

Dancing Museums – Wien Gemäldegalerie

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HOW TO DO THINGS WITH DANCE?

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Hieronymus Bosch's Grotesque Bodies

What do we see when we look at Hieronymus Bosch's Triptych of „The Last Judgement“? How exactly do we perceive it and how does it resonate in our bodies? The Triptych shows three stages of „The Last Judgement“: On the right wing the paradise and its loss, fall of mankind and of the angel, in the middle the goings-on on earth, the seven deadly sins, judged by Jesus Christ very far and distanced, only watching without any moment of hope of salvation, and on the left wing – the hell, represented in a devastated, burned landscape, just seems as a prolongation of what happens on earth. Altogether the idea that evil is already immanent in God's creation becomes comprehensible. We look at grotesque bodies – distorted, missing body-parts, composite beings between animal-human or plant, nearly grotesque ornaments, which proliferate the whole altar. The composition contributes to a deviation of our gaze, its dispersed body-parts are cut off by the frame of the picture composition. Between identification or recognition and the loss of reference the human figure is shown at its borders, but the dissolution of formerly existent borders produces transgressive or liminal experiences, it touches us most immediately. But this is not only a specificity of Bosch's painting and his time – the grotesque as characteristic mark of a crisis of form could be traced throughout the arts and its histories.

These „Figures of the Open and Incomplete“ correspond to bodyscapes and distortions we could see in contemporary dance since the mid-90s.¹ Thinking of Xavier Le Roy's *Self Unfinished*, or of Meg Stuart's or Benoit Lachambre's shaking bodies, of Isabelle Schäd's or Eszter Salamon's work, or of Forsythe's *Decreation*, they all created different strategies of distorting the body contours: morphing, deformation, decomposition, displacement, amalgamation or contamination, patchwork, hybridization – producing formless forms.

What we see here as in dance are processual bodies, always in metamorphosis, which don't show the human being as individual but as part of a collective body, focussing on processes of becoming. The grotesque shows a mixing of high and low culture, a bodily ambivalence, which affects us on a non-rational level as Michail Bachtin has worked out in his famous study. The Middle Ages, which pursued an image of the body relying on the medical idea of the four humours, – propagated an open body in continuous exchange with its surroundings, an idea that seems to be close to several conceptions we find in dance and its techniques.

¹ See: Susanne Foellmer: *Am Rand der Körper. Inventuren des Unabgeschlossenen im zeitgenössischen Tanz*, Bielefeld: transcript 2009.

But how could dance correspond to these aspects in the frame of the exhibition? Is it only in mere mimesis, or could we even address a compositional level, could we think in a more abstract way of specific qualities, of materiality and how could that become transparent for someone watching? Which correspondences could we establish between the painting and the beholder?

When the grotesque is described as a phenomenon of transgression – which experiences of displacement do these "figures of the incomplete or the open" produce? And what would this implicate for dance if we don't see it as a mere representation? What kind of effects does the presence of the body in the space of the museum produce? And which modes of affection become relevant thereby? How could different media translate different aspects? Which effects do the vexations the doublings or ruptures, produced by the dancer's body and different technical media, (as extensions in space) in regard to another way/ mode of mediation and of visual arts? How is the dispositif of the museum and the specific way of addressing the individual visitor part of the game, how could the walk of the visitor be choreographed in a way that it opens up to different modes of perception? Which role do the different time regimes play? How could these contribute to dynamize the character of the artifact? What could choreography / dance contribute within the interpretations of this body of work? Thinking the body as extended – as an in-between zone – as a medium, what could dance then contribute to understand or to access the visual arts on a different level?

Re-Considering the Objectives of „Dancing Museums“

Let us bring into memory some of the objectives of this ambitious project. As we could read in the press release, the *Dancing Museums* aims to:

- “Develop a European laboratory in which dance and the visual arts facilitate and encourage greater participation in the experience and appreciation of art and culture;
 - Create an environment, which melts the borders between spectator and maker, by putting people at the center, as the museum should no longer be a place where knowledge of others is produced, but much more a point of contact between people and cultures;
- Activate original artistic forms that integrate educational and participative elements, removing the barriers (emotional, cultural, physical), which may prevent access to the experience of the visual arts and dance by new and existing audiences;
- The aim of the project is to define and implement new methods to engage audiences and enhance the journeys which people make when walking through the rooms of historical artifacts and art spaces. Drawing the public's attention to contemporary dance as an inclusive, communicative form, events will be produced such as choreographic guided tours, participatory workshops and a web platform where the protagonists are both the artists and the public. The events will place the audience at the center of the experience, blurring the boundaries between spectator and maker. Creative ways of using digital technologies will also extend the reach of the project.”²

Not only that I would be rather suspicious about the unspecific emphasis on participation (I will return to that issue later in the article), we also could ask in how far dance is

² *Dancing Museums. Old Masters – New Traces*, press release, p.3.

instrumentalized in this conception? And: do the artworks really need this kind of “spectacular” mediation? How to draw the attention of the visitors and to divide them between the artworks and performers? How to obtain the absorption, which seems necessary to relate to the artwork?

To better understand and address these questions we have to differentiate between different formats of dance respectively choreography presented in the exhibition context or at the museum, which over the last 10/15 years, raised an increasing interest. The institutions were seemingly welcoming this “turn”: The Tate London even opened *The Tanks* as a new space for “art in action.”³

There were shows which were presented in the larger interest in re-enactment, as for example Marina Abramović’s *7 Easy Pieces* at the Guggenheim (2005), or even if they were rather show in the realm of a kind of retrospective *Yvonne Rainer: Body Space Language* at the Museum Ludwig / Bregenz (2012) or *Simone Forti: Thinking with the Body* at the Museum der Moderne Salzburg (2014); on the other hand there were mixed shows which functioned within a logic of event and participation like *Move! Choreographing you* at the Hayward Gallery (2011), or Robert Morris’s *Bodyspacemotionthings* at the Tate (2009) – combining retrospective, re-enactment and participation. At the same time, the younger generation, with artists like Tino Sehgal, who since his beginnings fled the dispositif of theater and prefers to create situations in the institutional context of the visual arts, Xavier le Roy with *Retrospective*, or Boris Charmatz with the *Musée de la danse*, tried to extend the notion of choreography by entering the dispositif of the exhibition—or by reinventing the museum in the realm of theatrical modes of display. In both art forms, the dispositif as a kind of multi-linear assemblage, which simultaneously distributes political power and modulates a constant change in the configurations of knowledge and subjectification, establishes a recursive framework for the negotiations of any production mode and any kind of aesthetic experience. Certainly there are different aesthetics or strategic interests at stake from the perspective of the choreographers or curators, as well as the institutions, to explore new formats or hold singular events to attract even more visitors.

So how could the museum as archive and collection relate to dance as an ephemeral art form? What does it mean to assign and arrange specific forms of knowledge in a different way? To “choreograph an exhibition?”⁴

Often these interventionist practices are performed in public spaces, and thus open up to a larger public and include the unpredictable / indeterminate. The mediating character of these

³ Parts of the following essay, rely on two related publications: Kirsten Maar: „Le Musée de la danse – or: What a body can do: Reconsidering the role of the Moving Body in Exhibition Contexts“, in *Stedelijk Studies*, Amsterdam, see: <http://www.stedelijkstudies.com/journal/what-a-body-can-do/>; as well as „Exhibiting Choreography“ – in: *Assign & Arrange. Methodologies of Presentation in Art and Dance*, hg.v. Maren Butte, Kirsten Maar, Fiona McGovern, Marie-France Rafael, Jörn Schafaff, Berlin/ New York: Sternberg 2014, S. 93-111.

⁴ As a related phenomenon, we could also look at exhibitions, which try to introduce a choreographic approach to the presentation of visual arts.

interventions occurs in a common presupposition that encounter and participation would be higher estimated than mere 'passive' contemplation. But what would predestine dance or choreography to mediation? Which potential misunderstandings we have to avoid in this context? It is not merely about adding kinesthetic to visual experience. Is it a specific experience of displacement, is it the tentation of movement as participation? Is it the tempo-spatial arrangements choreography makes visible?

Displaying and mediating

At a first glance, dance, mostly presented in the dispositif of the theater, and the museum⁵ seem to serve each an opposing logic: whereas dance as a transitory, ephemeral art form explicitly deals with process and the fleeting kinesthetic experience, the museum with its impulse to collect and archive objects of the past, to store them, to classify, to rearrange them always anew, seems much more static. Both dispositifs obey different spatio-temporal rules. Whereas the theater fixes us to our seats, demanding focused attention for a specific amount of time, the museum seems at first sight more democratic: it allows a distracted and disseminated attention, permitting the beholder to walk around, to look at the object from different angles, and even to talk. On the other hand, visitors are usually not allowed to touch; the art-object retains its distancing aura, relying on a primarily visual experience. Instead, the theater situation involves the spectator on different levels: sound, light, movement, and even smell evolve a sort of immersion, but at the same time a sort of narrative is negotiated and speaks to our rational ability to judge.⁶ This mingling constructs our aesthetic experience in a bidirectional mixture of fictional immersion and distancing.

Especially since the 1960s, dancers and performers, as well as gallerists and visual artists, looked for other spaces for presentation—in old industrial buildings, which had a specific use before and maintain a specific atmosphere, on the street, or in institutionally transformed spaces—and with this, other modes of presentation also fundamentally changed, included an everyday gesture, another public, and different forms of reception of the audience (participation sometimes included), in theater, performance, and dance, as well as in the visual arts.

The educational aspects are present in both dispositifs. In Schiller's idealist aesthetics and in his famous essay "Die Schaubühne als moralische Anstalt betrachtet" (1784), theater should help to educate man to self-fulfillment—between a ludic drive and a desire for form. On the other hand, the rise of the museum in the nineteenth century took place as a crystallization of cultural norms. Both theater and the museum served as public spaces, where social differences were constructed and rehearsed by means of specific rituals. Art

⁵ We have to differentiate between the museum as the institution and the exhibition, which defines a more temporal

⁶ This strict separation of body / mind is of course not durable, for most cases of our experience both ways of experience – rational and sensitive modes – are intermingling.

historian Tony Bennett describes the raise of the museum in the 19th century as crystallization of cultural norms, as it served as a public space where social differences were constructed and rehearsed by means of the architecture's spatial arrangements and its specific rituals.⁷ By organizing the modes of seeing and perceiving the museum's architecture and exposition devices the exhibitions mediated normative ideas of social and historical order and thus contributed to establish an educational framework which was flanked by other institutional activities.

The museum, which played off visual competence and connoisseurship against perception and an education of the senses thus focused on a bourgeois attitude of citizenship. Only those who knew how to behave in these settings and to obey the rules could be part of a distinguished, sophisticated society. What Foucault later called the "Order of Things" as well as the upcoming ideas of Darwinism played crucial roles in these processes. Classification systems contributed to create hierarchies of knowledge between the curator and the viewers. The objects of the exhibition – displayed in an idealizing linearity – were presented within a specific idea of evolution, which did not only draw upon hierarchies in nature but also aimed at a transfer of these thoughts to the social order. The educational aspect, as well as that of surveillance and control, remained a crucial element in the museum's dispositive, and could be compared with choreography as "art of command."

In a way the disciplining moment was challenged by the experience of minimalism – by precisely that tendency of art art-form, which was attacked by art-critic Michael Fried for its theatricality, the experience of duration, a specific experience of an articulated spatial presence and the bodily involvement of the beholder.

Spectacle and Theatricality

It was in 1967, when art critic Michael Fried criticized the minimal art object for its literacy and its theatricality – as the specific situation between the beholder as subject and the artwork as object.⁸ This relation is designated by its duration. He further argues against minimalist principles of addition and the serial as well as against its inherent anthropomorphism. This corporeality, relying on questions of scale, would create its specific presence. Finally he criticizes the minimalist artworks for the loss of medium-specificity: "What lies between the arts is theater."⁹

⁷ Tony Bennett, "Civic Seeing: Museums and the Organization of Vision," in: *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by S. MacDonald, London: Blackwell: 2006, 263–281.

⁸ Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood", first published in *Artforum*, 1967, in: Gregory Battcock: *Minimal Art. A Critical Anthology*, University of California Press 1995, 116-147.

⁹ Fried, "Art and Objecthood",

Since then the term of "theatricality" has passed a massive reevaluation;¹⁰ at last the discourse on "performativity" has challenged not only the Performative Arts, but also the Visual Arts as well have been read under the sign of a performative approach.

In the same year a second plane of critique emerges with Guy Debord's "La société du spectacle" a Marxist analysis of cultural production and resonates in the writings associated with the influential second October decade and which goes along with the critique of commodification, which is followed some decades later in 1991 by Fredric Jameson's "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism". Art critic Rosalind Krauss takes up this title in the same years, when she writes in "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum" an analysis of how the museum changed from diachrone perspective of transmitting (historical) knowledge to a synchrone perspective, which focuses on experience and situation.¹¹ The roots of this development Krauss situates in Minimalism. Especially the phenomenological aspects attracted the artists to probe aesthetics of Minimalism as an artform, which was in a specific way linked to bodily experience.

A lot of the exhibitions serve this logic of an "economy of event." Institutional policies as we see them for example with the programming at the *Tanks* perfectly seem to serve this logic of event – and experience. But even if the singularity of the event nowadays does not escape a logic of reproductability within the art market, it still seems to be linked to two aspects which are often claimed as intrinsic to any performative art form: its ephemeral nature as well as its reliance on the body as the "last frontier of authenticity"¹².

It seems clear that Fried and Krauss argue on different levels but if we go back to their etymological roots theater and spectacle are tightly interwoven: Letting something appear in front of one's eyes: Not only does the scene – as a 'Schau-Platz' in German – a place to see and to reflect – refer to a close interrelation of theater and theory, implicating a distance necessary for aesthetic judgement, but also does it show the interrelations of watching and "being watched".¹³

Along with these reflections we have to reconsider one seminal position in the dance-discourse of the 1960s – more precisely Yvonne Rainer's negotiations with theatricality and spectacle: In her famous *No-Manifesto* she wrote about the conditions of dance-production at that time. Her phrase "No to spectacle" is followed some sentences later by a "No to theatricality and make-believe".¹⁴ Written in 1966, the article certainly could not reflect upon the accusations by Fried, as her essay was written two years before his article was published

¹⁰ Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (1977), chapter 6: "Mechanical Ballet", Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1994, 201-242.

¹¹ Rosalind Krauss, "The Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum," in *October* 54, autumn 1990, S. 3–17.

¹² Such the title of the Parasite International Conference in Hong Kong 2014; see: <http://culture360.asef.org/event/hong-kong-para-site-international-conference-2014/>

¹³ Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched. Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008.

¹⁴ Yvonne Rainer, "A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A" (1966), in: *What Is Dance? Readings in Theory and Criticism*, Roger Copeland und Marshall Cohen (eds.) New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, 325–332: 328.

in *Artforum*, but she discusses minimalist tendencies and tries to transfer some of its principles for dance. Her insistence on a reflexive thinking of being exposed on stage still seems to be highly relevant for considerations on the modes presentation and resonates even if things have changed, since a generation of younger choreographers as Mette Ingvartsen or Andrea Bozic wrote their own No- (or Yes-) Manifestoes....

Choreography and Dance

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

Graphein also implies a separation and tension between the notational as conceptual part and its bodily execution,¹⁵ a specific hierarchy between the concept and its execution. As a prescript for potential movement and action, and by means of these assignments and procedures, a specific “partition of the sensible”¹⁶ is installed—meaning a reflection upon, and the modes of access to, singular aesthetic experiences, or even possible participation. It makes visible what otherwise is not seen. “[A] score is a realized composition of articulations, that urges for other realizations, interpretations and translations. It is a ‘partition’ of sensible agencies that communicates and shares modes of perceptibility, close to what Jacques Rancière calls *partage du sensible*.”¹⁷ This definition stresses the affinity of the score—in French, also *partition*—and *partage*: partitioning and partaking, or being a part of something. It touches an area of choreographic thinking that questions the conditions of art production and communication strategies, and in which production processes are collectively negotiated. As such, “a score is not a genre, but a generator of what escapes from it: its realization.” Thus, the score is always—even beyond its realization—characterized by its inherent potentiality. It describes an assignment within which movement *can* unfold.

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

¹⁵ Gabriele Brandstetter, “Choreographie,” in *Metzler Lexikon der Theatertheorie*, ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte, Doris Kolesch, and Matthias Warstat, Stuttgart / Weimar: Metzler, 2005, 52–55.

¹⁶ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, London: Bloomsbury, 2006.

¹⁷ Petra Sabisch, “A Little Inventory of Scores. Self-Conversation,” in *Maska. Performing Arts Journal XX*, “Open Work,” ed. Bojana Cvejić, autumn/winter 2005, 30-35, 31.

countenance, dance served as an instrument to social regulation, educating and training tactfulness and order in a framework of self-discipline and representation.

Since then, the relation between the notational prescript and the execution of a dance has shifted, but not lost its tension and ambivalences. With the Judson generation, the notion of dance and choreography was revised by working with improvisation, or with pedestrian movement, and with the intersections of different art forms, for example, in the collaborations between Simone Forti and La Monte Young, or in the extraordinary format of *9 Evenings*. Their uses of scoring practices, inspired by John Cage and Anna and Lawrence Halprin,¹⁸ fundamentally changed the binary relationship between choreography and dance, turning it into a more reciprocal one. Cage's chance-based compositional procedures as well as his idea of indeterminacy radically challenged the relation between notation and its actualization. In this operative model, in which the performers became co-authors and complete the work ever anew, it became possible to explore complex structures within exact timings and detailed instructions.¹⁹ By these ways choreographic procedures in these years changed in different ways – from the more conceptual approaches in the works with tasks and instructions during the early years of Judson (1962-64), but soon also modified the vocabulary of movement. To move adequately to the complex scoring methods, which demanded a high level of bodily sensitivity and improvisatory knowledge, it became necessary to explore different techniques and somatic practices, which opened up to a responsive body, relying on its kinesthetic experiences. On another level, this meant that an individual choreographer could not create a composition, but only unfold in-between the dancers in a collaborative realm.

The second root of “choreography” – *choros* – refers to the repetitive structure of the dance ritual, which enables a culture of memory whereby the imagination of a community can be built up. At the same time, it also designates the place where the dance is performed. The patterns of movement and the architectural “display” provide a frame to this communal experience. As a place to see and be seen (being visible and being represented), it fulfills the main conditions of theater and enables forms of an assembly.²⁰ Moreover, it underlines the aspect that dance, both historically and in our daily lives, is a practice performed together with other people, not merely watched.

¹⁸ Lawrence Halprin, *The RSVP-Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment*, NY: Braziller, 1970

¹⁹ Liz Kotz, *Words to be looked At: Language in 1960s Art*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007. His aim to eliminate any individual preferences remains doubtful, however, especially for dance, where practices and habits manifest so visibly in the dancer's body

²⁰ The relation of political assembly, architectural space, and theater is further described in Ludger Schwarte: *Philosophie der Architektur*, Munich: Fink, 2009. The theater as the traditional place, where dance was performed over the last two centuries, served other ways of exercising community. In its antique version, it refers to another aspect—not of community, but of a space of negotiation—as the greek *theatron* offered a space beneath the *agora* where even women, slaves, and strangers were part of the public.

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

Both aspects are most relevant to our topic: scoring or choreographing an exhibition as well as the aspects of how to establish a community – or perhaps better – a public.

In their book *Public Sphere by Performance* Bojana Cvejic and Ana Vujanovic state that, during recent years and in many areas of common language, the notion of choreography has replaced the discourse of the performative: “*The currency that ‘performance’ as a technical term had in the 1990s, seems now to be replaced by choreography. Comparing the usages we can infer that performance denotes competence, ability to execute, and achievement while choreography designates patterns of the complicated yet seamless organization of many heterogeneous elements in motion.*”²¹ In this context, choreography might mostly refer to the lightness and virtuosity of classical ballet, but even very different techniques and practices in the field of somatics, like the Alexander Technique, the Feldenkrais Method, Body-Mind Centering, or different release-based practices, contribute to create a flexible and responsive body and could be addressed in this framework of improvement of the body, healing it from its deficiencies and obtaining a quasi-neoliberal flexibility.

The Ephemeral, Dematerialization and Immaterial Labor

The shift to choreography as “smooth operation” perfectly matches with what Beatrice von Bismarck describes regarding the situation of the curator as an “arrangeur,” one who is dealing with “relations in motion.”²² Practices such as selecting, assembling, arranging, contextualizing and presenting, establishing contexts and references, organization counseling, publication, and education also influence the discourse of art production and could be subsumed under the term “immaterial labor,” which Maurizio Lazzarato coined to mark the differences between mental and manual labor, the dimensions of affective and cognitive commodities in a neoliberal knowledge economy.

This relates to another argument: the often-cited ephemeral character of dance and its implications: The ephemeral character of dance and performance as described by Peggy Phelan, who states that “performance’s only life is in the present,”²³ and her claims for the

²¹ Bojana Cvejic and Ana Vujanovic (eds.), *Public Sphere by Performance*, Berlin: b_books, 2013, 72.

²² Beatrice von Bismarck, “Relations in Motion: The Curatorial Condition in Visual Art and its Possibilities for the Neighboring Disciplines,” in *Curating Performing Arts, Frakcija Performing Arts Journal*, no. 55, summer 2010, 50–57.

²³ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, London /New York: Routledge, 1993

fleeting not only supports the argument of an authentic, non-reproducible here-and now but moreover it fits very well into a perception of the flow of capital – its volatility – and thus touches questions of how we work, and how the status of a dancer or choreographer is situated within the field of art production.

In 1969, Lucy Lippard and John Chandler proclaimed the “dematerialization of the art object,”²⁴ which would demand more participation of the viewer. Their notes on the experiences of different time-regimes within Minimal or Conceptual Art and emerging new genres like installation and performance, induced that one had to spend more time in experience of a detail-less work, respectively that a work with a minimum of action would seem infinitely longer than action and detail-filled time. Implications of disorder and chance would contribute to an increase of entropy, indeterminacy, and relativity. “Such a work,” Lippard and Chandler wrote, “is a medium rather than an end in itself or art-as-art” – it is mediating itself in the sense of McLuhan’s famous quote: “The medium is the message” – and as such on an institutional level reflects a kind of self-reflexive display-practice. Lippard’s short essay contributed largely to the rise of conceptual art and a specific reading of dance and performance within art history, and also helped to promote the situational, participatory, and relational as immaterial art forms, which aim at encounters rather than an enclosed art object.

With these shifts the role of the curator changed from a researcher and facilitator to supporting a kind of leisure industry and the logic of event (or from mediating knowledge to creating experiences).²⁵ The changing skills Beatrice von Bismarck mentions, are congruent with what Maurizio Lazzarato describes as characteristic for immaterial labor.

Transferred to the curating of dance and performance, connecting social and self-technologies, this contributes to a growing precariousness in this field. The idea of self-improvement and self-control, which is close to dance’s training practices, completely fits in this logic. Ballet is only one (historic) technique that overtly demonstrates its disciplining character. But also the holistic and release-based techniques, which aim at healing the body from its civilizing deficiencies (or from the orthopedic distortions ballet has produced in the dancer’s body), are not at all free from this ideology.

Returning to the etymological notion of curating, it is derived from the Latin word *curare*, which denotes the field of medicine, meaning caring for something. The former notion has often been discussed—if the curator should just be a “caretaker” or a facilitator, standing behind the work of the artist, or if her work should be considered as an artistic work in itself or if she could be seen as a mediator.

²⁴ Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, “The Dematerialization of the Art Object,” in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), S.46–50.

²⁵ Krauss, “The Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum”, 1990.

And further – if we turn back to the *Dancing Museums*: What happens when the dancers and choreographers in a way take over the role of setting up the relations between the different art works? What happens when the body corresponds to the painting? In how far does its potential to connect, its genuine openness and volatility, change the situation we enter, and how do the bodies of the visitors connect to it? Does the body really subvert the “cultural logic of the late capitalist museum”? As we have seen, the claim to go beyond the conditions of commodification is not really convincing – why should the body be excluded from these economies? On the other hand we could probably discuss the cultural pessimist arguments against spectacle in an actualized way. It is exactly the body which allows us to experience the borders of phenomenological sensation and self-reflective criticism, its volatility as Elizabeth Grosz or Judith Butler describe it, which mingles affective and qualities and re/acts *between* immersion and reflection.

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

What a body can do: relating different forms of knowledge – or creating communities?

This relation between conceptual and practical, between theory and practice, touches upon questions of how we obtain knowledge and which different forms of knowledge are negotiated in these situations. Bodily knowledge—*knowing how*, implicit, or tacit knowledge—always operates contextually, but to place it in opposition to rational *knowing that* would not be useful. Implicit knowledge is never situated outside of our knowledge, but is essential to its description.²⁶ Subjectivity is not acquired by accumulating rational knowledge, but essentially by practice and intuition. Practice, in contrary to *poiesis*, is not teleologically focused on the work of art as a closed and completed art object, but in its intrinsic openness, its potential to change – its potentiality.

Corresponding to this, the questions of the transitory and the archival, which are traditionally assigned to dance respectively to the museum in a more dichotomous way, are negotiated anew in every constellation in the *Dancing Museums*. But in how far do the dancers themselves, and not just the choreographic assignments of the site, contribute to this event? What experiences are assembled in the dancers' bodies, and how do their movements affect the beholders? How are they moving and being moved? With this question about the processes of affectation, the materiality of movement practice occurs, since in these bodies

²⁶ Michel Polanyi, *Implizites Wissen*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985.

different techniques and practices merge. Years of training are required to obtain specific skills, for instance, an improvisational knowledge to react adequately in unforeseen situations. In these situations, the body is not separate from language, images, ideas, and concepts; it is not a somehow miraculous refuge of authenticity, or allowing any immediate experience, as often claimed, but is rather a site of exploration, to which moments of disintegration and of disappointed expectations essentially belong.

In these practices, which traverse the body with its histories, experiences, and sensations, materiality is never addressed within a singular body; rather, it is only perceivable within the connections or alliances to which it responds. These practices are not techniques that aim at a specific form, like those in ballet. Instead, these somatic practices or bodily techniques are intended to create a “continuum” between the subject and its surroundings, simultaneously sensing the inner impulses of the body and being highly attentive and responsive to the outside and to the other. This produces “incomplete figures,” which are often described using the metaphor of porosity or permeability, or which dance critic Jeroen Peeters describes with the idea of “bodies as filters.”²⁷ Permeability in this field means to be affected by different forces that traverse the body and at the same time transform it. It is about extensions of the body, which qualify the body to engage in an exchange with others and to develop a specific kinesthetic capacity. In these processes, body and mind are inextricably linked to each other, for instance, when you see how the images help to generate movement material on different levels. The materiality of practice unfolds in the assemblages, which remain open and indeterminate. Especially in the moments of transference moments of interruption, stutter, hesitation, or other rhythmic configurations might occur, which challenge the organization of the choreographic process and its perception, and generate new patterns.

In these constellations, the medium condition of dance as reflection of a “being-in-the-medium”²⁸ comes into account. Especially the disruptions and interferences within a process of potential communication contribute to the specific quality of movement. This being in-between essentially depends on the precarious status of the body and its movements, their unavailability, and (on the other hand) their ludic and improvisational capacities.

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

²⁷ Jeroen Peeters: *Through the Back. Situating Vision between Moving Bodies*, Kinesis5, ed. by the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki 2014, chapter 5: „Bodies as filters. On resistance and the sensorial in the work of Boris Charmatz, Benoit Lachambre and Meg Stuart“, 87-115.

²⁸ Giorgio Agamben, “Notes on Gesture,” in *Means without End*, Minneapolis/Minnesota Press, 2000, 49–62.

and dance, as well as how they contribute to the modes of display and aesthetic experience. With reference to Agamben's "Notes on Gesture," dance is situated between "producing as a means in view of an end and praxis as an end without means [...], the gesture [or dance] then breaks with this false alternative between ends and means that paralyzes morality." Instead, it operates with a form of mediation, in which the reference to something else is a movement of reference between potentiality and act, between means and an end.

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

Lets then finally return to the crucial questions of audience participation. The discourses on participatory art or 'social practice' address as well the project of a 'coming community' or of creating space for public negotiation as the display or architectural arrangements co-determining a situation. In theatre as in art discourse the modes of presentation, which create these specific situations have been embraced and have been widely investigated in terms of 'forms of transformation'. These interstices are mainly defined by the way they enable forms of encounter. Perhaps Nicholas Bourriaud's "esthetique relationelle"²⁹ most perfectly describes how Krauss' analysis from 1991 developed in the 2000s onwards. In the course of that these participatory modes were also being criticized for their quality of being not very specific about what kind of social model they could provide nor about the specific qualities of relationships they re/produce.³⁰ The presupposition that participation would automatically be political and emancipatory, democratic and therefore good, fails to ask more precisely How is an art work made, who is it for, which in- and exclusions does it re/produce? What kind of perception do these modes of production allow or enforce? And what economies of time do they suggest? Which rules govern the behavior of the spectator? What proposals are made by the arrangements of architectural devices and exposed objects? How could the relationship to the other be defined within these situations?

Partition and participation – in German language: Teilhabe and Teilnahme – mean as much as partake. In French "partition" is the same word for the score as partitioning the page and drawing distinctions, which then determine the compositional configurations and participation being part of something. As such they define a part of choreographic practice; they establish a "partition of the sensible" in which it is also up to the beholder to negotiate the conditions of

²⁹ Nicholas Bourriaud, *Ésthetique relationelle*, Dijon: Presses du réel, 2002.

³⁰ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London/ New York: verso 2012.

aesthetic experience, its inclusions and exclusions. Between the choreographic score as a prescript for a possible situation to unfold and its actualization there remains a gap, which is to be filled by the indeterminate.

Participation on display? or: “Space as praxis”

“Space as praxis”³¹ – the title of an essay RoseLee Goldberg republished in *Manifesta Journal* on “The Grammar of the Exhibition” – points to the divide between theory and mind/ intellect versus praxis and the body – and between *praxis* and *poiesis*. Whereas *poiesis* aims on the creation of an artful product, *praxis* has its goal in its own – and as such is drawing on process. It aims to undermine the dichotomy between the conceptual set of rules or the assignment and the kinesthetic interpretation. Goldberg argues, that theory, concepts, drawings or documentation remain essentially two-dimensional, while practice and performance imply a physical context, a space in which we experience the materialization of that theory. Recent art would be looked at not only as the “dematerialization of the art object”, as it is described by Lucy Lippard, but Goldberg instead proposes a “materialization of the art concept”.

As we could see in the scoring practices Tatiana Julien introduced or in the swarm sculptures Lucy Suggate worked with to establish a kind of ensemble thinking, or the flip book technique Dante Murillo used to make the images move, these practices unfold in relation to different levels of the Old Masters, they take a compositional level or also work with mimetic appropriation and its productive failures. The assignments, scores, instructions or tasks contributed to help the dancers to develop together their specific movement vocabulary – as such “experience is truly learned”. The body is concerned with the dancer’s ability to articulate and experience both the body itself and the space in which it moves. In this way the therapeutic dimension Fabio Novembrini introduced a haptic and very intimate level into the public space of the museum. This kinesthetic exploration requires a specific focus on internal consciousness and the perception of an interior space and attention between the dancers and this tension is something, which also affects the audience in a way to use their whole sensorial spectrum as a medium of translation from image to the body and from the dancer to the visitor. As we have seen the level of translations could be diverse. In a way here seems to resonate what Walter Benjamin claims in his essay on “The task of the translator” (1923): Since the recreation of an original would be impossible, it would rather be the challenge to keep a certain productive and poetic strangeness in the text itself.

This needs time.

In an ideal way this would be producing different time regimes and they might alter the way we proceed in the gallery, turning it again into what it used to be before the raise of the

³¹ RoseLee Goldberg, “Space as praxis”, in *The Grammar of the Exhibition*, *Manifesta Journal*, Journal of contemporary curatorship, N# 7, 2009/2010, 51-62.

museum as educational instrument in the 19th century – a space for conversation, and for exchange of ideas – a 'space as praxis'.