

What a body can do:

## Reconsidering the role of the moving body in exhibition contexts

Kirsten Maar

Entrance – repeating, learning, memorizing, synchronizing: looking at the body and being watched

When I enter the apartment on the first floor in Berlin Schöneberg, where the Musée de la danse is announced to take place, Rabih Mroué welcomes me and the others visitors. At the very first room, I encounter a workshop situation in which Shelley Senter, former dancer with Trisha Brown (one of the icons of postmodern dance) tries to teach some phrases of *Primary Group Accumulation*, a piece from 1973, to Claire Bishop, art historian and critic of relational and participatory aesthetics. Both are lying on the floor, and we are joining them. *Primary Group Accumulation* was the third piece set by the mathematical structure of accumulation, following the principle of a children's game: A, AB, ABC, ABCD—repeating and adding one new element of movement after each repetition. Four dancers performed rotations and bending of the joints in unison; the easier and more everyday it looks, the harder it is to execute the movement in exact unison, with the right timing. The piece precisely negotiates the tension between the relatively simple structure, the non-virtuosic movement, and its interpretation—between “geometric order and corporal imprecision.”<sup>1</sup>

One of the former dancers mentioned that the performers seemed to become objects while performing,<sup>2</sup> and several critics at that time and later certified the minimalist character of Brown's choreographies.<sup>3</sup> However, the *Accumulation Pieces* were not so much inspired by minimal art as critics suggest, but more by Brown's interest in minimal deviation; in the very singular interpretation of each dancer and the slight differences that occurred in the process of interpretation. In fact, these pieces were developed in a period when Brown was deeply involved in work on kinetic awareness with Elaine Summers.<sup>4</sup>

I join them on the floor—not in a line, as the choreographic arrangement in the original assigns (and which could recall the minimalist aesthetic, similar to the singular cubes of

Robert Morris or Donald Judd, to underline the aspects of repetition and the serial)—but in a way that I can see Senter and just mimic her moves, which eases the learning process.

Even with some experience in movement, it is not very easy to memorize the singular motions in the right order, following the additive scheme without getting disturbed and executing them with the same level of precision. Simultaneously listening to her assignments and to my body, I shift into a concentrated, nearly meditative mood. Lying on the floor and trying to remember the elements and the sequences in the exact order, I ask myself: how do I learn, how does my body learn to remember? How does it relate to the other bodies, and how do I synchronize? Which specific skills are needed, which sort of training is adequate in order to perform the lightness and easiness we perceive in the video from 1987? What Brown always claimed for her dances—“the human failure factor”<sup>5</sup>—here becomes the main issue: the individuality of the dancer’s body, its small deviations, and the heightened attention of which it is capable—something which would certainly not be possible to acquire or learn in these few minutes.

People come and go, and look at us; some join in, others just pass by. How might it feel to look at the moving bodies, instead of an object, or does the body become an object in this situation? How does it feel to be watched, to be exposed like an (art) object? First performed in art galleries, Brown’s explorations in site-specificity allowed her to perform the piece at Central Park, or on some rafts on the Hudson River, and thereby create another public for dance.

I continue to repeat, again and again, to get the sequences into my body’s memory and synchronize with the others. And then it’s over. Bishop starts a discussion about the experiences she had and on the history of the choreography to free the situation of its meditative and inward character. After the short talk, I proceed to the next room.

Choreographer Meg Stuart and visual artist, director, dramaturge, and actor Rabih Mroué show each other the “history of their bodies”: they pull parts of their skin and say, “Brussels – 1990 – appendectomy,” or (showing a scar on his arm), “Beirut – 1988 – bomb attack.” Sometimes it becomes more metaphorical: “Berlin – 1997 – love pain.” Little by little, a very intimate history of wounds, scars, and injuries of the body’s memory unfolds, which does not end on the surface of the skin. At the same time—by the way it is presented to us—the presentation remains strangely ambivalent. In spite of the “exhibitionism,” the stories told remain distant and abstract, since they are presented without any emotions or telling of the circumstances. In another room, a similar back and forth develops between Meg Stuart and Boris Charmatz: “Do you remember this (movement)?” could be the title of the game, in which both cite singular sequences from well-known choreographies, or from the everyday context, involving either the other or the audience. These situations are interrupted abruptly by the next moment: suddenly, all visitors are requested to dance closely with each other, even with complete strangers.

The situations I encounter in this former bourgeois apartment all somehow involve the spectator in the

performer's concerns. Whether we are invited to a discussion or a training session, or if we interact directly with each other, there is a strong claim for participation. But what is the goal of involving the audience? Is it a remnant of the politicized attitudes of the late 1960s and '70s, is it the do-it-yourself attitude of punk, or just the "participatory turn" of the '90s?

The "choreography" by which I proceed from one room to the next seems to be simultaneously open and preset. But what indicates this collection of small choreographic pieces as a museum, if not only the title? No singular object or prop is used in any of the performances. What, instead, does it mean if the body replaces the art object? What does it mean for the "museum," and how do the bodies change the attitude, whether from the viewpoint of being watched like an object or from that of its practices?

Over the last ten years, one can recognize an increasing interest in presenting dance in the exhibition context. Marina Abramović's *7 Easy Pieces* at the Guggenheim (2005), *The Artist is Present* at the MoMA (2010), *Move! Choreographing you* at the Hayward Gallery (2011), *Yvonne Rainer: Body Space Language* at the Museum Ludwig (2012), and another show at the Getty (2014), and not to forget Robert Morris's *Bodyspacemotionthings* at the Tate (2009) or *Simone Forti: Thinking with the Body* at the Museum der Moderne Salzburg (2014)—just to name a few. At the same time, the younger generation, with artists like Tino Sehgal, who since his beginnings fled the dispositif of theater and prefers to create situations in the institutional context of the visual arts, Xavier le Roy with *Retrospective*, or Boris Charmatz with the Musée de la danse, try to extend the notion of choreography by entering the dispositif of the exhibition—or by reinventing the museum in the realm of theatrical modes of display. In both art forms, the dispositif as a kind of multi-linear assemblage, which simultaneously distributes political power and modulates a constant change in the configurations of knowledge and subjectification, establishes a recursive framework for the negotiations of any production mode and any kind of aesthetic experience. Certainly there are different aesthetic or strategic interests at stake from the perspective of the choreographers or curators, as well as the institutions, to explore new formats or hold singular events to attract even more visitors. The institutions are seemingly welcoming this "turn": the Tate London even opened The Tanks as a new space for "art in action."

What is striking here is the fact that at least half of the shows are devoted to artists who have long since passed their seventieth anniversary. In fact, the turn to the museum could also be considered as a "re-turn" to the 1960s. It is no coincidence that, in both the visual and performance arts, a growing interest in reenactment or reconstruction coincided with the presentation of dance in the exhibition context. Why is it that the '60s are now revisited so widely? What mythologies have been transported in the process? Why is the younger generation actually interested in the phenomenon of dance history? Retracing dance is not only about relearning a choreography of given steps and movements, or reinterpreting older scores, but demands actualizing them, in order to refer to a specific

contemporaneity and to transfer the conditions of artistic practice to this framework.

It seems not only reflective of the need to provide dance as an ephemeral art form with a sort of archival heritage, and to trace back the most recent history as long as the witnesses are still alive, but collecting its traces also means moving beyond the already existing archival formats of notational devices of dance history and researching the intrinsic relation of reconstruction and reproduction. This especially touches upon the relationship of score and its interpretation or actualization—choreography's inherent capacity to "score"—and what it means to assign and arrange specific forms of knowledge in a different way. Obviously questions of memory, or of the body's capacity for memory, change fundamentally with getting older, with the layering of different forms of knowledge. Thus, another level could be added to dance's ephemerality when we think of human beings as *ephemeroi*—as fleeting stars.

Creating a kind of "living archive" is not only about the necessary notational documents or the traces left on video and film, but especially about the practices that first constitute our experience in this field. The obvious link between presenting dance and preserving dance—between repeating, rehearsing, relearning—which comes to my mind during the experience of the workshop situation at the Musée de la danse will be traced in the following sections.

## Display – displace: educational aspects

At a first glance, dance (or theater) and the exposition (particularly the museum) seem to each serve an opposing logic: whereas dance as a transitory, ephemeral art form explicitly deals with process, duration, and the fleeting kinesthetic experience, the museum with its impulse to collect and archive objects of the past, to store them, to classify, to rearrange them always anew, seems much more static. Both dispositifs obey different spatio-temporal regimes. Whereas the theater fixes us to our seats, demanding focused attention for a specific amount of time, the museum seems at first sight more democratic: it allows a distracted and disseminated attention, permitting the beholder to walk around, to look at the object from different angles, and even to talk. On the other hand, visitors are usually not allowed to touch; the art-object retains its aura, relying on a primarily visual (sometimes also kinesthetic) experience. Instead, the theater situation involves the spectator on different levels: sound, light, movement, and even smell evolve a sort of immersion, but at the same time (even in post-dramatic theater) a sort of (linear) narrative is negotiated and speaks to our rational ability to judge. This mingling constructs our aesthetic experience in a bidirectional mixture of fictional immersion and distancing—a process which unfolds in time. In similar ways, Lessing and others distinguished between spatial and time-based art forms. But could we still rely to this old paragon? These are arguments that only perhaps (and not even fully) correspond to historic examples. Especially since the 1960s, dancers and performers, as well as gallerists and visual artists, looked for other spaces for presentation—in old industrial buildings, which had a specific use before and maintain a

specific atmosphere, on the street, or in institutionally transformed spaces—and with this, other modes of presentation also fundamentally changed, included an everyday gesture, another public, and different forms of reception of the audience (participation sometimes included), in theater, performance, and dance, as well as in the visual arts.

The educational aspects are present in both dispositifs. In Friedrich Schiller's idealist aesthetics of enlightenment, theater should help to educate man to self-fulfillment—between a ludic drive and a desire for form. On the other hand, the rise of the museum in the nineteenth century took place as a crystallization of cultural norms. Both theater and the museum served as public spaces, where social differences were constructed and rehearsed by means of specific rituals. By organizing the modes of seeing and perceiving the museum's architecture and exposition devices, the exhibitions mediated normative ideas of social and historical order, and thus contributed to establish an educational framework. The museum played visual competence and connoisseurship against perception and an education of the senses, and thereby focused on a bourgeois attitude of citizenship.<sup>6</sup> Classification systems contributed to create hierarchies of knowledge between the curator and the viewers. The objects of the exhibition—displayed in an idealizing linearity—were presented within a specific idea of evolution, which not only drew upon hierarchies in nature, but also aimed at a transfer of these thoughts to the social order. The educational aspect, as well as that of surveillance and control, remained a crucial element in the museum's dispositive, and could be compared with choreography as “art of command.”<sup>7</sup>

The choreographic score or partition, corresponding to which movement should be executed in an exact manner, serves as a means to organize and arrange, and to determine a specific situation. Historically, it was Raoul-Auger Feuillet, French choreographer and ballet master, who in 1701 developed a notational system for dance, *Chorégraphie, ou l'art de décrire la danse par caractères, figures et signes démonstratifs*, and with this contributed to establish dance as a social practice and widely recognized art form at the European courts. With the distribution of notational manuals, which also gave instructions for adequate behavior and countenance, dance served as an instrument to social regulation, educating and training tactfulness and order in a framework of self-discipline and representation.

Since then, the relation between the notational prescript and the execution of a dance has shifted, but not lost its tension and ambivalences. With the Judson generation, the notion of dance and choreography was revised by working with improvisation, or with pedestrian movement, and with the intersections of different art forms, for example, in the collaborations between Simone Forti and La Monte Young, or in the extraordinary format of *9 Evenings*. Their uses of scoring practices, inspired by John Cage and Anna and Lawrence Halprin,<sup>8</sup> fundamentally changed the binary relationship between choreography and dance, turning it into a more reciprocal one.

## The Choreographic

Etymologically, the term “choreography” derives from the Greek *choros*, connoting a place for a round dance performed in order to sustain the community and establish a common memory, and *graphein*, meaning the act of writing or scribbling. Both dimensions implicate aspects that are of great impact for the spatio-temporal practices of both dancing and curating exhibitions.

As we have seen, *graphein* also implies a separation and tension between the notational as conceptual part and its bodily execution,<sup>9</sup> a specific hierarchy between the concept and its execution. As a prescript for potential movement and action, and by means of these assignments and procedures, a specific “partition of the sensible”<sup>10</sup> is installed—meaning a reflection upon, and the modes of access to, singular aesthetic experiences, or even possible participation. It makes visible what otherwise is not seen. “[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*.”<sup>11</sup> This definition stresses the affinity of the score—in French, also *partition*—and *partage*: partitioning and partaking, or being a part of something. It touches an area of choreographic thinking that questions the conditions of art production and communication strategies, and in which production processes are collectively negotiated. As such, “a score is not a genre, but a generator of what escapes from it: its realization.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, the score is always—even beyond its realization—characterized by its inherent potentiality. It describes an assignment within which movement *can* unfold. Evidently, these principles of choreographic procedures are not only applicable to dance, but extend its notion—especially within the context of installation and site-specific art—to genres inherently dealing with spatial arrangement. But, we could also consider that George Brecht’s event scores or Sol LeWitt’s *Wall Drawings*, which, corresponding to his instructions, were produced by other painters, reflect upon a critique of the author and the deconstruction of a standardized artistic process. However, it could also be interpreted as a displacement of what could be judged as the author’s practice. In this way, the use of scores contributed to the emergence of conceptual art.

John Cage’s chance-based compositional procedures were also highly influential, and his idea of indeterminacy radically challenged the relation between notation and its actualization. In this operative model, in which the performers became co-authors and complete the work ever anew, it became possible to explore complex structures within exact timings and detailed instructions.<sup>13</sup> His aim to eliminate any individual preferences remains doubtful, however, especially for dance, where practices and habits manifest so visibly in the dancer’s body.

The division between concept and production reflected upon processes in the world of labor, and likewise stimulated collaborative or collective projects. According to Anna Halprin, whose 1960 workshop on her famous dance deck at

Marin County in the San Francisco Bay Area has been mentioned as a crucial experience by artists and choreographers like Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Morris, and La Monte Young, among others: "Everything could be a score."<sup>14</sup> Corresponding to that, some years later, Forti added her own statement that everything could be a dance.

Choreographic procedures in these years changed in different ways from the more conceptual approaches in the works with tasks and instructions during the early years of Judson (1962-64), but soon also modified the vocabulary of movement. To move adequately to the complex scoring methods, which demanded a high level of bodily sensitivity and improvisatory knowledge, it became necessary to explore different techniques and somatic practices, which opened up to a responsive body, relying on its kinesthetic experiences. On another level, this meant that an individual choreographer could not create a composition, but only unfold in-between the dancers in a collaborative realm.

This leads us to the second root of "choreography": *choros* refers to the repetitive structure of the dance ritual, which enables a culture of memory whereby the imagination of a community can be built up. At the same time, it also designates the place where the dance is performed. The patterns of movement and the architectural "display" provide a frame to this communal experience. As a place to see and be seen (being visible and being represented), it fulfills the main conditions of theater and enables forms of an assembly.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, it underlines the aspect that dance, both historically and in our daily lives, is a practice performed together with other people, not merely watched.

The possibility to see and be seen, and to gather, is not necessarily bound to the traditional architectural form of a theater, but could take place anywhere. However, architecture's potential to assign and arrange, its ability to construct a specific situation, to include or exclude, to set up specific rules, to create transitions and counterpoints, as well as a compositional syntax that the movement does or does not obey, seems to be crucial to questions of the public.<sup>16</sup> It gives a choreographic prescription of how to behave and move—and enables or allows derivations from this.

In the book *Public Sphere by Performance*, Bojana Cvejic and Ana Vujanovic state that, during recent years and in many areas of common language, the notion of choreography has replaced the discourse of the performative: "The currency that 'performance' as a technical term had in the 1990s, seems now to be replaced by choreography. Comparing the usages we can infer that performance denotes competence, ability to execute, and achievement while choreography designates patterns of the complicated yet seamless organization of many heterogeneous elements in motion."<sup>17</sup> In this context, choreography might mostly refer to the lightness and virtuosity of classical ballet, but even very different techniques and practices in the field of somatics, like the Alexander Technique, the Feldenkrais Method, Body-Mind Centering, or different release-based practices, contribute to create a flexible and responsive body and could be

addressed in this framework of improvement of the body, healing it from its deficiencies and obtaining a quasi-neoliberal flexibility.

## Volatility and the ephemeral

The shift to choreography as “smooth operation” perfectly matches with what Beatrice von Bismarck describes regarding the situation of the curator as an “arrangeur,” one who is dealing with “relations in motion.”<sup>18</sup> Practices such as selecting, assembling, arranging, contextualizing and presenting, establishing contexts and references, organization counseling, publication, and education also influence the discourse of art production and could be subsumed under the term “immaterial labor,” which Maurizio Lazzarato coined to mark the differences between mental and manual labor, the dimensions of affective and cognitive commodities in a neoliberal knowledge economy.

The ephemeral character of dance and performance as described by Peggy Phelan, who states that “performance’s only life is in the present,”<sup>19</sup> and her claims for the fleeting not only supports the argument of an authentic, non-reproduceable here-and now but moreover it fits very well into a perception of the flow of capital – its volatility.

In 1969, Lucy Lippard and John Chandler proclaimed the “dematerialization of the art object,”<sup>20</sup> which would demand more participation of the viewer. Their notes on the experiences of different time-regimes within Minimal or Conceptual Art and emerging new genres like installation and performance, induced that one had to spend more time in experience of a detail-less work, respectively that one with a minimum of action would seem infinitely longer than action and detail-filled time. Implications of disorder and chance would contribute to an increase of entropy, indeterminacy, and relativity. “Such a work,” Lippard and Chandler wrote, “is a medium rather than an end in itself or art-as-art.”<sup>21</sup> Their short essay contributed largely to the rise of conceptual art and a specific reading of dance and performance within art history, and also helped to promote the situational, participatory, and relational as immaterial art forms, which aim at encounters rather than an enclosed art object.

With these shifts, the role of the curator changed from a researcher and facilitator to supporting a kind of leisure industry, as mentioned above.<sup>22</sup> Transferred to the curating of dance and performance, connecting social and self-technologies, what Lazzarato describes as characteristic for immaterial labor contributes to a growing precariousness in this field. The idea of self-improvement and self-control, which is close to dance’s training practices, completely fits in this logic. Ballet is only one (historic) technique that overtly demonstrates its sometimes nearly military character. But also the holistic and release-based techniques, which aim at healing the body from its civilizing deficiencies (or from the orthopedic distortions ballet has produced in the dancer’s body), are not at all free from this ideology.

Returning to the etymological notion of curating, it is derived from the Latin word *curare*, which denotes the field of medicine, meaning caring for something or healing. The former notion has often been discussed—if the curator

should just be a “caretaker” or a facilitator, standing behind the work of the artist, or if her/his work should be considered as an artistic work in itself. But what about the latter notion of healing? Which “disease” should be “cured” within the system of the “late-capitalist museum?” Which “artificial hells” should be left with the healing process? The ritual of excess and exorcism is something we would rather connote to dance than to a more rational, conceptual, enlightened practice such as curating. But if we follow this therapeutic dimension, it could perhaps be productive to turn back to the role of the body in the exhibition context. Does it do anything, which exceeds the mostly rational spheres of cultural life? In which ways does it contribute to our aesthetic, particularly kinesthetic, experience? In all those participatory events, we could experience this feeling of inadequacy, of too close intimacy, or an experience of transgression.

Following these thoughts let us return to the beginning, and to the question that frames this essay: what happens when the body replaces the mostly static art object? In how far does its potential to connect, its genuine openness and volatility change the situation we enter, and how does my own body connect to it? Does it really subvert the “cultural logic of the late capitalist museum”? The claim to go beyond the conditions of commodification is not really convincing – why should the body be excluded from these economies? On the other hand we could probably discuss the cultural pessimist arguments against spectacle in an actualized way. It is exactly the body allows us to experience the borders of phenomenological sensation and self-reflective criticism, who mingles affective and qualities and re/acts is no longer *between* immersion and reflection.

Perhaps we could ask how far it could go beyond the existing regime. We could mention that dancing, and even watching dance, contributes to a regime of affect, that it belongs to the category of exchange or gift, or that the extravagancies of dance could support a theory of wastefulness, which neglects the volatility of the commodification of the art market. Different than in other relations or situational artworks, the moving body touches us at a level of affect in which emotion and motion are closely tied together.

## Return – Le Musée de la danse: the manifesto

Boris Charmatz places his considerations on the Musée de la danse among questions of dance practice and dance history. In a declaration he wrote on the occasion of *Expo Zero*, he makes an analogy between the body of the museum and the body of the dancer, and with this idea in mind, conceptualizes it as open and permeable; a permeable museum, which opens up to a public space and remains in a constant state of becoming: an incorporated museum, “built by the bodies, who move through it.”<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, it would be an eccentric museum (“no taxonomy of dance”), and it would be a contemporary museum—if one thinks contemporaneity in historical references—“a museum of complex temporalities,” which is simultaneously ephemeral and perennial, experimental and patrimonial, active and reactive, mobile and “immediate... it



Fig. 1 Musée de la danse: expo zéro at Foreign Affairs 2014 (c) Christopher Hewitt.

exists as soon as the first gesture has been performed.” It would be a transgressive museum, which does not limit itself to the quest for, or the representation of the “authentic object,” but encourages artists to copy and appropriate, and stimulates the plagiarism of continuing traditions.

In 2009, for the opening of the Musée de la danse in Rennes, which entailed the transformation of the former Centre Chorégraphique National (CCN) into the museum, Charmatz positioned himself against three parameters, which until then had been core in institutionalizing choreographic work in France. The museum should not be “national,” but be organized on a regional and on a global level concurrently, and it should no longer be a “Centre.” With this latter statement, Charmatz argued against the French centralist politics and instead favored decentralization as a strategy that concerns both the organization of the bodies as well as the institutions. Last but not least, he wanted to eliminate the notion of the “choreographic.” “This is why one can also erase the word ‘choreographic,’ in order to approach it from a different angle. Dance certainly includes a properly choreographic dimension, but it also happily overflows beyond this framework. Dance is much broader than what is simply choreographic.”<sup>24</sup> With this statement, he demonstrates how the materiality of practice could undermine the binary or hierarchic logic of the body-mind, as well as of the concept-execution schemes, and instead proposes a reciprocal relationship between both dance and choreography.

### What a body can do: relating different forms of knowledge

This relation between conceptual and practical, between theory and practice, touches upon questions of how we obtain knowledge and which different forms of knowledge are negotiated in the Musée de la danse. Bodily knowledge—as in *knowing how*, implicit, or tacit knowledge—always operates contextually, but to place it in opposition to rational *knowing that* would not be useful. Implicit knowledge is never situated outside of our knowledge, but is essential to its description.<sup>25</sup> Subjectivity is not acquired by accumulating rational knowledge, but essentially by practice and intuition. Practice, in contrary to *poiesis*, is not teleologically focused on the work of art as a closed and completed art object, but in its intrinsic openness, its potential to change – its potentiality.

Corresponding to this, the questions of the transitory and the archival, which are traditionally assigned to dance respective to the museum in a more dichotomous way, are negotiated anew with every project. But in how far do the dancers themselves, and not just the choreographic assignments of the site, contribute to this event? What experiences are assembled in the dancers’ bodies, and how do their movements affect the beholders? How are they moving and being moved? With this question about the processes of affectation, the materiality of movement practice occurs, since in these bodies different techniques and practices merge. Years of training are required to obtain specific skills, for instance, an improvisatorial knowledge to react adequately in unforeseen situations. In these situations, the



Fig. 2 Musée de la danse: expo zéro at Foreign Affairs 2014 (c) Christopher Hewitt.



Fig. 2 Musée de la danse: expo zéro at Foreign Affairs 2014 (c) Christopher Hewitt.

body is not separate from language, images, ideas, and concepts; it is not a somehow miraculous refuge of authenticity, or allowing any immediate experience, as often claimed, but is rather a site of exploration, to which moments of disintegration and of disappointed expectations essentially belong.

In these practices, which traverse the body with its histories, experiences, and sensations, materiality is never addressed within a singular body; rather, it is only perceivable within the connections or alliances to which it responds. These practices are not techniques that aim at a specific form, like those in ballet. Instead, these somatic practices or bodily techniques are intended to create a “continuum” between the subject and its surroundings, simultaneously sensing the inner impulses of the body and being highly attentive and responsive to the outside and to the other. This produces “uncompleted figures,” which are often described using the metaphor of porosity or permeability, or which dance critic Jeroen Peeters describes with the idea of “bodies as filters.”<sup>26</sup> Permeability in this field means to be affected by different forces that traverse the body and at the same time transform it, and which go beyond descriptions of movement as active and passive. It is rather about extensions of the body in the sense of Spinoza and Deleuze, which qualify the body to engage in an exchange with others and to develop a specific kinesthetic capacity. In these processes, body and mind are inextricably linked to each other, for instance, in imagined imagery, which helps to generate movement material.

The materiality of practice unfolds in the assemblages, which remain open and indeterminate. Especially in the moments of transference occur moments of interruption, stutter, hesitation, or other rhythmic configurations, which challenge the organization of the choreographic process and its perception, and generate new patterns.

### Medium condition?

In these constellations, the medium condition of dance as reflection of a “being-in-the-medium”<sup>27</sup> comes into account. Especially the disruptions and interferences within a process of potential communication contribute to the specific quality of movement. This being in-between essentially depends on the precarious status of the body and its movements, their unavailability, and (on the other hand) their ludic and improvisatorial capacities.

It seems therefore crucial to look more precisely at the materiality of practice and how, by these means, the hierarchical relation between concept and its execution collapses and the relation between score and interpretation becomes indeterminate. Within the dissolution of the choreographic and the curatorial, and the constellation of dance and the exhibition, the medium condition is no longer reflected in the Greenbergian sense of medium-specificity, but demands a close revision of plural procedures, practices, and techniques in choreography and dance, as well as how they contribute to the modes of display and aesthetic experience.

With reference to Agamben's "Notes on Gesture," dance is situated between "producing as a means in view of an end and praxis as an end without means [...], the gesture [or dance] then breaks with this false alternative between ends and means that paralyzes morality."<sup>28</sup> Instead, it operates with a form of a form of mediality, in which the reference to something else is a movement of reference between potentiality and act, between means and an end.

Between praxis and *poiesis*, dance produces an excess of meaning and destabilizes the beholder. The medium condition here refers to what I would call an in-between status of the body—always in a state of becoming and exchange—as a transmitter of signs and a phenomenological receptacle. The medium condition in this sense incorporates at least two states of being: being in relation to someone or something else and at the same time not fully being ourselves as such, being in a state of estrangement; and "being-with" (Jean-Luc Nancy), in a precarious relation to the other, or to an (im)possible community.

Certainly the Musée de la danse provides situations—they are relational as dance is relational per se—in its way of connecting different body parts and always relating to someone or something, even if a dancer dances alone. But the forms of involvement of the audience in these situations are neither those of total immersion nor do they run out in mere "situations" or "relational aesthetics," which would just maintain a given structure and sustain the rhetoric of democracy and emancipation, as Claire Bishop mentions in her critique of Bourriaud.<sup>29</sup> They carefully adapt the heritage of the 1960s, their use of scores and body practices, but they adjust it to the conditions of mediatized body and they effectively reflect on the logic of the late-capitalist museum and its economies of attention. Nevertheless, they carefully deal with the interplay of excessive demands towards the audience and with a playful (hence, self-reflective) attitude of entertainment.

Rather, they establish a "partition of the sensible" in which it is also up to the beholder to negotiate the conditions of aesthetic experience, its inclusions and exclusions. Between the choreographic score as a prescript for a possible situation to unfold and its actualization there remains a gap, which is to be filled by the indeterminate.

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Fig. 4 Musée de la danse: expo zéro at Foreign Affairs 2014 (c) Christopher Hewitt.

1. Ramsay Burt, "Geometric order and corporal imprecision: Trisha Brown's Group Primary Accumulation (1973)," in *Assign & Arrange. Methodologies of Presentation in Art and Dance*, eds. Maren Butte, Kirsten Maar, Fiona McGovern, Marie-France Rafael, Jörn Schafaff (Berlin: Sternberg, 2014), 73–88.
2. Sylvia Whitman, quote from 1974, cited in Burt, "Geometric order and corporal imprecision" (2014), 79. Whitman, a visual artist, was at that time a dancer with Trisha Brown.
3. Burt, "Geometric order and corporal imprecision" (2014), 79. Burt refers to an essay by Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism" (1980), in which he compared Brown's Primary Accumulation to Carl André's *Lever* (1966).
4. Ibid.
5. Trisha Brown, cited in Burt, "Geometric order and corporal imprecision" (2014), 79.
6. Tony Bennett, "Der bürgerliche Blick. Das Museum und die Organisation des Sehens," in *Die Ausstellung. Politik eines Rituals*, eds. Dorothea von Hantelmann and Carolin Meister (Berlin and Zürich: diaphanes, 2010), 47–77, first published in English: "Civic Seeing: Museums and the Organization of Vision," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon MacDonald (London: Blackwell, 2006), 263–281.
7. Choreographer William Forsythe as well as dance scholar Andre Lepecki both refer to that term.
8. Lawrence Halprin, *The RSVP-Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment* (New York: Georges Braziller Inc., 1970)
9. Gabriele Brandstetter, "Choreographie," in *Metzler Lexikon der Theatertheorie*, ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte, Doris Kolesch, and Matthias Warstat (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2005), 52–55.
10. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006)
11. Petra Sabisch, "A Little Inventory of Scores. Self-Conversation," in *Maska. Performing Arts Journal XX*, "Open Work," ed. Bojana Cvejić (autumn/winter 2005): 30-35, 31.
12. Ibid., 30.
13. Liz Kotz, *Words to be looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).
14. Ibid., 49.
15. The relation of political assembly, architectural space, and theater is further described in Ludger Schwarte: *Philosophie der Architektur* (Munich: Fink, 2009). The theater as the traditional place, where dance was performed over the last two centuries, served other ways of exercising community. In its antique version, it refers to another aspect—not of community, but of a space of negotiation—as the greek theatron offered a space beneath the agora where even women, slaves, and strangers were part of the public.
16. Ibid.
17. Bojana Cvejić and Ana Vujanovic, eds., *Public Sphere by Performance* (Berlin: b\_books, 2013), 72.
18. Beatrice von Bismarck, "Relations in Motion: The Curatorial Condition in Visual Art and its Possibilities for the Neighboring Disciplines," in *Curating Performing Arts*, *Frakcija Performing Arts Journal*, no. 55 (Summer 2010): 50–57.
19. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993)
20. Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of the Art Object," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 46–50.
21. Ibid., 49.
22. Rosalind Krauss, "The Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum," in *October 54* (autumn 1990): 3–17.
23. Boris Charmatz, "Manifesto for dancing museum," accessed September 2015,

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<http://www.borischarmatz.org/en/lire/manifesto-dancing-museum>.

24. Ibid.
25. Michael Polanyi, *Implizites Wissen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985).
26. Jeroen Peeters: *Through the Back. Situating Vision between Moving Bodies*, *Kinesis5*, ed. by the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki 2014, chapter 5: „Bodies as filters. On resistance and the sensorial in the work of Boris Charmatz, Benoit Lachambre and Meg Stuart“, 87-115.
27. Giorgio Agamben, „Notes on Gesture,“ in *Means without End* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 49–62.
28. Ibid., 56.
29. Claire Bishop, „Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,“ in *October* 110 (autumn 2004): 51–79.