?

David: Yes.

David: Do others like your work?

David: —

David: Do you know others who like your work?

David: Yes.

David: Do you know others who think that you are a good artist?

David: Yes.

David: A very good artist?

David: No.

David: Do you think it is possible to be a good artist if you are not a very good artist?

David: Yes.

David: Why?

David: —

David: What actually makes someone a good artist?

David: —

## everybodys self interviews

David: Ok, what makes someone an artist at all?

David: —

David: Is it your art that makes you an artist?

David: Yes.

David: Is it your art that makes you a good or bad artist?

David: Yes.

David: Is everything you do art?

David: No.

David: Is art what you do?

David: Yes.

David: Are there things that become art by being done by you?

David: Yes.

David: Everything?

David: No.

David: If there are things that become art by being done by you, is your art about things?

David: Yes.

David: So, your art is not about subjects?

David: —

David: Does your art have a theme?

David: No.

David: Would you like it to have a theme?

David: —

David: Do you sometimes wish you would like it to have a theme?

David: Yes.

David: And sometimes not?

David: Yes.

David: Are you happy with how you do things?

David: No.

David: Would you like to be happy with what you do?

David: Yes.

David: Do you think it is possible to be happy with what you do?

David: Yes.

David: Are you working on your own happiness?

David: Yes.

David: Will this save the world?

David: —

David: —

David: —

David: Yes.

David: Yes?

David: —

David: Yes.

David: Let's say it won't. Could you imagine doing something other than what you are doing?

David: Yes.

David: Do you like this image?

David: Yes.

David: A lot?

David: No.

David: So, what?

David: —

David: So, what do you do with this image of yourself doing something else?  
Does it change your way of doing things?

David: —

David: Your way of making art....

David: —

David: ... of being on the-way-of-art? Can anything make you talk about this?

David: No.

David: Is there a clear difference between your view on the world and your view  
on art?

David: Yes.

David: Isn't art part of the world?

David: Yes.

David: It isn't?

David: No?

David: It is?

David: Yes.

David: Ok. So, if art is a part of the world—next to that art is part of “part,” haha,  
...eh, ok—so, if art is a part of the world, are you certain that you can differentiate  
between your view on both art and the world?

David: Yes.

David: How?

David: —

David: Is your view on the world part of this world?

David: Yes.

David: Is your view on art part of art?

David: Yes.

David: Is it part of the particular artwork?

David: No.

David: Is your gaze on art part of the world?

David: Yes.

David: Is it part of something called art that is in the world and not part  
of the artwork?

David: Yes.

David: Is your gaze on the world part of art?

David: —

David: Hm. Is your gaze on the world part of your art?

David: —

## everybodys self interviews

David: Ok, is your gaze on the world part of your artworks?

David: Yes.

David: Good.

David: Yes.

David: Yeah, yeah, I mean, let's speak about you then.

David: No.

David: Not?

David: Yes.

David: Yes?

David: No.

David: Aaah!

David: Yes.

David: Whatever. How are you?

# METTE INGVARTSEN

## On IT'S IN THE AIR

October 2007

*We are going to start with a rather simple question, which might open the discussion to more complex matters. Why or how did you and Jefta van Dinther come up with the idea of working with trampolines?*

It started as a very simple physical desire, a nearly childlike passion arising through the remembrance of how the body can feel almost supernatural by the very fact of extending its capacity to jump. The extension in this case being the trampoline, understood as an analogue machine that enables the body beyond its natural ability. When we went to try it out the first time, we became increasingly more convinced that this activity of jumping could also have a potential as performance. The ecstatic smile that planted itself on the face of the person watching, without fading for the next 15 minutes, together with the sensation of movement that we felt not from jumping but simply from watching, made us think of the possibilities of kinesthetic transfer. A transfer of movement from body to body that we had not yet been able to imagine in relation to dance and performance.

*So you became fascinated with how the spectator's body absorbs or reproduces the movement of the body that it watches?*

Yes. We had already been talking a lot about how a contemporary body can be understood in relation to dance and movement. We were looking for a way to deal with an abstract rather than a signifying/semiotic approach to movement, and at the same time we were doubtful about returning to a body practice based on technical dance skills as we know them. In these discussions we came to the notion of kinesthetic transfer and how sensations can be communicated on the level of bodily engagement, on the level of experimenting with what a body can do and what a body is capable of. What occurred to us was the intriguing perspective of how to work on the body as body and to be busy with the *how* in front of (but not in place of) the *why*.

*What exactly do you consider the difference between the "how" and the "why" of what a body is capable of?*

The *how* has to do with the experience of actually seeing a body moving in front of your eyes, of seeing an unfolding of the body which you did not expect or that seems to stretch the limits of what you consider the body to be capable of. It works through your sensory system. Through experience, it is that which you cannot know before you have actually seen it. It is content produced through perception.

The *why* is rather a cognitive thought process that appeals to reflection. It would be possible to conceive of the jumping without actually doing it, which most probably would be a rather spectacular and powerful conception, but it would remain unrealized and, more importantly, based on past experiences rather than creating new ones.

We go from the notion that the body needs the body to know what it is capable of doing and that it is only through experimenting with the force of the body itself that its powers can be uncovered.

*It sounds a bit like you are talking about a body/mind split, which I have to say surprises me.*

We don't think that these two approaches can ever be entirely distinguished, but we need to separate them in order to work, to define the specificities of our method, which for this work starts from the body and its movements working outward towards structure and composition rather than the other way around. We go from intensive and qualitative movement experiments, from the how high, how long, how detailed, how differentiated, how silly, or how precise we can perform.

*Okay, I understand this emphasis on the how, but still it's a very particular set-up for a performance that I assume you have been thinking about as well?*

Well the trampoline enables the body to do things it cannot do without this machine-like connection to the extension tool. In a way this is an interesting aspect to consider, as we live in a world where technological/mechanical extensions of the body are part of our everyday activity, at least in our part of the world. With the Internet and the free flow of information, a lot of things have changed in terms of how bodies interact. How we consider identity, belonging, privacy, social spheres, borders, and nations. The defying of gravity, the hyper-mobility, the flexibility and buoyancy of these jumping bodies, in a way, reflect exactly these moves away from stability, fixation and rooted-ness, not as an ideal or utopian state of being free, but rather as a response to certain developments in how contemporary bodies function.

*I don't know, maybe I misled you with my last question. It can be that it's a bit far-fetched that two people on two trampolines, jumping up and down, should represent anything in relation to the world and for instance the bigger, better,*

*faster of capitalist expansion ... except maybe if you would actually represent the competitive sports bodies of synchronized jumping, where discipline, precision, perfection, and synchronicity are the only things that matter, and where it is exactly only the fittest who win. But as far as I understand you are not going to actually represent that; however, it is one of your influences?*

That's correct. We decided to extract certain principles from the sports discipline, but we are exactly not interested in working on the clearly coded body that a sports body would be. The piece is built on vague indications of reference within a very strict set up of the binary motion of the bounce. Even though some of the shapes, intensities, and rhythms that our bodies pass through might point to specific connotations, the basic principle remains the qualitative, intensive, affective, kinesthetic, and proprioceptive.

*Wait ... all these principles are not exactly known to me; would you mind trying to specify them?*

I guess *quality* has to be seen in opposition to quantity—it implies change, or maybe rather one can only really define a quality when it has changed or when it is put in relation to other qualities. If not, you are simply watching a growing number of jumps. We think of every jump as a qualitative transformation—which might only manifest once a series of jumps has been completed. It's like looking at a landscape while traveling through it—then snoozing for a little and realizing when you wake back up that you are no longer surrounded by endless fields but by a mountain range. The quality of the landscape has changed; you are no longer counting sunflower fields but rather mountaintops.

*Excuse me, but where does this nature reference come from all of a sudden?*

In fact we have been thinking a lot about what aspects of the body can be considered biological functions or at least as following natural laws. Like gravity: I throw a thing into the air and it will come down—that much is certain. Perhaps there is also something about the kinesthetic mechanisms of movement perception that in this case connects to the physical laws of the body and the behavior of material/matter. I mean this in relation to, for instance, the sensation of one's own body moving when in fact it is not, just by watching a body jumping. Of course we are aware that the fully natural body is a long gone concept, which is also why we, in spite of our interest in physics, gravitational pulls, and natural perceptions, are still working with digital strategies of manipulations, trying to understand each jump as an organic/mechanic loop, which participates in a constructed system of generated movements.

*Maybe this is an irrelevant question, but are you trying to produce a synthesis between nature and culture?*

We are not really concerned with that question; we are rather trying to figure out something in relation to perception. I don't know if you have heard about the famous half a second that it takes for the brain to actually become conscious of its own activities. Experiments show that if the body is affected with a stimulus it can be measured as brain activity 0.5 seconds before it actually becomes a conscious perception. What Brian Massumi adds to the understanding of this experiment is that every perception is already smudged by all the other perceptions that take place within this half second of delay and explains the clarity of perception as a kind of hallucination. The brain tricking itself into thinking that the stimulus and its conscious reception coincide in time, when in fact it always runs half a second late.

This is extremely interesting to think about in relation to what we discussed before, when saying that qualitative changes happen unnoticed. If it takes half a second for the brain to register a change, it should be possible to work with the micro perceptions that lie in between, and these changes in fact could happen unnoticed, like microscopic hallucinations.

In fact what we are working on is the differentiation of perception: imagine you are listening to the rain, a sound that you have heard a million times before, but that you have no detailed perception of. You don't have 20 different names for snow like the Eskimos, at best you have four: rain, snow, hail, and fog (which by the way is no longer rain). Now imagine that you start to be able to distinguish one drop of rain from another, the kind of surface on which it falls, its speed and texture. All of a sudden rain is no longer one whole but a conglomerate of millions and millions of different/-ciated drops. In a way it is this kind of microscopic perceptive activity we try to achieve when working on looping the materials we address.

*Something is becoming clear to me. As I understand you are no longer busy with the politics of representation, but rather with the politics of perception and sensation, from the perspective of creation. Does that sound right to you?*

What do you mean exactly with creation?

*I mean that you use natural or common perceptions and manipulate them in a way where the expression it produces is no longer expressing something natural, but something entirely cultured or, let's say, created.*

Uhm m m m m, maybe you are right. Somehow we question the notion of natural perception in the first place, as there is always a level of mediation involved in any constructed expression. But for sure with this work we are trying to get beyond dealing with the politics of representation as our topic.

*Now that you bring up the word topic, how would you then define the topics that you are working on?*

There is not one single topic but rather many different topics processed through the same machinery which is the gravitational constraint of moving up and down in relation to the surface of the trampoline.

Maybe what you said before is not bad as a topic. The politics of perception, sensation, and possibly, affect: this is for sure within our domain of interest. Secondly, I think the notion of experimenting with how the body becomes visible as what a body can do deals with the idea of modulation, transformation, evolution, creativity, and change. This connects to the idea of the subject, what it is that determines it, and how these forces of individuation, or becoming, function. Thirdly, there might be an interest in figuring out how to develop a new form of spectatorship that works through the principle of kinesthetic transfer. As a fourth topic, I would address the set up of the performance and the radical constraint of the movement production that the trampolines produce as an experiment.

*This all sounds very justifiable, but do you also have a more personal interest in these things?*

In a way it's very simple. Jumping equals desire, whether personal or impersonal. Desire equals a motivation to work and a reason to invest in thinking about why this is important to do now in dance and performance. Work always relates to at least two fields of production: one's personal development, and the general state of the field within which one works. This parallel axis is what makes it important to work both on the personal desire and in a more social or political context. Whether that is applicable to this particular work, I don't know.

*IT'S IN THE AIR* is concerned with the body, its capacity to move, to change, to act, to jump, to experience, sense, situate, hallucinate, fabulate, and to think and formulate how one's own body is affected by watching these bodies jumping. What conditions the body to move? How much is it the machine that moves the body and how much is it the body that moves the machine? It's about the in/visible forces that condition the movements of the body and about the effort or effortlessness with which these forces are performed. The body is always changing/evolving in relation to something, be it other bodies, systems of organization, maps of spatial navigation or an inner sense of orientation.

*This notion of navigation and orientation, could you elaborate on that a bit?*

Let's maybe return to the principles that you asked us to define more in depth earlier on because we think two of them are very relevant in relation to the question of navigation and orientation. One could try to define the more conventional understandings of orientation, such as following city maps versus one's sense of place, or walking in accordance with habit and memory versus walking without any sense of direction, but what we are dealing with while jumping is a very precise and specific notion of orientation which has to do with the previously mentioned proprioceptive and kinesthetic mechanisms of the body.

## everybodys self interviews

Proprioception is defined as the body's interior ability to know the position of its own limbs in relation to each other and to adapt the acquired effort it takes to carry out a physical action. It is, in opposition to the five exterior senses (taste, smell, touch, hearing and sight), an interior sense, which often is forgotten or functions completely unnoticed. Kinesthesia is a similar phenomenon, a sense guided by receptors in the muscles, tendons, and joints.

When we are jumping, we are dealing with these bodily mechanisms of orientation, of letting or getting the body to know where the ground/surface is, even when we are totally upside down without any measure from our other senses or when sight has become too slow a sense to navigate with. We are working with the instabilities of directionality and position of the body as expression.

What we are interested in are the kinesthetic hallucinations that can occur when the body senses that it is moving, yet nothing is going on. It's exactly these hallucinations that the body of the spectator might be confronted with and hope-fully a lot more.

# INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

## On SWEAT – THE MOVIE

July 2008

*Workshop is one of those terms used in such a wide sense that it has lost any meaning. International Festival seems to make it even more complicated to pin point its meaning?*

Well, generally speaking one could say that a workshop can be two things: a consolidation of knowledge already established, or an opportunity to produce knowledge, thus introducing the possibility for something to change. The question is just how this possibility can be articulated, how some form of engagement can be established.

Our practice is somehow formulated around an idea of forcing ourselves to do things we have no idea about, or things we are unable to perform, yet, of course, being able only to use skills that we already have. An architect and a choreographer/performer working together already introduce this inability. How can a choreographer work with an architect? And we emphasize “together” and not “next to,” as it normally is. You know, the architect builds some more or less artistic structure in chipboard, and the choreographer puts some dances in front of it. No, we are interested in how choreography can challenge architecture, and at the same time, be influenced by architecture. Our practice in fact implies insisting on processes of becoming foreign to ourselves.

One cannot sit down and produce, in the sense of inventing, knowledge. The production of knowledge is dependent on processes of making possible. For the workshop here in Vienna, we decided to make a film, and I mean “film” in the sense of cinema, a full-length feature film.

Of course it is impossible for an architect, a choreographer, and a dozen participants to create such a film, especially if the aspiration is Hollywood, and for it to be finished after four weeks and premiere at the end of the festival.

So what do we do...? Exactly, we better use our imagination. No, actually, if we use our imagination, we will not succeed in any sense. Imagination is already inscribed in representation and perception. We are interested in intensities of other characteristics, something that we call affects. Perception is not our interest but percepts. Or in other words, stuff that has yet to gain a name.

Now, we come across a slight difficulty in respect of novelty. If we think about

## everybodys self interviews

gaining a name, we easily end up in discourses referring to romantic or modernist notions of the artist, inventor, or philosopher. Our practice rather has to do with deterritorializing existing episteme. We wish to be Jewish piano players, to quote Horowitz.

So, to answer your questions: Yes, we are interested in complexifying the notion of workshop in respect of specific modes of knowledge production, and at the same time, if workshop means reproduction of knowledge, International Festival doesn't do workshops.

*This is the second Choreographers Venture that you have been involved in. What are your plans for this year, or is planning something too conventional for you?*

As we know, the path to hell is paved by good intentions, and since we have no errands in heaven, we can't operate through belief. As our interest in Artaud ran dry last Friday—Oops, there went sex, drugs and rock'n'roll, our only resort is to have both feet on the ground and the head above the clouds. We love planning, and everybody knows that conventional is the new perverse.

What we have planned is a workshop that takes the shape of the realization of a dance film in which a workshop where a dance film is being realized is taking place.

*So you are making a film?*

No, we are giving a workshop?

*But the film is a workshop?*

No, the film is a film?

*And what is the workshop?*

The workshop is the realization of a film?

*And what is in the film?*

A workshop?

*Oh, I see?*

There you go, now we are talking. When something's name, what it is called, and its being or existence coincide, then knowledge has stalled and become immobile. Of course the question will be what does this have to do with dance? And I can only respond by asking where do you want me to start? The activity of this group of people is everything dance and choreography is, except in

## international festival

respect of what it—i.e., dance—is, what it is called, and what its name is. This acknowledgment implies the possibility of potentiality, or implies that change can only take place at the moment when we are benevolent to an asymmetry between something's, or our own, name and what it, one, is called.

*This is rather unclear and more or less incomprehensible. Can you clarify?*

We are interested in the format of contemporary dance and its potential audience. Since the mode of production that we utilize for the realization of this film (which is fully fictional) is one of dance. Can we understand this film, whether it contains dance or not, as a dance “performance”/production, or is dance forever trapped in particular modes of presence and is its site always the institution The Stage? It is remarkable to recall that 50 years ago Bob Dylan was playing his guitar unplugged in bars in Manhattan, and in 2005 The Rolling Stones performed in front of 1.2 million people in Rio, and nobody asks questions about authenticity. At the same time—we don't mix up a Stones concert with something else, i.e., it is still understood as autonomous. So, if we decided that making a film through the mode of thought/production of dance is dance—authentic and autonomous in the same respect as any other dance—we have at least produced the possibility for an expansion of what dance can be.

If The Rolling Stones can do it, why shouldn't dance aspire to the same thing? You of course object and say, but Riverdance does that. Exactly, but why should we, as individuals and groups with ethical or political aspirations due to dance, abandon the “big” stage for Riverdance to explore? Isn't that the same contrived b.s. as sticking to vinyl when the CD was introduced, or resigning to the violence of a system? In other words: to invalidate one's capacity to act politically.

*Can you be more concrete?*

How long does it take to recognize that you are looking at cultural television? Less than a second? And why is every portrait of an artist exactly the same? Long, slow shots, measured inwardly talking and thoughtful choreographers sitting deep in armchairs or firmly concentrated in the studio. That's not my practice. I don't want to give that impression to the world. On the other hand, why do we offer to Hollywood to make films about dance without any further consideration than bashing the films before they arrive on the big screen? The dance that occurs in dance films has nothing to do with contemporary dance, and yet we allow our children to look at it? And finally, has anybody ever seen a decent dance film, like, made by a choreographer for the BBC? Certainly not! Because the choreographer is hired to represent himself and his practice, which cannot *not* be conceptually incompatible with cinema.

SWEAT—the movie is an insitu attempt to claim back dance from these three actors: cultural television, Hollywood, and “video-dance,” not as a critique, but rather as a proposal for something else. A flip side to this is to ask ourselves

what do we mean with commercial? Our film, which is a dance, aims for the same audience as Hollywood, but does that mean that we automatically become commercial? If commercial is disconnected from monetary value and expanded to any kind of value production, we believe that some of the work presented during Impulstanz, or in any other festival in Europe today, is far more commercial than a large amount of Hollywood productions, it's just that dance seems to pretend as if it's nothing. If dance remains on stage as we know it, we believe it is doomed, and it is only by stopping to use our imagination that dance can look forward to a lively future. If you run a car company today, why aim for the family car version? No, go for something specific, create a niche and avoid competition. Expand the field of the possible. In dance basically everybody turns to the stage—12 x 12 m—that is the place where dance proposes that radical is happening. But, hello, to gain a license to perform on that stage one always has to pass “the market.” In other words, all work produced for the stage aiming for the festival circuit is by definition commercial. This is lovely, since at least then we know the rules and we stop being precious about our artistic integrity and creative freedom.

*Big words, but how will this happen?*

With some good luck and a lot of hard work, or rather; some good work and a lot of hard luck. Of course, we will not make it to Hollywood, but that doesn't matter. We'd rather end up in hell than remain in place. Yet, it is only through belief in the bad will that something might change. The good will is always respectful, which means unproductive. We do everything ourselves. The actors in the film are mostly dancers and some other silly people, and as much as they are actors, they function as a film team. So you act one day, and the next you are operating some boom. This has economical reasons, but it is more because we are interested in what happens if the positions we normally occupy are undermined. It also implies that the process of filming in itself is a kind of choreography, and moreover, this is thus a collective film.

It is imperative to not mimic film production—then we are going down badly—but rather to look into how this group can make film differently. Not a different film (that's again the modernist artist peaking into the studio), but to make film differently, which of course is very Godard.

In fact, we are not trying to make a film in the sense of an autonomous product, but rather we are making a film that looks like a film. We have no idea about film making, so we can only do something that looks like a film, i.e., a process that fucks pride and engages in difference.

The starting point is a rather conventional screenplay that we wrote together, and as long as we follow it anything can happen. You know, doing something you have no idea about implies that there isn't a lot to lose. Even better: if you are doing something you have no idea about—with very strict conditions—you can produce a revolution.

# XAVIER LE ROY

## On E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S.

November 2000

### *Introduction:*

*Self Interview* is a performance set up to reflect on some critiques and questions produced during and after the project *E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S.#1*.

It was conceived of as a kind of introduction to other projects presented in the framework of the evenings titled *E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S.#2.7* in Berlin at the Podewil on the 7th, 9th, and 10th of December 2000.

This performance is also performed within other theatrical contexts and conference situations. The set for the performance is made out of a square table, a chair, and a ghetto-blaster put on the table. The performer sits at the table with the text (S\_I) and a pile of flyers with some statements on games (see end of the text). The audience is invited to take places around the table, and the performer starts by sitting at the table and playing the tape which is inside the tape player, and asks the questions (the Y part) to the ghetto blaster, which answers (the X part of the text). This continues until the change of tape before the answer X23. After this (second tape), the questions and answers are all spoken by the ghetto blaster. Shortly after X23, the performer stands up and distributes the flyers to the audience and takes a place within the audience, listening to the text until the end.

The text *Self Interview* was written for the performance with the same title which was presented for the first time during the event *E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S. # 2.7* in Berlin at the Podewil on the 7th of December 2000.

SELF\_INTERVIEW 11/27/2000

X1: What should we begin with?

*Y1: Maybe with the beginning or the origin of this project called Extensions. Because this is why we are here. So what was the first idea which made you initiate this project and how did it begin?*

X2: I don't know exactly how and when the project began. But I remember that at this time my major question was about the relationships between the production and the product within the process of work for dance or theater performances. At the same time, I was questioning the interdependency between how a conception of the body is represented and how this representation had been produced. I noticed that in analogy to an experimental set up, an artistic production cannot be reduced to anything else than its constitutive elements. That's why it is necessary to include the maximum of these constitutive factors as inherent questions into the work. It might be a way to avoid a separation between the topics, the context and the representations of the whole working situation. THANKS TO ISABELLE STENGER

*Y2: This sounds very confused and is almost incomprehensible to me. Could you be a bit more concrete, for example, which conception of the body are you talking about?*

X3: I don't know, but I wanted to associate what I had noticed about set-ups of artistic productions with the necessity to consider some perceptions of the body within their complexity and their contexts of representation.

*Y3: This sounds very confused and is almost incomprehensible to me. Could you be a bit more concrete, for example, which conception of the body are you talking about?*

X4: I don't know exactly. But I wanted to set up an arrangement that tries to consider the parameters involved during the process of production to make what I would call "a critique of their separation."

For example, I wanted to simultaneously question the chronological aspects of the work in process and also propose a concept of the body which should neither privilege the body more than the mind or vice versa, nor a body part against another one nor to favor the signs and senses from a human body opposed to a non-human one and vice versa.

*Y4: This sounds very confused and is almost incomprehensible for me. Could you be a bit more concrete, for example, which conception of the body are you talking about?*

## everybodys self interviews

X5: I don't know. But very often I ask myself, why should our bodies end at the skin or include at best other beings, organisms or objects encapsulated by the skin?

*Y5: I don't know either, but you might talk about the fact that the body image is extremely fluid and dynamic. That its borders, edges, or contours are "osmotic"—and that they have the remarkable power of incorporating and expelling outside and inside in an ongoing interchange?*

X6: Yes. As you say, body images are able to accommodate and incorporate an extremely wide range of objects and discourses. Anything that comes into contact with surfaces of the body and remains there long enough will be incorporated into the body image. For example clothing, jewelry, other bodies, objects, texts, songs, etc....

All this may mark the body, its gaits, its postures, its talks, its discourses, its positions, etc., temporarily, or more or less permanently. For example, subjects do not walk the same way or have the same posture when they are naked as when they wear clothing.

*Y6: So, in other words, what you say is that the body image is as much a function of the subject's psychology and socio-historical context as of anatomy. And that there are all kind of non-human influences woven into us.*

X7: Exactly, so there must exist another alternative to the body image than the anatomical one.

*Y7: What are you thinking about for example?*

X8: For example: I think about how the body could be perceived as space and time for trade, traffic, and exchange. THANK YOU TO ELISABETH GROSZ FOR THIS PROPOSAL

*Y8: Actually it is a very simplistic, even simple minded, idea. What you say is that the body image can shrink or expand; that it can give parts to the outside world and can take other parts into itself. Could you explain what this way of perceiving the body means to you?*

X9: I don't know, but: For example, following that idea would mean that each individual would be perceived as an infinity of extensive parts. In other terms, there would only be composed individuals. An individual would be a notion completely devoid of sense.... Some body parts leave my body; take another relation, a relation with anything, the mosquito relation when it bites me, the relation.... I constantly integrate parts into my relations, when I eat, for example, when I eat I appropriate extensive parts. What does it mean to appropriate parts? To

appropriate parts means: make them leave the previous relation that they had, or performed, to enter a new relation, this new relation being one of my relations, that is: with the meat I make my own flesh. It's horrible! So what? We have to live (*laugh*), it never stops to be like that: shocks, parts appropriations, transformation of relations. Compositions until the infinite and so on. This system of exterior parts, one to the other, that never stop to react, at the same time as the infinite ensemble in which they are never stops changing, that's precisely that system of the inadequate idea, confused perceptions, and passive affectations, and affectation/passion that comes out of it.

In other terms, because I am composed by an ensemble of an infinity of infinite ensembles of extensive parts, I never stop to perceive exterior stuff. Perceptions of myself in my relations to exterior stuff. Perceptions of exterior stuff in relation to myself, and it's all this which makes the world of signs. THANK YOU TO DELEUZE, THANK YOU TO SPINOZA.

*Y9: Ok, let's cool down a little bit and go back to the beginning.*

Rewind tape

X10: So what should we begin with?

*Y10: Maybe by the beginning or the origin of this project called E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S. Because this is why we are here. So what was the first idea which made you initiate this project and how did it begin?*

X11: I don't know. The origins of the project are multiple and it developed in many different phases. But I think that the very first step was to write a project to ask for subsidies.

*Y11: To whom did you address this project and could you make a sort of chronological description of the project?*

X12: Well, as I just said, the first phase was to write down my questions concerning choreographic art to ask for some subsidies to the Senat für Kultur, Forschung und Wissenschaft in Berlin. I asked for what is called a *Basisförderung*, which is support given for two years in a row.

For this I first founded, with Petra Roggel, a Gbr whose name is: in situ productions . in situ productions received support of 100 000 DM each year for 1999 and 2000. After this good news I sent an invitation letter to about 20 persons to invite them to take part to *E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S.* So this letter was actually the second formulation of the project. In between I asked Stefan Pente to collaborate to think about and to set up the first phase of the project.

The project contains two big phases. The first one was called *E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S.#1* and it took place at the end of the summer in Berlin

## everybodys self interviews

during four weeks beginning during the festival Tanz im August, and after that it took place during two weeks in Antwerp in the framework of the exhibition project *Laboratorium*. The second phase of the project has been developing since the end of 1999 in diverse projects initiated by different participants. My proposal was that the participants could realize transformations, reproductions, developments, recyclings, or critiques from the first period of work or about the general ideas of the project.

These projects are part of EXTENSIONS and are produced with the subsidies from in situ productions obtained from the Senat of Berlin and with the help of the Podewil and the Tanz Werkstatt. This is a very important parameter of the project because it is trying to actively question the politico-economical-cultural context within which we are working. The projects you will be able to see tonight are some of those projects.

Y12: *What were the ideas and questions that you proposed to the participants?*

X13: The proposals and general ideas were formulated like I said previously in the first letter that I sent to the participants to invite them:

read :

*Experiments and investigations about human and non-human bodies as extensions one of another, using "movement-based art," their performances and representations. Performance of the relationships between the "products" and modes of production of these experiments and investigations in the field (time and space) of their development.*

*Transformations and recycling of these investigations by "others" in a second period.*

Later in another letter I proposed a kind of definition for E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S.:

*We could think about E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S. as an organizing idea or concept to work and simultaneously think on questions about performance, body representations, and being at the same time a performance.*

Y13: *Could you explain why you made these proposals?*

X14: During the process of work for the production of a dance piece, there is usually a cut or a gap between the rehearsal period and the public representation. It's a sort of blind pathway from private to public. It is a delicate question

and at the same time it can't be ignored. You can't escape it.

I don't accept the dissociation between rehearsals and performance because I think that you cannot separate the representation of the bodies from the set up you used to develop these representations.

I would like to handle the question about this pathway during and within every moment of the production. So what I proposed was to work globally and at the same time on the complex stake of the processes during the performance and its production.

*Y14: Somehow it seems that what you speak about is what is proposed and showed in any representation using the principle of improvisation?*

X15: Some how you are right. But there are some differences. Because I think the kind of improvisation you refer to is used as a method for spontaneous composition, and this, generally, shows esthetics, body images and rules which are specific to this spontaneity.

This type of representation reveals fundamental questions, but its form depends too much on the acceptance and the trust on the fact that there is a shared and instant interest between private and public actions and perceptions. And I think this is an incomplete answer.

Because it favors the individual surprise hoping that it will be a collective one, but I think it is an assumption that cannot be imposed on an audience.

Actually it is a problem that we also had during *E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S.#1*. When, for example, the use of the freedom to act was transformed into a representation of freedom. And this, from my point of view, was a failure of the project.

*Y15: So it seems that you had some precise goals and desires to be fulfilled. Isn't it a paradox with how you proposed the project? Did you have specific expectations?*

X16: I don't know. I wanted to work between the types of work processes that each of us knew and practiced, to be able to find new ones. I expected that we concentrated on the questions and problems I had proposed without taking refuge in the comfortable habits of known experiences that we could infinitely repeat.

*Y16: Did you find something?*

X17: I don't know. I think that sometimes we went through moments containing some elements of an answer.

But the first period of work (*E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S.#1*) brought up new questions and showed the difficulties to work on my proposals. The major results, I guess, was that it revealed some impossibilities. Maybe because it was a utopia, and

## everybodys self interviews

like every project of utopia, it combined imaginary and rationality. So it is ambivalent and a source of paradoxes. THANKS TO MICHEL BERNARD

*Y17: What kind of paradox and difficulties appeared, and why do you talk about failure?*

X18: I don't know. Maybe it is because I wanted to create a zone for the cohabitation of some ideas which in the first place looked contradictory. And I think I was looking for something like a "discipline of the unknown" to escape the necessity of knowledge as the only tool to be active and to exist. This was a kind of a poisonous present that I made to the participants. It was a bit like if I gave something that I didn't have to people who didn't want it. THANK YOU, LACAN. Therefore the first phase of the project had a lot of chances to fail.

*Y18: Can you tell why you think that your proposal was a poisonous present?*

X19: I don't know. My proposals were maybe too much totalitarian and therefore took away the power from the participants and, at the same time, offered them an illusion of a possibility for self or social expression. And maybe this created alienation and group separation.

Nevertheless my proposals were sometimes seen as an obstacle to self expression. And I think that was coming from esthetic fetishism or expectation for expressive clichés.

The methods of work that I wanted to escape are very often structured on dichotomies like: knowledge/intuition, conscience/sensation, emotion/abstraction, body/mind, setting/improvising, control/expression ... and probably others, but we never really escape those ways of practice.

*Y19: You were maybe not clear enough in your proposals and your expectations?*

X20: I don't know. I wanted to work between the types of work processes that each of us knew and practiced, to be able to find new ones. I expected that we would concentrate on the questions and problems I had proposed without taking refuge in the comfortable habits of known experiences that we could infinitely repeat.

*Y20: So what happened?*

X21: I don't know. Maybe I was wrong, but I refused to use the methods of work that one or the other knew and usually practiced, not to impose another one but to try to find new ones.

*Y21: So could you tell more about the method of work you are referring to?*

X22: I don't know. But, for example, the use of improvisation is very often to make a selection of moments which should be the answers to a certain question. But more generally I refer to the usual ways of working that each of us were socialized in through education and environment. Because I think those methods have to be deeply questioned to go forward in the process of production and product in performing arts.

So I proposed to stay in "unknown spaces" between these different practices. But, to be able to represent, we need to classify, to locate, to set, and to recognize. And this necessity led us to confusion between research, knowledge, and power. Following this, problems of hierarchy and authority appeared and contaminated the project.

Maybe I was too much authoritarian, or I needed to be without wanting to accept that. Or there was a need for authority within the group to frame and build structures in which we knew how to function or to not be lost in. Or my position as the initiator of the project appointed me automatically in the leadership position. And I didn't want that. Maybe it was all this at the same time. And it seems not compatible with the proposals of the project, and that's a part of the feeling that something failed.

*Y22: So let's go back to the principle of the project. Why was one of the proposals to use the notion of games?*

X23: It is difficult to speak exclusively about the ideas on games that were proposed at the very beginning of the project. Because it is something that I continued to develop in collaboration with Stefan Pente during workshops that we proposed to diverse audiences. So all I will say now includes those latest experiences. Well, there are different parameters that made me think about games as a field to explore and simultaneously made me think that we could use the notions of games and play as a tool to work on different aspects of the project that I exposed previously.

First of all, the game in our society is used and seen as an activity involving fictive characteristics or as a secondary reality from the daily life or as a part of the unreal. But at the same time it is totally a part of our reality. When we play, we choose a role, or a role is assigned to us, to take part in the situation which is built out of rules. This has a big deal of similarity with how we act in our daily life within social and cultural constructions. These constructions assign roles to us, but we can also choose them. So in other terms, in our daily life we also play or perform different roles like in games.

I don't want to say that games are always a metaphor, or a mirror of our life. I see games more as one construction within the constructions we deal with every day, and therefore games are interesting to use to explore aspects about roles and performance in daily life and in performance. More than this I think that the notion of game is a great tool to work on the pathway, on the similarities, and on the differences between both situations.

The games are also activities within which it is possible to search and experiment and, at the same time, develop strategies to follow and use the rules. So it is a privileged field to work on body affectations by the constructions they are involved in and vice versa.

So what I proposed was not to try to express our personality and differences, but to use rules of games which assigned roles and allowed the participants to be at the same time active, passive, reactive, and productive without searching for a special state of creativity.

In other terms, games are a field where it is possible to diffract the questions on performance and at the same time to perform them in the realm of fictive and real constructed situations.

On another hand, there are always non productive aspects associated to the idea of game. THANK YOU, MICHEL CAILLOIS, FOR THIS REMARK.

Therefore the use and the creation of games seems to be very well adapted to work without having the product as the only goal during the production and the working process. It is a possibility to transform the production into the product itself. Another interesting aspect is that each game creates a kind of composition depending on the choices and decisions made by the players and therefore can be changed at anytime. I thought it was very interesting to use the notions of game and play to simultaneously look for methods of composition, work on questions about the bodies and their representations and, at the same time, being in a performance situation.

Distribution of the paper with some words on games

*Y23: One last question. Can you say why you earlier talked about the project E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S. as a utopia?*

X24: I think that the utopic aspect of the project comes from this effort to replace some dominating models of behavior and perception by other models. It is a utopia because it is an attempt to de-institutionalize the relationships between individuals, and to unmake the existence of power in the “spectacular” production chains ( or lines). It is a utopic building site because its goal is to propose another process, an other access, and another perception on the global system.

*Y24: It seems that those utopic aspects could be some reasons for the difficulties and problems you were reporting before about the first period of work?*

X25: Yes, actually there is a “congenital ambivalence” to each utopia because it associates imaginary and rationality.

This ambivalence comes from four components of the utopia which are often hybridized in a perverse way. THANK YOU, MICHEL BERNARD.

The first one is: by definition, the utopia is a place without place or a non space. And for *E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S.* the choice of a gymnasium as a non-rehearsal

space and a non-theatrical representation space was a very important aspect in the setting of the project.

The second component is that the utopia is a prospective aim to promote a future model. And I already talked earlier about that in the context of *E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S.* and the questions on the methods of work.

The third one says that the utopia is always proposed as a radical subversion from a social or political organization to be substituted by another one which is judged ideal. And during the first phase of *E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S.* I certainly expected and projected a desire of an ideal organization. But this desire was maybe not shared or not transmittable because it was held by a paradox between the constraints of the proposals and the wish to leave some freedom to the participants.

And the fourth component is that each utopia presupposes that a new socio-political model seen as ideal necessarily transforms the psychological and moral behaviors of each individual taking part in it. This is an inherent reality of a utopia that I didn't want to accept. But it was impossible to do anything without the active participation of each participant, on whom, at the same time, I didn't want to impose such a transformation. Maybe the participants had been expecting that I would transmit this way of transformation like a transmission of knowledge. But on one side, this was exactly the type of social organization that I wanted to change, and on another side, this necessary transformation was unknown to myself. And maybe this transformation is the utopia itself.

*Y26: Do you think that a utopia still makes sense for the work you initiated and for a more general or casual situation?*

X27: Well, I think that on one side the more utopia seems impossible, the more necessary it becomes. THANKS TO YVONNE RAINER.

On another side, I think if utopia still makes sense, it is not as a system or as a socio-institutional model to come, but as a singular modality or tonality for a process and a perspective. That is to say, as qualification for a perception and as an action and not as an aimed and desired object.

Shortly, as *utopic* and not as *utopia* in the historical sense. The utopic implies the presence of the imaginary because fiction is inherent to sensorial process itself. The utopic is not beyond reality but contaminates reality by the permanent activity of our perception. THANK YOU, MICHEL BERNARD, AGAIN.

That's why I think it is important to propose methods, organizations, systems, or concepts which can activate and question the perception within the processes of production in which we are involved to change the practices we use to survive. That's what the project *E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S.*, in all its extensions, tries to propose.

*Y27: Thank you. I think we can stop with these words on utopia. Thank you.*

X28: Thank you.

## everybodys self interviews

*Game as an instant experience and as a gratuitous creativity.*

*Use of games as a surface for exchange between de- and re-organization of bodies and the languages and codes included in the rules.*

*Games not to represent our daily life and its problems or some specific aspects of our society to entertain us. But to propose a process which simultaneously gives access to the experiments, the research, the staging, the performance, and the representation of bodies and their environment to disembody the authority of simulation. THANK YOU, HAKIM BEY.*

*Game as a conscience of immediacy without mediation as a proposal for a method of work and device for representation and performance.*

# NETO MACHADO

## On INFILTRATION TECHNIQUES

November 2008

*Here, in this interview, we will talk about the project that you are working on in the environment of 6m11/ex.e.r.ce08.<sup>1</sup> The first and second questions are: where does this project come from? And why did you choose to work on it here?*

Well, since my fellowship term at Casa Hoffmann (Curitiba – Brazil – 2004), I've been interested in implicit games of power and thinking of manners to destabilize structural patterns in power relationships. Or how I could give visibility for some rules, or parameters, that guide our relationship with time, space, history, and reality. How could I make something visible that is already here but we don't give attention to? How can I bring visibility to the relation, to the between?

I was attracted by actions that may seem peripheral, but are able to destabilize our daily life somehow. For instance, street art forms, such as graffiti, stickers, things written on public restroom doors, the visual confusion caused by all the posters glued to the walls of big cities. Peripheral things that could make changes in the way we see our actual experiences.

In 2007, I thought that with these interests I should try something in the streets, or outside of scenic spaces. I work with an artistic collective in Curitiba called *CauliFlower mini worldwide artistic community*. And, with two artists from this collective, Elisabete Finger and Ricardo Marinelli, I created a project that proposed actions in the public sphere.

This project also came because, at that point, we were really interested in the relation between visual arts and dance, and it was developed in Brazil within a context of a visual art program. So we worked on it together until March of 2008, when I came to France to be part of ex.e.r.ce08 in Montpellier.

I thought one year before, at the time of the selections for ex.e.r.ce, that it was better to develop a new project here because we already planned to work on this one in Brazil. Then I started ex.e.r.ce, dealing with almost the same interests, but with another proposal.

The proposal was very related to Japanese manga: the way they are organized on the paper and how the movement is represented. But after three weeks, I realized that it was interesting, but was not moving me to questions or putting in

## everybodys self interviews

action the questions that I had in mind.

So I realized that it was not a bad idea to change the work to the streets and to include the project that was started in Curitiba with my colleagues from Cauliflower. It would be another thing here with the involvement of these people and, of course, with this specific public environment that is completely different from Brazil's.

And now I am really glad that I made this choice. I think this is a project that brings my actual questions to action. And this environment of 6m1/ex.e.r.ce08 is perfect because then I am able to question my previous questions.

*So, what are your actual questions?*

It is funny for me to put them in words, to write them down, because I always think that they are more interesting in my head. When I write them, I always think: "but this is not interesting, in my head it was really better." But I will try to do it here. Some of my questions now are:

How do I work with something that is a proposition of an experience and not something that I perform for you to see?

How can the performance be not just in the figure of the performer, but in the things in between? In the relationships?

How could we propose different visibilities of something? How could we propose something subtle, but at the same time radical or/and intense?

How can we change the parameters of seeing and being seen? How can we propose something that plays with the edge of reality and fiction? Could the proposal make it go farther to one side or the other or blur this border?

How could we make people question reality beyond a fiction?

How could we create doubt and/or uncertainty?

How can we activate these questions with actions and/or instructions?

*Could you give an example of how these questions are being put into action now?*

We are working in the street. We had chosen first a café that was in a square named Marché aux Fleurs. We started to go every day to this café and sit in the same spot or almost in the same spot. We spent three hours there each day. And with this action of observing we were already activating some things in the space.

We did exercises about registering things. These could vary from registers that

tried to reproduce real facts or ones that were completely fictional. For us, it didn't matter what you register on the paper, you were already creating fiction anyway.

And with this exercise, we discovered actions, situations and propositions that could be in between. In between fiction and reality, in between public and performer, in between choosing something and being chosen for something. These were interesting for us.

For these observations, the procedure was: you stay twenty minutes or thirty, observing the space and creating your fiction. After reading your notes, you choose how you want to share it with the others. Maybe you create a fiction that asks to be read or to be seen or listened to. Then, we start to put these propositions into practice. They start to create a shape, an organization.

That was interesting for me because the performance/action started to be developed in action, in the doing. So it was something that we observed, that we planned, but in the doing we discovered how it would work. That was a wish of mine also: to work and find things in the action of doing it.

I don't know if I gave a clear example, but this way of working is somehow putting into action many of my questions.

*How do you deal with audience in the public space?*

For us, how we want to proceed with the audience is still a question because, for us, it was not enough to use the stage-audience relation in the public space. That was not what we were looking for.

So we tried not to define who our audience was in the first period. But then, we had a development about a concept that we called personal specific performance (instead of site specific). We thought it could be interesting for us to establish a pact of visibility with one person and make things specifically for her.

Just this person would be inside of this pact. It would be something done for her, like a gift dedicated to her. And the action would cause a strange feeling in the place that would be noticed by the others, but they would relate with this in a different way because they would not have the key to the visibility that was exclusively to one person.

We tried this for a while. We developed a net of instructions and actions that would make this person perceive things as performance and be part of it at the same time. She would unchain actions, respond to them, relate to them, and be part of them.

One day, we called one person to take the place of one performer, which was not part of our process before. We were six at that point. By doing this, we thought that we would be able to get feedback from him about the performance, but what happened was that we got feedback on the experience of the performer, rather than on the event as a whole. Because he was part of the thing, but not in the role of the unique audience member, he had a completely different reference to deal with the performance.

## everybodys self interviews

And then we started to think about this position as a possible position for the public also. How could we do many personal specific performances at the same time? They could inhabit different places at the same time and have personal experiences at once. It is in this direction that we are working now, creating different roles to inhabit the experience. Each one has their specificities, each one has their different experiences, but they are linked by the same performative act, choreography or organization.

The things that we are doing are on the edge of what could be perceived as a performative act or fiction and something that could normally happen in the street. So the public that are already in the street that are not part of the visibility pact wouldn't know about the performance, but might have a strange feeling about the environment. They would notice that there is something going on, but they wouldn't know what it is. There is a strange tension in the air; there is something happening or close to happening.

We are thinking now how we could develop strategies to spread out the visibility pact in different ways, even if it is just to observe something really fast. How could we open new doors and make it possible for people to have access to the performance in different degrees?

So, the relationship with the audience is still a question for us. We are searching for the more efficient relationship with different kinds and degrees of audience.

*You are doing this here; you worked with two artists in Brazil; and after, maybe, you would like to work on this project in other places. Why would you say all these situations are part of the same project? Will you define actions that will be repeated? Will you adapt scores or tasks? What will you bring with you from this experience?*

We had a great experience here in Montpellier because we worked on this project in separated weeks that are not periodically divided. For example, we had two weeks of work and then one month without working.

At first, this looked like a difficult way of working, but an interesting thing happened. We developed a whole structure for a first try of the performance in a beautiful place in the summer. We tried a lot of times with different people on different days, changing things that we thought were not efficient.

But then we didn't work for four weeks, and when we went back there to start again, the place was not the same. It was winter. The tables that we used outside of the café were not there anymore. It was raining. We could not do in the rain what we had planned. In that week, it rained from Monday to Friday, non-stop.

At that point we really were thinking that we would adapt or change some details and adjust it for the winter season. It was not possible. It would not have the same effect; it would not produce what we wanted. So, after this shock, we decided that we should find another place to act.

It meant that we would have to do it all over again. At that point, it seemed to

be the worst thing that could happen, but now I feel that it was really helpful. Because then we had to find out what were the principles that we were looking for, what were the basics that we would carry with us to this new place.

It helped us to define what we defined as strategies, which, for us, are principles that we look for that we want to activate. And in the new location, we would have to find the tactics, the specific ways of putting the strategies into action in that specific environment.

It was not enough to do the same score in a different place because it would be useless for our proposal. The tactics must be different to make the strategies valid in different contexts.

So, I think this period was really helpful to define what these strategies are that we will be able to carry with the project wherever it goes.

*So, to finish, what would be a "good comment" by an audience member who experiences what you are doing in this project now?*

If someone goes out of it with a sensation that she was part of something that she couldn't define but that made her feel some tensions in the space, doubts and unsettledness, and at the same time was not uncomfortable, it is already something good. I think the performance should make her, somehow, proud of being part of it, happy with it. It should be something subtle, but that puts the person in a kind of relationship with time, space, and fiction/reality, in which she was not used to being.

So, after this explanation, I think the comment could be something like this: "Well, I don't know. I was experiencing things that I already did, but in a different way. I was in control of something. It made me think that I was part of a system, that I had the opportunity to make choices, but these choices would interfere with something that I can't define. It was a fiction bubble inside of the reality, a little space for me to create my fictions inside of an experience that I was going through. It was little, but intense."

- 1 6M1L is a project initiated by Xavier Le Roy in the frame of the Centre Chorégraphique National de Montpellier. In collaboration with nine other artists working within the field of performance, the project questions modes of production, artistic research, organization and education. With the participants of e.x.er.ce08 the entire group experiments with different ways of working together, participating in each other's projects, sharing time and space for a duration of 6 Months in 1 Location.

# CHRYSA PARKINSON

November 2008

*What are you working on?*

I'm trying to understand practices, particularly the practices of performing artists. I'm working in Montpellier at 6M1L/e.x.er.ce.<sup>1</sup> And I'm touring with Zoo/Thomas Hauert and occasionally with Deborah Hay. And I'm teaching. When I'm not performing, I do a daily performance practice based on a combination of scores from Deborah and Zoo and other people. It has about six sections. Sometimes I help people devise daily performance practices (aka Personal Performance Practice, or PPP). Sometimes I just talk to people about how they hierarchize information and sustain themselves creatively. Sometimes I take part of someone's practice and add it to my own.

*That sounds like a lot of things.*

It's all the same thing, kind of. It just happens in a lot of different places.

*Can you define what you mean by practice more clearly?*

I'm trying to do that. I'm not satisfied yet. I started with the idea that there's something I do that is not training, process, or product, and that this thing is what underlies the decisions I make about training, process, and product. And I wanted to call that thing my practice—but I didn't have a way of saying that in one phrase—a slogan. Then I thought maybe I could say the underlying, over-arching thing I do is "giving and getting attention." Then, more recently, I thought maybe my practice is just performance.

*Why do you need the slogan?*

I don't really. But it's useful for demystification.

*Seems like you would have to be careful that the wording doesn't hijack the concept.*

Yes. That's the whole point, actually. I want to identify this concept of practice

## everybodys self interviews

more precisely because I can feel that not only are my training, process, and product changing, but also my way of choosing them is changing. In order to be clear and responsible, conscious, generous, effective, et cetera, I need to take a look at how I'm making decisions, and why.

*So a practice is like a structure.*

A volatile one. The most important thing to me about identifying my practice is noticing it change, letting it change.

*Does this interest come up because of teaching people?*

Yes. I notice my students devising principles, or thought-maps, mythologies, wish-lists, moral codes ... some substructure that helps them navigate or synthesize or do some other thing that I don't know exactly what it is; that thing helps them get through and around and up on their work. A lot of students start from a very vulnerable, vague point. Then they go make lives based on making art. It's remarkable.

*But isn't that just that they get training and then become good enough at what they want to do to actually do it?*

No. They often redefine being "good at it" by redefining "it." That's the excitement. They use their education to change the field they work in.

*Not everyone.*

No. But even the ones who fit into an existing set of standards arrive at that level of achievement through something more than just training. Taking class every day isn't enough. You have to have a way of processing information that works. And I see it in the other, older artists I work with too.

*But is that the actual definition of practice? The "thing you do that isn't training, process or product but underlies your choices in training, process, and product?"*

I used that definition to start with because I could feel it in myself, and I observed it at work in other people.

*I know Deborah uses the concept of practice, but who else does?*

Actually I hear it used a lot lately.

*Me too, but I think people mean different things by it.*

Yes. It gets soupy.

*What do people mean, actually? I'm getting more confused now than I was before people used the word so much.*

I think I hear performing artists and educators use the word three ways, basically. There's practice as "an active thought." Meaning that if my practice is music, I apply the concepts and experience of musicality to analyze and intuit all my experiences. And if my practice is performance, I use the concepts and experience of performance to analyze and intuit my experiences.

*So that would mean if I'm studying dance, but my practice is music, I use the concepts and experience of music to analyze and intuit the dance information I'm exposed to?*

Yes. And you see a lot of people approaching dance through a musical practice. In fact, dance can often be found humping the leg of other art forms.

*Why are you so derogatory about that?*

It's another topic, but it's one of the basic problems in thinking about dance. In order for dance to be taken seriously, it's often used to create metaphors for psychology, theory, music, visual art, etc.

*You would exclude other art forms?*

No. I'd just like to do more dancing. More things based on movement.

*Movement is a poetic concept as well as an actual thing.*

Let's talk about this later. Actually you should really talk to Tere O'Connor about this. He's very articulate on the subject, which is rare. It's hard to talk about it.

*Okay. So what's another way you hear people using the word practice?*

The other thing people mean by the word practice is "habitual or regular activity." If I'm a practicing musician, I play an instrument regularly. If I'm a practicing performer, I perform often. It often means that the person is a professional in that field, but not necessarily.

*And in that case, if I'm a musician and studying dance, I could use this definition "habitual or regular activity" and say that I am practicing dance?*

If you were a snake charmer and you regularly work as a dentist, you could say you were practicing dentistry.

*That's confusing.*

There's more. Americans spell the noun and the verb the same way, "a practice" and "to practice." In the British spelling, the verb develops an s. I have a dentistry *practice*. I'm going to my office to *practise* dentistry. I have a dance *practice*. I'm *practising* dance.

*That's irrelevant.*

Not really. They mean different things, and they're spelled differently. Actually, I think I'll switch to the British spelling now. The third way I hear it used—to "try"—means if I go to the studio to practise my music, I go play my instrument repetitively or rehearse. If I go to the studio and practise a dance, I rehearse. If I'm a student practising dances, it means I keep doing movements until I get them right.

*You can't practice British spelling.*

No, you have to practise British spelling.

*But you can have a British spelling practice.*

Exactly.

*Thanks, that clears things up.*

You're welcome.

*The first definition you used for practice, "an active thought" sounds like the definition of praxis, "the process by which a theory, lesson or skill is enacted." Are practice and praxis the same thing?*

Maybe. A practice is an active thought, while praxis is an action that enables that thought. I wish the words sounded more different. It's confusing and that there are so many words that start with *p* makes me feel ridiculous.

*That's ridiculous. Stop talking about that. Do you want to not use the word praxis?*

It exists and I hear it around. Maybe it's useful.

*It does seem like a pretty tangible difference—"an active thought" or "an action that enables thought." Seems concrete enough to be relevant.*

The problem is, I think, that so many thoughts and actions I'm interested in can't be identified as one or the other.

*What do you mean? Is that some Buddhist thing?*

You know I'm not a Buddhist. If there's a relationship it's accidental.

*But you meditate.*

That's personal.

*But it's a practice.*

Okay. But I really would prefer to keep that out of this discussion because I'm not sure how to talk about it. I can feel the concrete effects of meditation on how I concentrate and on the detailing of my sensations, but I think there are spiritual connotations to doing it that I have not dealt with at all and don't know how to deal with, and I don't want to deal with it with you. So I feel unqualified to speak about it right now.

*All right, all right. Relax. I'm sorry I brought it up. So. What do you mean by a thought-action? And what does it have to do with praxis/practice?*

So. I often experience both actions and ideas as scores; a movement or performance idea, like an action, can take an amount of time, or can occupy a place. But ideas are also processes. Actions are definitely processes. Scores are durational places. You spend time in a score.

*How can idea be a place?*

Any idea I can "get in to" is a place. Any idea I can embody.

*Can you give an example?*

Okay. With apologies to the people that I'm paraphrasing, plagiarizing, misrepresenting.... For example, David Zambrano's idea/score/practice/action of "passing through" creates an area of experience that is clearly enough defined to distinguish it as a place. I can drop in there. Sometimes I use the idea of "fiction." If I superimpose the idea of fiction on my actions, they are contained and limited by that definition—I can't get out of the idea until I drop it. Or Deborah Hay's questions that start with "what if every cell in my body could...." Or the way Thomas Hauert conceptualizes the relationships between force and space and bodies (I can't find a simpler way to say that yet...). Working with him I can feel the pressure and release, the momentum and force and launching effects of his

experience of connection. His way of connecting manifests itself both physically and intellectually. It's not an absolute Truth; it's a perception that finds ways to act itself out.

*And Martin Kilvady's concept of "dancing" as a field of experience?*

Exactly. If you say what you're doing is dancing, then you change the definition of dancing. The idea becomes a container that shapes whatever action takes place there, and the actions that take place there also re-shape the container. Jonathan Burrows has a sense of proportion—I've heard him call it "human scale" that runs through all his work. The idea acts on him. He acts on the idea. It's integrating, but there are things I think he wouldn't do because of this practice/idea/score/action of finding a human scale.

*Maybe the concepts of praxis and practice are continuous, like a mobius strip. "My practice is contained by a praxis but the praxis is also defined by my practice?"*

Yes. I'm not sure what the good of distinguishing these words is. The more I think about it, the more dangerous it seems to me.

*Why?*

Practice becomes static if you separate it from praxis, and vice versa.

*What's wrong with that?*

Once a practice is static, it's no longer functional. It becomes a marketable object, a product. Practices have to remain volatile, unstable enough to change.

*I don't understand how volatility makes something unmarketable. And I don't understand what's wrong with marketability.*

I'm a performing artist. I change—I get old, I fall in love, I move to another city, I get injured, I develop skills, I develop knowledge, I lose interest, I get seduced, etc. In order to guide me through training, process, and product, my practice has to change.

*If you can conceive of a product with no author or owner, you could think of a practice as a chemical reaction that would act as a catalyst on your experience.*

Yes. And then why would you bother buying it? It's not going to keep the value or shape it has in someone else's experience. And anyway it's just there. Just take it.

*But David sells “passing through,” doesn’t he?*

No. I don’t think that’s what he’s doing. He teaches ways of moving, techniques that he’s discovered for “passing through.” It’s a way to start. He’s not selling the practice of passing through, and certainly not the practice in the way that he uses it for himself. He lives that. He invites people to join him in that way of living. He’s often providing people with space or time. They spend it with him and they learn from him, but he’s not bartering.

*Is there really a difference?*

Yes. Klein Technique tried to become a product at one point. A select group of people went into an intensive studying relationship with the authors of that technique, but when it came down to it, every one of that group of people declined their diploma. They felt that the elitism of qualification and the labeling of the product as intellectual property was detrimental to the practice. I think it’s a testament to the ideas behind that practice that its practitioners refused to make a product out of it.

*I remember that. It was shocking.*

Yes, and exciting. It depends on the teacher, of course, but techniques become hard-wired, systematized, standardized. You can recognize the correct application of this technique in a process. You can see how the training and process have culminated in the product and you can anticipate the market they’ll reach. It’s boring. It’s not live.

*But aren’t training, process, and product part of your practice?*

Sometimes some of them have been. There are periods where I’m involved in processes that are not integrated into my practice, or I’m performing pieces that don’t fit into my principles, or I’m training myself for things that are no longer relevant to me. Out of habit. When I realize that’s going on, I have to adapt my practice to include them, or I have to stop doing them.

*For students that happens with training.*

Yes. They have to study some method that is outside their experience, their principles, their expectations. For example, I’m not really that athletic. I don’t tend to push myself aerobically or muscularly. My preference is for subtler physicalities, but I perform some pieces demand a higher level of effort, and I like that intensity as a principle. I like the principle of physical range—and I like the principle of challenging my desires. So in my daily practice I’ve included a kind of jumping that uses that area of physicality that I wouldn’t go to usually.

*And does that practice have to be daily?*

No. It depends. Sometimes day-to-day consistency helps to heighten your experience of the physical relationships between actions and ideas. Body time is different. For things like stamina you need a daily rhythm, obviously.

*What's the difference between daily training and daily practice?*

Training is about learning and improving on specific tasks. Deborah, for example, calls practice “learning without trying.” If you’re training, you’re trying to learn. You’re goal oriented, or maybe you’re putting yourself in that student-teacher relationship to find some objectivity. A practice, for the most part, is independent of teachers, and intensely subjective. It doesn’t need the presence of a viewer, although it doesn’t exclude it either. I don’t think you can specify the goals of a practice the way you can those of training.

*But you're training for stamina in your daily practice.*

Not really. I could train for stamina by running much more efficiently. Stamina is a welcome by-product. I’m looking for the dancing when I jump rope.

*No doubt. But some people use training as a part of their practice.*

Yes. That relationship with a teacher, or even just with a goal, can function to help you keep interested in your work life. I have definitely felt that way at certain times—like I needed help to change my patterns so I could do more things. I was getting injured. Training can help with boredom. When I complain, my friend Greg says, “Use your training.”

*And what's the difference between process and practise?*

Process also has a specific goal. If you don’t create a product from a process, it’s a failed process. It’s also a question of duration. Most processes are finished once the piece is constructed. A practice can span many processes. But I definitely use things I’ve learned in processes in my daily practice.

*You said you take other people's practices.*

Yes, I realized in working on it that, because my practice is performance, I have to do the thing to understand it. It’s tricky because I have to learn to listen and watch people without absorbing their experience too quickly into my own if I want to learn something new. But I can’t learn new things without doing them.

*You're just always stealing then?*

No. It's actually rare that I really like what someone else does enough to adopt it as part of my own thought process. I do relatively little of what I've learned.

*It seems like you've adopted Deborah Hay's practice.*

Yes and no. I'm very influenced by her. She's the first person I'd ever heard speak about (and use) performance itself as a practice. So when I talk about performance and practice, I use her language a lot. It's clear. But I take a lot from Thomas/Zoo, and it's difficult to find the right language for what we're doing in that group. Maybe "looking at movement for what it expresses itself, not its metaphoric potential." I learned that as a theory from Tere O'Connor, but as a practice, from working with Thomas. It runs through everything I do now.

*Are you defensive about being so influenced by Deborah?*

Probably a little. Sometimes I feel like what I do is Deborah-Lite. Anyway. It's a place to start. I try to say her name a lot so people will have her name in their heads.

*What have you taken from the people in Montpellier?*

I took things for my daily practice. I'm not sure how they'll fit into the larger picture. I took jumping rope from Jefta van Dinther. It works well as a form of "bounce," which is an adaptation of "moving through space without traveling from here to there," which relates to "passing through," but also to Zoo's work with space, and is a direct adaptation of a Deborah Hay score. I took loops from Mette Ingvartsen.

I use them in one part of my body as part of a three-in-one score I do. From Bojana Cvejic I think I'm learning and maybe practicing "thinking in conversation." I'm not sure I do that yet, actually, but I'm very attracted to it. It has to do with speech and performance and improvising and thinking and writing. I'm not sure how it will manifest eventually.

*If you think of the material of performance as perception, or as relationship (as Deborah would say), then some form of "doing it" to understand it makes sense.*

Yes. That's why I like to think of the daily practices, the PPPs, as small, condensed metaphoric versions of your larger practice. They are microclimates in the larger environment of your eco-system. You can experiment safely there. I really learned that from Deborah. That's how she makes pieces, developing them out of her daily performance practice. I do take a lot from Deborah. I feel like the "learning without trying" happened in this interview, for example.

## everybodys self interviews

*Oh. I just thought of something. Maybe the difference that's actually important is the difference between "a practice" and "my practice." Once something becomes your practice, it's infinitely more complicated than it was when it was something you could pick up from someone else. It becomes implicated in all your work, all aspects of training, process and product, and if you tried to separate it out, you would kill it or kill a part of yourself.*

That's a bit dramatic. Drowning your inner kitten. But maybe it's that simple also.

*Yes, and it's funny because I've been noticing that writing is a way of making sense, which is what performance does for me.*

And "thinking in conversation...?"

*Not yet. I'm just attracted to it. I can't quite do it...*

More training.

*Bojana calls the attention that passes between an audience and a performance "synchronizing with the duration of what you're watching."*

Yes. I like that. Writing can synchronize. Writing can be a performance practice.

*Then performance could still be your practice, even if you never performed.*

Is that a goal?

*No. I don't know. Maybe. Is it for you?*

I think it might be for me actually.

*Oh, okay. Good luck.*

Thanks.

- 1 6M1L is a project initiated by Xavier Le Roy in the frame of the Centre Chorégraphique National de Montpellier. In collaboration with nine other artists working within the field of performance, the project questions modes of production, artistic research, organization and education. With the participants of e.x.er.ce08 the entire group experiments with different ways of working together, participating in each other's projects, sharing time and space for a duration of 6 Months in 1 Location.

# PLAN B

Sophia New & Daniel Belasco Rogers

Sept. 2004

*What is plan b'?*

plan b can stand for Balham, Brighton, Bristol, and now Berlin, and it can stand for all those who want to start again to try another way. We often talk of things not being “the plan b way.” We use this to make the others feel bad if they are mean, unkind, thoughtless, cruel, bitchy. I thought about an unwritten manifesto once in bed and it went a bit like ... plan b will not shout in performances (unless the audience is very far away), they will endeavor to make you comfortable, they will have open hearts and be honest at all times, plan b is about you and me—you are free to come and go as you please. And now if plan b were to be visible, it would just be traces of places that have affected us or stopped us in our tracks—obsessions with clouds, writing in sand, scary fish, airports, shop displays, a winter wonderland, and a ghostly house. I would like to say that plan b could also stand for “being here” (in a kind of dreadfully punning way, but seriously). What is it to really be in the moment, at this very location? Sitting in our studio, side by side, while I type this and Soph types some other notes for a proposal.... The very things that are purposefully edited out of touring theater work so that it can go anywhere, pretending that the black walls of studio theaters are all the same. Our work strives to respond to where we are now. That’s why we spend our summers sweating inside a building making 1:100 scale models of the art institution we are in. In that piece *Me the City* we wanted to shrink the world around us in order to try and understand it and examine it. Research and stories that sprung from that place were then projected large again alongside our live manipulation of the model and miniatures—a world that from the digital images stuck on model buildings was nearly believable. From our three camera angles, we tried to create a film that used the low tech esthetic to make what we hoped would be urban voodoo: by playing on our carpet with our model could we in fact make it snow outside? Could we entice strangers to meet and kiss outside the registry office?

*And as a “duo” who inevitably work with dialogue, why do we say that we work with “real time text” instead of improvised text?*

Because improvisation has all the wrong connotations and nuances from a completely different world, these details are important to us. Improvisation is a tool actors use, and it stays as a workshop technique within the framework of narrative theater tradition. Real time text as we mean it is something quite different—it usually involves the very careful defining of context and concept way before a word is spoken. It hates rehearsal and repetition. It is the utterances of people trying to be in the moment and in the context and here and now with as much of themselves as they can manage. It tries to answer the hardest question an audience member can ask of contemporary performance practice—why have you asked us here? But to answer this question straight away is also a mistake and perhaps the mistake of dogmatic, narrative theater making. The art, as it were, is not to answer the question right away, but to stay with the discomfort and impossibility of the question because that is where the interesting territories are to be found. “Real time text”<sup>2</sup> is a way of challenging The Text or previously constructed/crafted dramaturgy—rather one that responds to a “nowness” of performing.

*How do you set up situations for “real time text?”*

We began with *How do you keep on talking even though you have said everything you thought possible?* In that piece we became the Girl and Clown from the infamous television test card F, which began in 1967 and has been shown more than any other program, over 70,000 hours. We wanted to use this iconic, nostalgic, and with the increase of viewing hours, increasingly rare image as a way to talk about people stuck together. It was at times Kafkaesque and Beckettian and other times funny, banal, ridiculous, and sad. We asked each other questions like, “What is fluff? Do you think we are no longer needed? Are you real? What else could we do for a job? Do you think anyone is watching?” and were interrupted by the muzak of test cards reminding us to retake our original position of being in an eternal game of nougats and crosses. In a way, *Bed full of songs* was also a real time text, but of song. In bed we set ourselves the task of singing all the songs we could remember and writing them down on a duvet ‘till it was full. In both these pieces the audience were made comfortable as if in a domestic space with carpet, cushions, inflatable chairs—anything that would be a contrast to the hardness of a theater seat, which required you to stay. As they were both long pieces, between 4–5 hours, the audience was free to come and go as they pleased. As a task *The Last Hour* wanted to limit this endless time experienced in these works and put pressure on our “real time text.” We were to say to each other truthfully what we would want to say to each other in the last hour—our confessions, affirmations, and anger timed by a chess clock. As the statement was finished, the other was forced to respond or move on, really listening was imperative and inescapable. Dressed as if this were a conference and directing the text to the audience and the listeners who were receiving the piece live on radio, it was an intense experience for all. The

end of the hour was not a clear state; was it the end of us, of the world, or just the performance?

*What is the difference between the real time text pieces and the more set pieces such as Me the City or your recent work in progress, Wonderworld?*

The more set pieces have always had a desire to continue the spontaneous text, yet in making the works, they have necessitated a framework, which gets nearer to being a “show.” Therefore a structure is put in place and a rough outline is made, but no lines are learnt and an openness is still required. Because both pieces are about trying to condense experiences in the world; one is the scale of buildings such as in *Me the City*, and in *Wonderworld* it was about trying to condense a 133 km journey. On our tandem we set off for a castle where we had a residency and made the journey to the venue the focal point. The arduous task of working together on this joint venture of physical stamina and co-operation made the end point, our destination, foremost in our minds. It quietened us. Yet we thought a lot about human power, inventors, efficiency, and coupledom. We were the public and where we chose to position ourselves (front or back) played a large part in how we were viewed as in charge or not—yet our unusual tandem with brakes and gears at the back meant a finer more sophisticated set of negotiations had to be made. The performance took seven stages of this journey as opportunities to represent these experiences in different ways. Aided by Kraftwerk’s *Tour de France* and R. Kelly’s *I Believe I Can Fly*, we peddled our way through journeys that we take daily, make especially, and the one that will end: life.

*What does the future hold for plan b?*

We are in a constant state of adaptation, both in how we respond to offers to make pieces for specific contexts (be that an airport, shrinking city, shop window or stadium), and in asking ourselves what we want to do and how to make it possible. We dream of continuing to juggle exhibitions, with performance, new media projects, and video works. Maybe one day we’ll even get to dance too.

- 1 [www.planbperformance.net](http://www.planbperformance.net)
- 2 a term we are grateful to Heike Roms for.

# ALEXANDRE ROCCOLI

## Interviews Himself as Trajal Harrell

### On UNBECOMING SOLO

June 2008

*TH: Alex, to begin, I would like to know how and why you chose a context such as New York, and I would like you to describe your new project unbecoming solo.*

AR: I wanted to come to New York to observe how a generation of artists is dealing with their conditions of production now, compared to those of a certain previous dance community in the performing arts. In today's context, the politics make it more and more necessary to produce private strategies. I wanted to observe how this economy of production functions, and what it generates in terms of "creation," "forms."

In the 60s and 70s New York was a very strong context that developed new forms and modes of performativity, via the Robert Dunn studio of composition, the Judson Church, or later, the Grand Union, but also in the 30s in Black Mountain College.

The energy of such research later strongly influenced European forms, if I relate to the 90s in Europe and, in particular, France, with "deconstruction" and desires to question modes of perception ten years after the institutionalization of dance via Jack Lang's politics in the tradition of André Malraux.

I needed to know what was going on now in a town that was qualified as the center of the world, and how, after September 11, moving and being moved in New York could give me a new drive.

I applied to FUSED, The French-US Exchange in Dance program for a grant, which I obtained.

*TH: So how did you work here? What was your map? Did you arrive with some specific statements? What did you want to verify, observe? Political links between a new French government and an American way of dealing with democracy?*

AR: The shift of the government in France induced a desire to understand what the new context could generate in the future in France. But my first desire was to

go to New York to research histories in dance: the current or recent ones as well as the past ones. I began to interview specific artists that I recorded and filmed. I was always very attracted by processes of minimalism in art, less is more. But also mainly how specific modes of considering repetition can generate “transformations” or “metamorphosis.” In terms of venues, I visited Dia:Beacon’s exhibition on Sol LeWitt and other visual artists working in minimalism, I went to the Lincoln Center Performing Arts Library to view some archives of Lucinda Childs and the accumulations by Trisha Brown, and I went to the MELA Foundation to visit La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela’s Dream House.

Meanwhile, Julie Perrin received a Fulbright to study at the Tisch School with André Lepecki. Julie and I had met at Paris 8 University, where she is teaching now, and I wanted to continue my research intertwining with her research through the concrete possibility to build a piece. To set, to write together.

*TH: How did you manage to arrive at this “form?” unbecoming solo was presented in September in the frame of Crossing The Lines, curated by the French Institute. The solo shifts within different modes of performativity that I can identify and understand and that you embrace in particular ways. The movement patterns are recurring from several styles. How did you build these bridges, links, metamorphoses? Could you now shift your way of answering and be more detailed in the mode of writing?*

AR: OK. Julie and I began to observe how we could relate specific corpuses:

- *watermotor*
- *trio A*
- *Accumulation 1*
- a voguing contest that we saw
- a Sri Lankan dance that I learned from Colombo

We had the possibility to observe the patterns in these dances, how the fact of writing/composing can build bridges in the histories, so called specters, ghosts, in the memories, and my own memory as a catalyst of these echoes.

*TH: Hum... yes I see. Humm... I mean I saw. The soundtrack is also very important in the process of watching, looking at the dances. It is mainly interviews that you did with specific artists. In a certain moment these voices become more and more abstract and the sense of understanding turns into the perception of noises...a white noise. Can you specify then how the soundtrack should proceed? Is this a choice to treat the voices as a material or a difficulty to select which samples from these interviews was important?*

AR: Hum yes ... I see. I mean, I see that you heard. I wanted to share the information in these meetings that I filmed and recorded. I wanted to work on a chorus, I mean, different voices which tell their conditions of production. And mainly, I chose the part where these artists speak about their displacement. How “glob-

alization” and “networking” generates new forms of nomadism. These ways of entering displacements linked to my own way of being displaced on stage, then were brought in the same space, which interferes and sometimes creates frictions or tensions of “understanding.”

*TH: Do you say that you work like Cage and Cunningham, bringing an audio score in parallel to a visual one, and that the connections are made by the viewer, the listener?*

AR: Yes and no.

*TH: ??? You mean that it is not totally random and then it is sometimes random?*

AR: Basically, I know which moment of the dance score is adjusted to the voices, but the dance functions sometimes on its own tempo to find the quality. I learnt this a lot with the choreographer Frédéric Gies. He is an amazing dancer, who really has a conscience of timing in the present time. I try then to not lie, and the mode of shifting is related to the timing of the movement.... Is that too abstract?

*TH: Hum... No, that sounds as if you improvise and then you know in the internal structure where you need to go. So unbecoming solo is also in this case a mode of composition which invests echoes—“a palette of echoes” as Daria Fain said—in an archeology of bridges between styles via histories, storytelling, building space, outside, inside, and intertwining this relation.*

AR: Daria Fain is a great teacher, I learned a lot on Chi Kung with her. It is maybe from her specific point of view that she sees.

*TH: Where will you show the project now?*

AR: I will try to investigate with Julie Perrin different spaces. Including the University, but also theater contexts.

*TH: What will you do with the archives that you are building? I think that these interviews could be presented on their own as a project too.*

AR: Yes, it is good advice, I actually would like to continue to map our displacements in other geo-political contexts. How it specifically works in Bucharest, for example, how choreographers such as Ion Dumitrescu, Eduard Gabia, and Vava Stephanescu are related in their own research to questions that Miguel Guitterez, DD Dorviller, and Ryan Kelly are investigating in New York.

# PETRA SABISCH

## A LITTLE INVENTORY OF SCORES

Autumn 2005

I ask and you answer?

*No. Let's do it the other way round.*

OK.

*What is it that compels you in scores?*

Perhaps it is first of all their strange quality of being *virtu-real*. A score is what tends to be exercised and thus waits latently for actualization, for realization. This latent tendency towards a practice is inscribed in the score itself, for it does not have to be realized in order to become a score. A musical score, for example, which has never been played, is nevertheless a score. And this is no question of given stylistic elements, identifiable codes or a perhaps witnessed intentionality. *A score is not a genre, but a generator of what escapes from it: its realization.* It is, in this sense, that a score encompasses all kind of possibilities.

At this point, where we can define a score as what proliferates the virtuality of other possible realizations, the score is simultaneously virtual and real. It is the maybe untimely but contemporaneity of something, which is always already there and which insists in its practice.

*Always already there? What do you mean?*

If you characterize scores in a wider sense as kind of not necessarily intentional programs articulating a real, they are a kind of *grammar of the real*. Multiple, different, a-logic, discontinuous, and maybe sense-lacking, but grammars for a real to emerge. Just think of body movements in a supermarket and the tacit rules, codes, aspects of conduct, etc., which regulate them. What interests me in that is neither behaviorism nor a social analysis of movement regulation. It is the *undecidability*, whether it is the real real which unfolds itself as being constituted by unknown and manifold scores, or our reading of the real real which submits scores in order to grasp it. Undecidable coincidence between reading (as making sense

of) and constructing (as attributing sense to); provoking an infinite quest for existing invariables that may determine the variables of every day life and vice versa. I see it as a blurring picture puzzle in which a momentary assemblage of variables appears to “make sense,” that is, to become visible, readable, before it tips over into the perception of another assemblage, which has to abort the first one for the sake of its readability.

In this sense, a score is the *double-bind of a record and that which is recorded: the escape of the score. Choré and graph*. You can zoom from one to the other, but never get rid of their reciprocal relationship: a pattern, an algorithm, or a map might try to organize time-spaces, numbers, or matters. Yet, to become readable, they have to permanently distinguish between their attributed signification and what is a-signified, in order to expel the latter and have a sense appear: a map full of post offices is not a map, a pattern is not a pattern when it does not repeat its sameness in front of an otherness, an algorithm is not an algorithm if there is no series of different numbers, etc. In other words, *a score produces the hierarchy of score and non-score as condition of its own possibility, as well as it distributes the degrees of it*.

*Can you give an example?*

If you imagine yourself listening to a contemporary interpretation of a written musical score, composed let's say for a cello and a voice, you will be able to recognize it, if you listen to the cello and the voice. Whatever the bird in the courtyard does, he will not be on the level of enabling you to recognize the score, for his omission is part of the specificity of the score. The bird is thus as non-score as you are, merely, part of a noisy silence that makes music audible. But, at the same time, you might consider the bird and the car crash in the street as being part of the score just because they are there, realized within the frame of a score. The possibility of them being scored or not becomes then a question of degrees of probability. Of course, you can always verify by re-listening to other interpretations, since every score is by definition *reproducible, repeatable, reiterable*. But if the score is *indetermined*, as in John Cage's case, including thereby variables, accidents, and shifting parameters, its realization might never be the same, to the extent that you are unable to recognize it.<sup>1</sup> *The realization of a score can thus not be identified with a unique score*. Which is far less banal than it sounds: it means that the relationship between a score and a realization is not unique. It is multiple per se. Scores tend towards realizations, infinitely plural, and score-realizations let emerge the co-possibilities of multiple scores. Just because there might be one single sheet of paper with some notations on it does not mean that this is the only possibility to record a specific score. Due to their virtu-reality, the scores extend their domain towards the possibility of alterity. This is the first aspect: a score is multiples of scores, multiples of realizations.

The second aspect concerns scores, like, for example, the imagined handwritten paper with musical notes. When I distinguished beforehand between a score and

its realization, I have now to come back to this point: *a score is already a realization*. But definitely not because it realizes what has been “mentally” anticipated beforehand and now is just represented. A score is already a realization because the “writing” of the score realizes the score in a specific medium. The relationship between a musical score as denoted on a paper and its musical interpretation, is nothing else than the translation from one medium (writing in a note system) to another (interpreting with instruments). Therefore, the relationship between scores and realizations is not only multiple, but *translating and “transmodal”* (Joseph Grigely). A score, realization on its own, interpellates its translation into other modes of realization.

When I said above, “a score is what escapes from it: its realization,” this has to be refined: *a score is a realization of multiple other realizations escaping to it*. It is only by realizing what escapes to it that a score can simultaneously be specific and multiple. And that is, by the way, what marks the *game character of scores* as a kind of *metonymics of translation*: being nothing more than what is always already there and the urge to realize it again and again in specific modes and different languages.

It is important here to stress the fact that scores, understood as transmodal translations, do not necessarily refer to an original, a model, or something prior. The idea of the first and the authentic can rather be interpreted as one main score in occidental societies to resolve problems of time: you take a progressive linear system, add causality and get a powerful system that distributes time. Yet, time is more complicated, and the co-possibility of other scores testifies for its plural-ity of specific modes of translations. And if they copy something, then this is no longer the reproduction of an earlier model, but the multiplication of realizations, which means the possibility to be translated. In this sense of copying as multiplying, scores copy signifying orders, realize infinite doubles of their tendencies and a-signify thereby the order of the real as coextensive deferral of the virtual. Scores as realizations copy realizations of scores...

*I'm sorry, but I got a little bit lost: scores seem somehow to be everywhere and in everything. They are the virtu-real two-foldedness of choreography, the undecidability of reading and attributing sense, a picture puzzle, two instruments without bird, two instruments with bird and accidents, multiple realizations realizing multiplicity, a playful translation and transmodation, and they undo signifying orders with a yet unknown and even playful ease. Isn't that a bit much? For it does not qualify the term score to be very operable in a concrete work, does it? Could you perhaps define more precisely, how you use the term score in your work?*

I distinguish between *cues, instructions, scripts, notations* and *scores*: a *cue* is what determines and disengages a change (in theater, the conventional example is the technician changing a light according to a prior agreement often related to time, actions, or sound). An *instruction* is a device that suggests a (way of)

doing, moving, thinking (e.g. “go to center of the stage”). A *script* is the often linear description of something realized or to be realized. A *notation* is an undisclosed system of recording or composing ways of doing, moving, or thinking. And a *score* is a realized composition of articulations that urges for other realizations, interpretations, and translations. It is a “partition” of sensible agencies that communicates and shares modes of perceptibility, close to what Jacques Rancière calls “*partage du sensible*.”

*When did your work on scores begin?*

I think my work on scores started with *Cartographics*. It was one of these ideas you cannot get rid off, they always come back and begin to take form. At first, I was very angry about myself, because I finally wanted to be “efficient” and correspond to the needs of the choreographic market, that is to make a short solo piece of ten or twenty minutes for a theater stage, in order to try one of these festivals for emerging artists. But I was unable to do that. Every time I tried to work on this mini-format, I finally ended up on *Cartographics*. I guess that this had as well to do with the fact that I wanted to produce without having the means, and living in a ten square-meter room in Paris with my minidisc player. By chance, I then got this call for projects from Danças Na Cidade, had a try, and got selected. This was in 2002.

*Can you tell what Cartographics is? And what the work on scores means concretely?*

*Cartographics* is an audio-choreographed performance, which was conceived for the huge terrace of Chão do Lorreiro Market in Lisbon. I remember that in the beginning there was this fascination about mapping, linked to the necessity of questioning spectacular modes of visibility and representation, as well as the paradoxical desire to create a piece that is at the same time absolutely choreographed and completely open for interpretation. I wanted to take into account that anyway each spectator produces her own show; yet, I did not want to perform a mere refusal. On the contrary: I wanted to offer a lot. I am not sure now, to remember the reason...

So I thought that maybe there was a chance to expose my ambivalent role as author by first over-imposing and exhausting it in a kind of absolutely fundamental score in order to interrupt consequently, in a second step, the functions of this authorship. The spectators should really get the place of co-authors and me, I should become a choreographer completely deprived of controlling time, dramaturgy, the number of participants, existing movements, and movement quality. To be more concrete: I realized, in close collaboration with the musician Frédéric Jean, a cartography of “sound-cards,” i.e. recorded CDs, which the visitors were free to choose from a “menu” at the entrance, that is, from a range of ten different cards (Idle, Music, Labyrinth, Motion, Birds, Love, Time, Identity, Gender,

Little). (You could as well just visit the 800 square meters with an amazing view over Lisbon). Equipped with a portable CD-player, the visitors were then invited to explore the card they had chosen. Now, on the cards, there were choreographic propositions that everybody could do or not do. They were meant to be real propositions (and not this kind of concealed happening, where you are forced to perform acting), since each card was distributed only one time (and then was returned in order to get redistributed again). Therefore, there was not one person among the present persons on the terrace who could control whether or not you followed the propositions, whether or not you did it “well.” No distribution of a common measure, but the possibility of a shared experience. Of course, the visitor could give back a card immediately if it did not match his expectations, or she could listen twice or take successively as many cards as were present. And as the whole performance lasted nine hours, the dramaturgy was that of duration: you simply take the time you want. My objective was to offer different “maps of perception,” rather than visual guides to appropriate space or movement manuals to demonstrate performativity. On the one hand, I was interested in making a piece whose subject, duration, chronology, and realization was entirely chosen by the visitor-performers. And on the other hand, I wanted to inject a doubt in the “rules” at work in order to question whether the present movements were steered by a choreographic score, the social and cultural codes, or by a matter of circumstance, a mere coincidence.

*So far for the plans. What happened?*

What happened was that an always varying number of persons moved on the terrace, some of them equipped with concentrated bodies, listening to a walkman, others equipped with cameras to take pictures. At some moments, there were interactions, at others, postures and movements of everyday life, walking, accelerating, slowing down, laying down, or sleeping. Sometimes they were like chains of movements, as if they were related, sometimes I saw slightly individualized ways of conduct, sometimes informal group dynamics. What was really working for me, as well, when we played it in a park in Zagreb (Urban Festival 2003), was a shift in the economy of attention: it was as if there was no need for a visibility other than the ongoing spectacle of an audience, which was at the same time audience and performer. There was no need for a cathartic and panoptic dramaturgy (you see without being seen). Instead, there was this relaxed concentration while listening to the headphones, which induced a corporeality I still find interesting: aware, individual, sometimes isolated, sometimes related, but never closed to the very tiny things going on. Interesting, not because of its aspect of grace, but rather because it witnesses a mode of visibility that requires a duration and in which you can never be certain whether what you see is the object of an observation or the production of visibility.

*I would like you to come back to the scores: how are the cards you are speaking about composed? What are they proposing? And what is it that makes you associate scores and cartography?*

Well, my propositions depend on the subject of the card and are too different to give you a short account of how they are made. I can just try to give examples: whereas the motion card suggests relational movement games, creating an inter-dependency to the other movements on the terrace and to the ambient or recorded sound, the gender card resembles rather a video game, which proposes performative strategies in order to interact with the story of JOY. The idle card and the labyrinth card, I let you imagine. On the little card, we just created a short sound comic without words, so that it is comprehensible for all those who do not speak Portuguese or English. And if you take the love card, whose time is of course potentially eternal and not only twenty minutes as the others, you get an envelope at the entrance, as well as you get explained how to program tracks on your CD-Walkman. At a certain track then, you can choose, among approximately 220 song titles (included in the envelope), the one you want to compose. I say compose because we realized a love song with Frédéric Jean whose stanzas are divided in such a way that you get an enormous quantity of possible combinations, without hearing the same song twice. According to the title and your actual mood, you can thus vary within the whole range from lonesome solo versions in despair to bizarre or happy duet fusions. The movements here are often reduced to a finger tapping on a CD-Player and a listening body. And yet, there is a difference in bodies listening to a love song and bodies that don't find the entrance to the sound labyrinth. It is however important that this difference never becomes the display of expressivity, and instead remains on a level where you have to balance questions on interpretation.

In general, *Cartographics* tries to engender this kind of balancing between the real and the so-called fiction. Fiction here does not mean "to fake" or "to lure." It is, as Jacques Rancière puts it, simply a way of elaborating intelligible structures that "indistinguish" between the reason of descriptive and narrative agencies of fiction and those agencies that describe and interpret historical and social phenomena of the world.<sup>2</sup> Maybe it is because I studied literature and history, that I never believed in this distinction between fact and fiction, which is also the fundamental distinction between science and arts. This is not to say that there is no real or everything is fiction. It is the other way round: without tracing sensible agencies and fictional ways to the coordinates of a real always to be reinvented we cannot grasp it. A cartographer knows the problem of drawing a map alongside the phenomena and their depiction. And writing, as Deleuze states in his Foucault book, is drawing a map.<sup>3</sup> I would add that cartographies are scores: plans of the real, plans of the possible.

*What were the difficulties you met in Cartographics?*

One of the difficulties is always the instructions themselves: on the one hand, you have to be very explicit and precise in what you want to suggest, (for example, the handling of a CD-player is still not evident to older persons), and on the other hand, you want to escape didacticism. To a larger extent, this difficulty concerns the readability of scores in general, and in performance, readability goes together with dramaturgy. The crucial thing with instructions is that you have to make elisions, deletions, ellipses, and omissions. Yet, it turns out, *what you leave out is as important as what you say*. This becomes even more difficult if you have to anticipate everything and find reliable parameters without having seen the space (which I chose from a range of propositions by Danças, thanks to a delightful documentation. Thank you Danças!) and without being able to change the score instantly. Moreover it was outside and the weather you never really know. For example: "Go to the balcony" is not the same as saying "Have a look at the Tagus" is not the same as saying "You have to follow the general movement of the persons who come to this terrace" is not the same as saying "move carefully backwards to a point which is at the same distance from the entrance as from the roof." What is interesting in this difficulty is that you immediately have to think about the parameters you choose and the economies at work within these parameters.

This was exciting in the translation that Paula Caspão realized. It was extremely important for me to have a Portuguese version. Yet, on the gender card, for example, every sentence that I had carefully freed from gendered clarity became once more gendered. Which was definitely not a problem of the translator, but of cultural contexts of language: you cannot abstract from the fact that the linguistic parameters of gendering are quite different from one language to another.

Another problem linked to the readability of scores, but on the re/production level, is the documentation of *Cartographics*. Although I decided to present *Cartographics* by three not exemplary but different CDs, I am always requested to send the video. I find this nevertheless a little bit bizarre, since the piece consists of a four-hour sound score, which are not on the tape. Once I was told that it was a technical problem to listen to the CDs because producers were only equipped with VHS players. But besides the whole problematics of documentation itself, it is strange when precisely those modes and economies of visibility, which I tried to criticize in my work, finally build the frame through which the work is accessed. And apparently, video is the unique format for denoting performances....

*In Contaminated (Atelier Frankfurt 2005), you don't use sound scores anymore and the scores that appear seem to function more indirectly. Could you explain what you worked on precisely?*

*Contaminated* did not have the idea of scores in the beginning. It is a lecture-performance that started, when I realized that I had been contaminated, physically, by another lecture-performance. I wanted to understand how this materialization happened. What it was that made me say that I had been the

product of circumstances of *Product of Circumstances*. On a larger scale, it is the question of how the so-called immaterialities, such as a speech, a thought, or a performance materialize in our bodies. Artaud raises this question in the *Theater and the Pest*, when he states that the exterior events, political catastrophes, and cataclysms discharge, while passing to the plane of theater, in the sensibility of the person who watches with the force of an epidemic.<sup>4</sup> I thought that there was no reason against what occidental history might tell us to believe, that this should only happen like an epidemic and not as an epidemic. For the protecting fourth wall was perhaps not as impermeable as we thought.

In order to find out, I used the same disposition as the performance: a desk, a screen or wall for slide projection, and a chair in a white space. I reconstructed the situation as far as possible to have an appropriate frame for my questions. Then I started to develop theories of how contamination could work, following first biomedical explanations of viral functioning, and then those of computing science. But there we are: if I took the viral model, I already believed that there was a kind of “program” behind it, since in computing science a virus is a program. That’s why I found myself exactly in that questioning that I tried to explain in the beginning of this conversation: you observe what already is in order to find out its ways of functioning, however rational they might be. You begin to attribute sense. Which led me back to the phenomenon that the performer, Xavier le Roy, had described for his biomedical research on breast cancer: that the observation of a fact transformed the fact. If I took this remark seriously, (and anyway I was obliged to start *Contaminated* at the point where *Product of Circumstances* ended), this meant that “the perception of a fact dissolves the fact or shifts it to something else than a fact, another fact, or no fact at all. A fact and shift of a fact, rupture of the fact. Affect and Effect” (*Contaminated*). In the lecture-part of the performance, I affirm this transformation proper to the perception of facts by applying different filters to the slides of the reconstructed performance situation. Only by using methods similar to the biomedical research, e.g., contrasting, filtering, and staining, my slides ended up resembling the representations of oncogene distribution in breast cancer tissues. In other words: you see what you expect to see. Or to be more precise: the scientific methods and procedures are by definition esthetic (aisthesis = perception) and their ways to attribute a visibility to phenomena entail a whole range of parameters: Ruth Mayer and Brigitte Weingart show in their book *Virus* how viral representations depend on body images, gendered depictions of intrusion, and war and technological procedures of creating visibility.<sup>5</sup>

The problematic of scores thus re-occurred on several levels: first, as a way to understand the possible mechanisms at work in a contamination, second, as a means to question the production and distribution of visibility in scientific research and performances, and third, as a tool to question authorship.

*Can you expand a little bit on the relationship between Contaminated and authorship?*

Yes. Like *Product of Circumstances*, *Contaminated* tells and shows my autobiographical path from science to performance and choreography. It has to take into account these personal aspects because a contamination is never more general than a specific body. Now, the interesting thing about contaminations is that there is no author. You may speculate or believe to know who infected you, but this “transfer” or “relais” (a person, an animal, a toilet, water, wind, whatever) is not what authorizes a specific materialization in your body.

So, I was contaminated with *Product of Circumstances*, but could not tell *by whom or by what*. (How does the raw material know?) It could be the performance situation, the performer himself, a bundle of facts, effects, and affects, or an exterior event.... The incapacity to assign an author is part of the contamination itself: for a contamination is a moment of reversal in which something im/material unfolds as material and vice versa. What then matters in a contamination is its mechanisms, rather than its causes, for you have to keep your body open to other contaminations in order to survive. And in this sense, from the point of view of a reversability, a contamination enables us to shift the perspective from authors and causalities to the anonymity of material effects.

At a certain moment in my work, I remembered that Xavier had published the score for *Product of Circumstances*. (It is a short introductory note explaining in which circumstances and how the piece has to be performed, followed by the general score of the piece.) When I re-read it, I realized that *Contaminated* still corresponded more or less to the introductory note. That's why I quote and project it at the end of the performance, in order to stress the fact that *Contaminated* is at the same time the realization of a score, an autobiographical parcours between science/arts and theory/practice, as it is the copy of a performative disposition. Or put otherwise: a contamination is the mutual reversion of circumstances into products into circumstances into products....

On a more general level of production, this becomes of course interesting because the appropriation that every contamination is, questions authorship and the status of an original. What is a quote on a corporeal level? Do you need language to mark a quote? When is a quote no longer a quote but a translation? At which moment do movements belong to you and become your “own” choreographic language?

Moreover, there is this phenomenon that you cannot see *Product of Circumstances* in the same way when you have seen *Contaminated* beforehand. They inform each other. Or, as Pirrko Husemann blogged, they are “a dialogue of articulated bodies, that speak the language of flesh”.<sup>6</sup> In the first version I showed in Berlin, some persons in the audience were very offended by the fact that they did not know if it was serious or a fake. One said that she wished to see quotation marks, in order to know at every moment of the performance if and whom I am quoting. Some others wanted to maintain the place of what they considered as original. And it is true that *Product of Circumstances* has become a classic of lecture-performances, which makes it dangerous to be compared to it. But that's exactly what it is about: contaminations are dangerous. Yet, to deal

with them, you cannot simply ignore them, and absolute protection is neither desirable nor possible. It seems to me that the only way is to use them and to understand their ways of functioning. And these ways of functioning do apparently cross the representational regime of knowledge, *mimesis* and *poiesis*—but they are of another order.

*Could you outline now, shortly, in which way this work on score is different to your new project Program?*

*Program* is an essay to think choreography as cybernetics, that is, as a way of understanding and controlling a “steering” or “engineering.” I think the word *cybernetics* refers to navigation in Greek antiquity, which is more evident perhaps. When Norbert Wiener published his famous book *Cybernetics* in 1948, he placed cybernetics as a science that tried to capture the interfaces between biology on the one hand and technological systems without engineers on the other in order to use the logics of life for technology. In a certain way, *Program* starts from the same interface, but shifts the accent: it tries to combine the aliveness of the persons I work with, with ways of processing them (technology is nothing else than the logics of a way of proceeding, in other words, a method), in order to understand the “autonomy” or the “play” within processed corporealities.

The main score of the work is to develop a program. Somehow, that happens already, consciously or not, in every choreography and every performance. I consider this program as a score in the sense that it is a realized composition of articulations which urge for other realizations, such as *usage*. The aim would be, and I know that this is utopian, to develop a real-time-program, by which I mean a score of rules and mechanisms which are developed at the same time as they are translated, mis/understood, and used. For what makes scores so interesting is that we already have the simultaneity of reading and interpreting, of perceiving and realizing. Nevertheless the “writing” often still precedes. Pro-gram: the grammar of what follows. Yet, in computing, you can imagine a viral program which is applied simultaneously to its writing. What interests me in that is that you might comprehend more on the *recursivity or feedback problems* we already encounter when we perceive and move at the same time: the movements are permanently informed by what we perceive and vice versa. Recursivity is thus another word to confront problems of time and causality: is the effect succession of a cause, causing another cause, causing an effect, or is the cause what is dissociated by effects? Do we need causes and effects to understand relationships between things? Does the notion of plural time change anything in this complexity? And these questions are of course closely linked to the cybernetic investigations on the observer, as being part of the system or not, and on the problem of self organization or autonomy. I don’t have the impression that we have yet begun to understand the era of mechanical reproduction ... so why not work on it?

By now, I can just outline the disposition we will start with in order to be more

## everybodys self interviews

concrete: one layer will be to define the space as a program which informs the bodies moving in it (as a kind of environmental program or coordination of a kinetic sphere). The second layer is to inform the bodies via scores, instructions, graphic notations, and scripts. One of the problems we will have to resolve is that of real-time writeability and readability, which asks for intelligible interfaces that do not reduce your actions to a list of ten options....

*This sounds still a little bit confused, although I see a kind of fascination for “in/formal programs” in your work. But how are they linked to critique? Can you characterize the critical potential of scores, if there is one?*

For me a critique is what captures the nature of a crisis. Etymologically, a crisis means a “turning point in a disease.” Therefore a critique has to find strategies for capturing this reversability (or contamination), in order to let the crisis tip over to its other side, where its virtual may emerge. But in order to make this reversal happen (a reversal that corresponds to the Deleuzian diagrammatical function), the critique has to be affected by the crisis, instead of continuing its ephemeral stories of judgment, distinction, and censorship. This affect is as necessary as dangerous to the critique, for it is, as Brian Massumi puts it, itself resistant to critique.<sup>7</sup> Which means that the critique becomes a critique if it suspends its very criticality for unqualifiable moments of affects. Affects, then, turn out to be this opening effect of critical practices, a moment where production and reception, or to be more concrete, realization and readability of scores culminate in each other, triggering off discontinuous chains of sensory modes, multiple thoughts and other destabilizing effects. That’s what the atopos of the real-time score in *Program* is about: making the representational regime of dichotomies between activity and passivity, consciousness and unconsciousness, practice and theory, etc., collapse in order to have agencies emerge, which are able to articulate another visibility of the sensible. But of course, it is an atopos still.

*I have the impression that there is another aspect to what you have said: scores may be the right place for the unfolding of critical methodologies, since their shifting balance between the real and the virtual entails an infinitude of possibilities. This infinitude is not only due to the multiplicity of scores, but derives from the fact that you can never accomplish, complete, or fulfill a score: a specific realization might be brought to perfection, brilliance, virtuosity, or failure, but it can never abolish the score tendency towards other realizations. In other words: scores can’t go total, can they?*

*Can you situate this opening effect, this critical aspect in other contemporary practices?*

I am not sure if I can and would rather suggest discussing some aspects of those I have been affected by. There is, for example, *Schreibstück* by Thomas Lehmen, which is the splendid idea of writing a score as a piece and for a piece

that is then to be realized by three other choreographers simultaneously.<sup>8</sup> It is a written score, a writing score, which tries to separate first of all the role of the author from the role of the choreographers. The objectives are to demystify the rules that govern artistic production and to create a transparency. And it explains that the main interest reveals within the actual interpretations of the canon-like structure and their succession. Yet, there is one aspect that I never really understood in *Schreibstück*: the score says that the author gives his approval to the choreographers and that this is not meant as a means of control. My problem is not the control because I do not believe that there has to be. My problem concerns the several indications expressing a “meant to be,” an intentionality, an expectation of the whole, which are in conflict for me with an idea of scores, which are abandoned once they are written. But, at the same time, these objectives of the score are transparent because they are there, written and open to the multiple usages, which since 2002 have been realized....

Another perspective on the authorship question is the work of Laurent Goldring, in which the role of the *co-author* is completely affirmed: the disposition is composed of a nude choreographer proposing movements and a video-camera-equipped photographer proposing images. Now, this work is primarily not at all about scores: there is no written score that precedes it, and the subject “score” never arose during our collaboration. But if we consider scores as being a methodology of a specific practice, it is interesting to realize that Goldring’s *Bodymades* are composed of two separate practices within a precise frame. This frame permanently composes the disjunctive gap between the articulable and the visible and makes thereby their transversality appear. I see it as a kind of “meeting” between the different and yet inseparable regimes of the articulable and the visible, which neither resembles an encounter you make by chance, nor a “date” you might program. It is a moment in the visibility of an articulated body on a TV-screen, where something operates which escapes either to the visible or to the articulable. As if the image was simultaneously folded and was displaying this fold or, as Goldring puts it, as if there was a temptation of the *inform* to emerge at the very moment of a formation.<sup>9</sup>

Another work I admire is that of Antonia Baehr. I am thinking here of the pieces *Un après-midi*, a collaboration with Henry Wilt, and *Holding Hands*, a collaboration with William Wheeler. In both pieces, her score practice consists for me in a very concise separation of score functions: when *Un après-midi* deprives the four interpreters of knowing the score beforehand, it separates the cognition of an integral score from its realization. This is not only interesting because it dis-enables the audience as the performers of “re-cognizing” what they already know or see. It exposes, moreover, a consequent tactic of production, which “unworks” the quasi evidential need for rehearsing in order to perform a skilled technicity. The performers become as audience as the audience, with the only difference that they are exposed.<sup>10</sup>

In *Holding Hands* two performers hold hands in the center of a white space. Unfolded is then a detailed choreography of minor face movements which are

## everybodys self interviews

performed in an amazingly perfect synchronicity. The score, in this case trained and rehearsed, consists of a choreography of breathing and facial movements that exposes a whole range of possibilities from task orientated eyebrow frowning, eyebrow frowning with predetermined successions of emotions to the congruency of movement steered emotions in a lipsynched song of Maria Callas. The realization of the score vivisects that synchronicity of a face as signifier of emotions that we are used to. Effectuated is thus a refined dramaturgy that goes hand in hand with the affects of an audience.

There are other practices, for example that of Jonathan Burrows, who emphasizes in *Both Sitting Duet* with Matteo Fargion the concertation of reading and playing in a kind of finger/hand/arm/sitting/tapping—arrangement.

Or Edit Kaldor, who unfolds in *Or Press Escape*, the specific temporal mode of a simultaneous writing and reading process by linking factual and fictional agencies. And, of course, *Project* by Xavier le Roy and the choreographers S. Berggren, A. Chauchat, N. Cusimano, C. De Smedt, J. Domínguez, G. Garrison, P. Gazzola, C. Pez Gonzalez, P. Husemann, M. Kangro, A. Koch, R. Mägi, K. Matthys, I. Munduate, R. Ponce, F. Segurette, T. Sehgal, M. Spångberg, A. Urra, which superposes the layers of performed game reality, real game performance, and playful performed realities. But all of these contemporary practices would need some more place, in order to capture more precisely what their crises are about.

*There are several questions open. You always come back to this connection between scores and production processes, whether they concern the production of a piece, the production of the possibilities for an emergence of the virtual, or the production of synchronicity of production and reception. Could you describe in detail in what way your realm of productions is distinguishable from those of a nevertheless very productive neoliberalism? And in what sense does the multi-usage of a score-methodology allow the specificity of a critical practice? Could you outline, let's say, a kind of ideal frame for your work within the politics of production? And how do you contextualize research and experiments nowadays?*

Wow. I don't know.

*Not valid.*

I really don't know all this.

*You might use Kleist's score of the successive elaboration of thought while speaking, if you want. I'll play the sister.*

Ok, a try, a blog. Concerning your first point on production: I think that artistic and scientific productions are situated within—or if you want, affected by—the

creative industries of neoliberal productivity. They are not its outside. The interesting question then is rather if and how they partition differently the production of time, space, practices, products, and last but not least, labor. That's what I referred to when I talked about critique: a critical practice is not what can be undertaken from a safe distance. It has to be affected in order to be effective. But, of course, the problem is to know when the crisis passes to its virtual other side. Maybe performative practices are not too badly placed for this controlling of the dynamics of change, for they are the very practices (besides education) of dramaturgy. And maybe choreography, understood here as esthetical practice of corporeal im/materializations and other dynamics, is potentially able to keep bodies open for all kinds of contaminations and other sharings. However.

It seems important to me to observe with precision how Rancière's "distribution of the perceptible" operates. (The french title "*Le Partage du Sensible*" connotes the proximity between *partage* as sharing/distribution and *partition*/score, as a mode to arrange these distributions). How are the modes of visibility of esthetic practices distributed? And how may these "ways of doing" articulate different ways of sharing? What does their doing do? Now, these questions are definitely too big to be answered by me and a word document. But what I wanted to say while speaking scores is that they offer at least a methodology, which may help realize the parameters we use. This methodology is not a meta-knowledge, which can simply be applied to every practice. It is what derives from esthetic practices (and theory is part of them), which question established knowledge of how to do something. In this sense, a methodology of scores is as specific as their scores. Yet, it is their use, their realizations, their "play," which help specify the operations and functions, that are at stake. And by the way, it is this "play," inhabiting the virtu-real of scores, that makes them escape from a mere instrumental reason. Nevertheless, the question of economy is inherent to that of use.

Now, artistic practices are maybe always in this stretching between, on the one hand, taking into account the present production parameters, such as money no money, space no space, collaborators solo, co-produced auto-produced, kindly supported, supported or not at all. And, on the other hand, trying to produce new ones in accordance to what the projects need. That's why I cannot think of an ideal frame as such. It depends on the practice and the project. Yet, what I realize is that the possibilities for independent research in general are more and more reduced today. Either by the no longer free accessibility of former public facilities, such as libraries, specialized videothèques, and databases or by bureaucratic obstacles, privatizations of institutions, and the direct exercise of control. This withdrawal of the public is alarming, in particular for independent, non-institutionalized research. But, on the other hand, I am sceptical as well of those curatorial practices that give you everything: the hipness of a laboratory, a cool title, technological equipment, outstanding international reputation in advance, and highly specialized, of course interdisciplinary, expert colleagues. With the minor inconvenience that you never asked for somebody else to decide neither the frame, nor the subject, nor the method for your work.

One of the consequences is of course self organization (greetings to the cybernetics). Which is often accompanied by the one-million-dollar question of how much time you waste on not finding subsidies. But this is not only a question of wasting time, but also one of a whatever strange commitment, not to disengage the institutions from their missions. On the other hand, my personal practice today tends towards the idea of multiplying institutions. If those you wish aren't there, then set them up. At least this is one possibility of concretizing that which is intrinsic of an ideal frame. The summer academy of Frankfurt is a very good example of that. In this context, it is probably worth having a closer look at the French institutionalist practices of the sixties, which observed closely the mechanisms of institutions (for example at the University Paris 8) in order to criticize and interrupt their functionings. For institutions are apparently subjected to this strange effect of self preservation once they dissociate from their initial objectives. Therefore multiplying institutions or whatever you call them (networks, temporary autonomous zones, collectives, credit-card-libraries, biography exchanges, or stockmarket for artistic equipment, etc) means as well to abolish or to quit them as soon as they are no longer part of a practice. In a way, these minor institutions can be very similar to experiments: a precise frame to set up your questions and make them work...

*Blog end?*

Yes.

*See you.*

Yes, see you.

- 1 In this way, a score refers directly to problems of cognition: you only recognize what you already know. Knowledge is the reproducibility of identificatory and representational systems. That's where indeterminacy has been interesting: as a means to reveal the aleatoric co-extensions of scores and the contingency of knowledge. But scores do not have to be undetermined to encompass this aleatoric aspect. Precisely because they inhere the aleatoric metonymics of being practised differently, they point already towards these complexities of knowing and reading and defy us to unlearn those identifications and representation that we already know. It is in this sense that they are able to destabilize economies of representation when they multiply other realizations of economies...
- 2 Jacques Rancière (2000): *Le partage du sensible. Esthétique et politique*, Paris, Editions de la Fabrique, p. 58.
- 3 Gilles Deleuze (1988): *Foucault*. Trans. Seán Hand. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 44.

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- 4 Antonin Artaud (1995): *Le théâtre et son double*. Paris, here: p. 37.
- 5 Ruth Mayer and Brigitte Weingart (ed.): *Virus! Mutationen einer Metapher*,  
Cologne: Transcript Verlag 2004.
- 6 Pirkko Husemann: "P.S.: Gedanken zur Aufführung einer Nachschrift,"  
<http://www.unfriendly-takeover.de/blog/node/21> (transl. ps)
- 7 Brian Massumi (1996): "The Autonomy of Affect," in: *Deleuze: A critical Reader*,  
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# ISABELLE SCHAD

## On OHNE WORTE (practicable)

October 2008

*Hello Isabelle, I would like to ask you some questions around your new solo project Ohne Worte (practicable).*

Hello Isabelle!

*I would like to start at the very beginning: what was the starting point for this project and how did it develop then?*

It all started around two years ago with the exploration sessions on different body systems that we did in the frame of *practicable*<sup>1</sup> and with my desire to find out more about one of the systems: the endocrine system. At the time, it was the body system I knew the least about. I was very curious to know what it does to me, how it affects my body, my movements, sensations, feelings, etc.

*As I'm not familiar with Body-Mind-Centering,<sup>2</sup> which is the practice you are talking about—as you told me before—I would like you to explain to me more about the endocrine system.*

Ok, I will try.... The endocrine system deals with our energetic centers—the glands—and hormone regulation. It concerns intuition, feeling, and touches on who we are and how we perceive and express ourselves. The glands have a profound effect on both physiological functioning and feeling states—sometimes extreme states. They form an energetically connected network that lies inside of the spine and relates closely to the chakras. They are a link between the subtle, invisible energy body and our manifest physical body. Each gland corresponds to a specific expression in posture, movement, states of feeling, and perception. Observing my movements, postures, and ways of being that emerged in this process, I was often reminded of alienated, monstrous, and comical bodies (among others).

*You are mentioning many things at a time. I would like to go through what you said step by step, so I'm sure I understand what you mean. When you talk about extreme states what exactly do you mean? Can you describe it in a more detailed way?*

Maybe I can explain it through the commonly experienced example of a long jog. When you are running, the adrenal glands send out adrenaline. This hormone spreads in the body and keeps you in movement. After a while the action becomes more tiring, and you have to pass a certain threshold of exhaustion before the movement becomes easy again. The adrenaline helps you to keep “up for it” and to reduce the sensation of effort. It helps you reach a point where the running even gets effortless and you can stay in movement longer... After a while there are also endorphines sent into the blood, and this produces pleasurable sensations. You may experience that you feel like flying and staying in that state forever... The sensation you experience has a lot to do with desire. Desire of moving, of reaching one’s own limits, going beyond them, of feeling free somehow. I was very keen on researching how I could share the experience of pleasure in physicality through dancing with and for the spectator. I wanted to explore ways for the performer to generously share his/her sensations with the one who is watching.

*OK. But what does it have to do with comical bodies or alienated ones?*

I just described how one can reach a certain state that is relatively easy to sustain in movement—a state where one is able to produce a lot of movement, while experiencing pleasurable sensations. I also mentioned the possibility of kinesthetic transfer, so that the viewer is able to participate in the desire and pleasure of the dancer. Furthermore, I am playing with different states as one means to trigger extreme, excessive, or overwhelming situations. The potential that, within these states, different kinds of bodies could emerge from my own body—while performing—was exciting to me. During the work on certain glands the appearance of very theatrical figures surprised me. They related to the clowning tradition, fairy tales, ghost-like apparitions or to the expressionist faces of early movies. I got interested in those theatrical figures and comical bodies that appeared in and through me. It thus became my theme in the work to deal with the comical body—traditionally associated to a somehow alienated body—through the means I have mentioned: feeling states, movements, postures, and figures appearing.

*Did you get interested in those different bodies that emerged in the sense that you wanted to talk about the politics and representations of the body?*

Yes. In a way these bodies represent my personal other body. Or let’s rather say my personal other bodies, as there are several hidden within one. The figure that is on stage in *Ohne Worte*, which wears blue make-up and a bi-colored costume, is somehow a character but transforms into many different bodies, other characters, and develops many different ways of moving, many different attempts to try to entertain ... and fails many times. Other emotions and faces

appear through the surface of the make-up. It is interesting for me that this piece, based on the issue of the comical body, reveals certain tragic aspects along the way. However, I didn't want to speak explicitly about myself and my own "other" bodies in this work, rather about "other" bodies in general. About what it means to stick out, to be different—with a focus on the comical aspect of such situations. Actually, if you see, for instance, a Jacques Tati movie, and then you go out on the streets and observe what's going on, there is not such a big difference between this fiction and that reality. There is already so much instant choreography and so many highly comical situations happening in our daily life. We just don't "see" that any more, as we have become used to this daily spectacle. We don't walk around in the streets with such a specific awareness that we actually focus consciously on what is "being choreographed" around us.... Did I get lost again by trying to explain many things at the same time?

*Well ... I think I understand you when you talk about a certain awareness that generates a generous and humorous way of observing our daily life. How did you want to transfer these notions in your piece?*

I think I'm always interested in working on creating a certain "space" in my performances—a space that allows for the spectators to connect to their own experiences, sensations, emotions, life stories, their own observations, discoveries—and in this case also to their own comical body or "the little idiot" inside themselves. I've been working on the production of that kind of space of exchange for years in a certain sense. And I have always been working by traveling back and forth between body practice and the articulation of an idea. Some time ago, I was strongly influenced by the Moshé Feldenkrais body practice that deeply interested me. Several projects became quite minimalistic and the movement of the performers very slow, extremely focused on details and on the transformation of the body and space in time. Duration became a very important tool, time was stretched and distorted to allow the viewers to immerse themselves into a different time frame allowing perceptual shifts. I worked on giving that "space" through an extreme reduction of the exteriorized movements of the performer.

*Wait a minute, what do you mean by "reducing the exteriorized movements?"*

What I mean is that I have been focusing a lot on internal movements, movement inside the body. I've been working with slow weight shifts, with the articulatory system, the reduction of effort, concentrating on inner journeys between attention and intention, putting importance on every detail of the body in motion... I wanted to produce certain bodily situations that would affect the perception of space and time, that would create a certain presence, atmosphere, or texture. It didn't necessarily mean to propose a still body, as there was a lot of physical work and finely articulated movement going on, but often it didn't bring the body into dance movement in and through space, as I didn't find the motivation to

do so in my body. The work was rather related to transforming situations with a strong focus on image and visual aspects and the desire to alter our usual habits of perceiving time and space as well as the body. When I started to practice BMC, the big discovery for me was that I found a motivation for why to move again, and from where, in which rhythm, etc., in the body itself. Being able to link physiological and psychological aspects, interior and exterior travels, the relation between myself and others or the environment was just like opening a door for endless possible discoveries. And a direct access to the dancing body as well. In *Ohne Worte* I'm working on certain types of ongoing movement, accumulations, states that are influenced and transformed depending on where in my body I initiate the movement. But after all, what is more important is what I produce with the dance, with those movements: what kind of texture, what kind of body? What happens to the space, how can this be received by an observer, where does it eventually bring the observer? What kind of emotion does it produce, to what kind of inner journey does it invite the spectators? I don't need the observer to find out or know what I'm doing with my body or where I initiate movement, but I'm interested in what the movements and the dance produce. I'm dealing again with duration, but, in this work, time is "filled up" with movement. In a way I'm interested in what happens to the spectators' unconscious while I'm trying to drag them into a journey. And if I'm interested in producing a certain ... something that triggers unconscious travels for/in the observer, I need to be working on my own unconscious as well. I experienced in the BMC work that it brought me towards discovering and understanding better certain aspects of my own inner complexity: relationships between body, bodily memories, psychological aspects, unconscious memory, the connections I have to my environment, to reality, to how I relate to other people. It is again about this essential question: what is it that I would like to share with other people watching my work? To what extent can the complexity of life be addressed in a piece of work? Is it possible at all? To what extent can we touch our innermost selves, the fragments of experiences that stay in our memory, the early experiences that seem to be forgotten but are deeply inscribed in us?

*You were speaking a lot about what you desire to produce for a spectator. Let me now go back a little bit: I would be curious to know more about the work on the comical body and these theatrical aspects you have been mentioning.*

First important thing: I haven't been starting from the referential or representational point of view, but from the physicality. I could have—from the beginning—watched Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, Peter Sellers, or Jacques Tati to find a coherent transference to my dance project. I chose to start from the point of the body practice. In this practice, body types, figures or known references have been emerging. In a second phase of work it has been important for me to study them: what they (the mentioned actors or artists) have been doing and how they did it. Meaning: the timing, the decision making, the precision work, the abso-

lute virtuosity involved in order to be at the level of being funny or entertaining. I've been considering the failure of the entertainer as a sort of leitmotif and I've been linking this pattern to certain aspects of the theater—a space of representation and, as a matter of fact, a space where people get entertained to a certain extent. Tati has become a really important reference for me. I like to quote him with this sentence : “comedians are always protest people.” I find his work strongly critical towards society and very political. I think it is relevant that he is recurrently presenting the “idiot”—a humble figure—impersonated by himself. The guy that doesn't fit into his surroundings, that does everything wrong—according to a certain society—but still gains the empathy of the audience, and a paradoxical power as he fails, as he shows the essence of very human mistakes, that one can recognize and relate to ... thus he gains the sympathy of the viewer. I also find Tati's sound work amazing. There is an inside/outside relationship all the time ... how to be with a person or with the space.... I have been working around that inside/outside relationship as well in *Ohne Worte*.

*How did you work on that, as you don't have the means of cinema (where you can quickly change perspective, go into the head of a character-subjective point of view, and then again switch back into the space in general)?*

One point is that in the body practice I have been working a lot with my voice to stimulate the endocrine glands. By doing that, I discovered the possibilities I had with the range of my own voice. As a young girl, when people told me to sing just a bit higher I wasn't able to do it, as I didn't have a tool to know where to place the sound inside my body. I didn't even think about placing sounds inside my body. I just felt pressure in my throat when I wanted to find a higher pitch. I felt totally untalented in singing and I wasn't very ambitious in trying to change that. Even though for my whole childhood I was in love with music and adored dancing to music. But, Ok, back to now.... Finally, with the BMC practice, I found out that the voice work was totally similar to the body work and I happily discovered a whole new field that I could explore. I mean, I was simply happy about discovering the pleasure of singing freely and without effort. And also about all the other weird, animal, or monstrous sounds that came out of myself. In *Ohne Worte*, then, I'm working on producing sounds in such a way that the spectator doesn't directly associate them with my body. I became curious to explore the separation between visual and audible perception: one may not really bring the two together even though it is quite clear that the sounds come from the stage. Sometimes I'm overlapping my own sounds with organic sounds pre-recorded during rehearsals. I'm either trying to catch up and be in tune with them or they are melting together with my “live” voice to form a soundscape—e.g., a breathing that produces wind.

*Wind?*

Yes, wind sounds. I wanted to produce my own sound environment that could open imaginary spaces. In the same time it brings me into a situation. Meaning: I produce my own storm while bodily working on axis, balancing, equilibrium. Weird heroic figures appear in this wind, absurd images fade into each other. I like the fact that this production of sound is organic and comes from my physical activity while evoking artificial or dreamlike spaces.

*Could you tell me more about the inside-outside relation you are dealing with?*

In general I have been trying to think the theater space in the same sense as my body. Like another body with an inside and an outside life. So—in theory—the space inside my body gets transferred to the space of the theater. Maybe I could compare it as well with the image of pre-natal life inside the uterus and the perception of the whole outside environment from the inside of the mother's belly. Really, I'm quite excited by the idea of bringing the spectators' kinesthesia to somehow perceive the inner sensations of the performer. I think that the dramaturgy of *Ohne Worte* is alternatively proposing this kinesthetic transference and cutting back to a more normal perspective from the outside. This proposal of constantly changing points of view is an attempt to work on our collective unconscious memory. Maybe it's more clear when I describe a section of the piece in which I am working physically on this inside/outside relationship: I call it the mechanical trousers. In a way it is very banal. I imagine that the trousers I'm wearing are moving alone and that they do things by themselves that I cannot control. They bring me into more absurd situations and into a way of dancing that is ... let's say, rather embarrassing. The dance is invading the whole stage, the trousers bring me so far as to nearly climb up the walls of the theater at high velocity. This mostly physical and imaginative game is discretely supported by technical interventions. There are environmental microphones in the space that capture and amplify the sounds of the stepping, dancing, plus my own breathing. All that creates a soundscape to my crazy dancing. At one point I suddenly turn around and step on the spot, reducing the movement little by little, almost like falling asleep, and at once reducing all organic sounds to silence: I keep on moving, but the sounds (both organic and amplified) stop, the light focuses from general to spot and this combination of events brings the viewer to some other, unexpected place. An illusion created by the combination of the physicality, the sound, and the lights. I try there to treat the theater space as another body, a second character.

*Can you tell me more about the use of the lights? How do you deal with the lights in relation to the theater becoming another body?*

Bruno Pocheron, a close collaborator in my work, worked together with me on that issue. He chose to use one moving light, treated as a second character, on top of a more conventional theatrical lightplot. This "second character"

highlights the theater as a space. It does not follow me, or almost never, but rather has its own independent life. We play with expectations: I sometimes try to be in the fleeing spotlight, sometimes the follow spot crudely exposes the mechanics and practical installations of the theater space (emergency exits, the cables of the projectors, the speakers in front of the back-drop), sometimes the spot is totally independent, splitting the attention of the viewer and sometimes it helps to create perfectly theatrical images. In short, we try to use this device in a humorous sense, as well as as another means to activate and comment on the theater as spectacular space.

*I understand. I'm wondering now about the title. How did it come to you to call the performance Ohne Worte?*

The title came to my mind in the beginning of the process. I was thinking of laughter, comical aspects, and imagery ... *Ohne Worte* is used as a title in German culture for short stories, comics, images—or one image—for which you do not need texts. They are self explanatory. The story is understandable through the images, and then the title *Ohne Worte* is put next to it. I liked it. I was not sure in the beginning if I would use any language or words, and if that had any meaning for me in relation to using that title. I kept it open. Even if I had used some words, I would have wanted the piece to be self explanatory as well, that it would not have needed words to explain it—and now look how much we talk about it :-). I do not necessarily want the audience to read a program text in advance either. I want them to experience it first. The piece should in a way stand for itself. *Ohne Worte* is the title that is usually used for comical images. That relates directly to the comical aspect of that work and fits very well to my intention. Some spectators mentioned the fact that it refers to a practice common in the fine arts, related to the idea of product: it is usual to give to several products the same title (*Untitled*, or *Ohne Titel* are very common titles in visual arts and music). I liked that *Ohne Worte* is between the genre of images that don't have to be explained and the serial aspect of some art works. Maybe I will do more pieces called *Ohne Worte*, giving subtitles to them in relation to a certain aspect, but let's see....

*I think it is a nice idea to give subtitles to Ohne Worte. Thank you very much for the conversation and for giving me a view into your current research. I wish you a good continuation with your work!*

- 1 An ongoing project by Alice Chauchat, Frédéric de Carlo, Frédéric Gies, Isabelle Schaad, Odile Seitz. Based on sharing physical practices, *praticable* brings together research, learning processes, creation, production, and distribution, multiplying circulations between them.
- 2 © Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen

# NOÉ SOULIER

## On 368 MOVINGS

December 2007

*When did this project start?*

It became really clear in July 2007. Of course, it didn't appear suddenly, it was part of a bigger process. I started doing it before I was able to articulate it.

*How did it start?*

I wanted to work on generating movements as such. This is a very vague and big task. I had to define it, to approach it from a specific perspective. What did I mean exactly by generating movement? It was not simply to produce any kind of movements in a certain quantity. I had to produce a curiosity, a frame to approach the action of moving, to keep the desire of producing alive. I started to wonder how I could consider movement, and two main frames of lecture became apparent: geometry and mechanics. I started with geometry, experimenting with shape, lines, and vectors. Right away, I was confronted by different approaches I had practiced a lot, mostly classical ballet, Cunningham technique, and Forsythe improvisation technologies. I wanted to approach the investigation as openly as possible, not taking anything for granted. I think it's a common feature of these approaches to accept certain givens as self evident and necessary for the realization and the perception of the work. Often these preconceived ideas are backed up by loose concepts such as the cleverness of the body or the initiative of the doer. This doesn't mean I wanted to systematize and define everything. I wanted to be clear about what was set and what was left open. So that what is open is really a territory of exploration in relationship to the direction of the task.

*How can you make such a clear cut between set and open, explicit and implicit?*

It's never absolutely clear, it's more an attitude towards the process, it's never absolute (but what can be?). The objective is to avoid what can already be identified as a confusion, and to go on, probably to produce another one. The

most noticeable thing when I started considering the corpus of works I could access dealing with geometry was that there were some very clear concepts as a starting point, sometimes very sophisticated, but their application seemed often very narrow compared to the immense field of exploration these concepts suggested. And this reduction was not recognized, it was not accepted. In parallel to the explicit aspect of the exploration, a set of implicit ways of interpreting them had developed, common to the people working together. Something that made it recognizable as a style. Somehow I am trying to avoid producing a style in such a way, which is extremely hard as there is almost an unavoidable tendency towards stylization.

*How do you plan to avoid such a direct stylization?*

It has to do with the level of complexity you set at the beginning. I think if this level is too high, then you lower the complexity of how you can deal with it. Too much complexity produces a flattening of complexity. So I started with a very simple geometric goal: producing a line with a specific body part. But I tried to not imply anything specific in the way I did it. To not lead with the body part, to not isolate it, to not give it special attention, to not try to make it apparent ... I am not drawing a line, but moving in order that the body part goes from point A to point B in the designed path. Of course it's not a neutral movement as its very specificity is to try to avoid specificities, which is not common at all for a movement. Its criteria is neither efficiency, it's something much more open, which we could call "easiness." The performer is trying to achieve the movement in the easiest way, which most often isn't the most efficient. Efficiency implies an analysis, a distance, and a practice. It also tends to lead to one solution: the most efficient way for the human body considered from a functional point of view. The functional human body is an ideal, a transcendental concept, which the dancer can take as an unreachable aim to orientate his work. Easiness is multiple, the solutions are always different, not only for different performers, but for the same performer from one day to the other. Easiness in that sense isn't natural, it's not given, it's not a matter of work and technique, but a matter of perspective. Because you have to perform a very precise action, you have to be very self aware and reflexive, so you can't let your body go, you have to somehow recreate the easiness. It's an artificial process that can never be fixed.

Another important point to deal with to avoid direct stylization is the transmission and the creation of the material. For this, I started to use very basic Laban notation. I think an important factor of the stylization process of an experiment has to do with visual models and imitation. Whether it's someone else or a recording of oneself, visual models provide solutions that don't need to be re-questioned. They add up and slowly develop a certain way of dealing with the task, which seems to be the only way. Notation enables us to avoid visual models. The code is always partial, and it always needs processing to be deciphered. It also produces a very important shift in the political aspect of the process. It creates

## everybodys self interviews

a new distribution of powers between the creator(s) of the movement and its performer(s) (even and especially when they are the same person). This comes back to the distinction implicit/explicit. Modern and contemporary dance have often claimed to develop a more and more collaborative process, the dancers participating in the making of the dance. Improvisation especially is seen as a place of framed freedom for the performer. It's certainly true in some way, but it's also interesting to notice how these collaborative processes often develop a dogmatic aspect. The distribution of powers is blurred: the performers can have an influence on the material, but they are also controlled in their interpretation. The shares aren't defined, which often results in the establishment of a dominant way to deal with the research, which takes the form of this implicit stylization of the explicit research. If someone writes a sequence and gives it to someone else, the roles are very precisely defined, and the maker somehow loses ownership of the written material. He doesn't know it better than anyone else.

*Why do you talk of "direct stylization" and not simply of stylization?*

Because I believe it's impossible to absolutely avoid stylization; the research always have a physical result embodied by specific individuals, with certain backgrounds and histories, making subjective choices. It's not even the point to avoid style in that way. But it's very different to undertake a research that inevitably produces an object read by the public with a certain stylistic dimension, or to reduce the field of research by an implicit stylistic construction. In our case, the stylistic dimension of the result of the research is extremely unstable, as it can be recognized as stylistic. We try to be as self aware and critical as possible. Different people and new understandings of the research will produce completely different stylistic results.

*Why did you decide to work on generating movements?*

It's a reaction to a specific context, and also a personal fascination for the body and movement. It seems today that people have been working a lot with references and deterritorialization, placing themselves in a cultural research, investigating the nature of representation itself and of meaning productions. This implied a constant use of (al)ready made cultural products, approaching the possibilities of diversions, and re-questioning our relationship to cultural products and to our society and its spectacles. It seemed interesting to avoid this referentiality, to create an original product, keeping the awareness of the parameters made apparent by the representation research. Maybe we should still consider this attempt in terms of referentiality: trying to create an original cultural object and carefully staying aware of the cultural context and heritage of this creation as the most indirect level of referentiality. It can also be read as a reuse of a modernist strategy in a postmodern context ... or as a self contained research....

noé soulier

*Do you have a preference between these different interpretations?*

No. I am not trying to construct the theory of my practice, it's only interesting to notice some of its consequences. A multiplicity of possible interpretations would be great.

# JEFTA VAN DINTHER

## On THE WAY THINGS GO

December 2007

*Where did the idea of THE WAY THINGS GO come from? Was it a direct inspiration from the film Der Lauf Der Dinge by Fischli and Weiss?*

The film has been on my mind the last year or so and has inspired me greatly, but in fact the material came as a by-product while researching how bodies can affect each other physically. We started with the idea of one body functioning as a catalyst, a second as a transmitter, and the third as the activated that would be catapulted away. We then tried to minimize the impact by simply dropping an arm or falling onto a torso or leg or falling into an arm, by which new, connected motion was created, which in its turn affected the next person. We soon had a small chain of domino effects and realized the obvious resemblance to the art film. Rather than going against this reference we decided to rip it off quite bluntly: the title obviously, but also the mechanism at play remains intact throughout the whole sequence, as in the film. There is never a conceptual shift whereby the material starts to function according to different conditions. It is obvious that the emphasis lies on the motion, on the passing of motion, and a “reading” of this motion.

*How did you direct this?*

Because we were only three performers, it became necessary to reposition oneself in order to be affected again, meaning one of us repositions him/herself while the other two are still in the process of the movement, of the transfer. Otherwise the passing would ultimately stop. The logistics of these very specific conditions determined how to work. The other condition was to always succumb to gravity, so that all movement was caused by using the weight of the body in collapsing, thus always moving down, although sometimes indirectly. With this in mind, the work was to find as “real” connections as possible, whereby one body affected another body with the least use of control or activation, simply letting the forces do the work. What you call the “reading” is the tracing of these forces, the search for where the movement is taking place, the anticipation of what is going to happen next and significantly the how. The “reading” can also be seen as the result of

all of the occurring relations, the constellations that appear, and the characteristics that we performers gain, both as objects and as subjects. We are not working on creating representational imagery, iconography, or narrative situations, but these possible readings are rather inherent in the material and in our individual bodies and qualities. It is significant to me, however, that the material firstly functions on an abstract level, whereby movement is experienced. Semiotics and association obviously play their roles as well, but for me it is important that the cracks into the realm of meaning are passages and that it is the physicality that is the centerfold and transparently so.

*It is this "how" that you speak of that seems to create excitement. After a few moves into the piece we get the picture. We know that the body in movement will somehow connect to the body in stillness and that this will cause it to move down, but still it manages to keep an engagement.*

Yes, this is of course the dramaturgical trick we use: to expose to the viewer the "what," but not the "how." I like to think of it as an intrigue. It constitutes a triangle drama with a mechanism of a necessary perpetuation. The necessity to make-it-happen-because-otherwise-it-stops prevails and induces both desire and anxiety. For a spectator, it is not merely a machinery running, an impeccable clockwork, but rather an active *doing* by making connections. And this question that lingers between our bodies, in its passing—the "how"—functions as a suspense. It is the moment that is thought of and experienced both beforehand—in imagination and projection—as well as in hindsight—as a reflection of a memory in relation to its resolution (was that believable? preconceived? according to my expectations? etc) ... But most importantly the question of "how" is active also in the moment of its happening, in its passing, in process.

*To me, the oscillation between seeing you as objects versus subjects is interesting and makes me sometimes zoom in on a detail or zoom out to context. I see an attempt to work with the body as object, but how did you work with these ideas?*

In principle we don't make a distinction between the two and I think we function as both simultaneously. I wanted to let the body become visible as body, and I wanted the aptitudes of this body to be present, although they might not be very spectacular. Whatever we needed to do to reach that was what became decisive. E.g., the concentration with which we perform—the integrity of the use of the gaze in how we relate to each other as opposed to the audience—became an expression generated and informed by the doing. We worked with the idea of giving our bodies properties, different ones in every repositioning, which would enable or disable movement, giving a quality of matter to our bodies. But these properties are never used as an absolute, and any one connection can never be fully reproduced, which is where the human aspect comes into the picture.

Throughout the course of the never-ending collapses, we have found ourselves in places where the movement would come to a halt had we not done anything, and this is where something curious happens. This is where we as practitioners of this activity, functioning within a rigorous *dispositif*, start to speak. This is where our wishes surface and become visible: in the (re-)activation of movement.

We underplay this activation as much as possible, but the impossibility of an undisturbed sequence of flow is nevertheless a fact, and dealing with this impossibility opens the doors for this expression to be part of the choreography. The expressions of a will or a desire for change, movement, affectation, continuation.

*Is this desire you speak of not present in all movement, always?*

No. Well, one could say that desire precedes movement, although even that is highly questionable. More often movement is used as a pretext and not for its own sake, meaning that the connoted desire is in utility of something else, a desire for something outside of itself. Embarking upon this project, I wanted to find movement that could be self sufficient, meaning it was in service of itself. I wanted to see if it was possible to propose movement today that didn't demand interpretation. Could people be moved by movement rather than reason it?

*Are you talking about the effects of mirror-neurons studied in neuroscience, whereby mirrored muscular activity is being activated in a viewer of movement?*

Yes, but also on other levels. Many have expressed the felt engagement they have while watching this material. The down movement of is everpresent and pulls the audience slowly down as well, the "reading" of the movement and the search for the *how* concretely implies an embodiment. The piece is also presented in an empty room as a moving sculpture, and as a spectator, one is free to move, and does so when the urge of the search is strong enough. In many aspects, quite literally, the audience thus also moves and is being activated to move. The range of the movement also contributes to this, not in speed, but in size, where a minute movement demands a zooming in, which is then followed by a sudden flip of a full body in midair, necessitating a quick zooming out.

*Would you agree that this piece stages the desire to move and be moved very explicitly, since without that desire nothing would happen?*

Yes. Such desire is inherent in the singular movements themselves, but also in the overall mechanism of the piece, through its rejuvenation. One can see every collapse as a small death on the way, which holds the potential of a cessation, of a collapse of the entire machinery. Consequently, every repositioning would be a wish for flux, or the wish for an affect in order to continue. And the beauty

in this, for me, lies in the fact that it is a wish for the movement itself, rather than for what that movement might result in, or be in service of, as long as it keeps moving. Getting up, walking to another place, taking a new position in the room, and making ourselves available for an impact is all we do, and the implications of this are massive. Because by doing so we expose the will to continue, to change. We reposition ourselves in order to be moved and these bodies in movement thus metaphorically speak of life. The attention is always directed to the movement and its passing, regardless of how microscopic it might be. It is life that persists, not the cessation, and the movement continues.

*Fluffy, all that life and death...*

No, not at all, I think, since it is an experience felt due to the presence of its possible failure, its possible crash. The established mechanism is everpresent as well as transparent and thus *überclear*, and so are the movements. Our method as performers is the same as your method as viewers—we use our sensorium, and our proprioception, and so do you. It communicates corporeally in a doubled way: through our bodies and through yours, and it is exactly that that enables this type of layering of perception.

# ANDROS ZINS-BROWNE

## On SECOND LIFE

August 2008

*Could you give us some background about this work?*

Surely—the piece is called *Second Life* and it's a piece which imagines a sort of utopia—a futuristic leisure space from the perspective of “us” in the future but as old people. In that way it's a piece, which is both “futuristic” and “old.” And I am making the piece in fact with a group of elderly people, seventy years old and above. The question for me is what would a leisure space—the Club Med, Cruise Ship, Island retreat space—of the future look like. We have incorporated a lot of new-age elements—from body and spiritual practices, often cultishly performed, as well as a very new-age soundscape. But as it is a kind of sci-fi piece, we also are working on a kind of non-thetic quality—I mean an airy there but not there quality—as if the body and these new-age body practices are there only as an image to reassure us that we still have bodies. The cult comes together and celebrates their bodies ritualistically through leisure, pleasure, exercise, “bodily communication.” The whole thing is very space age. This Utopia island is either floating in outer space, in the afterlife, or in a virtual space—in any case the idea is that these elderly bodies are there in effect, but not in essence.

*And is the title a reference to the online virtual world then?*

Yes. Originally the proposal was of *Second Life* as an afterlife space. I did a lot of research into utopian cults—promotheists, cosmotheists, transhumanists. Anyone interested in some very bizarre but good sociological reading on new-age groups might want to check out a wonderful website called transtopia.org. It is very bonkers, but fantastic. I saw that all of these utopian groups have to deal with the question of the “afterlife”—whether from a scientific, a pseudo-scientific, or a purely spiritual/religious perspective, this was always a question they had to deal with. I thought about how we could imagine *Second Life* as an afterlife space—that life after death wouldn't be about heaven and pearly gates, but about your brain being frozen and your avatar continuing to live on—I thought in many cases of course this exists—I mean many “residents” of *Second Life* are poetically a hybrid of a virtual and an analogue body. Their body exists at least

as much, if not more, in a virtual space as it does in a “real one.” Simultaneously those lines are beginning to blur of course. I wanted to develop an analogue body (as I am not especially computer-savvy, and don’t work on computer design) which was at the same time real and virtual. How do we do that—it’s very difficult because of course you could not find a space more conducive to the analogue than the theater. Even the gym is more virtual.

But I thought what would *Second Life* look like without the interface—i.e. without the fucking dopey computerish thing sitting in front of me which shows me a screen with “point of view” perspective, where I have to then invest my own imagination into these pixels and dopey washed-out colors. And what would it be without the big heavy helmet and glove that we’ve almost forgotten about since we first saw Keanu Reeves in *Johnny Mnemonic*, and said “Dude!” so a fully immersive virtual space. And when we would consider this fully immersive virtual space, how different would it be in fact, and in what ways different, from our “real space,” real interactions, etc.

So I knew I wanted to make a piece with elderly people because that was for me where the contradiction was which made the concept interesting and which sci-fi usually doesn’t do—I mean usually we see ourselves in the future looking like Scarlett Johansson in a tight track suit. But of course in the future we will be old and fat and balding and our sexual organs will be sagging, and I somehow doubt we will all be walking around on our walkers and canes looking like *Aeon Flux!* As I started to work with these elderly people I was firstly amazed by how immediately playful and even hyperactive they were, but I also realized that “physical research” was very tricky. You could say working with elderly has taught me again to say things like “imagine ...” and “pretend that you are a ...” wow, I really missed this. In contemporary dance we never say these things, its only, let’s try with such and such quality, or I would like to take such and such material and let’s apply this operation to it, etc., etc. Now it’s like choreographing in the sandbox again—“imagine that you are flying a mega-speedboat and there are dragons spewing fire at you and you have to jump away from the fireballs before they scorch you in a bloody pulp of lava, no the fireballs are coming from THERE, not THERE!!! How big are the fireballs? Really really really really big...” It’s great). But they go for it and of course with their bodies you would say, what the hell are they doing? And it’s fantastic. But to develop a new body with them, this was difficult.

*Why did you want to develop a new body with them; it sounds like seeing an eighty-four year old man pretending that he is avoiding lava-spewing dragons could be enough, no?*

It’s a very good point. I also thought this—but like I said, the virtual is a tricky concept to try to approach with bodies and without technology. And when you think of a compelling fifty minutes and not a compelling fifty seconds—I knew that I wanted to install another reality—not just a “land of elderly make-believe!”

And I'm also still at heart a dancer, so I do truly feel this gushy need with each project to develop a body practice—not to have an AZB style—but that each project develops a physical reality that pushes the material—however wonky that material may be—dragons, or mulabanda meditation or whatever—I'm less concerned with the material qua material and more with how it can be done in a way that produces another reality—well, in this work—I know I'm interested in creating an “environment” more than a “piece,” i.e., one with dramaturgy, development, etc.—which seems closer to me to the dramaturgy of *Second Life*—things happen but there is no craft from outside to shape its development—the structure is floating, but highly connected. More than likely this is how I would like this piece to develop.

But for this other reality—there needs to be an other body—and old bodies doing things that old bodies don't normally do isn't enough for me. So I wanted to develop a kind of design and technique that I could teach them.

*I'll let you continue and won't ask “what was that technique then, Andros?..”*

So I worked with a group of three other dancers and we worked on developing a “virtual technique” or “avatar physicality.” We worked on lots of disassociation techniques—how to move the head independent of the body, the arms independent of each other—i.e., in a single walk moving between walking homo- and hetero-laterally and in between—i.e., out of rhythm from each other, or swinging together perfectly—to move between these smoothly in one walking path—you should try walking down the street, it's lots of fun! And then the direction of the torso—how to move it with, counter to, just behind, or just ahead of the movement of the head—how to do this on a lateral plane, a vertical plane, a diagonal plane—so, for instance, if you would look up at the “sun” the torso and head could direct upwards on a diagonal, or the torso could move first, followed by the head, the arms could then start to turn, followed by the torso turning, but turning just a bit too far, the head catching up and the arms synching in. Basically, we treated the body the way animators do—as different fields of information which need to be operated simultaneously but independently—so there is no “integration” or integrity to the body—but neither is it a kind of Forsythe isolation thing—but each body part was another set of information to compute and continually try to operate simultaneously—being in information (effect) not essence. This might have been robotic, but we then worked on how to never have any tension and in fact to use the pressure of the feet to the floor to wobble slightly so that you had this kind of “wetness” to what would otherwise be a robotic body. More like a body in outer space or under-water. The idea was to make a kind of passive body,—indeed a body which is controlled from outside—which does not move but is moved—and that for me has a lot of, I guess, existential implications.

One friend said—we looked very Alexander-ed out—I mean the spine was always super “elongated” the body very released and we were very much enjoying our

comfort like some rich old men on the golf course, whose bodies could at any moment reveal themselves as being made of only water and pixels.

So the idea was great, now I had to work on this with the elderly. Well, it took us six weeks to get somewhere—and I don't say we were masters at this—and we are used to trying to develop and absorb new physicalities. With the elderly—I couldn't work more than once a week—three hours per session (half of which you have to understand goes to eating cookies and drinking tea and talking—which I thoroughly, deeply enjoy, but it doesn't really help our “productivity”)—and of course their bodies are not quick to absorb new behaviors—so the possibilities of elderly avatars, as attractive as it is to me, seemed to be not fully feasible.

At the same time we were pleasantly happy with what we made with this research group, so now we come to the sticky part, where I can perhaps offer myself some *kunst*-counseling:

*Let's hear it.*

Option 1: I continue only with the young ones on this concept (we wore grey wigs, and I think that wearing these wigs, plus knowing what the final aim of the project was, infected our physicality, making us indeed look like elderly forever-young avatars, but we never worked on imitating the movement of elderly people). In this case, we lose something precious to me in this piece which was one of the early questions for me—how is it to not work via imitation of foreign bodies (one of the primary concerns of my previous work), but to work on the bodies themselves. Which is to say that somehow or other my work is usually interested in society—real, historical political society, and/or what if? Hypothetical Society—i.e., an abstraction or complexification, hybridization of social bodies and qualities, themes, physicalities, dynamics, which, for me, are poetically inherent to those bodies in a real or imagined society.

But now I want to know what it is to work on those bodies directly rather than to approach them from the beginning body of a contemporary dancer. I mean, does it not bother anyone else that before you go to see a show, you know already that you will see twenty- or thirty- something year old, liberal-minded, agile bodies? No matter what they will do on a stage—the demographic is already clear before the show starts. And when we want to speak of other bodies—that, no matter what, it will still be those bodies speaking for or about or as if they were these “other bodies?” Well, it began to bother me or make me feel that this was a limitation which contemporary dance had, versus, for instance, video art—the alternative usually being the humanistic multi-racial-gender-national-generational performances, which try to present difference as something to be well noticed and then overcome by the simplistic thesis that we are, in the end, all human. This piece is post-humanistic if anything. I do not want these elderly people to be cute and “in the end just like us.” I want them to be a bit terrifying in their boredom and desire to continually please their disembodied senses. Well, if I were to work with only the young ones, I would lose this opportunity to work

“directly on the bodies themselves.” We would be again back in contemporary dancers doing as if they were....

Option 2: (should I insert “what is option 2, AZB?” this is becoming a monologue...)

*What is option 2, AZB?*

Sorry. Option 2 would be to work just with the elderly, in which case I likely would have to give up the physicality we developed and rely on a supremely analogue pleasure chest of reclining, exercising, meeting and greeting, pensioners keen on fun, adventure, and entertainment as a personalized experience—the less shared the better—and work on the display of virtual experience rather than becoming-avatar. For this we have been working with remote controls a lot and what we call “Magic carpet,” like where the subject stands on a carpet in Las Vegas and “experiences” what they are told to do, receiving in the end—a DVD with a backdrop video—when they duck down it is because they are passing under the arm of the Statue of Liberty—when they wave, it is to Elvis, etc.—basically virtual reality—imagine the helmet glove example—without the helmet and the glove. This asks the question of how to not perform the imitation of an experience—for instance, imitating fighting—but to perform the perception of the experience—for instance, to perform perceiving that your body is fighting—this is very feasible for the elderly. Becoming avatar is therefore out the window. And that would be a pity because sometimes I would miss this state which we developed—sometimes in the grocery store or in the post office I just want to slip into my avatar state anyways—I think it would often help me cope better with some of these spaces....

Performing young and old together on a stage is absolutely out of the question. For the above-mentioned reason of United-Colors-of-Benettonness.

Option 3: a two part performance in which we see the virtual world and then the analogue world experiencing the virtual or becoming virtual. I like this option the best but then it requires some clarification. Well, first, let's say, because it is never only about artistic means, but also always about economic means that this third option nearly insures that the piece will not tour. Eight elderly plus four young, plus a technician, perhaps sound person as well, from a choreographer named AZB, who not too many people have particularly heard of, means we perform in Kortrijk and Essen and that's the two-year process—yes, Ok, there are a few more dates Brussels, Gent, Leuven—but it will not go far beyond Belgium. Do I care about this? Now, no, but in a year, when I will have worked for so long, and there it is, the work is over and can no longer be shared and communicated, I said it here first, I will be sad.

*What are the questions here? And maybe now I can shift into the main role because mister answey-answey has pretty much been on top of the whole discussion.*

Ok.

*I'm wondering: when you make these two parts—that means the first part is a more developed version of what you already showed—basically an environment where avatars meet in a disconnected way and share new-age body material, exercise, relaxation, pleasure, and bodily entertainment, and then lots of—if I can say so myself—very complexly composed walking around in a particularly strange but codified physicality. Nothing happens. There is no development. First of all are you happy with this?*

Yes.

*You could work more on it. What would you do?*

Eleanor Bauer said, “What’s the characteristic of time in *Second Life*, what’s the characteristic of space in *Second Life* (i.e. the virtual world). Whatever it is—do it much more (extremely).” I still haven’t answered that question for myself, but it was a good one. In *Second Life*, time is fluid—meaning it does not move at a constant pace because there is a conduit for it—namely—streaming. And streaming speeds and slows irrationally. We should use this much more and on a more subtle level. Time is really infinite—meaning without beginning or end. You tune in and out of *Second Life*—but it doesn’t turn off—but the result of this is pretty much what we already do—lights come up, we are already going—lights go out, we are still going. We could of course bring lights up and down a few times, but otherwise this infinite time is difficult to convey and maybe not so important. To represent a “logging the body off” materially would just look like us occasionally going to sleep on stage—although I suppose there is something when a user, for instance, goes to the bathroom that means that even if there is a virtual war going on in front of his avatar—for that moment while he’s peeing—his avatar is in a fluid “out of it” state. And this simultaneity of intense bodies and inert bodies can be interesting.

*About that time fluidity—does it happen individually or globally—to the system, I mean?*

Well, that is a damned good question. I could check into that, but I can already say that both are interesting—I mean an individual computer stalls or its connection goes slowly—or the mega computers at Linden Labs fluctuate in their speed and the whole environment speeds or slows together—it could be very interesting to work with this concept a bit more.

*What else about time?*

It's viral in *Second Life*—I mean that time is so static there until “something happens,” then there seems to be a lot of movement created out of nowhere—there's no logic to this—randomly lots of people teleport to a certain event. And then disappear more or less together as well. About this fluidity thing—I was also just thinking about this, is it personal or is it global and thought – it's also relational—I mean that the real-time-ness can have a slight difference between two systems—meaning that what might appear as a unison on screen is in real time not and vice versa—which implies to me the possibility of “joining each other” in a *décalage*. I suppose it could also mean the opposite—ridiculously precise timing even in those things like greetings, which normally have loose timings—as if the program runs on its own.

*And space?*

Someone else said—why do you run in this piece? (We do some speed walking, for our health, it's true) He said I can't stand it when contemporary dancers run on stage and I'm reminded that there are these fucking curtains and that we are AGAIN in a theater black box where they have to turn around or run in a circle or whatever. Very good point. I hate it too. So I would need to think how to make the theater space seem limitless—of course within *Second Life* you have these invisible barriers—there is still property and invisible fields that you bump against out of nowhere and cannot cross—but mostly the space is endless. This is obviously impossible on a stage.

*Wings?*

I remember asking someone once why it is that we don't like “going offstage” anymore. I mean, I remember as a kid being in these big ballet productions where it was all about waiting on the side for the cue—coming in, doing your part, and going offstage again until your next entrance. In contemporary performance, we've mostly gotten rid of those entrances and exits. She said to me it's because we don't like to be reminded as an audience that there is another reality which exists besides what we see on the stage. I agree—but in this case if we can imagine the stage as screen—then it should be as if the environment is floating, passing in front of our “point of view,” looking at a screen—in which case, yes, wings are useful, but also having lots of performers would be useful. With the elders this could be possible—with the youngings, for economic reasons, this is more difficult.

*But, so, do you work on this with the elderly or not?*

Schitze.

?

I mean, if I go for these two parts there needs to be a difference, materially, relationally ... the elderly space still needs to be about “real” space, but needs to suggest certain characteristics of the virtual—I mean the idea should be that they live enough in the virtual world that their analogue relations begin to take on a virtual quality, without them representing avatars, etc.

*And materially, what's the difference?*

Well, I guess that the major difference should be that we see in the first part the avatars, the surrogate bodies, and in the second part we see them playing “us” without that virtual space being present or represented. Imagine a first part from the perspective of “within” *Second Life* and a second part from outside, where you would see someone playing *Second Life*—only rather than sitting at a computer typing at a keyboard, you see a kind of direct embodied link to their other. In the first part you see the solution and in the second part you see the problem.

*I think I get what the solution is, but what's the problem?*

The problem could be a lot of things—physical atrophy gives a good reason for wanting to have a virtual self who is fit and able and never deteriorates. Another problem could be—but here we have to be careful about becoming theatrical/psychological—that either the boredom of or inability to interact in real space creates the desire to interact in virtual space.

*So this second part would be about failure.*

Yikes.

?

I mean this is tricky. Who wants to see another piece about us humans who just can't relate to each other. This was done by someone like Meg Stuart and reiterated very well by someone like Philipp Gehmacher. No, there has to be a smarter way with this—I'm thinking of the kind of numbness that a consumer culture inspires—I mean like with this magic carpet ride you hear this annoying, I can say, super American girl shouting things like “Oh my gawd, look over there! It's Michael Jackson! Say, hey, Michael Jackson! Alright, good job, you guys!” and you imagine these wonky tourists there doing whatever she says, I mean she could say anything and they would do it and from a very passive investment, they receive a document of a “spectacular experience.” I'm thinking now of the problem as being this kind of inserting passive bodies into the perception of a spectacular situation, where the actual investment needed is the price of admission and that's pretty much it. And there's a lot to do with disembodiment

there—you are provided a surrogate who experiences this for you. I need to invent my own version of the magic carpet ride. Of course I will also just steal hers ... but I'm thinking also about Nintendo Wii. Do you know it—this video game that is motion sensitive—so rather than pressing the “up button” on the controller, you have to move the controller “up” so a small movement creates a big big jump on the screen. And now they have Nintendo Wii Yoga. I think it's very relevant.

*How do you work with these elders on this?*

I need to buy it. But I also need to work on their focus—this blank amazement that looks through the audience to the supposed “screen,” which is in this case not a 2D screen, but an immersive environment.

*Which brings us back to the question—is the material any different then between these two parts?*

I guess not really—only that we see it from different angles—and that with the elderly we see the “total space,” that means also elderly lying around, sun tanning, walking around, past, and in front of those who are immersed in playing a virtual space.

*You spoke before—or I don't remember exactly, but suggested something about perversity—that these elderly people should be somehow frightening—this sounds pretty innocuous, innocent.*

Yes. There needs to be a character to how they do—that they are consumerist pleasure bunnies. That it's hot in there. That there are too many of them in this small space trying to squeeze out any second of pleasure and that the options for quick meaningless distraction are so many that there is no real satisfaction—this becomes so narrative that it borders on theater theater. Why is this a problem I have to ask—and does this mean that this is more representational/didactic/literal and therefore more superficial? Is there something less narrative—more systematic, qualitative, or dynamic which might include these things without “doing”/representing them?

*Now you're asking the good questions.*

Someone had to.

*And so...*

And so. I guess you want answers.

*That'd be nice.*

No, you know where the fold has to be clear between these two spaces and it's not—which is bothering me. It sounds to me like more or less the same thing done by more or less very different people. In the first part, they wear wigs; in the second part, they don't need to.

*Doesn't sound like answers.*

No, no, not yet. I mean something has to be in this “total space” that complexifies the limited scope we've seen in the first part. I mean if we see the utopia of the virtual in the first part, in the second we need to somehow see what the problem, so to speak, is—about this experiencing the virtual co-existing within actual space. And that it—virtual space—somehow “distracts us from true, human interaction” is somehow just not enough. I will go get a coffee.

*Good luck.*

I mean the approaches to the same material can be so stretched apart that we really see the same space looked at from two dimensions—namely, from the perspective of “within” the virtual space and from the perspective of outside—i.e., in analogue space. And like I said, I don't care how stupid the material itself is—but the way it's done needs to be layered—in the avatar part, we have more work to do—but let's say I'm less worried—I think the content could still expand, but even when we're walking around and around in the space I have to say I think it's great. But about this analogue space—I don't want to do representing playing virtual reality games—there still has to be in this analogue space something producing a state, a behavior, which doesn't belong to what we know. Masumi talks about this, and I think it's very relevant here—that when you want to go for the virtual (and here he's talking about the virtual and not “virtual reality,” which are very different), that you cannot take one molar (a whole, for instance, an elderly person) and another (for instance, playing virtual reality games) and arrive at something virtual—you will end back with another whole—i.e., elderly people playing virtual reality games. And the virtual—well, I don't totally understand what this term means, but I think my misunderstanding of it has been very helpful for my imagination! The virtual needs some kinds of displacements—things that should normally be there and aren't and things which are there and which you cannot place. And these are not things that you “add on” or “take away,” these are things which are forced to emerge as a surplus or a deficit to what we would otherwise understand as being “the whole.”

*Sounds good, but what does this mean?*

I was thinking about this last night—in the kind of Johnny Mnemonic DUUUDE!!! virtual reality of the nineties, there was this helmet and this glove. Very stupid, but interesting, no? Because it meant that the hierarchization of the body was

artificially shifted. Suddenly, the concentration of a whole body's worth of movement was put into the hand. To jump left, right, duck, etc. You would see the hand moving like crazy and the rest of the body as a kind of byproduct, reacting to the actions of the hand.

*If you would take away this glove and helmet, would this "rehierarchization"—however you call it—would this be a surplus or a deficit?*

Yes. That's maybe somehow it—to see resistances or facilities without an instrument—to see these things as if they appear from nowhere as matter-of-fact dynamics, approaches the virtual.

It helps, yes, because I'm trying to say how do you tear apart this material into two different directions. And it helps to have strong material—you know like a lot of frequencies, intensities, or whatever to work with—manipulating white noise is more difficult than manipulating Britney Spears. But yes, so one thing is that this "outside space" shows the perception of experience rather than the representation of it. It shows the body only as a kind of reaction to perception rather than its actor. I would say that it's also possible for the body to be controlled then by the perception of an experience rather than vice versa—perception controls body rather than body controls perception. The bodies become consumers of perception—but not passive consumers—this isn't about couch potatoes, but about *new couch potatoes*—a more interactive, indeed active, version of the couch potato—the same direction video games have been going in for a while now. So if the actions of the body which we see are in fact supposed reactions to stimuli—it's also possible to imagine this "reaction" as lopsided—we can imagine that instead of the "glove," the "control" is directly visual or linked to the torso, etc. And this implies to me a disembodiment where the body is potentially rehierarchized. I mean in Wii the whole body of the video game character is controlled by the motion of the hand—it's obviously possible to complexify this relationship between player and character. Movement should seem passive and active at the same time—in virtual reality you are active, but your activity is based on your response to the virtual environment.

*Could you give me an example of what this would look like technically?*

One thing the elders have done good to respond to is working with movement from the feet up—I mean you can use your feet's pressure into the floor to move the whole body rather than moving from the release technique kind of "center." So the arms might wail—but I'm not wailing them.

*What the hell are you talking about?*

You can try this—your feet have a clock around them—you move your weight from twelve o'clock all the way around and go as far as you can with

your weight without shifting your feet.... Now vary the speed at which you do this so that it is smoothly speeding and slowing. Now try shifting between points in the same way—twelve o'clock to six o'clock to four o'clock to ten o'clock—around clockwise to six o'clock, etc., etc. Now imagine a vertical clock that goes on the vertical axis around your feet—try going around the clock this way; at twelve your weight is as high and light and at six as low and heavy as possible. Work in the same way—clockwise, counterclockwise, then between points. Now try to mix between the vertical and the horizontal clocks in the same way. If you allow this to effect into the body in a way that isn't active but reactive, you get a kind of floaty quality, the head and focus need not have integrity to the movement, and this "streaming time" should also be considered. It also implies for me something that we haven't done yet—working with the voice—I mean everything should be reaction to direct perception—so when François receives his sensual massage by the Hawaiian lady on the beach (Ok, François, so, I want you to imagine that you're on a beach...). and his movement shows this seventy year old man in ecstasy—the voice should be present and not in a way that necessarily corresponds to the movement. We should be able to imagine that there's more going on there than what we can see and that there's a strong logic to the programming of your own sensations. I mean, when he wants her to massage lower, he pushes his tongue more and more to the left. Believe me, I can only get away with this kind of thing because they're old people.

*You took another break ... like a month since the last time we wrote.*

Oops ... but, honestly, I didn't know what to write because this question wasn't resolving.

*Did it now?*

Yes, pretty much. These two worlds needed to be differentiated as much as possible. That's what I was working on. If it was going to be necessary to have these two parts they needed to have their conceptual reasons, not just practical causes—somehow—like usual—it was a long fucking detour just to arrive back at what I now think was anyways there from the beginning—it just takes me a long-ass time to get back there and realize that I could've realized this months ago—but of course that detour is what makes it now seem so much simpler, and a lot more rich in the sense that now it's *necessary*, before it would have just been another choice.

*You start working again in one week, what are the next steps going to be?*

There are some things that need to be explored that weren't before—mixed into the physicality of the avatars and the new-age material there needs to be

more perversity—the kind that you get in a film like *Crash*, *Eyes Wide Shut*, *Stepford Wives*. I went recently to this upscale spa in Belgium late at night, and I remember this sense there of all of these quite wealthy people there—I was there in a couple—but I couldn't help but feel, and my partner felt the same—that there was this creepy undercurrent to this affluence. Everyone walking around naked and checking each other out in this kind of “I feel comfortable, do you feel comfortable” way—wanting to kind of reassure each other, even by sense and attitude, that they were indeed living the good life—that they were getting their money's worth out of life and that this sense was indeed *still* lasting *now*. And you felt that at any moment that desire for reassurance could express itself in a creepy way. But it never did, at least not to us—it was all in the sense of things—the ways that the bodies did normal things in just slightly abnormal enough ways.

*Does this fall back into representation? How do you maintain the “sense” without representing?*

But I don't want to represent sex or violence—but the perversity of what would happen to the drives of fantasy once they could be expressed in a non-physical (avatar) body. And it can't turn into representation because it will become Jan Fabre very quickly and this is not what I want—I want to know when this de-psychologized, de-physicalized body has the possibility to literally do anything, what and how it does—when the way to connect to the sensual possibilities of bodies is through having a non-physical surrogate.

*But we know—it would do more or less what we already do—just more explicitly and at times more imaginatively—for sure more remotely and more anonymously—but is this aspect of Second Life really so interesting?*

No, you're right, it's not—but here we have to imagine not a representation of *Second Life*, but avatar subjectivity—the avatar as a state of subjectivity, meaning it shares something with the human—it isn't something to be imitated by the human. In which case – it's true the avatar as it is, is often used to express explicitly that which we can't or don't want in society, etc., isn't really the point. The point for me is how to position this imaginative space—and this space for me has more to do with the inherent creepiness of the affluent spa than the overt fetishes of *Second Life*. So I wonder more about how aerobics can have a creepy undercurrent in the sense of enjoying one's own body while doing it—things can be given just a little too much—pleasure, indulgence, force to push it into perversity—a sense that body fitness is the language through which the now extinct, so-called “drives” can continue to exist. Another is to go back to the Japanese game shows which are such an awesome physicalization of perversity—bodies which are not quite human and not quite videogames acting out the socially unacceptable fantasies of and for a public. Working with these as sources,

I think that, divorced from the sound, the other bodies, the objects they use, we might be able to arrive at another type of behavior at least mostly divorced from representation. It all needs to be a bit more like a dirty rich old man.

*And can you imagine putting that on stage?*

That's the difficulty—we know sex and violence as materials on stage. The question is how do you extract the sense of a thing without using that material. I'd go back to what Sandra Iché saw in the showing in April in a part where I do these push ups very rapidly against the floor, my head sort of bobbing around aimlessly despite the force and repetition of my body, and she saw this as perverse—it reminded her of the Paul McCarthy installation with the mechanical man fucking the earth and the tree. But at that point we had never spoken of sex, violence, perversity, blah blah—perversity wasn't in the material itself, but the overcompensation of expression—the pleasure I seemed to get from this exercise was not the pleasure that it seemed I should have gotten. Perversity in the rehierarchy of things—giving an overdetermination to certain parts over the whole. There are ways perhaps Japanese game shows, *American Psycho*, *Crash*, *La Grande Bouffe*, *Eyes Wide Shut*, et. al. might not lend new materials to be represented per se, but a new access point to the materials we already have—how can exercise and new-age meditation exact the same kinds of dynamics as sadism or any other fetish—not in a dark oooo-oooh ... way, but in a new, glossy way, a combination between the just-under-the-surfaceness of my spa example and the way that overt fetishes are enacted in *Second Life*—as part of the norm, encoded on the exact same plane with all actions in general—the perverse and the norm aren't really anymore qualitative differences....





