

Notate, Document, Score: Body culture & visual culture

Paisid Aramphongphan (Smithsonian American Art Museum)

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This session will examine the intersections of body culture and visual culture across time, encompassing notation, performance and experimental scores, photographic documentation, film, and other archival sources. Rather than focusing on rubrics traditionally understood as dance, such as choreography and performance designed for time-limited showings, the papers examine body and movement as an expanded field of practice, and how that fits within, emerges out of, and/or shapes a particular social and historical context.

Speakers and Abstracts

The Body between Text and Performance in the Theatre of Tristan Tzara

Erica O'Neill (University of Glasgow)

Tristan Tzara's play *The Gas Heart* features a dance interlude: a diagram of assorted letters under the direction 'Dance of the gentleman fallen from a funnel in the ceiling onto the table'. Sarah Bay-Cheng argues that Tzara's diagram eludes stage direction: the illustration resists translation to the stage as 'embodied action', animating the text *in place* of the corporeal body. However, what if we read in Tzara's play a form of performance notation: an illustration to be translated as a physical equivalent to typography.

This paper will discuss Tzara's theatrical work as an expanded field of artistic practice in which the body is simultaneously limited and emancipated. Tzara's text occupies a dual position in Dada's history: as a document exclusive of performance, and as a performance score, exemplifying the Dada paradox best described in his 1918 manifesto, written 'to show that you can perform contrary actions at the same time...' In Tzara's theatre, the body becomes a dialectic between text and performance.

At an historical juncture when society witnessed physical deformation resulting from WWI's trench warfare, Tzara named *The Gas Heart* characters as living body parts (Eye, Nose, Mouth, Ear, Neck and Eyebrow). Separated from the whole, they become disembodied limbs: simultaneously liberating and disassembling corporeality. By the additional inclusion of an illustration/notation, Tzara emancipates the performing body by posing what the fractured body of the dancing gentleman might look like in performance. Employing a dramaturgy of fragmentation, Tzara refigures a body anchored in its historical, cultural and artistic moment.

'An explosion of energy somewhere in the centre of the body': Yvonne Rainer's written reflections on dance instruction (1959–62)

Tom Hastings (University of Leeds)

This paper focuses on the movement work that preceded the composition of Yvonne Rainer's signature dance, *Trio A* (1966). In her 1968 commentary, 'A Quasi Survey', Rainer calls *Trio A* a 'continual and unremitting revelation of gestural detail' – an enigmatic formulation that invokes activity extrinsic to the performance situation. Reading carefully through her notebooks (1959–62; archived at the Getty), this paper responds to *Trio A*'s so-called 'revelation' by analysing her recorded negotiations of different kinds of dance instruction. It focuses on a series of journal entries that see Rainer reflecting on improvisation sessions shared with fellow dancers Simone Forti and Nancy Meehan, during May and June 1959. These sessions constituted a 'relatively socially-closed' site through which Rainer, Forti, and Meehan were able to adapt drills and technique transmitted by Merce Cunningham and Martha Graham, prior to the formation of the Judson Dance Theater in 1962. Transactions between movement exploration and linguistic tropes form the basis for a study of notation vis-à-vis the category of expression. Critical theorist Carrie Noland has produced an excellent reading of this category in relation to Cunningham's gifting of the transition, parsing its embodied and semiotic modes. As Rainer observed in 1959, 'He tells you what to do, but not how to do it'. Reading with Noland, this paper considers the unmodulated and continuous movement of *Trio A* as the summation of back-region transactions between competing forms of instruction. In doing so, it expands the study of Rainer's dance at the intersection of archival readings and critical theory.

The Dialectic of Wex

Judith Rodenbeck (University of California, Riverside)

From 1972 to 1977 the German painter Marianne Wex undertook an extensive research project aimed at demonstrating the cultural nature of gendered physical postures, accumulating a monumental archive of photographs of residents of her hometown of Hamburg, pictures reshot from popular magazines such as *Der Spiegel*, and images from the world history of figurative sculpture. A large-scale display of nearly 5,000 images culled from this archive was shown in 1979 as a sequence of mounted panels and then published in book form in German and English. *Let's Take Back Our Space: 'Female' and 'male' body language as a result of patriarchal structures* is remarkable on many counts, not the least of which is Wex's dialectical account, told in pictures and in prose, of her own political and personal coming-to-consciousness of the extent to which patriarchal biopolitics shaped her own life kinaesthetically, emotionally, and socially. The book thus deploys both the language of then-developing kinesic analysis alongside ethnographic self-study. It also serves as a remarkable document of feminist visual practice during the heavy years that led to and culminated in West Germany's 'autumn' of 1977; and, practically Warburgian in aspirations, it stands as a key utterance in the long history of photography's engagement with human motion, on the one hand, and with the archive, on the other. The project considers Wex's project in three art contexts: its lineage within the realm of photographic practice; its relation to contemporaneous conceptual projects; and its profound – and direct – dialogue with behavioural psychology and cybernetics.

OUT SCORE: Live and invariable renderings

Sozita Goudouna (Onassis Scholars Association)

The paper will discuss methods of translating three-dimensional work into a two-dimensional format and the ways a movement score can define the future of architecture, engineering, and our built environment by examining the expanded art project OUT SCORE: Khoros/Choros (the same word, with different intonation, means dance and space in Greek) that will take place at the sculpted theatre of Aixoni and at 'T' Space in Rhinebeck US in May 2019 with the participation of Maria Hassabi, among other visual artists. The project draws a parallel between the two spaces, and attempts to reopen the sculpted theatre that was inaugurated with an international celebration of Yiannis Xenakis in 1992, within the exceptional surrounding of Mt Hymetus Aixoni Quarry.

OUT SCORE is a research programme and exhibition that generates encounters between dance, performance and the visual arts, in relation to the complex notions of notation and score, and the ways they have emerged in the second decade of the century. The paper will investigate the ways movement organically changes over space, and the ways our actual environment, live space, and surroundings can be adjusted by movement. It will also examine the distance between the printed material and the actual experience of the performance, as well as the ways that contemporary performance can form a specific 'body language' with its own signs and connotations that can define another discipline, such as architecture and sustainable engineering.