

# CONVERSATIONS ACROSS THE FIELD OF DANCE STUDIES



## *Visual Culture and Dance – an Academic Discipline*

Eulanda Shead: Simon Ellis, Booth: A Dance Fair, interactive dance installation. The Place, London 2011

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## Dear Reader,

These days, it seems, visual art and dance are having a vibrant dialogue wherever you may look. While this mutual attraction is nothing new, the current rise in the interest of visual art curators in dance performance on the one hand, and the ideas by choreographers transposing dances into choreographic objects and performance installations and events in galleries, museums and other traditional visual art spaces on the other, create many new possibilities. This dialogue between the art forms is particularly lively on both sides of the Atlantic. In London, a surge of dance activities and explorations curated in key visual art venues have been seen in recent years: in 2010, two major dance exhibitions figured prominently (and simultaneously) in some of the key visual art spaces in the city. An interactive movement celebration, *Move - Choreographing You*, co-curated by Stephanie Rosenthal and André Lepecki, was shown in the Hayward Gallery of the Southbank Centre, while an homage to Diaghilev and his Ballets Russes (co-curated by Jane Pritchard and Geoffrey Marsh) was revealed on the other bank of the Thames, in the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). Both exhibitions proved internationally popular, attracting great numbers of international visitors (the former also toured Europe and Asia). In the past decade, Tate Modern's Turbine Hall hosted events and residences by dance makers including William Forsythe and Michael Clark, and choreographic events by Tino Sehgal. This year featured the opening of the Tate Modern's dedicated space, Tate Tanks -- an arena for the exhibition and exploration of performance art. In New York City, the visual art-performance biennale, Performa has been exploring intersections of visual art and dance for several years (ever since its 2007 instalment that particularly investigated dance and visual art connections). At the time of writing this introduction, New Museum is hosting a residence of the dance/movement investigation laboratory Movement Research, focusing on the legacy of Judson Dance Theater. And this is just a snapshot of similar activities in two centres.

The discourse generated by, and surrounding, all these ideas and contemplations is exciting. Artists' voices raise interesting questions. Mårten Spångberg in one of his September entries on his *Spangbergianism*, objects to the notion that any dance could be considered a fixed object or installation, while Boris Charmatz in his Rennes-based (often object-less) Musée de la danse engages with the notion of the object-hood of dance, but also wonders about the modalities of its archive (sometimes through the bodies of the museum's visitors). In scholarly literature, theatre as a space

## A word from the Guest Editor

where visual experiences are created is investigated in the seminal book by Maaïke Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre: the Locus of Looking* (2008). Representations of dance in the arts is a subject in the recently published *Imaging Dance: Visual Representations of Dancers and Dancing*, edited by a team of dance anthropology scholars (Sparti and Van Zile et. al.). In recent years, several university programmes have begun explorations into the convergence between performing arts and visual culture, including the University of Roehampton's post-graduate dance studies courses that investigate the concepts of visuality as well as curating in dance. These courses, which investigate the performance as part of the heritage that is typically preserved in galleries and museums, are studied by graduate students of dance and ballet studies, dance anthropology, as well as by those invested in choreography and performance practice. In the United States, Wesleyan's Center for the arts established its exciting Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance in 2010.

There is no better time -- it seemed -- than now, to dedicate a space to highlight the scholarship that looks into these issues widely, by looking at dance in conjunction with the visual symbols it produces, as one of the key expressions of our society's culture. The volume of submissions received from our field all over Europe and America was exciting. This issue of *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies* presents but a small selection of the work done so far in the sub-field: the aim was to present a range of still unpublished investigations. The reader of this initial collection will find thought-provoking investigations into reading the visual aspects so as to understand something new about the dances. Some articles explore the use of visual elements and cultural symbolism in the practice of choreography. Kirk explores ideas about the (dis)engagement of sight and vision in embodied movement, while others focus on the relationships between visual expression, art and fashion as elements of dance iconography (Jenkinson/Schwarz). Photography and typographic design as sites of choreography are explored in visual submissions by dance choreographers Kohler and Shead. The issues of visual culture in the present-day era, where digital media influence the look of the dance, are explored through art theory and dance analysis (Blades), and the ever-pervasive pop-culture visual symbols and messages are analysed through their socio-cultural context of music videos (Takyah). An historical investigation of post-modern choreographic practice in reference to its visual representations is explored by Cornell, and art history objects as tools for developing dance teaching methodologies are contemplated in the article by Gozzano.

This is only a fragment of the rich discourse developing in our field. With gratitude to the Editorial Board of the SDHS for opening space for this topic, I hope this will be one of many collections that will open new spaces for convergence between dance research and aspects of visual culture.

***Tamara Tomić-Vajagić***

# Edited Realities

Hetty Blades

## Introduction

Dance, alongside other art forms, is undergoing a sociological and philosophical transformation, largely due to the reproducibility and flexibility afforded by the Internet. We are now able to access images and recordings through computers, televisions and mobile phones. We are living in an age of constant visual information, frequently accessed through screens. In our homes, at work and in public, we use screens for information, communication and entertainment. We are also able to experience artworks via a screen; the virtual has become commonplace – re-configuring the role of the actual in contemporary society. This has an impact on the significance of live performance. We increasingly consider the virtual as ‘real’, as the actual.

Much has been written about ‘virtuality’. Pierce (1902), Deleuze, (2002) and Zizek (2004) have contributed significantly to this field. In this essay, I am using the terms ‘virtual’ and ‘actual’ in the most rudimentary manner, to distinguish between that which is online, and that which is experienced in shared physical space. This paper raises broad observations, operating as a starting point for further enquiry. The topics raised here thus extend way beyond the limitations of this paper.

Visual art theorist Nicolas Bourriaud describes current society as in a state of ‘Altermodernity’ (2009). Bourriaud suggests that Post-Modernism has come to an end and that we exist in a new form of modernity, defined by globalisation, cultural relativism and deconstruction. He suggests that this new era has an impact on artistic practices. The artist acts as a ‘homo viator’, travelling through signs, formats and geographic places. The impact of this on form, Bourriaud suggests, is an emphasis on trajectories: “The form of the work expresses a course, a wandering, rather than a fixed space-time” (2009). I will consider Bourriaud’s observations in relation to contemporary culture, and specifically to digital dance recordings.

Dance on screen is a large, ever-increasing area for investigation. The medium includes a number of forms, such as; recordings of live events, specially made dance films, live screenings, and many more. Various scholars have discussed the issues raised by the re-production of the ephemeral form. Peggy Phelan (1993), Phillip Auslander (1999),

Sherrill Dodds (2001) and Matthew Reason (2006) have all contributed significantly to this area. In this paper I focus on a fairly new form of screen dance on the Internet, which I refer to as Online Marketing Films (OMF).

## Online Marketing Films

Superficially OMF are simple – they are created to sell the work. Not only to promote it to the public, in order to generate ticket sales, but also to potential funders, thus serving a crucial economic purpose. However, they are symbolic of a recent cultural shift for dance. The combination of enhanced accessibility and an increased presence on TV and in music videos means that contemporary dance is more widely seen than ever before. The division between contemporary dance as an art form, and dance in popular culture is shifting, potentially becoming obsolete. Furthermore, the way in which we generally experience work through a screen, opposed to in a theatre, points to a fundamental change for this art. Analysis of the editorial decisions reveals cultural priorities and tells us something about the nature of dance in contemporary, consumer-driven society.

Advances in technology and the development of websites such as YouTube mean that it is easy to upload recordings, providing instant access to filmed versions of performances. The Internet provides an opportunity to watch dance from practically every genre and from all over the world. The vast choice available and the control that is afforded to the viewer, makes access easy and desirable.

Dance companies have embraced technological advances as an opportunity to share, store and advertise their work. OMF are films of performances posted by companies or theatres on their websites, or video sharing sites. There are two types of OMF. One is documentary style, with the performance presented in real time, albeit only as a short excerpt. I suggest that this is a Documentary Online Marketing Film (DOMF). An example of this is a film presenting an excerpt of William Forsythe’s *I Don’t Believe In Outer Space* (2011). The work is one hour and fifteen minutes long in its live form. The concept of space is key to the work (Mackrell, 2011), meaning that duration and slow pacing play important dynamic and conceptual roles. The marketing film, created by London theatre, Sadler’s Wells, is two minutes and six seconds long, and is unedited, giving a real-time portrayal of the role of temporal duration in the live performance. The second style of film involves a performance, or multiple performances edited to fit key components into a short time frame. These films, which I call Edited

Online Marketing Films (EOMF), present a version of the performance that shows the highlights, in much the same way that a film trailer, newspaper review or press release might. A film posted on Sadler's Wells website for Pina Bausch's *Como el Mosquito* (2009) exemplifies this style of representation. It condenses a work of two hours and twenty minutes into a clip of one minute and thirty-two seconds. The film comprises seven scenes of fairly even length. It features fluid, fast and gestural movement, in a dramatic style typical of Bausch's work. The dynamics build to a crescendo, creating an even and predictable viewing experience. It is EOMF that are the particular focus of this investigation.

EOMF have been made for many British companies, including Rambert Dance Company (*Comedy of Change*, *Hush*, *Linha Curva*, 2009) and Random Dance Company (*Entity*, 2009). Although presenting very different works, the films share common stylistic features, such as fragmentation, disruption of time, short scenes and a frenetic rhythm. This style of representation is particularly common in popular culture. The length, sequencing and use of short frames in these films are similar to the devices used in music videos and film trailers. These forms, like EOMF, are created to promote, entertain and appeal to a mass audience, as opposed to being designed for preservation or education. The way in which EOMF are shot provides a single, privileged perspective, unlike watching the work in a theatre. The camera offers close-ups of facial expressions and body parts, and focuses on specific movements or dancers. The viewer of a film is therefore able to see elements that are impossible to see from an auditorium.

These films are often one of the first sources presented to us when we search a company, work or choreographer online. This means that they become a crucial piece of information for the lasting identity of a work. The Internet provides a vast archive for performance artefacts, which will potentially be available indefinitely. The ephemeral nature of live performance means that recordings of performances are the only way we can visually access dance works before and after instantiation, making them highly significant. Furthermore, these films are not only created by choreographers, but also by venues such as Sadler's Wells. This means that the choreographer does not have control over the way in which a performance is represented historically. The Internet de-centralises the role of the author in the representation of the work in history. Although the choreographer has creative control over the performance (to a high degree), EOMF demonstrate how the Internet allows others to inform the way in which we perceive works outside of performance. Although this is true of written accounts, the way in

which we trust visual images and relate film to truth - as I discuss later - means that we relate differently to the subjectivity of film editing than the subjective nature of a review.

## Control, Choice and Consumerism

The Internet provides the spectator with enhanced agency. We are able to choose what we watch and when to pause, stop, repeat, rewind and fast-forward. The viewer has a great deal of choice, creating an enhanced sense of power. We no longer have to sit through an entire performance to see a work. However, consideration of the limitations of the experience offered by such forms of representation is important. For every close-up, there is another component that we do not see; someone else decides which moments are significant. The dynamic effect is also potentially misleading and not necessarily true to the overall dynamic feel of the live work.

One example of a typical EOMF is a film representing *The Land of Yes and The Land of No (TLYTLN)* (2009) by Spanish choreographer Rafael Bonachela. The work was created for UK based Bonachela Dance Company, (formed in 2006). Bonachela has since been appointed Artistic Director of Sydney Dance Company, and *TLYTLN* is now part of the company repertoire. *TLYTLN* was inspired by the way in which signs and instructions govern our lives (Jennings, 2009). The live performance is 90 minutes long, it features three male and three female dancers. The movement involves undulating torsos, hyper-extended limbs and contact work. It is contemporary in style, with classical influence. There is an emphasis on line and sculpted silhouettes. The subject matter is embodied abstractly, with taut, bound movement expressing frustration. Movement is frequently off-balance, and dancers manipulate one another, possibly exemplifying a lack of personal control in a society governed by rules. The work unfolds dynamically, with the movement gradually building to a crescendo involving all six dancers.

In the EOMF the work is condensed into just over four minutes. It is divided into scenes of approximately 30 seconds each, featuring multiple angle changes. The movement involves contact, solo, unison and counter-point. We are not offered any prolonged images or themes. This creates a sense of unpredictability and excitement. The editing creates a dynamic quality that is different to the movement quality in the theatrical version: the *film* is fast paced. This pacing mirrors much of the selected movement but also lends slower and calmer movements a frantic quality. This is unique to this representation of the work and is not a microcosm of the dynamics of the piece, which moves fluidly through a range of energetic qualities. The editorial style -- typical of

these films -- is particularly interesting when we consider why it is that this style has departed from the 'reality' of the live work.

The primary focus of the editorial process is to gain and keep hold of the viewers' attention. But why is it that these short, fast-pasted scenes are considered a more appealing option? Jonathan Crary suggests that there was a "generalized crisis in perception in the 1880s and 1890s" (1999, 2) and that this "contested notion of attention was central to a range of social, philosophical, and aesthetic issues during those years, and indirectly, to subsequent developments in the twentieth century" (Crary, 1999, 2). Popular culture, advertising and marketing respond to a widespread belief that we are more able and willing to process small pieces of information or images, than to prolonged or static imagery. Crary assesses this notion by stating:

It is possible to see one crucial aspect of modernity as an ongoing crisis of attentiveness, in which the changing configurations of capitalism continually push attention and distraction to new limits and thresholds, with an endless sequence of new products, sources of stimulation and streams of information, and then respond with new methods of managing and regulating perception. (Crary, 1999: 13-14)

This notion that our preference for constant visual stimulation is created by consumer society is of interest in relation to EOMF. They demonstrate the notion that people will be disinterested in a film that maintains durational reality. By generating these films, companies are engaging in consumer culture, highlighting the economic need for dance works to exist as a commodity that can be bought and sold.

By assessing the choices made during editing, we can see that what we see in the finished product is manipulated to appear different to the 'truth' of the live performance. Whilst the viewer is not being tricked into thinking they are experiencing a direct documentation, there is paradox between the apparent freedom of the viewer and the lack of control, regarding what we see. This exemplifies a power struggle at play in consumer culture, where increased choice provides the illusion of power. However the choices available, and the way in which we become aware of them are manipulated.

The existence of performances online also demonstrates the democratisation of information on the Internet. Dance generally has been considered a 'high' art form (Fischer, 2001, 409). Live performances exist primarily in theatres, and are costly to attend. The Internet allows many more people to see dance, it is as affordable and easy to access as any other manifestation of popular culture. However,

there is a paradox at play here -- films operate in the same sphere as popular culture, while live performance does not. The films allow us to experience a version of the work, however it exists to sell the live performance. Although access is democratized online, the Internet is a vast marketing and advertising site. EOMF demonstrate the way in which information and objects are simultaneously democratized and commodified. The live performance is neither accessible nor democratized through the Internet. The virtual replaces the actual, and simultaneously enhances the significance of the live and the 'real'.

## Virtual Docu-Fictions

Through the condensing of time these films distort the 'reality' of the live work, offering an edited version of reality. Bourriaud discusses the role of time in Altermodern art, suggesting: "The form of the work expresses a course, a wandering, rather than a fixed space-time" (2009). In the case of EOMF, the narrative of the live event and its linear relationship with time is subverted, fragmented and re-formed. Movement does not operate in a fixed space or time, and always plays out through a course, however the performance itself is situated exactly within a fixed place and time. Online recordings alter this characteristic. Works now exist whenever they are enacted through the screen. Although the form of movement is not necessarily altered in Altermodern culture, the form of the dance work, and its relationship to time is changed.

The disruption of time through editing is potentially an attempt to emulate the excitement and drama of live performance, yet simultaneously it creates a fictitious version of the experience. Tim Etchells says of creating artistic documentation: "The thing is to look for forms of objects that reflect the aesthetics and contingency of the live events" (Etchells in Reason, 2006: 59). However, through editing, EOMF become abstracted versions of the reality of the live. This further relates to some of the features of Altermodern visual art. Bourriaud says, "Taking a trend that is prevalent in contemporary film and TV culture, artists are creating works which mix historical, journalistic or personal enquiry with fictionalised accounts." He observes, "Truth and fiction are presented side by side, in modes traditionally associated with the authentic" (Bourriaud, 2009). This is exactly the phenomenon presented by EOMF. Film is a medium associated with truth (Carroll, 2004, 485 – 497). We trust filmed images, despite being accustomed to experiencing fiction through the medium. The subjects of truth and fiction in relation to virtuality mirror larger sociological issue created by the Internet. The Internet does not offer a purely fictional world; it represents, and impacts on our actual, physical existence. It offers

truth and fiction, intertwined and re-configured. It is not the case that the physical world (or live performance) is the dictator of truth. Film, and the virtual world use the truth of the actual to create a new truth, which in turn impacts on, and re-configures the physical world.

We can see that these films distort the reality of the live event in order to appeal to a specific cultural mentality. However, they can be considered to possess their own reality. The cultural significance of the virtual implies that we should not dismiss EOMF as merely fictitious accounts of live performance, but that they can be considered alternative realities. They possess individual form, distinct from the performance.

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# Girls Run the...What?: Michelle Obama, Beyoncé and Black Women's Dis/Respectability Politics

Takiyah Nur Amin

According to theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff, “visual culture is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology” (Mirzoeff, 1999, 3). If it is accepted that the visual technology to which Mirzoeff refers can include “any apparatus designed to be looked at or to enhance natural vision, from oil painting to television and the Internet” (ibid.), it is fitting that scholars interested in visual culture examine the ways in which dance performance is structured, manipulated, represented or otherwise mitigated through visual technology, the multiple meanings offered by such performances and how they are in conversation with ideas that circulate in the public sphere. While authors like Katrina McPherson and Erin Brannigan give attention broadly to the relationships between dance, video and film, this article examines a single, popular video dance performance with attention to the way in which it circulates in a contemporary context that is shaped by specific ideas about race and gender.

Emerging in the 19th century, negative portrayals of black people were depicted in “art and popular imagery that served to both reflect and establish racist ideas and to reiterate the social order; images of blacks most often iterated limiting and derogatory perceptions held by whites and helped create a “visual iconography for black representation” (Harris, 2003, 40). As stereotypical, damning images of blacks — as lazy and childlike, for example (2003, 45) — circulated within the popular American consciousness, ideas about black womanhood as failed and black female sexuality as abject, deviant and deranged emerged. Stereotypical images of black womanhood during the slavery and post-slavery era circulated to suggest that black women were fundamentally immoral and sexually loose. These depictions were often juxtaposed with the idea that black women were essentially unable to enact femininity because their physical strength (a byproduct of forced labor, to be sure) didn't fall in line with notions of the Victorian feminine ideal; real women were not only white but also small, soft and unsuitable for manual labor or work because of their enviable frailty. While it is true that post enslavement, many black people embraced a newfound sexual freedom, (i.e. the freedom to choose one's own sexual partners), it is overreaching to assume that emancipation exacerbated an inherently deviant sexuality that resided within the very personhood of black women. While it is accurate that, “some manumitted black

women exercised their new found sexual mobility by engaging freely in sexual relationships with black men,” it was problematic that “whites saw the sexual activity and newfound independence of the manumitted female slave as further evidence to support their claim that black women were sexually loose and innately morally depraved” (hooks, 1981, 54-55).

Consider that since First Lady Michelle Obama emerged in the public sphere, pejorative comments about her body have been commonplace. When Wisconsin Republican Congressman Jim Sesebrenner made inappropriate comments about the size of her backside in 2011, it was just the most recent at that time in public commentary about her physicality (Fuller, 2011, 1). The obsession on the part of the public with the First Lady's choice to wear sleeveless dresses and tops and her open dislike for wearing pantyhose (Sweet, 2008, 1) immediately garnered criticism about her inappropriate style choices, suggesting that she was unsuitable for the role of First Lady (Harris-Perry, 2011, 279-280). I assert that the criticisms and comments referenced here about Mrs. Obama were rooted in the same kind of rhetoric that produced the stereotype of black women as hypersexual — as if the size of her derriere was evidence of a lascivious nature —reinscribing the notion that black women's bodies are “ground zero for promiscuity” (Collins, 2005, 151). Mrs. Obama's public persona as an intelligent woman, wife and mother is juxtaposed with the public's obsession with dissecting her body and fixating on her bare limbs. Her physical being is read as both unfeminine and inappropriate, harkening back to the desexualization of black women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Consider the 2008 cover of *The New Yorker* magazine which depicted Mrs. Obama as a gun-toting, afro-wearing, frowning militant and the recent cover of Spain's *Fuere de Serie* magazine which featured the First Lady's face air brushed onto the body of Marie Guillemine Benoit's bare-breasted slave woman from the 1800 painting, *Portrait d'une Negresse* (Peck, 2012, 1). Taken together, the comments and images referenced here suggest enduring and pernicious stereotypes about black women, rooted in 19<sup>th</sup> century ideas, that continue to circulate in popular consciousness.

In a May 2012 interview with *People* magazine, the First Lady set off a firestorm when she shared that if she could switch places with anyone, it would be international pop and film star, Beyoncé.<sup>1</sup> In response,

journalists penned op-eds sharing their dismay about what they saw as Mrs. Obama desiring to be a woman who trades on a super-sexy identity as the key to her success. By way of example, contributing editor for *TheRoot.com* and author Demetria L. Lucas wrote:

For a woman of Michelle Obama's caliber to uplift Beyoncé as a role model, and to speak of swapping lives with her, sends a damaging, demeaning and dangerous message to women and girls. It says that despite education and intellect, grace and power, what really matters is our looks, our willingness to submit and our ability to swivel our hips to sexually satisfy the opposite sex. We hear that message loud and clear every time a reality show airs. We don't need to hear it from our first lady, too.

This response to the First Lady's admission suggests that into the 21<sup>st</sup> century preoccupations about the appropriateness of black women expressing (or perhaps desiring to express) a frank sexuality persist, especially if the woman is to be considered respectable and proper. *After all, how could it possibly be appropriate for a First Lady – a black one at that – to express herself (or desire to express herself) in that way?* According to Lucas, the "love affair" between Mrs. Obama and Beyoncé is both highly problematic and dangerous. While Mrs. Obama's statement might have been merely the expression of a fantasy or desire to perform as a "superstar," it was read as a failing on her part. Why would she want to be a woman who is "lacking" a formal education? Why would she want to be a woman who seems to intentionally play on the notions of female manipulation through overt sexuality in order to assert power? While the admiration between these two global icons seems to be mutual, the public outcry has not been against the idea that Beyoncé would admire Mrs. Obama and want her daughter to be like *her* (McDevitt, 2012, 1). Of course the pop diva *should* desire to be educated, circumspect and sober, in keeping with the accepted behavior modes for African-American women under the banner of respectability politics. Moreover, Lucas's response demonstrates how contemporary preoccupations around black women's respectability continue to persist in contemporary life and as such, complicate readings of Beyoncé's artistry, particularly in the realm of music video performance.

In April of 2011, pop icon, vocalist, performer and film chanteuse Beyoncé released to American audiences the song and accompanying video for 'Run The World (Girls)' as the lead single for her then upcoming fourth studio album, 4. While the song has garnered intense popularity, it is the accompanying music video for the single that receives this article's attention. With over 148 million hits on YouTube,<sup>2</sup> the video features

Beyoncé, clad at various points in armor, lingerie and a multiplicity of figure-revealing couture gowns,<sup>3</sup> in the Mojave Desert with an attendant "army" of (presumably) all women. Beyoncé and her company of *Girls* perform a hyper-stylized routine to the synth-pop tune, including dances derived from contemporary African movement vocabularies,<sup>4</sup> juxtaposed with intense hip rolling, crawling and isolated, shoulder-thrusting, torso and hip movements. The "girls", with Beyoncé as their leader, approach an opposing, truculent male army and confront them – both vocally and through dance—with the message that it is they who are in charge. In the song Beyoncé highlights this triumph of female authority by stating:

Some of them men think they freak this like we do  
But no they don't  
Make your cheques come at they neck,  
Disrespect us? No they won't!

Beyoncé proceeds to give a "shout-out" to women who are financially self sufficient:

This goes out to all my girls  
That's in the club rocking the latest  
Who will buy it for themselves  
and get more money later

Beyoncé meditatively croons that her "persuasion" – in this case, women – can "build a nation," before reminding listeners that through the "endless power" of herself and the "girl" army, others (presumably men) can be positioned to "do anything" for her and by extension, women. This pronouncement precedes the infectious call-and-response chorus of the song:

Who run the world? Girls! (x4)  
Who run this motha? Girls! (x4)  
Who run the world? Girls! (x4)

The song proceeds with Beyoncé giving recognition to women who are college graduates and celebrating those women who are adept at both making money and being mothers, before repeating the chorus of the tune.

Interestingly, while Beyoncé extols the virtues of female empowerment and global authority, the accompanying physical performance suggests that the "power" and "persuasion" to which Beyoncé is verbally referring is derived in part from her sexual identity and that of the other dancing "girls". While not all of the movement choices function in this manner (there is much saluting and other references to classic military formations, for example) many of the dance moves executed in this

clip have a hyperstylized, sexually frank quality that is expressed by Beyoncé and her “girls.” For example, consider that while intoning the repetitive chorus, Beyoncé is seen revealing her undergarments and adjusting her breasts in time with the music. The first time we see the “army” of women dance in the video, the majority of them are clad in tube tops, briefs, garters, thigh highs and capes as they execute deep hip isolations and booty shake movements for the camera. Later, Beyoncé rolls and contorts her body on the sand–covered ground while intoning the lyrics which precede the chorus, before she is joined again by the army who perform seductive full body rolls and hair flips for the viewer, juxtaposed with the driving bass line of the chorus. When the movements are “read” together with the attire and parallel to the lyrics, it is clear that an emphasis on heteronormativity and the frank expression of sexual identity undergirds Beyoncé’s pronouncement of female empowerment and that the embodied performance in the video “talks back” to enduring notions of black women’s respectability politics.

As bell hooks points out, the majority of black men and women post enslavement and into the era of reconstruction strived to adopt the values, behaviors and attitudes of whites in order to be deemed socially acceptable; black women in particular strived to dispel the myth that they were sexually loose by emulating the (public) conduct and mannerisms of White women (1981, 55). As a response to these pervasive negative characterizations, black women in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and into the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century adopted what sociologist Patricia Hill Collins refers to as a “politics of respectability.” As black women strived to refute the notion of their sexuality as morally depraved, black middle–class women in particular rejected the “controlling image<sup>5</sup> of the Jezebel” – the wild, devious sexually brazen woman – by adopting a way of life that was “characterized by cleanliness of person and property, temperance, thrift, polite manners and sexual purity” (Collins, 2005, 71). Black women across class were striving to reject a racist and false image of sexual depravity that had been projected onto their bodies for hundreds of years by enacting this informal politic.

As a consequence of America’s complex history, Beyoncé’s video emerges – for better or for worse – in a context that has been shaped by negative stereotypes and derogatory controlling images about black female sexuality that continue to persist into the present.<sup>6</sup> The danced performance in the video for ‘Run The World (Girls)’ in particular, taken along with enduring ideas about black women’s sexuality and respectability politics create a unique tension that raises the question: how does this visual performance complicate persistent notions of “proper” or “correct” black female identity when Beyoncé, invokes a

stance of female global authority while referencing an apparent and frank sexuality? This aforementioned juxtaposition of movement vocabularies and lyrics raises interesting and complex questions. While one might consider why Beyoncé (who herself was approaching her 30<sup>th</sup> birthday when the video was released) might refer to herself and her army of attendants as “girls” instead of “women” or question the validity of invoking sexuality vis-à-vis dance vocabulary as the core of female power in the video performance, it is key here to acknowledge that images, including popular music videos, do not exist or emerge in a world or context wholly unto themselves. This popular performance comes forth within a larger discourse of racialized and gendered representations, off-circulating ideas concerning black women’s respectability politics and notions of Black female sexuality. It is useful then to consider how this performance, accessed by viewers to primarily provide entertainment (i.e. pleasure) responds to competing contemporary ideas about Black female identity, respectability and power.

It may very well be that Beyoncé herself and her creative team didn’t consider or were not concerned with the larger context in which the video would circulate. Intent aside, the video, with its invocation of global female authority rubs against historical ideas about what a black woman in particular might need to do or be or avoid in order to be seen as someone who could in fact, *run the world*. Pursuant to respectability politics, historically, it was most often those black women who chose to portray themselves as proper and upright “ladies” that received the most disdain, abuse and derision at the hands of whites (hooks, 1981, 55) – not those women whose public deportment was considered socially unacceptable (but in-keeping with the supposed “natural state” of black women as morally depraved). The popular criticisms of Mrs. Obama exemplify this contradiction. Consequently, the danced performance in Beyoncé’s video complicates ideas of what correct or appropriate black female identity should be by invoking a personal strength and external authority while at the same time acknowledging a sexual identity that can and should be deployed at the behest of a woman who *runs the world*.

What is being proposed here is that the fully self-possessed woman, imbued with the potential for leadership, is one who derives her authority to make others “do anything” at her command – at least in part – through the overt expression of herself as a sexual being. As such, the video enters into conversation, with long-standing discussions about black female sexual identity and respectability politics. Specifically, the danced performance in this video resonates with long-held ideas on the part of some black women about the need to proclaim and celebrate

one's own sexual identity as a place of power and as a place from which authority emerges. The video does in fact talk back to cloistered notions suggesting that for black women in particular to claim authority, the denial of oneself as a sexual, sensual being (in favor of a more "respectable" image) is perhaps not the road to take. While it remains to be seen as to whether this particular pronouncement of self-possessed black female identity and authority will have any impact on how black women in real positions of power construct their public personas, the video presents a perspective that is both ironic and provocative, given the historical context which frames its emergence.

Music video performances inhabit a location in the popular consciousness that is framed by words, concepts and meanings that have been re-presented time and again. Consequently, viewers who access performances through visual mediums like television and the Internet receive information, meaning and/or pleasure that is informed by ideas and perspectives that are already in circulation. By extension historical ideas – about race, gender and sexuality, in this case—remain as an appropriate lens through which to engage and raise questions about danced performance and our engagement with visual culture. Here the tension between what one might read as a small screen fantasy and the historical ideas that frame and inform real life, collide and collude to create a site where one can meaningfully engage contemporary visual culture through the consideration and "reading" of popular performance.

<sup>1</sup> See bibliographic entry for People.

<sup>2</sup> Information accurate as of August 31, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> For details on attire worn in the video, see bibliographic entry for The Independent.

<sup>4</sup> The creative team for this video included Tofo Tofo, a male duo from Mozambique who were hired to teach Beyoncé their style of African contemporary dance. For more information, see bibliographic entry for Vena, Jocelyn.

<sup>5</sup> Collins defines controlling images as "the gender-specific depiction of people of African descent within Western scholarship and popular culture," p. 350.

<sup>6</sup> For an extended discussion on this issue see bibliographic entry for Harris-Perry.

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# Texture, Collage, Pastiche: Materials of a Bodily History for Our People

Monique Jenkinson and Selby Wynn Schwartz

## Making Scenes

Texture, as an element of 'still' visual arts, is a visible trace of time and particularity in the making of material art objects. It is also a concentration of surfaces, laid one over the other in such accumulated profusion that they produce depth — and with this accretion comes a new sense of perspective, of 'seeing into' a work of art. In the performances of Monique Jenkinson, slices of histories and slips of

identities are overlaid in a collage that creates texture through its layers. In this depth created entirely from surfaces, a body can move between its own pasts, through levels of inheritance and appropriation, and in the seams between skin and costume. Strata of character roles, historical allusions, camp ironies, hand-made costumes, and bodily identities are plastered together in the form of pastiche, only to be partially stripped away as the performance veers into autobiographical territories and kinetic labors.

In April 2012, as part of her Artist Fellowship at the de Young museum in San Francisco, Monique Jenkinson curated an evening of performance that she called "Making Scenes," drawing on the queer resonances of 'scenes' that appear superficial—even hysterical—but become tribes, families, houses, and churches. Collapsing the hierarchy of curator, artist, and artist's model, she also choreographed a dance/installation piece for the evening, christened *Our People*, in which she appeared as a dancer.

## MONIQUE JENKINSON on Making a Scene

*I usually perform in the work that I create, stepping outside the traditional modernist division of labor that often separates choreographer as artist and dancer as interpreter. My process of creation is grounded in my own performing body, and I feel most at home as a creator and performer. For 'Making Scenes' at the de Young, I also curated the entire evening's events. Though my practice of performing in my own work kept me connected to the process from within, it also kept me from overseeing the evening I had curated. Juggling these three roles proved especially tricky in the vast museum space, and I learned a great deal about the functionality of traditional divisions of creative labor.*

*Upon entering the large, open main hall (Wilsey Court) of the de Young museum, the first thing one sees is the giant, 31-by-30-foot Gerhard Richter mural on the back wall. This is the museum's usual designated spot for performance: on a stage right under the Richter, the performers dwarfed by its grandeur. I wanted to avoid this unsatisfying situation of the forced proscenium, placing my piece instead in the multiplicity of the de Young's spaces — as a dance party in a side event room, as a march down the grand staircase, as an installation in the windows overlooking the great court, as a crowd-dissecting procession through the hall, and as an intimate experience in an upstairs gallery.*

*I received unequivocal support from the institution for all but one of these locations—the upstairs gallery. In the close quarters of the*



*Our People*: Monique Jenkinson. Photo: Arturo Cosenza.

gallery, our proximity to the art created a delicate situation, in its own way just as dominating as the Richter piece. As a result, I added a new role to my repertoire: diplomatic ambassador to the gallery's conservator. Her trepidation was obvious, and understandable, as her job is to protect precious works of art from the human foibles of performing and spectating bodies. Our negotiations presented a micro-version of the tensions around democracy and togetherness. We want to share spaces and ideas, but we want to protect what we value.

Our negotiations with the audience brought up a related set of issues. The *Friday Night de Young* series is an art event, a performance event, but also a party. I perform a lot in nightclubs, so I am used to people drinking and talking during a performance, but the daylight airiness of the gallery space changes the audience/performer power dynamic. In the gallery, deprived of the structure of a stage space to tell them what, and how, to watch, viewers feel free to leave or talk. And performers, deprived of audience-obscuring stage light, can see everything. Since we made our piece out of personal material, and since I care about the quality of my collaborators' performance experience, this created unexpected tension. As museums attempt to change from hallowed halls of reverence to activated spaces for cultural inquiry, the tension is palpable.



*Our People:* Carlos Venturo, Helen Shumaker, Maraym Rostami, Monique Jenkinson, Rotimi Agbabiaka. Photo: Adrian Arias.



*Our People:* Maryam Rostami, Monique Jenkinson, Rotimi Agababiaka. Photo: Adrian Arias.

## Making Surfaces

Shaped in part by her experience performing in museums, Monique Jenkinson's aesthetic incorporates the planar field of traditional visual art and its emphasis on representative surfaces. The texture of a painting shows the breathless impatience of brushwork or the slow, substantial accretion of vivid color on a canvas; time, pigment, and artistic labor are hardened together. Jenkinson's performances also construct representations in layers, as if she sees every body as coated in its own multiple histories. In framing live bodies, though, Jenkinson keeps the raw marks of these histories viscerally present. She takes the materiality of history as something literal but inherently uneven, incorporating both the glossy and the rough-edged. The way in which a dancer's body wears its own history shows through every costume, and every costume wraps the body in a collage of real corporeality and fictional, performed identity. These surfaces continue to shift, intermingle, and collide, producing a movement that can give rise to dances.

Costumes have been of particular importance in Jenkinson's work, and they are often pastiches themselves: statuesque, 4-foot heels that parody the pedestals of the sculpture gallery where she performs, while evoking the real labor of female strippers in *Heroic Comportment* (2008); Italian leather handbags that, in *Luxury Items* (2009), ventriloquize their own problematic histories of construction. In 2003, Jenkinson became the first female Miss Trannyshack, giving a winning performance in pink satin toe-shoes and fifteen-foot gauzy wings that

swelled into a histrionic camp anthem of self-affirmation, in which she literally emerged from her cocoon and became a colorful butterfly. In *Faux Real* (2009), a reflection on faux queen drag and autobiography, she appeared in an elegant gown, with matching hat and stole, made entirely of collaged photographs from fashion magazines. In these embodied historiographies, the costumes relate the narrative of their own constructedness. Their texture is both archival and archly, queerly present.



Monique Jenkinson. Left: *Luxury Items*, photo: Michelle Blioux.  
Right: *Faux Real*. Photo: Arturo Cosenza



*Trannyshack Kiss-Off*: Jennifer Chien, Joseph Copley, Monique Jenkinson, Carlos Venturo, Nicole Dessoie. Photographer unknown.

## Making Work

In the process of creating *Our People*, Jenkinson began a dialogue with the current de Young featured exhibition *The Fashion World of Jean-Paul Gaultier: From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk* by appropriating Gaultier's own tactics: homage, idolatry, appropriation, and culture-jamming. She gathered a coterie of movement artists who were markedly different from each other *and* willing to stage their differences in a live movement collage. *Our People* evolved its movement and costumes from a series of questions she developed with these six performers.

"What is the dance of your people?" Jenkinson asked at the outset, deliberately invoking both the tensions of identitarian politics and the slippages of queer camp. In a collaborative process, the performers elaborated and complicated her question, producing a nexus that Jenkinson calls, in a wry mock-90s tone, "problematic":

*"Who are my people? Do they have a dance?"*

*What if they don't have a dance?"*

*What if I feel alienated from my people?"*

*Who are my people?"*

Playing on the visual tropes of "native costume" such as headdresses, puffed sleeves, veils, and colorful aprons, in combination with visibly crooked imitations of Gaultier's sailor couture, these costumes re-appropriated Gaultier's cross-cultural forays and pushed them towards pastiche. Costumes made of shredded photographs — both from the iconic ethnographic lens of *National Geographic* and from glossy fashion magazines — colored masking tape, white cotton T-shirts, rucked butcher paper, elbow-length gloves, papier-mâché, and a cream-colored bustier worn with a rope of pearls literalized the aesthetic of layered difference. In this pastiche of materials and styles, of paper fringe and taped-on headbands, Jenkinson inverted the hallmark of couture — hand-made, with artisan labor, of unique materials — and reimagined its products as camp artifacts.



*Our People:* Maryam Rostami, Monique Jenkinson. Photo: Adrian Arias.



*Our People:* Maryam Rostami, Monique Jenkinson. Photo: Adrian Arias.

Jenkinson undertook an analogous process with the performers' personal histories, generating movement phrases derived from cultural traditions to which the performers were ambivalently attached. Nigerian-born, Texas-raised performer Rotimi Agbabiaka was glad to validate the contribution of a Nigerian wedding dance, but Jenkinson needed to download a version of it from the internet, so that they could learn it together; Maryam Rostami, an American-born Persian performance artist who also works with drag, contributed an interpretation of a traditional Iranian mourning (Ashura) processional sequence typically performed only by men. Jenkinson herself,

researching the dances her Czechoslovakian grandmother might have done, noted that "Czechoslovakia" was now as fractured as the concepts of nation, homeland, and heritage.

### MONIQUE JENKINSON on Collaborative Creation

*I am struck by Gaultier's interest in difference — of shape, size, age, color and culture — which he celebrates in an irreverent but generous way. Playing with cultural costume (including counter- and queer-cultural costume), he creates a collage — layers of meaning and provocation. One of his favorite phrases is 'Why not?', which speaks to a spirit of inclusion. In response, I attempted to create a performance collage acknowledging and celebrating difference instead adhering to an (often misguided) ideal of 'color-blindness'.*

*Instead of holding an audition in order to see dancers and judge their aptitude for my movement, I gathered a group of people — people I like, people I wanted to get to know better, people from different places (relative to each other and to me). I wanted to work with them because of their various skills as artists and performers, but also because of who they are. Although it was ultimately my vision, we created the piece together, researching dances and writing text from our experiences and histories that I then shaped into the piece. We were all challenged — some pleasantly and some more uncomfortably — by the act of bringing personal material into what was, for some, a new way of creating and performing.*



*Our People:* Lambert Moss. Photo: Adrian Arias.





*Our People*: Joseph Copley. Photo: Adrian Arias.

Jenkinson seems to say, is the collage of your own layered inheritances and appropriations, and you have the right to tape its surfaces together and wear them in a pastiche while you dance. In a museum setting of labeled halls and expository catalogs, which necessarily places a premium on preserving the surfaces and frames of representations, *Our People* may indeed dance too close to the walls of the gallery.

## Making Bodily Histories

Jenkinson's choreographic process for this piece heightened the intimate texture of personal experience and the material singularity of bodies. At the same time, the possibility of producing any kind of authentic or representative dance was foreclosed, because the performers' own experiences were already sticky, ragged, imbricated collages of histories and traditions. The title *Our People* restored a possibility of belonging to a community that danced together — but only in acknowledging that these dances, like the bodily and cultural identities of the performers, had to be reconstructed as fragments, simulations, and re-inventions.

In the shift from “what is the dance of your people?” to a dance called *Our People*, Monique Jenkinson moves the burden of representation. From the very beginning, the camp overtones of the question deliberately leave it open to queer appropriation. The narrowness of its frame — the assumption that ‘you’ have ‘a people’ and that they have only one dance — indicates the irony of flattening bodily identities into one neatly delineated surface. For Jenkinson, the surface always has a depth of its own, one that accumulates gradually as bodies are marked by variegated histories, and as those histories erode unevenly.

Instead of the weight of representing “your people” through this one mystically authentic dance that will validate both you and your community, there is an invitation to bring the irregular texture of your bodily identity to the process of creating *Our People*. This texture,

# Sensing Into Self Beyond Sight

Johanna Kirk

## Introduction

During my time as a graduate student in Choreography, I sought out innovative strategies for sensing into and communicating through the female body. My work grappled with ideas of “individuality,” “authenticity,” “femininity,” and “the natural body,” concepts which I found repeatedly sticky and elusive to analyze despite the plentitude of existing scholarship dedicated to their scrutiny and definition. I found postmodern art definitions challenging to rectify with either my analytic mind (which craved biological “proof” to substantiate theoretical claims about the female body) or my dancing body (which I trusted would be capable of recognizing relevant “truth” about female embodiment). I was also curious about how much the body’s visibility, and the cultural obsession with this aspect of corporality, tangled women’s ability to know and the ability to make “authentic” movement from their own bodies. I took as a choreographic challenge the task of designing approaches to eschew vision in making and imparting movement, and I hoped to let my body do the hypothesizing and theorizing that felt slippery and problematic when worked through in text.

As I deepened and broadened my study of the body, both scholastically and somatically, my artwork became focused on what I defined as innate, biological “dances.” These were unaffected, observable movement patterns that, to my mind and body, merited the labels “authentic” and “natural,” and thus, they were dances from which I felt safe to launch reasonably *un-biased* explorations. Facing the seemingly impossible situation of getting beyond personal bias in creating through my body, I felt that biologically-based/developmental movement was the nearest I could approach *objectivity* as a mover.

My interest in such dances eventually narrowed to the female body’s behaviors during pregnancy and the ways that perceptual and movement meditations on these processes could inform and expand the creative facility, instincts, and stylistics of my dancing and that of my dancers.

## Theoretical Springboard

In her article exploring the modern state of living, expressing, and sensing through “Techno Bodies,” theorist Ann Cooper Albright asks “is there a precultural body that is connected to a natural realm of human existence?” (31). I felt exploring this question was apt before attempting to ground my work and process in an experience of body that was internally-informed and thereby un-tethered to influences based on socialization. Judith Butler illustrated how challenging it is for women to fully shake themselves of the social systems that organize them. As she asserts, “[i]t seems difficult, if not impossible, to imagine a way to conceptualize the scale and systematic character of women’s oppression from a theoretical position which takes constituting acts to be its point of departure” (276). Writer Susan Bordo made similar claims. She commented on how much of what modern women cultivate as embodied praxis of self-affirmation and empowerment lead to deep physical and psychological confusion. So embedded are women in conflicting social values, she suggests, that they are unable to perceive the ways in which their tactics cancel each other out or reinforce the limitations they seek to transcend. Things “come to be experienced as liberating, transforming, and life-giving” (168) that are actually exercises reinforcing of Foucault’s “docility” within an organized society. Bordo emphasized that the body’s visibility, is a key to the problem. Women want their self-awareness and empowerment to be externally legible, not only for public recognition, but they find it imperative for their own ability to register their progress and success in self-assertion. This falls in line with visual art theorist John Berger’s notion, applicable to the behaviors as much as the artifacts that reveal culture, that women’s sense of self cannot be divorced from their identification with self as “sight.”

## My Intervention

Considering the above ideas, I hoped to create a movement practice and a context that offered an alternative space of self-exploration, and I felt bolstered that the type of investigation I wanted to do had significance beyond my own academic and artistic curiosity. I hoped it would provide an opportunity for the undergraduate dancers who chose to work with me to have more options in how they related to their bodies and the possibilities that felt accessible for how to physically experience themselves as women.

I gained courage to trust that my body would be able to drop beneath culture and thereby liberate itself and its sense-making abilities after reading the work of Jacqueline Shea-Murphy. In, *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing*, she describes dancers who explore their

bodies as sites of “blood memory” (9) and use choreographies as “tools for locating and unearthing...ways of knowing” (10) that are rooted in their genealogy. I hoped that in opening our bodies to new experiences, which we would, ideally, *re-member*, while prioritizing self-awareness and interiority and allowing ample time and space to indulge in movements that felt inwardly-generated, my students and I could, like the self-aware and artists Murphy describes, reclaim our bodies as “home” (22). These “homes” would be linked on our ancestry and biology, but free from the mores of our immediate context and the particularities of our historical moment. I hoped this would be fertile ground for making new connections and expressions.

## The Process

To understand how the female body might experience itself in a non-social (and by that I speak specifically to our social preoccupation with how a body looks), I meditated on my understanding of my own anatomy, which had been informed by years of study of the body from Western and Eastern, analytic and somatic, perspectives as well as those gleaned from training in visual and performance art, Yoga, and Body Mind Centering. I queried how these ideas had choreographed my experience of self and how they had empowered me to deeper sensitivity for things “true” and “natural” within the body. I recognized two components of my biology that, written in my genes, connect me to a pre-cultural body and that refine my specific experience of body. One point of entry was my mother, who not only influenced my chromosomes and chemistry, but who also shared my earliest kinesthesia because of our common vessel. The other was my genetic aptitude for pregnancy. I appreciated that these are physical choreographies that my body enacts, that I had neither learned nor designed, and that had been my own from the beginning of my life. I wondered how I could access and rehearse them in order to welcome their “naturalizing” and “individualizing” influence on my perception of self and agency as a moving body. My work turned to the themes of pregnancy and motherhood, and I began my master’s thesis with these driving curiosities.

My graduate thesis marked the culmination of a year’s worth of research. For one semester, my students and I used tactics including Body-Mind Centering exercises, Automatic and Authentic movement in response to anatomical study, interviews with our mothers and consequent reactive improvisation, and partnering with pregnant women in empathic explorations, to arrive at a new and specific movement vocabulary. This vocabulary dictated choreography. All

choreography came from feeling and sensing and making choices based on the information perceived. While making the dance, I resisted the urge to step outside of it and begin editing as a viewer interested in formal composition. I used no dance terminology and we covered the mirrors. I made creative choices based on what I sensed was rational or necessary to maintain coherence and cohesion within my own body and within the collective body of movers.

The second semester, the choreography was arranged, and I broadened my schema by one layer and attempted to structure a dance work that invited the audience into the same internally-awake state as the dancers. I challenged myself to create a spectacle that resisted being seen, that de-prioritized sight as the primary means of being received, and thereby offered a richer, more visceral experience of observation.

I initiated this second chapter of my choreographic work by limiting all aspects of the choreography that felt presentational or flat. I decided to remove all events in which the dancers were squared off against the audience. I also challenged the dancers to maintain an “internal focus” both on an individual and on a collective level. By this, I mean I asked the dancers to prioritize their felt experience of the movement rather than imagine what it would look like to an audience. We accomplished this by reconnecting the eyes anatomically to their home within the skull; demoting vision from its familiar agency, I emphasized that the eyes should follow and reinforce the lines and energetics of the head. We worked to de-prioritize sight among our sensing organs so that visual feed was only one means of tuning into the space, connecting with it, and expressing through it. I allowed that eyes could always be closed to assist the dancer in maintaining a “feeling state.” Eyes could also always find an anchor within the choreography and the world it was manifesting. Their eyes were welcome to wander through our choreographic landscape until they latched on to a cue that would feed or underscore their own movement.

Dancers could also latch on to their “partner.” These partners were assigned by me after looking at the choreography as a whole and deciding on figures between whom I sensed a distinctive and consistent relationship. These relationships had emerged organically from the movement and were determined by multiple instances of shared space, vocabulary, effort quality, or sometimes, something that felt more ethereal, but still evident and recurrent (like a common spirit). Inspired by a friend’s suggestions that each dancer have a “birthing partner,” I encouraged them to feel particularly invested in observing and supporting the expressive efforts of their assigned partner. Whenever possible, they were encouraged to take their eyes to that dancer, and even when they were not observing this partner, to have a sense of

where she was in the room and in relation to herself. This information, I hoped, would in some way inform and enlase all of the dancers' movement and its meaning. I enjoyed adding this *rule* because it then assisted me in making choices and establishing consistencies as we cleaned and modified.

As a viewer, I found that this strategy effected my looking in an intriguing way. It served to draw me into the work because the choreography kept folding in on itself and enfolding me in tow (this is in opposition to having movement projected out at me thereby forefronting the relationship between dancer and viewer rather than dancer and dancer). This kind of enveloping energy felt much more inviting to my body (while that of a viewer) than the frontal presentation.

Another way that I minimized the work's "flatness" and defamiliarized the audience's perspective was achieved by removing nearly all instances of *front* and *back* from the choreographic composition. Instead, I emphasized circularity of form, space, and energy. Considering the truth that no straight lines exist in the body, I removed all straight lines from the choreography, and I curved every linear formation. I encouraged the dancers to think of all points in the performance space as having equal potential and importance, and to place and angle their movement so that the entire space was included and validated. With only a handful of very specific exceptions, anytime the dancers found their torsos square to the audience, I asked them to angle either in toward the center of the space or out towards its circumference. They were also encouraged to find the curves and circles within their movements and to carry each curve to its physical and energetic completion, thus, never cutting it short in the interest of how it might look to a viewer or in order to be "on time" for their next movement. This meant that movements donned a new sense of current and flow, and the dancers' bodies arrived at new facings when between phrases, instead of consistently signaling a movement's end by facing toward the anticipated audience, as was all of our habit at the outset of the project.

I tried to keep all movements, phrases, and spacing revolving and evolving. Dancers were pulled by forces and tides, rather than tracing pathways, and everything followed either a gravitational pull around an orbit or a magnetic pull, push, or resonance with another dancer's energy. In this way, we again canceled the option of considering the work from the outside as something that could be mapped two-dimensionally or described through shapes and lines (optically-based organizing principles). We used the energy between each other to knit the space together and stay connected even when separated spatially, and we used the laws of physics to find impulse and intent. By this, I mean each dancer attuned herself to interior and exterior space with

her soma to notice and ride currents of energy either stirring within herself or "caught" off of another event in space. This followed the principle that energy is never created nor destroyed and I hoped would keep all elements of our world in constant dialogue and development.

## The Presentation

We presented the completed work in the round in a non-traditional venue (a non-denominational church), under natural sunlight, with doors open to all viewers, free of charge. The piece was performed multiple times throughout the day, and between each performance the audience was invited to interact with the dancers and step into and onto the performance space. In this way, with the context and performance elements, I took great care to resist the typical cues that designate site of spectacle. The audience did not enter a familiar, visually legible space where there was clear distinction between observer and specimen, or space of play and area of surveillance. Rather, their bodies were asked to make choices based on physical instinct once they entered the doors; they could choose to sit or stand and their location could be based on their physical comfort with proximity to the moving bodies. They were included in the performance event by being on the same surface and level as the dancers and by sharing the same lighting conditions. Because the piece took place in the round, and the audience knew that I, as a choreographer, felt that no seat or perspective yielded a more valuable vantage point than another in communicating my meaning. This meant that they could not trust their eyes alone to give them the entire sense of the work. Different seats provided different panoramas, but the overall dynamic of the space, I hoped, would gel the audience into a common experience that was sensed, meaningful, and believable. My goal was not to alarm or confuse the audience by asking for this additional attention, vulnerability, and effort, but rather to broaden their sense of dance beyond simply a sight and, more importantly, to invite them to tune into their other perceptual instruments and their body's natural empathy to interpret and identify with the work.

I was elated by the number of audience members who wished to connect with me and the dancers after the performances and who, even if they did not have specific verbal feedback, felt welcome to join us on "stage" and often to offer a supportive touch or smile. The majority of those who wished to discuss the work with me focused their comments on how it had reminded them of their own experiences during pregnancies (or their wives' pregnancies). For me, this validated that our highly abstract work (which did not explicitly claim to represent pregnancy) was somatically recognized, and captured a visceral snapshot of

something other female bodies knew. I was glad that we had done so in a way that not only revived physical memories for those who had direct experience with pregnancy, but that also offered a sensory window into this experience for those bodies, like those of the husbands or my undergraduate students, who had not yet or could not have conscious, pre-existing embodied understanding of it. I was also intrigued that the audience, which was predominantly non-dancers, spoke to me from and of their own physical experiences and put them in dialogue with my choreography. This kind of involvement and interaction between the audience and the art, between bodies and bodies, felt very significant to me and like an exciting new priority for me for future work as a thinker and choreographer. I feel that designing creative processes and performance events that open both the dancers and the audience to experiences beyond sight, is a necessary and exciting catalyst into such work. I look forward to arriving at new processes for making and sharing choreographies in order to connect participants and audience to their bodies in unfamiliar, liberating ways that allow for richer sensory understanding of womanhood and how to interpret the female body and its dances.

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**mirrors,**  
**a canvas,**  
**projection,**  
**live feed,**  
**stillness,**  
 falling,  
 slipping,  
 recovering,  
 singing.  
**glass bottles,**  
**beet juice,**  
**nudity,**  
**a pink glass dildo,**  
 jumping jacks,  
 music,  
 a live unicorn  
*and the*  
**failure to dance**



queer artist, Gina Kohler's resistance to institutionalized patriarchy and heteronormativity, becomes manifest thru her performance of this solo work with a crew of visible technicians. **dream [factories]** is a live event where the performer becomes the site for transgression thru strategic combinations of musical choices, movement, and objects, creating space for temporal disorganization. **dream [factories]** exposes the politics of women's bodies and challenges hierarchical systems of dance techniques. This work ruptures methodologies and ideologies of institutionalized dance pedagogies. The explicit subject matter makes visible the intersections of identity, gender, sexuality, phallocentrism, race, religion, media, love and violence. **dream [factories]** simultaneously questions the traditions of consumption and mediation of the body that occur thru surveillance and the spectacle of the theater. Kohler's research travels between performance and inscription, leaving both an ephemeral trace and a historical marking.



*All of my love I will give to you But teach me **TIGER**...or I'll teach you*



I'm  
your .  
private  
dancer  
dancer *for*  
money & any  
old music  
*will do*

a  
m  
o  
I will be your father figure  
Put your tiny hand in mine  
I will be your preacher-teacher  
Anything you have in mind



We can

When they said  
REPEAT REPEAT  
I wonder what they meant  
When they said  
REPEAT REPEAT

Heroes

New York, New York

To  
Come  
But  
I  
Was  
Already  
There  
You  
Shook

for one day

All  
Night  
Long

She  
Was  
The  
Best  
Damn  
Woman  
I  
Had  
Ever  
Seen  
She  
Told  
Me



I'm your man



# How Art History Can Improve Dance Education: A Kinesic Approach.<sup>1</sup>

Natalia Gozzano

In this paper I would like to discuss how art history in dance education may serve to improve – besides cultural and aesthetic competence – the kinesic skills of dancers and choreographers.

Through art history we can understand the cultures from which stemmed the different styles and aesthetic ideas that have influenced dance. Visual aspects of dance always had cultural and aesthetic links to the world of art through common aesthetic models; in modern and contemporary dance these links gradually have become closer as the boundaries between visual and performing arts have become increasingly blurred.<sup>2</sup>

In general, visual arts based on the study of the human body and its dynamics provide a wide repertory of *schemata* - figures, gestures, attitudes – historically have often been a source of inspiration for the performing arts.<sup>3</sup> To this traditional role of performing arts, in the present paper I would like to add another one: the way the study of art can provide useful tools for developing the ‘kinesic knowledge’ of dancers.<sup>4</sup>

The cognitive learning role played by activities such as observing, describing, analyzing and, above all, imitating something has been confirmed by the discovery of a class of cells of the neuron system, called mirror neurons: watching an action performed by others activates in our brains the motor areas appointed to the organization and execution of that action.<sup>5</sup> Further studies have clarified that ‘mirror circuits have a purely motor response over and above visual representations of action. We understand actions not only through visual recognition, but also *motorically*.’ As a consequence, watching an action allows us to *know it dynamically*.<sup>6</sup> The *internal simulation* of what we see is particularly stimulated by strong emotional images. Neuroscience has confirmed this stronger neural reaction showing it to be deeply rooted in certain areas of the brain: watching the struggle of the subject of Michelangelo’s *Prison against the marble* in which he is imprisoned can activate the motor neurons in our brain associated with the muscles used by the figure.<sup>7</sup>

From this perspective, visual arts are very important because they capture expressive human movements, providing a wide repertory of gestures, attitudes and expressions. Their strategic role is highlighted by several treatises on painting and theatre, in which this repertory has been studied and classified and, to some extent, it also related to dance studies.<sup>8</sup>

Even without knowing the underlying scientific explanation, artists have always been aware of the ‘kinaesthetic empathy’ provoked by watching a representation: “We shall cease to be mere spectators and become participants in the movement that is presented to us (...) we shall nevertheless be dancing synthetically with all our musculature.”<sup>9</sup>

All these considerations suggest that working on the observation, analysis, and description of art works, stimulates the students’ instinctive awareness of the human body activating and reinforcing their kinesic knowledge. The strategy I adopt in teaching art history to dance students is based on the direct relation between student and art works (occasionally originals [in the exhibition places] but mainly projected images). The presentation of the artwork - including its content, context, and form - is combined with the active intervention of the students, who are requested to describe and analyze it, focusing



Fig. 1

Students direct a fellow student who assumes the posture of Christ in Caravaggio’s *Flagellation*  
Rome, Accademia Nazionale di Danza. Photo: Natalia Gozzano

on what they see, more than what they may already know from their studies.<sup>10</sup> Their work can focus on different aspects, such as the body's posture or its meaning in context (i.e. the different ways in which the same theme has been treated by artists).

While close observation can already activate kinesic experiences (as noted above), Calvo-Merino, however, reminds us that many studies "showed greater mirror activity when watching a movement in which motor representation had been acquired compared to watching those that had not."<sup>11</sup> More specifically, experiments with dancers have shown that the more one is trained in an action, the greater the neural involvement when observing that action.<sup>12</sup> This suggests the usefulness, when practical, of having students not only study but also imitate the postures and attitudes of the works (Fig. 1).

This kind of study reinforces the students' kinesic understanding of the dynamics of the human body and can help them understand the ways in which such dynamics ultimately may provide the basis for the fundamental movement vocabulary of ballet, such as *en dehors*, *aplomb*, and the *contrapposto*.<sup>13</sup> In one exercise, for example, I have students observe two ancient Greek statues, typifying the transition from archaism to classicism, which is characterized by a more realistic

depiction of the human body (Fig. 2-3). Even if the Archaic figure is in a walking position, it does not seem dynamically engaged because its weight is distributed to both legs; in the Classical figures instead, the weight is only on one leg (*ponderatio*), conveying the possibility of movement. This dynamism is the basis for the idea of *contrapposto* or 'chiasmus' elaborated by Polykleitos, whose *Doryphoros* (Fig.4) is a perfect example of dynamic equilibrium. In these exercises, it can be very useful to have students imitate or interact with their fellow students as they imitate the postures of the two figures. In my experience, this exercise is extremely effective in helping students fully grasp the exact details of the postures. It teaches them to be more confident in their capacity for observation and allows them to be more open to facilitate forms of kinesic understanding which may be achieved through observation.

In conclusion, observing, describing, and imitating works of fine art can be used as significant tools which may enhance kinesic knowledge and body awareness, two elements that are crucial in dance education. It is also an approach that can help explore the many facets of the fascinating relation between visual art and dance.



**Fig. 2**

Marble statue of a *Kouros*,  
ca. 590–580 B.C., New York,  
Metropolitan Museum



**Fig. 3**

Kritios, *Ephebs*, ca.  
480 B.C., Athens,  
The Acropolis Museum



**Fig. 4**

Polykleitos, *Doryphoros*,  
450 b.C., Naples,  
Museo archeologico  
nazionale

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> In this paper I present the first result of a research on the role that Art History could play in the education of dancers and choreographers. In the course of the research I visited the Dance conservatoire in Paris and Antwerp, the Centre Nationale de la Danse in Paris, P.A.R.T.S. in Brussels, the Codarts in Rotterdam; I interviewed scholars, dancers and choreographers. I am very grateful for kindly sharing their expertise with me in discussing the possible role of art history and the results of my own experience as Art history teacher at the Accademia Nazionale di Danza. Special thanks to Francesca Falcone.

<sup>2</sup> An exciting survey of these relationships was offered by the exhibition *Danser sa vie: Art et danse de 1900 à nos jours*, Centre Pompidou, Paris 2011-12.

<sup>3</sup> On the origin of this repertory of *schemata* and its social, political and cultural meaning in ancient Greece see M. L. Catoni, *La comunicazione non verbale nella Grecia antica*, Universale Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> About the definition of 'kinesic knowledge' see E. Spolsky, *Elaborated knowledge. Reading kinesis in pictures*, Poetic Today, 17.2, 1996, pp. 157-180; G. Bolens, *Le style des gestes. Corporalité et kinésie dans le récit littéraire*, BHMS, Lausanne 2008, pp. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> G. Rizzolatti, C. Sinigaglia, 'So quel che fai.' *Il cervello che agisce e i neuroni specchio*, Raffaello Cortina editore, Milano 2006, pp. 120-121. The first discoveries on mirror neuron, due a team lead by Rizzolatti, were published in G. Rizzolatti, L. Fadiga, V. Gallese, L. Fogassi, 'Premotor cortex and the recognition of motor actions,' in *Cognitive Brain Research*, 3, 1996, pp. 131-141.

<sup>6</sup> As Zeki shows (S. Zeki, *Inner vision. An Exploration of Art and the Brain*, Oxford University Press 1999), kinesic involvement can even be activated by watching non figurative art works. Moreover, developing Merleau-Ponty's suggestions, Freedberg and Gallese (D. Freedberg, V. Gallese, 'Motion, emotion and empathy in aesthetic experience,' in *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 11, n. 5, 2007) state that 'viewers often experience a sense of bodily involvement with the movements that are implied by the physical traces – in brushmarks or paint drippings [by Pollock, or in the cut canvases by Lucio Fontana] – of the creative actions of the producer of the work.'

The interest of choreography in this field has an interesting example in the research project 'Choreography and Cognition', Joanne Butterworth & Liesbeth Wildschut (Eds.), *Choreography in Contexts: Critical Perspectives on Choreographic Practice*. London: Routledge 2009. (<http://www.choreocog.net/index.html>)

<sup>7</sup> D. Freedberg, V. Gallese, 2007. U. Dimberg, 'Facial reactions to facial expressions,' in *Psychophysiology*, 19, 1982, pp. 643-647.

<sup>8</sup> This classic tradition (Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian) was taken up again during the Renaissance, notably by Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci, leading to the publication of many treatises dealing with the art of mime as a strategic tool to express feelings and emotions were written, from the 16th century to the present day. Among these: L.B. Alberti, *De pictura* (1435); Leonardo da

Vinci, *Trattato della pittura*, (Milano 1804); G. P. Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura et architettura* (Milano 1584); J. Bulwer, *Chirologia et Chironomia* (London 1644); Ch. Le Brun, *Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière des passions*, ([1688] Amsterdam 1702); F. Lang, *Dissertatio de actione scenica...* (Viduae 1727). A work relating this tradition to the specific context of dancing is Blasis, *L'uomo fisico, intellettuale e morale* (Milano 1857). More recent studies include: J. Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions. The Origin and Influence of Charles Le Brun's 'Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière'*, Yale University Press 1994; A. Kendon, *Gesture: visible action as utterance*, Cambridge 2004, N. Rouillé, *Peindre et dire les passions*, Ajaccio 2006. F. Pappacena, *Il linguaggio della danza classica*, Gremese, Roma 2012, pp. 201-204.

<sup>9</sup> J. Martin, *Introduction to the Dance*. New York: Dance Horizons, 2nd edition 1968, p. 53. See also S. L. Foster, 'Kinesthetic empathies and the politics of compassion', in D. Tércio (ed.) *Continents in Movement: Proceedings of the International Conference*, The Meeting of Cultures in Dance History, Lisbon: FMH Editions 1998. About 'kinesthetic semiotics' see J. Desmond (ed.), *Meaning in Motion*, Duke University Press 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Language too, in fact, activates the NMS. Kaschak, M. P., Madden, C. J., Therriault, D. J., Yaxley, R. H., Aveyard, M., Blanchard, A., & Zwaan, R. A., *Perception of motion affects language processing*, in *Cognition*, 2005, B79-B89; Tettamanti, M., Buccino, G., Saccuman, M. C., Gallese, V., Danna, M., Scifo, P., et al., 'Listening to action-related sentences activates fronto-parietal motor circuits,' in *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 2005, 271-281; Havas et al., 'Emotion Simulation during Language Comprehension,' in *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 14.3, 2007, pp. 436-441.

<sup>11</sup> B. Calvo-Merino, J. Grèzes, D. E. Glaser, R. E. Passingham, P. Haggard, *Seeing or Doing? Influence of Visual and Motor Familiarity in Action Observation*, in *Current Biology* 16, 1905–1910 (2006).

<sup>12</sup> Using fMR, has been registered the brain activity of a group of professional dancers of the Royal Ballet and dancers of capoeira, stimulated by the vision of *ballet* and capoeira sequence. As a result, the "mirror neuron system" (NMS) showed more activity in proportion to the specific training of the dancers, that is depending not only on the type of dance but also if the actions were male or female specific. Calvo-Merino, B., Glaser, D.E., Grèzes, J., Passingham, R.E., and Haggard, P. *Action observation and acquired motor skills: An fMRI study with expert dancers*. *Cereb. Cortex* 15, pp. 1243–1249, (2005).

<sup>13</sup> On the neural implications of imitation see J. Grèzes, J. Decety, *Functional anatomy of execution, mental simulation, observation, and verb generation of actions: A meta-analysis*. *Hum Brain Mapp.* 12 (1), 1–19. (2001); T. Chaminade, A.N. Meltzoff, J. Decety, *An fMRI study of imitation: Action representation and body schema*, *Neuropsychologia* 43, 2005, pp. 115–127.



## EXPLORING THE IN-BETWEEN

*Eulanda Shead*

My current choreographic practise is geared towards exploring what's "in-between." I find that my camera plays an essential role in my practise; as it challenges my perception of movement and my pre-conceived understanding of movement pathways. Physically the camera is much quicker than the human eye at isolating and cataloguing a movement. However, the human eye witnesses the journey of the movement and perhaps is the neurological lens for assigning meaning to what we see. What I question is the interstice, or the perceptual gap that is inhabited by the captured image, and what the body physically performs—the in-between. This deeper exploration has led me to shooting and moving with my eyes closed. This is not a literal physical action, it is the process of dis-regarding all of my pre-conceived notions and the feeling associated with capturing the climax of a movement. Then, during post-processing of the images I can view a more un-filtered representation of what's actually being performed. I've found that this process has opened up the breadth of my work in so many ways.

Ultimately — or at the limit — in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes. "The necessary condition for an image is sight," Janouch told Kafka; and Kafka smiled and replied: "We photograph things in order to drive them out of our minds. My stories are a way of shutting my eyes." Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (1980), trans. Richard Howard, paragraph 22.

# The Sounds of Bodies Dancing: An Examination of Jean-Pierre Perreault's *Joe*

Katherine Cornell

In *Meaning in Motion*, art historian Norman Bryson recognized that dance provides a fertile ground for visual culture research. Dance offers visual density combined with the semiotics of the body. Specifically, contemporary dance puts the body in between the gaze and the glance, thereby asserting the importance of reception. This paper considers the sensory reception of the dancing body in a contemporary work with no music.

Canadian choreographer, Jean-Pierre Perreault's<sup>1</sup> masterpiece *Joe* provides a complex and unique canvas for analysis. Perreault's choreography has a heightened visual presence because of the architectural set design and because of the absence of music. The Joes dance to the sound of their own footsteps – thus accentuating the counterpoint of the group and the individual. Within the first seconds of the work, we know that the Joes are “average” – every man (and every woman). Individually, the thirty-two<sup>2</sup> Joes are virtually unrecognizable. The brims of their hats hide faces; bulky overcoats disguise gender. The character in *Joe* is “the anonymous figure [who] is anybody and everybody.”<sup>3</sup> The Joes paint an urban canvas with a complex vision of agency, gender, and conformity. Perreault's choreography is difficult to categorize because of his fascination with the humanity and vulnerability of the dancer.

In the two anthologies about Perreault's work (*Jean-Pierre Perreault: Alternate Visions* and *Jean-Pierre Perreault, Choreographer*), several authors try to locate and contextualize his choreography. They ask if it is post-modernist dance, new dance<sup>4</sup>, or expressionist dance? A possible answer may be found in Chantal Pontbriand's complex interpretation of dance styles and eras in her article “Expanded Dance (extreme dance)” in the anthology *The Responsive Body*. The *Parachute* editor and writer investigates the essential link between the body and dance in order to redefine the field. She states that new dance is a cousin of post-modern dance because of the predominant use of pedestrian movement in both styles.<sup>5</sup> Although she does not mention Perreault directly, pedestrian movement certainly pervades his works (the booted footstep is at the heart of *Joe*).

Furthermore, Pontbriand goes beyond new dance, pedestrian movement and gesture to consider the whole body as a conduit. She posits that in an abstract work of dance (such as *Joe*) the narrative is not an external device, but is directly imbedded in the body itself. The body contains and conveys all meaning. Pontbriand defines the contemporary dance seen on Canadian stages as “expanded dance” which is “a tool for developing consciousness.”<sup>6</sup> Expanded dance has a broad reach and encompasses bodily practices within any art form.<sup>7</sup> Perreault expanded dance to incorporate architectural set pieces and to challenge the spectator's concept of dance by heightening the senses.

## The Visual and the Aural

*Joe* engulfs audiences because of the magnitude of the large anonymous cast walking together across the dim stage. In *Joe*, Perreault illuminates the intersection of sight and sound. Art historian and visual culture authority W.J.T. Mitchell emphasizes the importance of considering the relationship of vision to the other senses.<sup>8</sup> Although vision is dominant sense, we often hear something before we can see it. Perreault's *Joe* exemplifies the idea of seeing the body in the act of making sound. At points in the piece, we see, hear and feel the Joes charge up the ramp. (The metallic ramp spans the width of stage and is used in many capacities in the work, but often as a percussion instrument.) But at other moments, sound directs us to the visual because of the subtle nature of the movement. Dance ethnographer Cynthia Jean Cohen Bull has considered the importance of the senses in her research as well. She has published a significant study of ballet, contact improvisation, and traditional Ghanaian dance that focuses on the heightened use of the senses for both the dancer and the audience. She states that the senses are not “fixed biological or psychological mechanisms but dynamic processes shaped by and through culture.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, we see dance differently based on cultural cues and signs. In *Joe*, Perreault stimulates the senses to elicit a response from his spectators.

The bodily movements in *Joe* hit the audience, almost as if they were a second ramp in the invisible fourth wall. The footfalls propel the audience to breathe in rhythm with the dancing bodies. Dance writer Sondra Horton Fraleigh states that dance is essentially human movement grounded in a subjective process – it exists in a framework of reciprocity.<sup>10</sup> She argues that the audience is the other in the reciprocal framework of a performance: “The dance[r] (object) dissolves as it becomes consonant with subjectivity.”<sup>11</sup> The audience's reaction is subjective because it can only be grounded in the individual's body. The other/audience perceives

dance in two ways: through the body and through experience. "With no story and no home, no body and no declared gender, Perreault's dance curiously shows spectators of either sex to themselves."<sup>12</sup> *Joe* inspires both a bodily and an intellectual reaction in the spectator. Perreault's greatest success was his ability to evoke empathy, through the body and the mind of in his spectators. The body is no longer other and superhuman, but real and corporal to the spectator -- thanks in part to Perreault's mature dancers interpretation of his choreography.

## The Trained Body Transformed

Perreault employs the trained body to represent everybody in *Joe*. Even though the Joes strive for "commonness," the exactitude and intent of their movement reveals their technique. The trained body in dance visually demonstrates absolute control of minute movements. In his article "Cultural Studies and Dance History," Norman Bryson argued for the examination of the dancing body as "the most blatant and unarguable instance of the disciplined body"<sup>13</sup> (as defined by Michel Foucault). The trained dancer's body is disciplined in *Joe* by the invisible hand of conformity. Even though the Joes are trying not to look like dancers, their precision is central to the trope of conformity. At first the Joes appear to be just businessmen disciplined to get from point A to point B. But at points, the Joes resemble an army, trained and merciless to deserters.

*Joe* focuses upon the theme of conformity versus non-conformity; this theme is expressed through the rebellious body. At first, individuals rebel from the disciplined platoon, and then smaller groups break off from the crowd. Fraleigh describes the dynamic between the solo dancer and the group:

Solo and group take their meanings in part from one another, by contrast. They differ in number; yet they are alike as singular wholes. When the soloist is successful, she draws us into the whole of the dance she creates. It is not self-importance that she marks when she is successful; rather, it is the dance in its unfolding. Likewise, dancers in a successful group dance transcend self toward each other and the world they make for us in their dance.<sup>14</sup>

Perreault explores the relationship between the individual and the group in this piece by clustering and isolating his Joes. The first rebellion from conformity occurs near the beginning of the piece. The group slowly coagulates in a gliding step that travels horizontally back

and forth across the stage. The Joes progress forward into groups of three, except for one group of four. In a circular pattern, the groups of three toss each others' bodies to the ground repetitively. This frenzied movement accentuates the power of gravity to pull the conformists to the ground. The four rebellious Joes stand in isolation at the front of the stage; they slowly raise their heads up and look towards the heavens. The conformists give into gravity, whereas the non-conformists resist gravity. One of the four is slowly lifted grasping for something outside of the frame. These two groups oppose each other in both the quality and speed of their movements.

Individuals rebel against the movement and patterns of the crowd. At the end of the piece, we see the stark difference between the group and the individual. The Joes quietly huddle at the front of the stage; the sound of a harmonica wafts through the space (as if signaling the approach of a rebel). The others watch as one Joe determinedly treads the mountain again, only to slide down in defeat several times. The rebel looks up, fighting gravity and the ramp, whereas the crowd stays low to the ground. Just the visual image of one watched by thirty-one is striking. The rebellious bodies constantly fight the elements; their movements push upwards against a binding force. The movements of the conformist group use weight and thrust downwards. Non-conformity patterns, movements, rhythms and sounds reveal the rebels. The individual rebels can be seen and heard in opposition to the anonymous and androgynous bodies of the group. Often, the audience hears the sounds of rebellion from within the mass, before it can be seen.

## Conclusion

Although any dance work can be interpreted through the lens of visual culture, arguably *Joe* offers a heightened relationship between the dancer and spectator. Watching Perreault's work, we are caught somewhere between the gaze and the glance, between mind and body. "Perreault often sought to disrupt perception, to worry, surprise, or suspend the gaze. Sometimes it was through the audible voices and steps of invisible dancers, other times it was through spatial and temporal decoupling." We see bodies moving through space, but we also hear them move in time. We physically feel the rhythmic pulse of the steps, at the same time as making the sound, the dancers respond to it. We empathize with the individuals who break away, but crave the sound of conformity from the group. The simultaneity of it challenges our senses. *Joe* leaves the viewer in a highly sensitized place of reflection more conscious of the self.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Pierre Perreault, a visual artist, began his dance career when he joined the Montreal company Le Groupe de la Place Royale in 1967. He trained on the job as a dancer and quickly became interested in choreography.

<sup>2</sup> The size of the cast varied from tour to tour. The 2004 tour had a cast of thirty-two.

<sup>3</sup> Therese Saint-Gelais, p. 83

<sup>4</sup> A term used to describe choreography primarily from the 1980's that does not completely refute the ideals of modern dance. In comparison, the post-modernists rejected the structure and technique of the modernists.

<sup>5</sup> Chantal Pontbriand. "Expanded Dance, Extreme Dance," found in Webb, Brian (ed.). *The responsive body: a language of contemporary dance.* (Banff Centre Press, 2002), p. 98.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.107.

<sup>7</sup> Expanded dance resembles visual culture in that Pontbriand defines it as a growing field that reaches beyond the traditional artistic fields.

<sup>8</sup> W.J.T. Mitchell, "Showing Seeing," *Journal of Visual Culture*, p. 174.

<sup>9</sup> Cynthia Jean Cohen Bull, "Sense, meaning and Perception in Three Dance Cultures," Jane C. Desmond (ed.), *Meaning in Motion.* (Duke University Press, 1997), p. 271.

<sup>10</sup> Sondra Horton Fraleigh. *Dance and the Lived Body: A Descriptive Aesthetics.* (University of Pittsburgh, 1987), p. 57.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> Thérèse Saint-Gelais, p. 91.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>14</sup> Fraleigh, p. 205.

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## Contributors

**Takiyah Nur Amin, Ph.D.** is Assistant Professor of World Dance at the University of Carolina at Charlotte where she teaches courses in dance history and theory in the liberal studies curriculum, Department of Dance and College of Art and Architecture Honors Program. Her scholarly and teaching interests include Black performance and aesthetics, Black feminist thought and activism, 20th century American concert dance and pedagogical concerns in the teaching of global dance traditions. Dr. Amin's scholarship has been published in *Dance Chronicle*, the *Western Journal of Black Studies*, and the *Journal of Pan-African Studies*. Takiyah is a former Riley Scholar-in-Residence at Colorado College and past recipient of the Edrie Ferdun Scholarly Achievement Award for excellence in dance studies from the Esther Boyer College of Music and Dance at Temple University.

**Hetty Blades** is a PhD student in the Centre for Dance Research at Coventry University. Her research considers dance ontology in the digital sphere. She explores questions regarding the nature of the dance 'work', online recordings, and our engagement with performance in digital form. She has written dance criticism for *Londonist* and taken part in multiple performance projects. Hetty has published in the *Postgraduate Journal of Aesthetics* (2011), and presented at various conferences, such as EVA (2012) and the Postgraduate Conference in Aesthetics (2012).

**Kate Cornell, PhD**, is a writer, teacher and historian. Her research on Canadian dance has been published widely in magazines, journals, anthologies and online. She co-wrote the only book that chronicles the history of Toronto Dance Theatre (1998). She has taught theatre and dance history and arts education at three different universities, and is currently the Director of the Canadian Society for Dance Studies/La société canadienne d'études en danse. Her research interests include the role of artistic practice in culture, the impact of Canadian cultural policy on the arts community, and the development of arts education in Canada.

**Natalia Gozzano** studied Art History at University La Sapienza, Rome

(BA, MA), at University of Pisa (PhD), again at "La Sapienza" (Post-Ph.D. work), and at University of Leuven (on a grant from the Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry). Her interests span from Flemish Art and its links with Italian Renaissance, to the aristocratic patronage and economics of art in Rome during the 17th century, the art market in Europe; and contemporary art criticism. Specifically, she has published a monograph on the Colonna collection and various articles in leading Italian and international journals. Since 2002, she has been working as Professor of History of Art at the Accademia Nazionale di Danza (AND), Rome, and, since 2009, as Curatorial Assistant of the AND Library–Historical Archive too.

**Monique Jenkinson** is a multifaceted performing artist whose work hurls itself into the gaps between dance, theater, drag and performance art. Though her work moves outside and between recognizable genres, she maintains deep roots in dance. She explores connections and tensions between art and entertainment, contrivance and 'the moment,' freedom and limitation. She has created and performed at ODC Theater, CounterPULSE, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the de Young Museum, and Trannyshack in San Francisco; Danspace Project, the New Museum, Movement Research/Judson Church, Howl Festival, Vandam and the Stonewall in New York; the Met Theatre in Los Angeles; the Coachella music festival; and in Reykjavik, Amsterdam and London. In 2012, Monique is an Artist Fellow in residence at the de Young Museum in San Francisco, where she curates and creates performance pieces.

**Johanna Kirk** is a professional writer, educator, and choreographer with undergraduate and graduate degrees in Dance. She has designed and taught courses in Experiential Anatomy, Yoga, and Dance at the University level and is currently based in Copenhagen, Denmark.

**Gina Kohler** is a Brooklyn-based independent choreographer, teacher and yoga instructor. She received an MFA in Dance, from HU/ADF in 2009. She currently teaches Yoga throughout New York City and is the Co-Director for the Brooklyn Arts Exchange Youth Dance Company BAXco. Kohler has taught as a guest artist at Kent State University, Holy Cross, Salem State College, Frostburg State University, Duke University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and TanzTag Coop

(Austria). As a dancer, Gina has had the pleasure of working with Archipelego Theater Company, Kelly Bartnik, Tessa Chandler, Diana Crum, Thomas DeFrantz/SLIPPAGE, Camille Dieterle, David Dorfman (Underground) and Apprentice, GK1 Productions, Lyndsey Karr, Dahlia Nayar, Jennifer Nugent, Daniel Lepkoff, James Morrow, Nora Stephens, Claire Tunkel and Shen Wei Dance Arts.

**Selby Wynn Schwartz** received her PhD in Comparative Literature from UC Berkeley. She teaches classes in comparative literature, gender studies, and dance studies, and works as the International Tour Manager/ Project Manager for Alonzo King LINES Ballet. Her first book, *Rogue Poetry*, a performance history of gender in vernacular medieval poetics, was published in 2008, and in 2011 she received the SDHS Lippincott Award for the best English-language article in dance studies. In Fall 2012, she will be the dramaturge for Monique Jenkinson's *Instrument*, a meditation on the material legacy of Rudolph Nureyev, which will premiere at the de Young Museum and CounterPULSE.

**Eulanda Shead** (dance maker / photographer / instructor) is currently in pursuit of her MFA in Choreography at the University of Roehampton. She is currently conducting research on the black dancing body, and notions of dehistoricisation through a series of short time-lapse films, tentatively entitled SURFACE. Conceived as a year long photo durational research essay, SURFACE documents the experiences of 12 U.K. based dance makers & practitioners who utilise movement from within the African diaspora in their practice & choreographic works. Shead's own choreographic practice includes the use of African diasporic movement, contemporary dance, and various improvisational techniques. As a photographer, her work has been published in several U.S. publications, and most recently in *Confluence* magazine.

**Tamara Tomić-Vajagić** is Lecturer in Dance Studies at the University of Roehampton. She is currently completing her PhD, focusing on the role of the performer in late twentieth-century ballets in the lineage of practice-clothes sub-genre. She lectures at BA and MA level, and her courses explore the issues of dance analysis and visual culture in dance, both investigating what kind of knowledge is gained about dances through the visibility.

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Carrie J. Preston (Associate Professor of English, Boston University)

*Modernism's Mythic Pose: Gender, Genre, Solo Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

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Amanda Graham (University of Rochester Graduate Program in Visual and Cultural Studies) for her essay:

“Out of Site, Trisha Brown’s Roof Piece”

Jessica Ray Herzogenrath (Texas A&M University) for her essay:

“Building National Character: Urbanization, Americanization and Folk Dance in Chicago, 1890-1940”

Munjulika Rahman (Northwestern University) for her essay:

“Dancing in the (Socialist) City: Bangladesh at the 1979 International Folk in Zagreb”

## **2012 Graduate Student Travel Awards**

Victoria Fortuna (Northwestern University) for her paper:

“Labor, and the City: Dancers for Life and Post-Crisis Buenos Aires”

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SDHS' monograph series  
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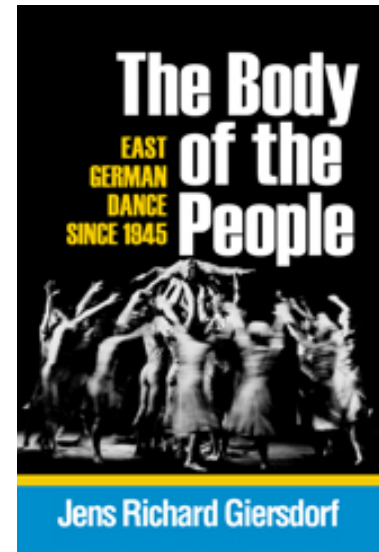
2011 SDHS Monograph:

Lesley Main, *Directing the Dance Legacy of Doris Humphrey:  
The Creative Impulse of Reconstruction* (2012)

### Forthcoming:

2012 SDHS Monograph:

Jens Giersdorf, *The Body of the People: East German Dance from 1945 to the Present*



### Call for Monograph Submissions

The Editorial Board of the Society of Dance History Scholars is actively seeking submissions of manuscripts for its monograph series *Studies in Dance History*.

Because the society defines dance history in the broadest possible terms, the board encourages submission of manuscripts on a wide range of topics. For more information please consult <https://sdhs.org/publications/studies>.

Submissions & inquiries may be sent at any time to Sarah Davies Cordova, Chair, Editorial Board: [cordovas@uwm.edu](mailto:cordovas@uwm.edu)

# Conversations across the Field of Dance Studies

## Calls for Contributions:

### *Dancing Spaces*

Guest editors: Drs Ying Zhu and Alexis Weisbrod

This volume of *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies* investigates what transpires at the intersection between pedestrian bodies and the theater of the everyday landscape. It is seeking conduits for uncovering meanings produced when space and architecture collide with bodies navigating and using the built environment, and when we make our way onto the streets and observe the shifting, gesturing, moving bodies that inhabit them.

(For details please consult: <https://sdhs.org/conversations-call-for-contributions-dancing-spaces>)

**Deadline for submissions: 22 April 2013** to be sent to [yingz81@gmail.com](mailto:yingz81@gmail.com)

### *Latina/o Dance*

Guest editors: Ramón H. Rivera-Servera and Cindy García

This volume of *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies* seeks to showcase and broaden understandings of contemporary and historical U.S. Latina/o dance practices and their continuing influence within Latina/o communities as well as in national and international dance circuits.

(For details please consult: <https://sdhs.org/conversations-call-for-contributions-latina-o-dance>)

**Deadline for submissions: 31 May 2013.** Please forward inquiries and submissions to [r-rivera-servera@northwestern.edu](mailto:r-rivera-servera@northwestern.edu) & [cgarcia@umn.edu](mailto:cgarcia@umn.edu)

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**April 18 – 20, 2013**

**Special Topics Conference with York University, Toronto, Canada**  
***Sacre Celebration: Revisiting, Reflecting, Revisioning***

The Society of Dance History Scholars presents in partnership with the Faculty of Fine Arts at York University, Toronto a Special Topics Conference in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the original performance of Igor Stravinsky's and Vaslav Nijinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*).

**June 8 – 11, 2013**

**International Joint Conference with the**  
**Nordic Forum for Dance Research**  
**Dance ACTions—Traditions and Transformations, Trondheim, Norway**

The Society of Dance History Scholars is partnering with the Nordic Forum for Dance Research (NOFOD) for our 36th Annual Conference "Dance ACTions – Traditions and Transformations" which will be hosted by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, in Trondheim, Norway.

**November 14 – 17, 2013**

**Special Joint Conference with Congree on**  
**Research in Dance, Riverside, California**

The Society of Dance History Scholars will be joining with the Congress on Research in Dance for a special joint conference to be held at the Mission Inn Hotel & Spa in Riverside, California. This conference will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of University of California, Riverside's PhD in Critical Dance Studies.

**October 8 – 11, 2014**

The Society of Dance History Scholars is delighted to announce that its 38th Annual Conference will be held at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.



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